

Newsletter No. 19 – March 2021

Editor: Dr Jenifer Harding (daughter of George Hogarth, Co 3)

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Reflection

I am writing this one year on from the start of the first UK Lockdown on March 23, 2020. Now, we are coming to the end of our third Lockdown with restrictions gradually being lifted from next week and our children back at school. But as the UK is starting to recover with fewer deaths and fewer cases being reported, in no small part thanks to our very successful vaccine programme, Continental Europe is suffering with cases rising, deaths increasing and new lockdowns, curfews and restrictions imposed. It's like a see-saw – this 'up and down' of Covid.

This third lockdown has been the most wearisome of the three – the very cold and wet UK weather hasn't helped! But on the positive side, spring is coming and outside, birds are nesting, trees are in bud, snowdrops have come (and gone), bright yellow daffodils are everywhere, and we are predicted a mini heatwave. Not hot compared to the lovely Florida sun, but pretty warm for the UK in March. Next week, we will be able to meet a limited number of friends and family in an outdoor space – finally the start, we hope, of a return to normality.

Flypaper, July 16, 1942, includes a letter from the mother of an RAF cadet then safely back in Britain. She is writing on behalf of the women in Britain to thank the people of the USA for looking after their sons and saying that they can never repay them. "Our hearts are very full of gratitude for all you have done". And she quotes a verse that she sang in school:

"Little Deeds of Kindness
Little Words of Love
Make this Earth an Eden
Like the Heaven above"

There have been so many small deeds of kindness reported over the last year to make life a little more bearable for those bereaved or isolated by Covid – shopping, chatting over the telephone, friendly waves through windows, etc, and long may this spirit of Kindness last when the pandemic is all over and Covid becomes a chapter in a history book.

I hope those of you reading this are safe and, if vulnerable or have signs and symptoms of Covid-19, are well cared for. If you have lost someone close to Covid, please accept my condolences and sympathy. 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'

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



RIDDLE - MCKAY AERO COLLEGE

Annual British Memorial Day Service 2021

64th Annual British Memorial Day Service May 25, 2020 – CANCELLED!

For the first time in 64 years, there was no Memorial Day Service last year. 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!



2019



I suspect that the 65th Annual British Memorial Day Service due to be held on Monday May 31, 2021, will also be cancelled. If it does go ahead, non-essential flights between the UK and USA will not have resumed so sadly, I won't be there. All we can do is 'watch this space'!

Meantime, thank you to Arcadia for continuing to look after the British Plot in Oak Ridge Cemetery. It is good to know that the cadets have not been forgotten.

Like many other businesses, **Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit**, 10 South Polk Avenue, Arcadia, Florida 34266 was forced to close during the Florida lockdown – although Helen Cooke was able to reopen the Tearoom in early May 2020. We hope her business is thriving once more. 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:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryMargaretsTeaAndBiscuit/>



Annual British Memorial Service May 31, 2021

Covid permitting, the service will start at 10am

The Service is organized, as it has been for the past 65 years, by Arcadia Rotary Club

Address: PO Box 1492, Arcadia, FL 34265-1492

Telephone for information at 863-444-0664

Email: BritishMemorialService@gmail.com

EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

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, has taken over the organization and we look forward to his first service.

In Memoriam

Dennis Hart Wyatt (Course 22) died March 10, 2020 aged 95

Dennis, born in 1925, was one of 62 cadets who graduated from the initial 100 intake on Course 22 which was at Clewiston from August 29, 1944 to March 31, 1945. He married

Anne in 1951. They lived in Linton, Wetherby and Anne survives him. Dennis had two sons and a daughter, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



Dennis joined the 5BFTS Association in about 1995 and was a member until it was disbanded in 2013. He attended the final reunion at Bedford in 2013 and was one of the eleven cadets who were present at that reunion (picture below). Two cadets in the picture (both standing) are unknown to me – can anyone help identify these two gentlemen?

← Cadet D H Wyatt: Listening Out Course 22, Flypaper March 15, 1945



Final 5BFTS Association Reunion: Bedford September 2013.

Standing L-R: Unknown, Dennis Wyatt Co 22, John S Wright Co 26, Geoffrey Reynolds Co 22, Peter Hines Co 19, Unknown, Ron Cox Co 22

Sitting L-R: Brian Gait Co 24, John Broome Co 18, Gordon Newsham Co 24, Ivor Sneezum Co 22

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!



