

THE GOLDFISH CLUB



Newsletter No.184
Spring 2013
71st Anniversary Year

Membership is available only to aviators who have ditched in the sea.

Dear Fellow Goldfish,

It is with regret that I have to inform you of the death of our secretary, RICHARD SHEPHERD. Please see obituary column. Also, I am very sorry to say that ROY GRAHAM, our membership secretary, has finally retired after a magnificent 23 years in post. He has been a tower of strength keeping the records, writing condolence letters to the next of kin and, until very recently, also running the club shop. Well done Roy, you will be missed. For the time being I will be taking over the responsibility for both posts.

In this issue are the details of the 71st Annual Reunion and the centerfold contains the return pro-forma (a better colour than last year this time !) which should be completed and returned to Stu Clay. This is a one off opportunity to visit the Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth and we hope that as many members as possible will avail themselves of the opportunity.

Ditching stories. This is the first time I have been able to obtain a story which features our (the RN) involvement in the war on the Japanese mainland. We were not there for long but we were there! It is written by Goldfish D R `Bim`

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Members' details are held on computer but, aside from Officers of the Club, we do not generally publish addresses. If you wish to contact anyone, send your letter in a stamped envelope to the Editor and we will be only too pleased to send it on.

Wells from Leicester.

Written by Bill Streiver, the second story is somewhat unusual as it involves the crew of a US B29 that crash landed in Korea after the end of WW2 thanks to the efforts of one of our `allies`! Six of the crew baled out and landed in the sea and although they never joined the Goldfish Club at the time their names have now been added to our records. There is some interesting correspondence and a book review – RAF Strike Command 1968-2007 which is a great read for the post war generation.

One of the problems with an editorial is that you write about items that are in the news at the time (in this case late February) but they may well have faded into obscurity by the time the magazine is printed. I am referring to the great horsemeat saga. This has spawned no end of jokes, among them some very good `one liners`. Although I realise that members with computers will probably have seen them I am including them in this magazine for those without modern technology because I thought they were very good. Since we have obviously been eating horsemeat for some time without any (reported) ill effects the story appears to be fading away.

Best Wishes and I hope to see you in Dartmouth,

Mike Dane

OBITUARIES

DERRICK A ARMSON lived in Cambridge and died 10 March 2013 aged 89. Derrick was the pilot of a Barracuda Mk II of 822 Squadron based at RNAS Maydown, Northern Ireland. On 17 June 1945 the aircraft suffered an engine failure, due to a coolant leak and was ditched to the North of Ireland. After 2 ½ hours in the water he was spotted by another squadron aircraft and subsequently rescued by an ASR launch from Portrush. Called up into the RN in 1941 (aged 17), he initially was trained at HMS Ganges for seagoing duties. However, he suffered from sea sickness and was re-trained as a pilot in Canada. After the war he took up a career in agriculture eventually retiring as Eastern Area Manager for Dalgety Agriculture.

LAURENCE DAVIES from Paignton died in January 2013. Laurence was the W.Op on a Wellington of 216 Squadron based at landing ground 106, Egypt. On 29 October 1943 they were dropping leaflets over Crete and enemy held territory near Blida, North Africa when fuel shortage, due to flak damage, caused the aircraft to be ditched.

The crew were all saved but we have no further details. *Ed*

W B EDWARDS. We received notification of the death of W B Edwards. Unfortunately the club does not hold any information on this member.



WILLIAM (BILL) EVANS lived in the Dunkirk Memorial House, near Taunton and died on 6 January 2013 aged 102 years – he was our oldest known member. Bill was the navigator on an OTU Hampden engaged on a photographic reconnaissance sortie on 7 October 1942 when, due to engine failure, the aircraft was ditched off the coast of Ayrshire, Scotland. After 25 minutes in the water the crew were initially rescued by a fishing boat and then transferred to a Rescue Launch from Girvan.

EDWARD NORMAN HARRIS CBE, AFC, FRICS lived at Surbiton and died on 13 September 2012, aged

96. Norman was the pilot of an Anson of 500 Squadron based at RAF Detling, Kent. On 9 September 1939, following an anti-submarine sea patrol in the North Sea, they encountered dense fog while attempting to return to base and due to fuel shortage were forced to ditch off the coast of Whitstable, Kent. All four crew were thrown through the roof of the aircraft when the wing hit the water. After 30 mins in the water the crew were rescued by rowing boat. After the war Norman returned to the family firm of Quantity Surveyors and enjoyed a distinguished career.

