



Issue No. 76
April 2017



***No 50 & No 61 SQUADRONS'
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER***

61 SQN 100TH ANNIVERSARY



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FOREWORD

“The fighters are our salvation, but the bombers alone
provide the means of victory”

Winston Churchill 1940

This edition is devoted to 61 Sqn in its Centenary year. One of the first RFC sqns formed to protect London and the South East from German aerial bombardment. We salute our 61 Sqn wartime veterans, some of whom we highlight in this Newsletter. We also celebrate the bravery and courage of the late Flt Lt William Reid VC and his gallant crew. We are very proud to have the honour of a VC winner on both of our Sqns (Fg Off Leslie Manser VC on 50 Sqn).

LUNA HABITILIS

The time will come, when thou shalt lift thine eyes
To watch a long-drawn battle in the skies,
While aged peasants, too amazed for words,
Stare at the flying fleets of wondrous birds.
England, so long the mistress of the sea,
Where winds and waves confess her sovereignty,
Her ancient triumphs yet on high shall bear,
And reign, the sovereign of the conquered air.

Thomas Gray 1737

We dedicate this Newsletter to the memory of the late Derek Brammer, author of “Thundering Through the Clear Air”, the definitive history of 61 Sqn in Bomber Command 1937 - 1958. We are also indebted to Mr Roy Prestney-Archer for the detailed 61 Sqn information, dates and fate of Sqn aircraft. We remember too the wartime veterans of both our Sqns and all allied airmen and women for their bravery, courage, modesty; and for far too many, their ultimate sacrifice.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them

Robert Lawrence Binyon 1914

61 SQUADRON ROYAL AIR FORCE - 100 YEARS



Motto: Per Purum Tonantes (Thundering Through the Clear Air).

Nickname: Hull's Own Squadron.

Badge: The Lincoln Imp. To associate the Squadron with the County of Lincolnshire in which it was re-formed in 1937 and where it spent most of active days in World War II.

Authority: HM King George VI March 1940.

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Jul 17	Major E R Pretyman
Mar 18	Major B M Murray MC
Apr 18	Major E Henty
Sep 18	Major E B Mason (Sqn Disbanded 13 June 1919)
Mar 37	Sqn Ldr C H Brill
Sep 39	Wg Cdr C M de Crespigny
Feb 40	Wg Cdr F M Denny
May 40	Wg Cdr G H Sheen DSO
Nov 40	Wg Cdr G E Valentine DSO
Sep 41	Wg Cdr C T Weir DFC
Jun 42	Wg Cdr R M Coad AFC
Feb 43	Wg Cdr W M Penman DFC AFC
Oct 43	Wg Cdr R N Stidolph DFC
Apr 44	Wg Cdr A W Doubleday DSO DFC RAAF
Sep 44	Wg Cdr W D Pexton DFC AFC
Feb 45	Wg Cdr C W Scott AFC
Jun 45	Wg Cdr J M Tombs
Aug 45	Wg Cdr R H Humphries
Feb 46	Wg Cdr J L Kirk OBE
Nov 46	Wg Cdr C D Milne DFC
Apr 47	Sqn Ldr W Jones DFC

Aug 47	Sqn Ldr S J C Harper DFC
Oct 49	Sqn Ldr T E Ison DSO DFC
Jun 52	Sqn Ldr C D Owen DFC
Aug 52	Sqn Ldr A P Huchala DFC RCAF
Aug 54	Sqn Ldr J H Gaston
Aug 55	Sqn Ldr N L Hartley
Feb 56	Wg Cdr R L Fuller AFC*

(Sqn Disbanded 31 March 1958)

Hull's Own Sqn The nickname refers to the loose association between The City of Hull and 61 Sqn, based at RAF Hemswell 1937-41 and 1947.

61 Squadron Standard. A sqn has to be operational for at least 25 years, or perform a deed of outstanding heroism, and receive royal approval to qualify for a Squadron Standard. 61 Sqn was operational for only 23 years: 1917-19 and 1937-1958 therefore ineligible.