Anne Hughes, who developed the 5BFTS section on the American Air Museum Internet Archive and is chairman of the Vintage Aircraft Club (VAC) has had a few challenges this

year! Running the club through lockdown and continually having to cancel events has not been easy, but on the positive side, the club has been pro-active in doing things in a different way. Vintage Aircraft Club: <http://www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk/index.php>



Anne writes a weekly newsletter to members and told me about a really good 'Click and Collect' Awards Day she organised in late September - no laws broken and applause in the hangar courtesy of Youtube!

← Anne 'collecting' her award

Anne writes, "After a five-year restoration programme we have managed, despite everything, to finish our [Beagle] Prototype Pup. She has nearly completed test flying and we have had some magic moments since May. Now all the aviation magazines need articles, so I am busy with publicity, writing for the Light Aircraft Association (LAA) and with the book we have written for the Pup project as well as running the VAC." www.lightaircraftassociation.co.uk



Beagle Pup: First sighting - 2014



In the air again! August 26, 2020 - Pup Press Day



'DUXFORD OUTDOORS' will open to the public again from Monday, 12 April 2021, with access to the grounds; however, in line with UK government guidelines, the museum remains closed and only outdoor spaces are accessible.

← A Spitfire Mk 1a practises tricks over Duxford, in Cambridgeshire, where it joined 19 Squadron in 1940 (photo: *The Times* April 3, 2021)

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

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

Ian (Jock) Blue and my father, George Hogarth, were two of the 13 cadets on Course 3 who had been members of the Edinburgh University Air Squadron. After WW2, Ian and his wife

kept in contact with my parents although they lost touch after the early death of Ian in 1981. In 2018, a chance viewing of a photograph taken by Kyle Blue led me to make contact with Kyle, Ian's son. Around 2000, Kyle met an ex RAF man, Don McClen, who subsequently wrote a quite detailed history of Ian's wartime career which made up a chapter of a book he published. This is the third extract from that book which takes up Ian's story after D-Day.

In July 1944, the Typhoons of 182 Squadron began intensive activity over France and Ian was invited to apply for a commission again. The operations were almost daily and intensive. On August 21, Ian heard that he had been awarded the DFM (Distinguished Flying Medal) and a colleague the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross). The operational criteria for these awards were the same, the difference being that the DFC is reserved for commissioned officers.

In September, the Typhoons were in action at Arnhem. Records show that the Typhoons gave the area "a very effective staffing" but bad weather inhibited their action on September 18 and 19, and Ian records, "Two very duff days and no flying. A great pity.....Mist and clouds down to the deck". On September 19, Ian heard that he had received his commission and celebrated with "a few beers". On September 20, Ian recorded that he was part of a "Full RP [Rocket Projectile] armed reconnaissance of Arnhem area. Afraid our airborne boys are a bit pushed and weather not helpful. What a curse". This was the day when Operational Market Garden was deemed to have failed, and it was to be another 8 months before VE Day when Europe was free again.

Ian's operational days were almost over; his last operational flight was on October 17, 1944 when he celebrated with "6 rolls one after the other". In total, he had taken part in 117 operational sorties lasting 119.30 operational hours. He spent two months testing Typhoons and then became an instructor for the rest of his military career. His last flight was in a Typhoon doing "low level flying and aerobatics"; altogether, he had flown 735 hours.

Don McClen finished his chapter on Ian as follows, "Reading his logbook in conjunction with official history was for me a privilege in its own right, and in my mind, he will always remain larger than life". See Newsletter September 2021 for what happened next!

Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre

In October, I heard from Michael Brewis, Volunteer Research Team Lead at the Air Station who wrote: "As part of some research for Montrose Air Station Heritage Centre I found your newsletter online from the 5 British Flying Training School website. Of particular interest to us at the museum was the information about Ian Alexander Blue DFC MD.

We are in the midst of a mammoth project to identify as many people as possible who served at RFC and RAF Montrose when it was operational between 1913 and 1919 and again between 1936 and 1950. We were aware of Jock Blue and his court martial from the Operations Record Book of No.2 Flying Instructors School at RAF Montrose, however had no other information on why he had been court martialled. The article in your newsletter [September 2020] cleared up our questions completely.

For information our museum is located on the site of the former RAF Montrose base and we are just about to restore the very same Station Commanders Office in which Jock Blue would have had some interesting discussions with Group Commander Coleman when the 'prang at Glentannar' was discovered."