Unfortunately the aircraft ditched in the Whitstable oyster beds ! Ed

DEREK THOMAS REVINGTON MARTIN lived in Stoke Gabriel, Devon and died in July 2012. Derek was the pilot of a Blackburn Skua of 800 Squadron embarked on HMS Ark Royal. On 13 June 1940 the squadron was ordered to attack the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau lying in Trondheim Fjord. This was a revenge attack following the sinking, by the German ships, of HMS Glorious and two destroyers. Derek was attacked by two ME 109's which destroyed his control column. The aircraft went into an uncontrolled dive and Derek was forced to bale out – landing in the Fjord.

A German seaplane then spotted him trying to swim to shore – landed and picked him up. Also on board the seaplane were two survivors from HMS Ardent – one of the Destroyers that had been sunk previously. They had been on a carly float for 3 days and 4 nights and were in a very bad condition. One died 6 weeks later and the other was invalided home some time during the war. Although in poor health for the rest of his life he was able to attend the commissioning of the new HMS Ardent at Devenport in 1963 – he was the only survivor of the old ship.

Footnote: The leader of the raid, Captain R T Partridge DSO RM, after leaving the target had spotted a German seaplane which he attempted to shoot down. However he was also shot down by two ME 109`s before he could accomplish the task – Derek believes this was the seaplane that subsequently picked him up. Ed

DENYS EDGAR MITCHEL lived in Falmouth and died on 28 December 2012 in Treliske Hospital, Truro. Denys was a passenger of a Walrus which was on a routine flight between Lee-on-Solent (HMS Daedalus) and RNAS Ford in Sussex. Shortly after take off (altitude 1000`) the engine cut out and the aircraft was ditched successfully in the Solent. They

managed to get the engine started and attempted to taxi to the shore but were waved off by red flares as the area had been mined. A large motor launch approached (full of WRENS) which unfortunately hit the Walrus, broke off a float and damaged the lower mainplane! The launch then `retired` and was replaced, some time later, by a male crew who then towed the aircraft to the Short Bros slipway which they reached several hours later. After a medical inspection and the removal of several teeth, Denys eventually reached Ford by train.



Richard Shepherd

RICHARD W M SHEPHERD lived in Great Glen, Leicester and died on 11 March 2013. Richard had been our Secretary since 2005. His funeral was at St Cuthbert`s Parish Church, Great Glen on Thursday 21 March 2013 and was attended by your Chairman, Newsletter Editor and Treasurer. A donation was

made to the Stroke Association on behalf of all Goldfish Club members. Richard was the observer on a Firefly 7 based at RNAS Culdrose (HMS Seahawk). On the 20 January 1955 while engaged on a NATO exercise with the Home Fleet the aircraft flew into the sea in poor visibility 45 NM NW of the Scilly Isles. Unfortunately the pilot was lost in the accident but Richard and the TAG shared a one-man dinghy for 4 ½ hours until located by an RAF SAR Shackleton from RAF St Eval. The Shackleton homed on the SS Scottish Eagle which picked them up and landed them at Falmouth.

THOMAS HENY STANIFORTH lived in Sheffield and died in November 2012. Thomas was the pilot of a Grumman Avenger II of 857 Squadron embarked on HMS Indomitable. On 12 May 1945, following a bombing raid on Ishigaki Airfield, Japan he was forced to ditch following an engine oil leak when returning to the carrier. After 8 hours in the water he was rescued by US Submarine Bluefish.

LESLIE M WHITTON lived in London and died, aged 90, on 17 January 2013. Leslie was the Air Bomber on a Wellington of 432 (RCAF) Squadron based at RAF East Moor, Yorkshire. On 22 September 1943, following a raid on Hanover, the aircraft lost an engine due to flak damage and was ditched

in the North Sea. After 105 hours in their dinghies the crew was picked up by a German MTB and taken to the Island of Borsum. Subsequently, Leslie was a prisoner in Stalag Luft 3 where he was one of the tunnellers.

Our condolences have been sent to the relatives of those concerned. Any relative of a deceased member is welcome to join as an associate member and continue to receive our newsletters and attend the AGM/reunion.

HELP REQUESTED

Matthew Willis is a writer specialising in Naval aviation. He is working on an article on the development of Air Sea Rescue launches for the RAF and would be very interested to speak to members who had experienced these launches, particularly if they had been rescued by one.

He is also writing books on the Fairy Barracuda and Fulmar and would like to speak to anyone with experience of these types. If you can help please contact him at: 25 Avon Road, Southampton, Hants SO18 4FR or 02381-222081 (Mob) 07971-102523.