We believe this is quite likely to be the late Wg Cdr Roy Leslie Fuller, the last CO of 61 Sqn; taken at RAF Upwood in 1958. On promotion to Gp Capt, he became Stn Cdr of RAF Linton-on-Ouse 1962-65.



Wg Cdr A W Doubleday DSO DFC RAAF

Arthur William Doubleday trained in Canada under the BCATP Scheme. He was awarded his DFC while a plt off on 460 Sqn RAAF at RAF Binbrook in 1942; and his DSO as an outstanding OC 61 Sqn in 1944. He flew 53 ops, retired a gp capt, and returned to Australia after the war to promote regional airports. He died in Aug 2001, aged 89. He is believed to be the only Australian to have commanded an operational RAF bomber squadron.

ARTICLE 50/61

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Firstly, I wish to say a special thank you to Gerry Collins who has recently retired from the post of secretary having held it for many years. I am sure Gerry will not mind me saying but now in his 90's age is just beginning to catch up with him and so he has been given time off for good behaviour! I am sure that all of you who know him will join me in saying thank you Gerry for all that you have done for us over so many years. You can now relax when it comes to Association matters.

Having celebrated the centenary of 50 Sqn last year, this year we turn our attention to 61 Sqn. In this newsletter, our editorial team have provided us with a fitting tribute to this courageous Sqn and as we look forward to getting together again in June, I have no doubt that this annual reunion weekend will be every bit as good as the last, or at least a bit drier. I am also sure that former members would be immensely proud that both Sqns are still being remembered 100 years on, particularly when considering it has been more than 30 years since 50 Sqn disbanded and nearly 60 years since the disbandment of 61 Sqn. I may be proved wrong but I suspect that neither Sqn will ever resurface and that leads me on to the future of our Association.

Throughout its 70 years, the Association's focus has been on the Sqns' wartime veterans of Bomber Command rather than on any other period of history. Sadly, the number of veterans gets fewer by the year and although we have some former 50 Sqn members from the post-war era, our president and vice-chairman included; also Roy Davidson and Danny Thomas from 61 Sqn, they are in the minority. Today some 90 per cent of our membership, myself included, has never served on either sqn. Therefore, perhaps now is the time to think about the future and to decide whether the title of 50 and 61 Squadrons' Association remains viable or whether we should move forward under a different name to better reflect what our membership represents.

As you would expect, we as a committee have been discussing this for more than a year, but we were keen to see out last year and this year so that we could commemorate the centenaries of both our Sqns. We have done that and so now is the time to move forward, and although the number of former sqn members continues to dwindle, we are keen to continue preserving the legacy

of the wartime airfield of RAF Skellingthorpe, its sqns and those who served there during the Second World War. We believe that next year, the RAF's centenary, provides us with an ideal opportunity to make the transition and to move forward under a new title **Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe, Home of 50 & 61 Squadrons**.

I must make it clear that at this stage that it is a proposal only, hopefully to be ratified by members at this year's AGM, but it is a proposal that has been unanimously agreed by the committee in consultation with members of Skellingthorpe village. The proposed changeover date would be Sunday 10 June 2018 - ie after next year's annual reunion, which will still be run as an Association event. Indeed, the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe has already formed, with its own committee and constitution focussing on preserving the history of RAF Skellingthorpe and its sqns; it is now waiting patiently in the wings. If the members attending the AGM agree to proceed as we have proposed, then more details about the Friends of RAF Skellingthorpe and its constitution will be given in the next newsletter.

Now, with all that said I am sure that this will not come as a complete surprise to most of you. Nonetheless, it is probably best to take a deep breath. What would this mean to you as members? In reality - nothing. Although the title will change, the membership, the annual reunion in June and the remembrance services in November will remain the same. Therefore you might say why bother? But as an historian and former member of the RAF, I believe it is important, if not essential, that membership of any association carrying sqn number plates must be made up primarily of former sqn members. We are now well past that and while none of us want to see the end of an Association that has lasted for 70 years, it is important that we go forward under a name that better characterizes who we are and what we represent. I hope you can agree. I look forward to seeing you in June.