If anyone has any further information or connections to Montrose, please can you link up with Michael. Their website is www.rafmontrose.org.uk and is a mine of information. If you are in this part of Scotland, the museum is well worth a visit as I found out in 2013.

Link Trainer at Montrose Air Station 2013

John Penman, Ken MacVicar & Ian Gibson: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)

John (Johnny) Penman and Ken MacVicar (Obituary September 2020) were two of the 13 Edinburgh University Air Squadron cadets on Course 3 and were both among the eight cadets in my father's hut at Riddle Field, Clewiston. This group of eight young men also included Ian (Jock) Blue (see above).



Course 3: Cadets from Edinburgh University Air Squadron at Riddle Field in October 1941. This group of 13 cadets also included Noel Mackertich (see photographs of 9 AFU and 59 OTU below)

In the September 2020 newsletter, I reported receiving an email from John Fockler in August mentioning Johnny Penman who was a close friend of my father and the best friend of John's father, Eddie. John sent me a photo which included Johnny, Ken and Ian A S Gibson, also a graduate of Course 3. This photo was in the September 2020 newsletter.

Since then, John has sent me more photos and information. After reading Ken MacVicar's book, 'Wings of the Morning', John wrote, "As I was reading through Ken's book, I realized that once he got back to England, Ken was following a similar path to my father".

Eddie Fockler and Ken MacVicar were both on a conversion course at No. 9 Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) at RAF Hullavington near Chippenham, Wiltshire, where they flew Miles Masters. In his book, Ken notes that "This short course was to familiarise us with flying conditions in the UK which indeed were very much different to those we had experienced in America. Night flying in America had been very little different to flying in the daylight, but now with Britain in blackout it was a shock to the system to take off from a dimmed flarepath into a blackness with very little point of reference".

After 9 AFU, Ken and Eddie found themselves posted to No 59 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Crosby on Eden near Carlisle where they trained on a single engine aircraft with a view to being sent to Fighter Command. To quote Ken, they "were delighted". After a few hours of flying Miles Masters, they converted to Hurricanes (the legendary Hurricane!). Ken observed that flying a single seater aircraft was "like the first 'solo' trip all over again.....no-one to fall back on - nowhere to hide". This first flight was a shock as the Hurricane was far more powerful than anything the pilots at 59 OTU had flown before but it "flew like a bird". Ken reported that he was travelling faster than he had ever gone before and felt exhilarated. It was the start of a great association between Ken and the Hurricane, for the plane never let him down during his RAF career. I imagine that many of those at 59 OTU felt the same as Ken.

59 OTU (with Ken and Eddie) moved from Carlisle in the north-west of England to RAF Millfield in Northumberland (now Northumbria) in the north-east where an RAF satellite field was also used for training. Ken writes that his companions here included 'Boris' and 'Ian' who had been on the same course in America (Course 3). Course 3 was known as the 'University Course' because all cadets had been at the Universities of Edinburgh, Oxford or Cambridge, and Boris (actually John C Buckland) had been reading classics at Oxford and Ian (Ian A S Gibson) was a botanist from Cambridge.

And then, in August 1942, training was over, and it was time to "move to the sharp end". Ken's original posting was to No 1 Squadron flying Typhoons, but on being recalled to a transit camp at Padgate, found out that he and many who had been with him at 59 OTU were being sent to India to re-equip squadrons which had been decimated in the retreat from Burma.

They sailed to India on the Empress of Russia and then Johnny Penman and Eddie Fockler went to 20 Squadron and 'Boris' Buckland, Ian Gibson and Ken MacVicar went to 28 Squadron.

John Fockler has shared two course photographs. Fortunately, his father Eddie Fockler wrote names on the back of the photos and so, in addition to the Course 3 cadets mentioned by Ken, and Johnny Penman and Eddie himself, we can see that the photographs contain at least three other Course 3 cadets – William A P Manser, Noel D MacKertich and Robert R Monk.



No 9 AFU at RAF Hullavington

Second row: MacKertich (1st on LHS), Manser (3rd from LHS), MacVicar (4th from LHS), Fockler (5th from LHS), and Penman (2nd from RHS)

Third row: Monk (1st on LHS), Gibson (3rd from LHS), Buckland (1st on RHS)



59 OTU at RAF Milfield

Front row: MacVicar (1st on LHS), Monk (2nd from LHS), Fockler (3rd from LHS), Gibson (5th from LHS), Penman (6th from RHS), MacKertich (2nd from RHS) and Manser (1st on RHS)

Middle row: Buckland (2nd from RHS)

Dr Stuart James Cox: Course 11 (September 25, 1942 to April 8, 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 told of his journey and introduction to Riddle Field. Part 4 was about time spent in primary training and Part 5 covers advanced training and graduation.