NEW AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

ALAN BREND is the son of Peter Nabozniak whose death was reported in the last magazine (NL 183). He has joined us as an associate member.

COUSINS T and MALTBY S ditching details in next newsletter.

HAROLD WERNER SODERLUND lives in Canada. He was the pilot of a Beaufighter of 603 Squadron based at RAF El Adem, Libya. On 30 August 1944 they were engaged on a night patrol in the Aegean near Crete when they were attacked by a pair of Junkers 52. The port engine of the Beaufighter was hit and disabled and the aircraft was ditched. Both crew members evacuated the aircraft and climbed into a one man dinghy – the other had floated away. After two nights and days in the dinghy they drifted to within sight of Candia (now Iraklion), Crete and were captured as P.O.Ws by a German patrol boat.

Welcome to the Goldfish Club after almost 69 years!! Ed

Welcome to the shoal.

DONATIONS TO THE GOLDFISH CLUB

The committee wish to extend their thanks to the following Goldfish, Institutions and Association members who have made donations to our funds. We are extremely grateful for their generosity.

Mr P Adams £10

Mrs Norah Anderson £25

H Andrew £25

Mr J M Brennan £15

Mr D A H Briggs £25

H Bains £192.60

Mr R L Crisford £15

Mr Dane M Cosby has increased his subs to £10 a year.

Mr M Day £50

Mr C A Evans (How much ?)

Mr P George £100

Mr H C M Johnson £15

Wg Cdr D Martin £15

Martin Baker £200

Mr M J Muncaster £10

Mr R Parkin £80

Rolls Royce (undisclosed)

Mrs Pearl Stubbs £50

Mr J Synad £15

Mr D R Wells £20

I just got off the phone with a friend who lives in Yorkshire. He said that since early this morning the snow has been nearly waist high and is still falling. The temperature is dropping way below zero and the north wind is increasing to near gale force. His wife has done nothing but look through the kitchen window and just stare. He says that if it gets much worse, he may have to let her in.

The 71st Reunion.



By kind permission of Captain Jerry Kyd RN and the tireless efforts of fellow Goldfish, Commander Jason Phillips RN we are delighted to be able to announce that this year's reunion is to be held at the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth over the weekend of 13/14/15 September. The format of the weekend is as follows:

An informal meet and greet at the Grand Hotel on Friday evening.

Coach(s) will depart the Grand at 09.15hrs on the Saturday morning for Dartmouth arriving at approx 10.30hrs for a conducted tour of the College. The visit will end at 12.30hrs after light refreshments at the College and the coach(s) should arrive back at the hotel by approx 13.15hrs.

The AGM will begin at 15.00hrs.

Coach(s) will leave the hotel at 17.15hrs arriving at the College at 18.15hrs. Pre-dinner drinks will be served on the Quarterdeck from

18.15hrs and we are hoping to have a fly-past, weather permitting, by an aircraft of the Royal Naval Historic Aircraft Flight before dinner is served at 19.00hrs. Dinner, in the beautiful Senior Gun Room will follow the traditional Mess dinner format and consist of a full silver service four-course meal with wine, followed by coffee and port. The traditional toasts will be made and all attendees including the junior service will comply with naval tradition and toast Her Majesty seated.

Post dinner entertainment will be provided by a local band, `Freeway` in the Senior Gun Room Bar and adjacent dance area. Drinks in the bar will of course be at Mess prices, i.e. £2 a pint and a G&T at approx £1.30. Coaches will depart the College at midnight for return to the hotel.

Those planning to make their own way to the College at any time are requested to provide details of their

cars on the booking form. The floors of the College are wooden and polished but not as slippery as we thought they might be. However, if you are in any doubt then perhaps some form of rubber soled shoes would be a sensible option. There are also a few steps to negotiate, initially upon entry and then between the Quarterdeck and the Gun Room but we have been assured that full assistance will be given by willing, young and eager members of the 'Senior Service'. Who said the days of the press gang had gone forever!!

For those with time to spare on Sunday we have an invitation to visit Brixham Lifeboat Station, meet some of the crew and to be shown over the boat. The invitation is for 12.30hrs. Transport will not be provided. If anyone

is intending to extend their stay at the Grand either before or after, we have arranged a special B&B rate. If you are interested contact Stu Clay, the Social Sec.

Some historical notes for the `light blue`!