Peter Jacobs

ABSENT FRIENDS

As we go to press we have to report the passing of 3 veteran members: Reg Dear DFC; Wg Cdr Charles Cawthorne and William (Jock) Crozier.

Due to space limitations and to provide a fitting memory for our late members, we will provide an obituary for these 3 veterans in the next newsletter.

Mike Connock

61 SQUADRON 1917 - 1919 and 1937 - 1958

First World War



Maj E R Pretyman

61 Sqn was formed on 5 Jul 1916 at RFC Ashford in Kent, but within six weeks was detached to Stirling in central Scotland. It was amalgamated with a flt from 43 Sqn to form 63 Sqn. 61 Sqn was disbanded on 24 Aug 1916, without becoming operational.

61 Sqn was re-formed as an operational Home Defence Sqn on 24 Jul 1917 at RFC Rochford in Essex; one of the earliest sqns within the London Air Defence Area. The first CO was Maj Edward Radclyffe Pretyman, late of the 1st Somerset Light Infantry, who later received the DFC and retired a Wg Cdr in 1937. Equipped with the Sopwith Scout (Pup), its vital task was to repulse German daylight air raids from across the English Channel.

The Sqn's one and only action in the First World War was on 12 Aug 1917. A formation of 10 Gotha bombers was intercepted successfully by 16 Sopwith Pups over the Thames Estuary. But not before 2 bombs had been dropped by the enemy near the Sqn's hangars on Rochford airfield (now London Southend Airport). In 1918, the Sqn was re-equipped with the SE5. It then converted to the Sopwith Camel and the Sopwith Snipe. 61 Sqn disbanded on 13 Jun 1919.



Sopwith Scout (Pup)



German Gotha G V Bomber



Royal Aircraft Factory SE 5

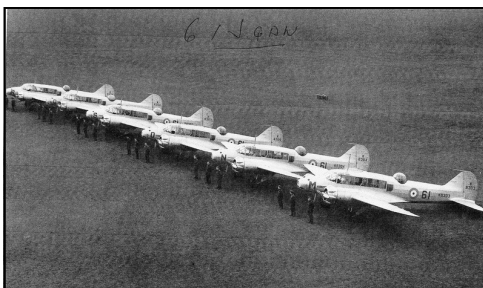


Sopwith Camel

Second World War



Hawker Audax



61 Sqn AVRO Ansons



Bristol Blenheim



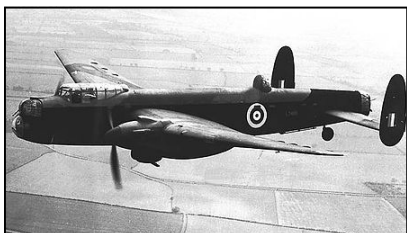
61 Sqn Handley Page Hampden

The Sqn was re-formed on 8 Mar 1937 at RAF Hemswell as a bomber sqn, flying the Hawker Audax, Avro Anson, and the Bristol Blenheim 1937-39.

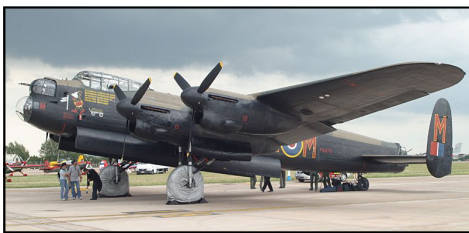
In 1939 the Sqn became part of No 5 Gp Bomber Command, operating the Handley Page Hampden bomber. The Sqn moved to RAF North Luffenham in 1941; flying the disappointing Avro Manchester, then converting to the Lancaster Mk I, II and III in 1942. The Sqn remained mostly based at RAF Skellingthorpe until 1945. The Sqn was involved in many 5 Gp raids on major strategic German targets: Dresden, Berlin, Wesel and Dusseldorf.

It was twice detached to Coastal Command in 1942 to patrol the Bay of Biscay. On 17 Jul, Flt Lt Casement's crew (QR-F) became the first in Bomber Command to return with irrefutable proof they had sunk a U Boat (U751); the sailors were photographed swimming away from the stricken vessel. The Sqn's last and most rewarding wartime task was on 6 May: Op Exodus repatriated 336 Allied POWs from Germany.