Here I might say that we were all looking forward to getting back to England, I certainly was.

My total flying time up to now was 70 hours. At last, we were to fly an aircraft more like the fighter planes that we had joined the RAF to fly. My first trip in the Harvard was on December 8, 1942. It was as enjoyable as we expected. We went through all the important aspects of flying that we had with the PT17 except that it all happened quicker and more powerfully. We went further on cross country trips both day and night. At night, town lights were on and here and there were what appeared to be town lights but were actually campfires of the Seminole Indians who lived in the Everglades. On January 20, 1943 one of the aircraft did not return so we all took off and searched for them. This was when Derek Clandillon and John Clay were killed. It was evident that they had been low flying and had dug a wing in and crashed.

One day there was a hurricane alert, so we were all allocated an aircraft and instructed to fly North and find airfields at which to land and stay there until we were recalled. Colin Downes and I took two Harvards [AT-6] to Silver Springs at Ocala. We landed at an American Army Airforce Base. They had no idea who we were, and we did not tell them that we were still training. We were treated as officers and spent three days in relative luxury with no expense spared. We were loath to return.

One night on returning from a cross country flight with another trainee acting as navigator in the rear cockpit, I found the airfield completely covered by fog at ground level. Not wishing to divert to Miami I foolishly decided to see if I could land. I let down gradually with only the control tower sticking up through the fog as a guide. I put down flaps so that I could reduce speed to about eighty miles per hour. At a very low altitude of a few feet just as I thought I was over the field I put the wheels down and at the same time my navigator, thinking he was helping, pulled up the flaps. This caused the aircraft to fall out of the sky like a brick. I am still here because the aircraft landed on its wheels and rolled to a stop. I had to radio the tower and ask someone to guide me in. I had to switch on the very powerful landing lights so that they could find us. The next day I was asked by all the instructors how I did it. I kept very quiet trying to give the impression that it was nothing. Actually, it was as near death as I had ever been. But it was a very valuable lesson learned.

One day we were told to parade to welcome a visiting pilot who was going to give a display of aerobatics. An American fighter aircraft appeared and proceeded to give a brilliant display. The instructors applauded and smirked at us with pride at the display. The aircraft taxied in and out stepped an RAF squadron leader who had only one arm. Jaws dropped. This was Squadron Leader James McLachlan DSO DFC who had continued to fly operations while having only one arm. He later gave us a talk telling of his experiences in France, over Dunkirk and in Malta. He expressed his words with the most colourful language that we had ever heard. It did our morale the world of good.

At last, we came near the end of our course with ground school examinations and flight tests. We awaited results with bated breath. (How do you bate breath?) Not only would the results determine whether or not we gained our wings but also whether we became sergeants or pilot officers. Ten of us were commissioned, I was one of them, and the rest put three stripes on their sleeves. Of course, those of us who were commissioned could not buy uniforms, so we put white armbands on. As you can imagine it was a great day and difficult to believe that it had all happened. It was April 9, 1943.

The newly commissioned took off for a formation fly-past while the others had a group photograph taken. I have a copy of that photograph which was given to me when I went to the RAF Club in Piccadilly on April 9, 2003. Nine of us turned up to that reunion all of us looking old and all talking about their various medical complaints. I did not recognise any of them since I remembered them when we nineteen or twenty. It was agreed that it would be our last reunion. When I received my 'Wings' I had done 214 flying hours.

Part 6 will be in March 2021.

Stephen Arrowsmith: Course 15 (May 1943 to December 1943)

Stephen was a member of the 5BFTS Association until it disbanded. A mutual friend told me that Stephen had sent her a Christmas card in 2020 but hadn't written his address in the card. So, I sent a copy of the September newsletter to the address in the Association records. Unfortunately, the letter was returned to me marked "No longer here. Left in 2018". I have tried to make enquiries to find out where Stephen is living now as I would love to send him a copy of this newsletter, but so far, my searches have all drawn a blank. Stephen's last address was in Stamford, Lincs.

So, can anyone help me? Does anyone know where Stephen is living now?

Thank you.