Four 61 Sqn Lancasters recorded over 100 successful ops: ED860 (QR-N) (130); EE176 (QR-M) (128); JB138 (QR-J); (120) and LL843 (QR-P); (118).



AVRO Manchester Mk IA



AVRO Lancaster Mk I/III

Post War

In May 1946, 61 Sqn was re-equipped with the AVRO Lincoln at RAF Waddington and in 1954 converted to the Canberra Bomber at RAF Wittering, then RAF Upwood. The Sqn saw action during the Malayan Emergency and the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya. The Sqn disbanded 31 Mar 1958.



61 Sqn AVRO Lancaster Mk II



AVRO Lincoln B2



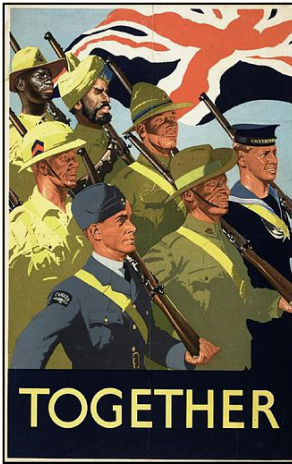
61 Sqn Canberra B2

RAF Station Bases and Detachments (1917 - 1919 and 1937 - 1958)

RFC Rochford 1917 - 1919. Re-formed at RAF Hemswell 1937 - 41; RAF North Luffenham 1941; RAF Woolfox Lodge 1941- 42; RAF Syeston 1942 - 43 (detached to RAF St Eval (Coastal Cmd) Jul and Aug 42); RAF Skellingthorpe 1943 - 44; RAF Coningsby 1944; RAF Skellingthorpe 1944 - 45; RAF Sturgate* 1945 - 46; RAF Waddington 1946 -53; (detached to RAF Hemswell 1947 and RAF Tengah (Singapore) 1950 - 51); RAF Wittering 1953 - 55 (detached to RAF Eastleigh (Kenya) 1955); RAF Upwood 1955 - 58 (detached to RAF Nicosia (Cyprus)) 1957.

*Tiger Force for the liberation of Singapore. The 2 atomic bombs dropped on Japan in Aug 1945 ended hostilities and the Tiger Force was cancelled.

COMMONWEALTH FORCES DURING WORLD WAR TWO



The contribution of the British Empire and Commonwealth in terms of manpower and materiel was critical to the Allied war effort. From Sep 1939 to mid-1942 Great Britain led Allied efforts in almost every global military theatre. Commonwealth forces, totalling close to 15 million serving men and women, fought Axis armies, air forces and navies across Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, India, the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Arctic Oceans. Commonwealth forces fought in Britain, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark and France in the effort to slow or stop the German advance across Europe. Commonwealth air forces fought the Luftwaffe to a standstill over Britain, and its armies fought and destroyed Italian forces in North and East Africa.

Over 130,000 Allied aircrew from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain were trained in Canada under Article XV of the 1939 Ottawa Agreement: “The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP)”. There were 67 “Article XV” Sqn; the largest contributor, Canada, with 15 heavy bomber sqns, formed 6 Gp Bomber Cmd in 1943; AVM George Brookes RCAF was the AOC.



Trinidadian Sqn Ldr Ulric Cross DSO DFC, flew with 139(Jamaica) Sqn as a Pathfinder. He was the High Commissioner of Trinidad at the Court of St James in London 1990-93; Ulric Cross died in 2013, aged 96.



The 460 Sqn RAAF Lancaster AR-G (W4783) at RAF Binbrook in 1944, with her Australian crew. The aircraft survived 90 ops and flew home! “Lucky George” is now proudly displayed at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

WARTIME VETERANS OF 61 SQN



WO Reg Freeth (left) and Flt Lt Jamie Barr DFC (right) both trained as Observers in South Africa. In 1942, the Specialisation split into Bomb Aimer and Navigator. Reg became the former and Jamie the latter. They both flew with 61 Sqn in QR-J. Sadly, Reg suffered a perforated eardrum and was medically grounded. They remained close friends and attended our reunions. They have hardly changed! Reg's son Stephen is our "official" photographer.