Charles A. Neyhart (known as Chuck): Course 17 (October 1943 to April 1944)

It is always lovely to hear from Shirley Neyhart who was born in the UK and lived in Surrey, although recently, our chats have mainly been about how Covid is affecting our lives! She did, however, tell me a little about how she and Chuck met and about the varied places they lived.

Shirley writes that she is amazed at the drastic changes in the weather. "In the Northwest Territories of Canada at Yellowknife on the west and Baffin Island on the east, there is no snow left in the summer and not much more in the winter compared to when I was there in the late 50s and early 60s. The only way to get to the villages was by air, trucks that looked like tanks or dogsled which was fantastic, those huskies and malamutes just loved to run.

In August 1963, I headed south to Las Vegas, Nevada on a visitor's visa, and met Chuck and a month later we were married. He took me to the USAF Military Academy at Colorado Springs where he taught aerodynamics. That was a real change; I did not know a sergeant from a general in US ranks!

We were transferred to bases in New Mexico and Oklahoma and finally Dover AFB Delaware. Chuck was flying C-141 on Air Evac via Alaska to Vietnam. I also flew that time on a medical contract as we evacuated wounded and, sad to say, bodies.

We retired in 1970 and travelled worldwide and came to this Air Force Village, which is now called Blue Skies of Texas, in 2003. Chuck died from the effects of Agent Orange that was sprayed all over Vietnam and has caused so many deaths."

In February, Shirley told me that, "Winter comes to all of us but not like in Independent Texas!! We have been without any electricity for 5 of the last 6 days, temps around 20F or less and inside no more than 50F. We all wear several sets of clothing and every blanket we can lay our hands on." But as Shirley says, "After years as a Doctor in the Northwest Territories of Canada this is child's play."

Half of the residents at Blue Skies of Texas are over 80 and so extra medical help was needed as the hospitals were overwhelmed with Covid cases. Shirley was helping out where she could since some of the medical facilities staff tested positive and were not allowed on campus. But Shirley is British born and worked here during WW2 – "the worst part of no power was no cup of tea - so as we always said during the war, Carry On Mate!!"

By early March, San Antonio had recovered from the big freeze - the grass was getting green, and trees were sprouting. But the threat of Covid was still ever present - no visitors, no gatherings of more than 10 people, no dining in the dining room (all meals to be picked up and taken to quarters). To relieve boredom, Shirley took walks around the park and lake with its three fountains and did lots of reading and watching television. Once a week, she drove eight miles to the town of Castroville which has a super Walmart and a European bakery with crispy bread (I can smell the bread as I write this!!).

Thank you, Shirley for sharing some aspects of your life in San Antonio.

Shirley has kindly donated a further sum to her husband's 5BFTS scholarship fund. Thank you so much Shirley and please continue to keep in touch. 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.

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

A small correction to the article I wrote about John in September 2020 – John actually died on December 8, 2002 aged 78 and not in 2002 as I wrote. My apologies to John and his family.

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

Following an email from Colin Hicks about his father Alf (see below), I discovered that the Listening Out for Course 22 was incomplete in the Fly Paper digital archive on the Embry Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) website. Fortunately, Ron came to the rescue and sent me a complete copy of this Listening Out which I have scanned and sent on to ERAU. I have my father's original Listening Out (Course 3) - written over 4 pages on fairly flimsy paper and it is interesting to compare this to the Course 22 Listening Out which has 12 pages and is on thicker paper. Another trend in the later Listening Outs is to include the cadets' home addresses, which is quite fascinating! Wouldn't be allowed now, but at the time, although censorship was in full swing, data protection hadn't been thought of! And another interesting thing about Course 22 is that everyone has signed their photo.



It is always lovely to talk with Ron on the telephone and our conversations range far and wide! Two special things about Ron – first, at 5BFTS, at the start of his flying career, not only was he a Cadet Flight Commander for Course 22 and held the sword of honour on parade, he was presented with an award by John Paul Riddle as the Best Flying Cadet on Course 22 and towards the end of his flying career, he was the oldest member of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots (Livery Company in London) and the only one over 90.

Thank you so much Ron for your friendship and your help whenever I need 5BFTS information.