Wg Cdr Jim Wright (right) with his great pal Mike Ward (left). They graduated as the top 2 students on their Air Navigation School in Canada and were commissioned as Plt Offs.

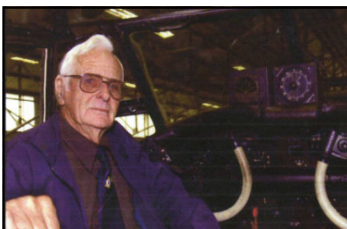


Jim joined 61 Sqn in 1943 as a navigator. Sadly Flt Lt Mike Ward DFC failed to return whilst on 83 (Pathfinder) Sqn in Jul 1944.

QR-S (Sheila) 1944 End of Tour

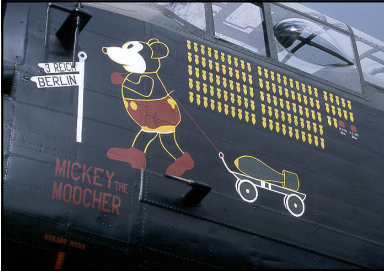


L-R: FO Alf Lyons (BA); Sgt Len Whitehead (MUG); FS Les Cromarty (RG); FL Bernard Fitch DFC (Pilot); FO Sid Jennings (Nav); FS John Taylor (FE); FS John Kershaw (WOP)



Frank Mouritz RAAF, pilot of QR-M, in the pilot's seat of the BBMF Lancaster PA 474 in the hangar at RAF Conningsby in 2004. (60 years after the photograph on p 18).

Mickey the Moocher (QR-M) is one of the few Lancaster aircraft that completed over 100 missions (she completed 128 and survived the war). She was built by AVRO at Newton Heath, Manchester, in early 1943 and given the registration EE176. It was on 61 Sqn at RAF Syeston that she was given the sqn code QR-M. There was a popular song by Cab Calloway in the 1930s called “Minnie the Moocher”; thus QR-M was nicknamed “Mickey the Moocher”.



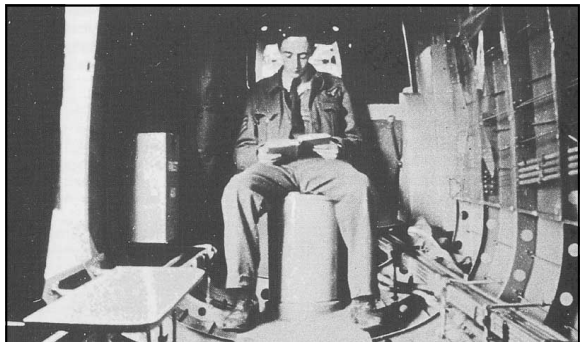
The Nose Art of “Mickey the Moocher” appearing on the BBMF Lancaster .



WO Ken Johnson flew with 61 Sqn as an Air Gunner. He was a part of the final attack to sink the Tirpitz in 1944 and also the air attacks on Berchtesgaden.



Between 2000-2006, PA 474, the BBMF Lancaster, was displayed as QR-M as a salute and tribute to 61 Sqn. It appeared to millions of aircraft enthusiasts at air shows all around the UK. Depicted here with the BBMF PR Spitfire and the Hurricane.



Dedicated by the editors to all those resolute and heroic 61 Sqn crews who not only braved the flack, the fear, the enemy aircraft and the ever-present danger, but also the Lancaster “convenience” too!

FLT LT WILLIAM REID VC RAFVR - CITATION



On the night of November 3rd, 1943, Flight Lieutenant Reid was pilot and captain of a Lancaster aircraft detailed to attack Dusseldorf. Shortly after crossing the Dutch coast, the pilot's windscreen was shattered by fire from a Messerschmitt 110. Owing to a failure in the heating circuit, the rear gunner's hands were too cold for him



to open fire immediately or to operate his microphone and so give warning of danger; but after a brief delay he managed to return the Messerschmitt's fire and it was driven off.

During the fight with the Messerschmitt, Flight Lieutenant Reid was wounded in the head, shoulders and hands. The elevator trimming tabs of the aircraft were damaged and it became difficult to control. The rear turret, too, was badly damaged and the communications system and compasses were put out of action. Flight Lieutenant Reid ascertained that his crew were unscathed, and saying nothing about his own injuries, he continued his mission. Soon afterwards, the Lancaster was attacked by a Focke Wulf 190. This time, the enemy's fire raked the bomber from stem to stern. The rear gunner replied with his only serviceable gun, but the state of his turret made accurate aiming impossible. The navigator was killed and the wireless operator fatally injured. The mid-upper turret was hit and the oxygen system put out of action. Flight Lieutenant Reid was again wounded and the flight engineer, though hit in the forearm, supplied him with oxygen from a portable supply.

Flight Lieutenant Reid refused to be turned from his objective and Dusseldorf was reached some 50 minutes later. He had memorised his course to the target and had continued in such a normal manner that the bomb-aimer, who was cut off by the failure of the communications system, knew nothing of his captain's injuries or of the casualties to his comrades. Photographs show that, when the bombs were released, the aircraft was right over the centre of the target.

Steering by the pole star and the moon, Flight Lieutenant Reid then set course for home. He was growing weak from loss of blood. The emergency oxygen supply

had given out. With the windscreen shattered, the cold was intense. He lapsed into semi-consciousness. The flight engineer, with some help from the bombardier, kept the Lancaster in the air despite heavy anti-aircraft fire over the Dutch coast.

The North Sea crossing was accomplished. An airfield was sighted. The captain revived, resumed control and made ready to land. Ground mist partially obscured the runway lights. The captain was also much bothered by blood from his head wound getting into his eyes. But he made a safe landing although one leg of the damaged undercarriage collapsed when the load came on.

Wounded in two attacks, without oxygen, suffering severely from cold, his navigator dead, his wireless operator fatally wounded, his aircraft crippled and defenceless, Flight Lieutenant Reid showed superb courage and leadership in penetrating a further 200 miles into enemy territory to attack one of the most strongly defended targets in Germany, every additional mile increasing the hazards of the long and perilous journey home. His tenacity and devotion to duty were beyond praise.

Victoria Cross citation as published in The London Gazette on 14 Dec 1943

Bill Reid was presented with his VC by HM King George VI at Buckingham Palace in July 1944. He was 22 years old.

FS John Jeffries (Nav) was killed in the second fighter attack and FS Jimmy Mann (Wop) died in the Medical Centre at RAF Station Shipdham, Norfolk, where QR-O landed. The aircraft was repaired and transferred to 50 Sqn; the aircraft failed to return in 1944.

The surviving crew of QR-O Dusseldorf raid on 3 Nov 1943:

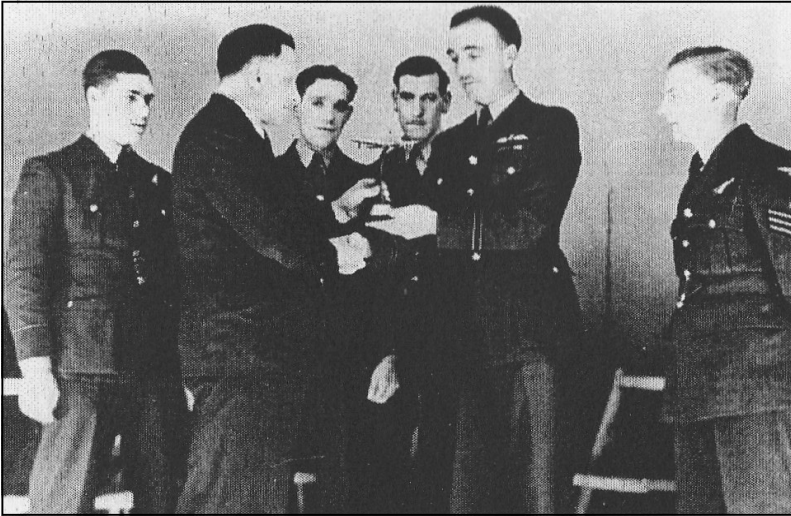


Les Rolton; Frank Emmerson;
Jim Norris; Bill Reid; Cyril Baldwin



Lancaster QR-O (LM 360) after the
landing at the RAF Shipdham

FLT LT BILL REID VC AND HIS CREW AT AVRO YEADON



Following his release from hospital, Flt Lt Bill Reid and his surviving crew visited the AVRO Factory at Yeadon (now Leeds Bradford Airport) in Dec 43. He was presented with a silver model Lancaster by the Works Manager, Mr H W Harper. The 4 surviving members of his crew are (left to right): Plt Officer Les Rolton DFC (Bomb Aimer); Sgt Jim Norris CGM (Flt Eng); FS Frank Emmerson DFM (Rear Gunner); and FS Cyril Baldwin (Mid Upper Gunner). FS Baldwin was finally awarded the DFM in Jun 1944.

The Air Ministry was very keen for RAF aircrew awarded the Victoria Cross to visit aircraft factories for Public Relations opportunities. These visits were also much welcomed by the men and women who built the aircraft. The air crews were quite rightly fêted as heroes. The workers at Yeadon were immensely proud that they had built the 61 Sqn Lancaster LM360, QR-O, that carried Bill Reid and his crew on the raid to Dusseldorf on 3/4 Nov 1943. The visit by the crew was received with enormous delight by the 17,500 staff employed there.

The above photograph, and the Prose on page 3 are reproduced, with permission, from "Mother Worked at AVRO" published by Compaid Graphics 1995.

FLT LT BILL REID VC - PRISONER OF WAR

Bill Reid was posted to C Flight, 617 (Dambuster) Squadron at RAF Woodhall Spa in Jan 44 and flew sorties to various targets in France. On 31 Jul 44, 617 Sqn linked with 9 Sqn for a "Tallboy" deep penetration bomb attack on a V weapon storage dump at Rilly-la-Montagne, near Rheims. As he released his bomb over the target, he felt his aircraft shudder under the impact of a bomb dropped by another Lancaster 6,000ft above. The bomb ploughed through his aircraft's fuselage, severing all controls and cables fatally weakening its structure causing the aircraft to break up; Reid gave the order to bail out.

As members of the crew scrambled out, the aircraft went into a dive, pinning Reid to his seat. Reaching overhead, he managed to release the escape hatch panel and struggled out just as the Lancaster broke in two. He broke his arm on landing heavily by parachute. He was captured by a German patrol and taken prisoner within an hour. Only Bill Reid and his WOp, Fg Off David Luker DFC, survived. The other 5 members of the crew, including Plt Off Leslie Rolton DFC, also on the raid where Bill Reid won his VC, failed to return.

After various transfers, Reid and Luker ended the war in Stalag IIIA - a prisoner of war camp at Luckenwalde, west of Berlin. Bill Reid was demobbed in 1946 and resumed his agriculture studies. He was awarded a travelling scholarship for 6 months, visiting India, Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada. He retained his reserve commission until 1949. Bill Reid died in 2001 aged 79 years.

SGT JACK LIDDELL 61 AND 617 SQNS



A veteran of 61 Sqn, Sgt Jack Liddell, rear gunner, was the youngest crew member on the 617 Sqn Op Chastise "Dams Raid." The Lancaster, AJ-E, flown by Flt Lt Norman Barlow DFC RAAF, hit power cables on their way to the target (Sorpe Dam) and crashed near Haldern, Germany, on 16 May 1943; there were no survivors. The captain and crew of AJ-E had all served on 61 Sqn at various times.

Jack Liddell's ambition was to become a member of Bomber Command aircrew and he enlisted at 17, lying about his age. Rather than taking the usual break as an instructor after his 61 Sqn tour, he volunteered to join 617 Sqn and train for the dams raid. He was 18 years old.