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



I found a photograph of Alf in the Listening Out for Course 22 sent to me by Ron Cox. And while nearly everyone was looking quite casual (even if in uniform of some sort – for example, the smiling faces of Ron Cox above and Dennis Wyatt in his plane – see Obituary), the 'old man' of the course (Alfred Hicks was 29 when he arrived at Clewiston) the subject of my initial enquiry about Course 22's Listening Out, is smart, in full uniform and standing straight with his thumbs down the seams of his trousers. Colin comments that *"Dad is standing there more like a policeman on the beat than a military man. Shoulders not far enough back maybe so a bit less frightening [but looking like] the village copper, which is what he was. The address is the house where I was born a couple of years after he got back"*.

The Instructors

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

The seventh of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

Frederick J Brittain:

Nothing new this month, but a reminder that there is a lot of information about Fred on 'his' website, www.frederickbrittain.com (developed by Fred's daughter, Vicki Brittain)

Albert Mueller:

In August, I heard from Robert Mueller, whose father, Albert, was an instructor at 5BFTS. Robert said that he had recently found a box of Albert's belongings that included various training papers and maps. He also found logbooks belonging to 4 cadets on Course 23. Unfortunately, no-one has been able to identify the cadets from their photographs (see newsletter September 2020). I am now doing some searching to see if I can locate any relatives.

Robert has sent me a lot of training documents, cadets handbooks and classroom charts etc. There is a huge amount of material here and I am still sifting through it. There is also a copy of the July 1942 First Anniversary Booklet that belonged to Albert and has the signatures and home addresses of a large number of instructors who were at Clewiston as it closed. I hope to have finished some analysis of these data by the time I write the September 2021 newsletter – so watch this space.

Robert - thank you so much.

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 sixth selection shows photographs from a stay at West Palm Beach and visit to Palm Beach.

Hugo and his friends stayed at the Salt Air Hotel, Narcissus Street, which was one of the very first hotels in West Palm Beach. According to the Palm Beach County History Museum: "the 74-room Hotel Salt Air was built in 1913 for the middle-class tourist who couldn't afford a Palm Beach hotel." It closed sometime after 1956 and a Holiday Inn was built on the site which in turn was razed in 1994.



1930s postcard showing Salt Air Hotel



View from the hotel



West Palm Beach from the air



'Jay and Johnny'



On the Ferry



Pier at Palm Beach



Hugo Trotter



John Potter



Pete Varley



Frank Hobson, J West



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



Leigh Woodham has been appointed Director of the Museum. Welcome Leigh - we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Meantime, we have very recently been approached by Chip Nusbaum, of 82 West Video Productions, who wrote, "My partner and I are producing an hour-long film for PBS broadcast about Florida during WWII. We are fascinated with the RAF training that took place at the Florida airfields. We would love to learn more about the British training". Jeff, Leigh and I have provided Chip with a variety of suggestions and resources to help him with this project – so, watch this space!

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 Leigh Woodham for looking after the 5BFTS archives and doing such a wonderful job keeping 5BFTS alive for the visitors to the museum.*

Other news from Clewiston: Jeff wrote to me in February to tell me that an MD-80 jet (stretched version) had landed at Air Glades. The company, which flies contract flights, is looking to build a facility for their maintenance operation. As the big expansion seems to be on hold indefinitely, maybe there is some hope there for more activity.



PT-17 and AT-6 at Riddle Field as seen by Hugo in 1942



A real contrast: MD-80 jet at Air Glades – February 2021

News from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU)

Kevin Montgomery, who was the University Archivist at ERAU left in December, and the job of managing the archives has been moved to the university library. Alan Cesar, whom some will know from the British Memorial Day Service in 2019 when he represented ERAU and took a lot of very good pictures, is acting as an external point of contact for anyone wanting to donate materials to the archives, and the library will take it from there.

Alan – if you are in contact with Kevin, please give him our best wishes for the future and thank him for being a good friend to 5BFTS.

Alan's contact details are:

News from No. 1 British Flying Training School Museum in Terrell, Texas

I just checked the Museum website and the museum is open for visitors Wednesday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm which is great news as here in the UK, all our museums are closed until at least May 17.

I heard from Rudy Bowling Snr, Executive Director of the Museum in early October 2020 when he thanked me for sending him a copy of the 5BFTS September 2020 newsletter and said that just that morning, he had been adding materials to a display binder dedicated to 5BFTS. He also told me that in their renovation two years ago, they utilised a wall near the Chapel to recognize the other five BFTS schools. If anyone is in Terrell and would like to go and see the Museum, information is on their website: <https://www.bftsmuseum.org>

The Seas Divide Us But the Skies Unite Us – Celebrating Co-operation Between the United States and Great Britain

News about No 3 British Flying Training School

In November 2020, I arrived home from Switzerland to find a parcel from Peter Dowdell whose father, Edward Henry Dowdell, was at a training school in Tulsa around April 1945. The parcel contained photos to help me identify where Edward had trained. I discovered that Edward had probably been a cadet at 3BFTS. Number 3 BFTS was in Miami, Oklahoma, but when 3BFTS started on June 16, 1941, the airfield and camp in Miami wasn't ready for occupation and so training started at Tulsa. No 3BFTS was managed and operated by the Tulsa Spartan School of Aviation which is still going strong today. Dates suggest that Edward might have been at Miami from around October 1944 to around March 1945 and on Course 22 or 23.



Edward Henry Dowdell

The 3BFTS Association was set up around the early 1980s. The Chairman of the 3BFTS Association in the 1990s was Deryk Maddox who lived in Norfolk. Deryk was on Course 22 and one of Edward's photographs mentions 'Dee' – could this be Deryk? If anyone reading this knows anything about 3BFTS, perhaps you can pass on the information.



'Dee' hanging out from a train on the way to or from Miami

Peter would like the photos to stay together, and I have contacted the archivist of the (recently disbanded) Aircrew Association who looks after the 3 BFTS archives at the Yorkshire Air Museum. But until lockdown finishes, nothing further can happen – so watch this space.

News from No 4 British Flying Training School (Falcon Field)

Kathryn Masters, daughter of pilot Hugh Harrison, Course 27, who lives in Lincolnshire, has started to write a newsletter to keep all those who are interested in 4BFTS connected with each other. Kathryn kindly sent me a copy of her first two newsletters, published at Christmas 2020 and in February 2021.

4BFTS was based at Falcon Field Arizona from 16 June 1941 to 10 September 1945. During that time 27 courses were trained involving over 2300 pilots. Courses 26 and 27 were cut short by the end of World War 2 and the cadets returned home without graduating. Sadly, 23 RAF cadets lost their lives in cadet training and are honoured every year in a Memorial Service at the City of Mesa Cemetery.

Like 5BFTS, 4BFTS formed an Association. The idea originated at a Thunderbirds Pilots Association Reunion in Mesa in 1979 when Bill McCash was persuaded to start the association. He began tracking others down and a dinner was arranged in London. The newly formed Falcon Field Association Committee held their first meeting on 1st February 1981. Stuart Mills, who played a key role in getting agreement for RAF training in the USA, was the President. Bill McCash was the Chairman, Herbie Buckle the Secretary, Stan Whalley the Treasurer and Robert Brown was the Registrar. Lively annual reunions and mini course reunions were held, and 111 newsletters written before the Association closed down in December 2009.

2021 sees the 80th anniversary of the establishment of BFTS and The Wings of Flight Foundation (WoFF) in Mesa, Arizona is planning an 80th Anniversary Gala in one of the remaining 4BFTS hangers on Saturday, November 13, 2021. More about the WoFF and the Gala event at www.wingsofflight.org

In February, Kathryn wrote about Derrick Croisdale whose niece Ann Pattison-Bingham sent a link to the story her uncle has written “*PER ARDUA AD ASTRA (IN HOLLYWOOD)*”, a personal memoir relating how he joined the RAF and trained at Falcon Field:

<https://www.aircrew.org.uk/surrey/aircrew-stories/croisdaleD.htm>

Bertram (Bert) C Whittle was on Course 1. He died in 2020 at the age of 99 and his son, Eric has created a biography and an album of photos on Flickr. Reading this shows that although 4BFTS was in Arizona and 5BFTS in Florida, there are remarkable similarities between them.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/188470206@N05/with/50008204847/>

Unfortunately, at the moment, 4BFTS does not have a website but if anybody would like to read the newsletters, please let me know and I will forward a copy.

For a few years, there was some joint work undertaken in the UK between the various BFTS Associations. During Lockdown, I found some records in my personal archives and will write more about this in September 2021.

And recently, a 4BFTS archive has been set up on the IWM American Air Museum Website. Similar to the 5BFTS archive, it can found at <https://americanairmuseum.com/unit/4175>

Ron Middleton, Cadet at Carlstrom Field, Arcadia

In January, I heard from John Middleton who lives in Canada. He knew his father, Ron Middleton, was one of the RAF cadets who trained as a pilot in Arcadia, Florida, and while having a basement clean-up found some photographs taken at Carlstrom Field in Arcadia.