THE CREW OF QR-M MICKEY THE MOOCHER 1944

Jim Leith (Flight Engineer); Dennis Cluett (Rear Gunner); Peter Smith (Bomb Aimer); Frank Mouritz RAAF (Pilot); Arthur Bass (MUG); Lawrie Cooper (Nav); Dave Blomfield (Wop)

ROLL OF HONOUR

The 50 and 61 Sqns' Association is justifiably proud of its Roll of Honour which was compiled by Peter Jacobs in 1991. It records the rank, name, aircraft, target and date of the 1,002 aircrew and ground staff from 50 Sqn and the 974 aircrew and ground staff of 61 Sqn who made the ultimate sacrifice between 1939 and 1945. The Roll was dedicated by the Dean of Lincoln on Sunday 2 June 1991.

The bravery of the 61 Sqn crews is reflected by the 366 decorations awarded in the Second World War: One VC; 5 DSO, 3 CGM, 208 DFC and 149 DFM.

There was an average of c12 Sqn aircraft per operation from 1943
61 Sqn carried out 377 Lancaster raids, 4546 sorties and lost 116 aircraft.

Out of the 22 Sqns in 5 Gp. 61 Sqn:

Carried out 2nd highest number of overall operations (704)
carried out the 4th highest number of sorties (6,082)
suffered the 5th highest number of operational losses (156)

MEMORIALS TO BOMBER COMMAND AND 61 SQN



BOMBER COMMAND MEMORIAL IN GREEN PARK, LONDON
(Unveiled by HM The Queen 28 Jun 2012)



50 AND 61 SQNS' MEMORIAL AT SKELLINGTHORPE ↑
(Sir Michael Beetham 2 Jun 1991)

← **50 AND 61 SQNS' MEMORIAL AT BIRCHWOOD, LINCOLN ON THE SITE OF THE FORMER RAF SKELLINGTHORPE**
Op Failed to Return - (Sir Michael Beetham and Eddie Davison DFM 3 Jun 1989)

SHORT SPERRIN SA.4B

In 1947 the Air Ministry issued Specification B14/46 for a jet-powered aircraft that could carry a 10,000lb bomb 1,500nm from a base anywhere in the world and be "relatively simple to maintain".



Shorts SA.4B Sperrin aircraft on static display (she flew a display too) at the Farnborough Air Show in 1956

In parallel, planning began for an independent strategic bombing capability, so that the UK air defences would no longer be solely reliant upon the USAF Strategic Air Command. Therefore in late 1948, Specification B35/46 was issued for an advanced jet bomber that would serve as a successor to the AVRO Lincoln, a derivative of the Lancaster. The requirement included a similar specification to B14/46, but with a further stipulation that provision be made for a nuclear weapon to be carried. Designs were submitted by Armstrong Whitworth, AVRO, Bristol, de Havilland, Handley Page, Shorts, Vickers and English Electric.

The Air Ministry soon realised that such an advanced jet bomber could well become a "hostage to fortune". Therefore B14/46 was re-drafted to become an "Insurance Specification" for a less ambitious conventional aircraft that could be available should the advanced jet bomber fail to satisfy Specification B35/46. Short Brothers and Harland, of Belfast, won the contract and 2 prototypes were built: VX158 flew in Aug 1951 and VX161 a year later. The aircraft was named the Sperrin, after the mountain range in County Tyrone. There was a crew of 5: pilot; co-pilot; air bomber; navigator; and wireless operator. The pilot was the only crew member with an ejection seat. The two pilots faced forward, but the remaining 3 crew members faced towards the rear (as they did in the three V Bombers). The 2 prototype aircraft were powered by four turbojets (RR Avons or DH Gyrons) as a pair, stacked one above the other, in nacelles on each wing.

However, Specification B35/46 was fully met and resulted in 3 jet bomber aircraft being selected: the Vickers Valiant, Handley Page Victor and AVRO Vulcan. The world famous "V Bombers". Although the Sperrin never went into operational service, the prototypes did provide much valuable data on the characteristics of large jet aircraft. They were used by Shorts for testing advanced jet engines and scrapped in 1958. If B35/46 had not been a success, who knows? Maybe we would have had a squadron or more of "S" Bombers!