Ron at Carlstrom Field



Cadet Ron Middleton



Carlstrom Field in the 1940s

Readers may remember that 5BFTS Courses 1 and 2 started their training at Carlstrom Field because Riddle Field wasn't ready and I wondered at first if Ron might have been one of these cadets, however, having checked the 5BFTS database and found out that he wasn't a 5BFTS cadet, John kindly sent me a history of his father's life which shows that after Carlstrom, Ron an Arnold Scheme cadet, went to Dothan in Alabama for advanced training during 1942. Ron started his training in Carlstrom at approximately the same time as my father started in Clewiston (on Course 3, the first course at 5BFTS to spend their entire training time at Riddle Field) but so far, John has found nothing to suggest that Ron and George ever met each other. The BFTS scheme was far more successful in training pilots than the more rigorous Arnold Scheme and it is interesting to note that at 5BFTS overall, about 69% of cadets who started their training graduated as pilots compared with an average of 37% of those on the Arnold

Scheme. The less successful Arnold Scheme stopped in March 1943 while BFTS continued until Japan capitulated in August 1945. Ron was one of the successful Arnold Scheme cadets.

Ron's story is very interesting and there will be more in September 2021 – suffice to say for now, that Ron crossed the Atlantic five times, caught tuberculosis and was in a Canadian sanatorium during 1942 and 1943 where he met Mary who became John's mother. He recovered and returned to England via Florida. He was discharged from the RAF because of ill health in 1944, returned to Canada and married Mary. And more to follow!

More news about Carlstrom Field

I reported in 2017, that The Foundation of American Ideals was planning to buy the remaining buildings on Carlstrom Field. Unlike Riddle Field which was left to decay with the last hanger blown down by Hurricane Wilma in 2004, Carlstrom was used as a hospital and other purposes and is relatively intact. The Foundation had great plans for preserving the history and turning the buildings into a museum and resource that could have been used for many different purposes. Sadly though, this is not to be as the Foundation had to pull out of the deal.

The Sarasota/Gulf Coast Welsh Society remains a good friend of 5BFTS. Many of their normal activities have been cancelled and until they can meet in person at their usual gatherings, the Gulf Coast St. David's Welsh Society committee has been staying in touch with their members through newsletters with topics of interest from Welsh news through to contributions of articles, photographs and jokes which are submitted. They kindly include me in the mailings, and I have found many of their topics very interesting. If anyone reading this is interested, let me know and I will pass on their newsletter.

Harold Kosola



Joan and Harold Kosola: May 29, 2017

British Memorial Day Service at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia

Last Christmas, Harold's wife, Joan, wrote to give us news about Harold. Following his major stroke in 2016, Harold worked hard to recover mobility, but sadly, in May, he was hospitalised with congestive heart failure.

After this, he had to use a wheelchair to get around and moved to live at Magnolia Manor, a senior community in Americus, GA. Despite Covid restrictions meaning that he has to see visitors through a glass panel, Joan reports that he is thriving there and enjoys reading, watching TV and talking on the telephone. I am sure he would appreciate letters and calls from friends.

All best wishes to you, Harold, and thank you Joan for keeping us updated.

Lois Heflin Blount still writes regularly to me. Now, aged 94, she still manages to take a walk of about half a mile each day. It is wonderful to hear from her.

Featured 5BFTS Reunion: Harrogate October 9 to 11, 1987

So far, I have featured reunions held in Royal Tunbridge Wells 1995 (newsletter September 2018), Bedford 1999 (newsletter March 2019) and Harrogate 2000 (newsletter March 2020).

This time, I am returning to Harrogate – but to a reunion held 13 years before the Millennium in 1987 when delegates stayed at the Moat House International Hotel rather than the Majestic. The cost of the weekend was £60 – to include two nights bed and breakfast, two dinners (the Saturday evening reunion dinner in the private dining room) and Saturday visits to RAF Linton-on-Ouse and York. 85 members and their guests attended – this was the highest attendance at a Reunion to date. A 5BFTS Association Newsletter dated September 1987 suggests that Robert Warbuton (Course 16) was making a video as a record about 5BFTS. He was planning to demonstrate an early version at the reunion to see if members would be interested in purchasing this 'nostalgic record' – but did this happen? If anyone reading this knows the answer, please let me know.