Brittania Royal Naval College is the Initial Naval Training establishment for Officers of the Royal Navy. The wooden hulk HMS Britannia first

moored in the River Dart in September 1863 (for the `light blue` that's 150 years!) with training moving ashore to the magnificent building in 1905. Officer Cadets spend 30 weeks at the College on Initial Training, and there is a large contingent of foreign and Commonwealth students, currently encompassing 21 nations. The College is a part of the Flag Officer Sea Training (Rear Admiral Ben Key – a Goldfish too) the current Captain is Captain Jerry Kyd who was appointed in September 2012.



We will be accommodated in the Grand Hotel, Torquay. This is a 4 star hotel and was the venue for the Goldfish reunion in 2003. It is situated on the sea front and has unrestricted views over the bay. A major advantage is that it is only 100 yards from Torquay railway station and members could consider travelling by train – tickets booked in advance are often cheaper than driving. It is possible to have a sea-view room for an additional charge

of £25 (per room) a night. It is worth looking at the hotel web site (The Grand Hotel Torquay) to get an idea of the facilities on offer.

The committee is sometimes criticised for having reunions mainly in the Midlands. I have done a trawl through our mailing list and have discovered there are 47 members living in Cornwall/Devon/Dorset and Somerset (down from 67 in 2003), all within easy reach of Dartmouth. Apart from the unique venue this is your chance to turn up and we would be very pleased to see you.

As well as attending the 2003 reunion I have stayed in the Grand Hotel on four occasions since that date and thoroughly recommend it.
Ed

At last year`s reunion (Scalford Hall) our team of ladies broke all records with the receipts from the raffle. At the time several members said they would have liked to have contributed prizes. If you would like to do so please advise our raffle co-ordinator, Valerie Stacey, on 01780-753584 or vjstacey@tiscali.co.uk

As at Scalford Hall last year Steve Hart, the Club Shop member, will have a display of our memorabilia on show at the Grand Hotel and all items will be available for purchase enabling members to avoid the (high) postal charges.

The Goldfish Club

By Bill Streifer

Two weeks after the Japanese surrender at the end of WWII, more than 1000 B-29's began delivering 5,000 tons of food and medical supplies to POW camps in China, Korea, Formosa, Manchuria and the Japanese Home Islands. Although largely successful, some sorties were "non-effective," resulting in the loss of eight aircraft with 77 casualties. Although most of the losses were likely due to mechanical failure, B-29 Hog Wild (73th BW, 500th BG, 882nd BS) was shot down by a Russian Yak fighter over Soviet-occupied Konan, Korea (now Hungnam, North Korea). As a result, nearly 800 tons of supplies were never delivered to Allied prisoners who had suffered years of abuse at the hands of their Japanese captors. The Konan POW camp, for example, housed 354 British and Australians who were captured in 1942 during the fall of Singapore, which is considered one of the greatest defeats in the history of the British Army. First detained at the infamous Changi prison, and later to camps in southern Korea, the men were eventually transported by locked cattle car to a "work camp" in northeastern Korea, 500 yards from a carbide factory. There, they laboured long hours -seven days a week - under grueling conditions. Five men died. The rest remained prisoners of the Japanese until

August 28, 1945 when Russian troops, who had recently arrived in the area, occupied the camp, interrogated and disarmed the Japanese officers and Korean guards, and led them away.

The next morning, two B-29s arrived over Konan. Prior to their arrival, the prisoners were instructed to paint "PW" in large orange lettering on the top of buildings so that air crews could spot the camp. Each B-29 - with "POW" painted in white lettering under each wing - carried 10,000 pounds of supplies: Class I (food, drinks, candy, cigarettes and matches, etc.), Class II (clothing, soap, razors, underwear, socks, etc.) and medical supplies known as a Medical Kit.

With joyous prisoners waving their hands and yelling below, barrels tethered to parachutes, were dropped into the camp's parade grounds. Unfortunately, B-29 commanders were instructed to fly too fast and too low, resulting in parachute failures. One plummeted to the ground, killing a Korean civilian. Another fell into the camp as prisoners scattered to avoid being struck. And one crashed through the roof of the camp, nearly injuring a Soviet colonel. When reports of parachute failures began pouring into 20th Air Force Headquarters, B-29 crews were advised to drop their

supplies from 1,000 feet, up from 500. But the change came too late for the Hog Wild which arrived later that afternoon from Saipan via Iwo Jima. Armed with poor maps and



provided with incorrect camp coordinates during their pre-flight briefing, the 11-man Hog Wild crew and two passenger/observers: 1st Lt. Robert W. Campbell and 1st Lt. John B. Grant, arrived over Konan and began searching for the camp. The Airplane Commander was 1st Lt. Joseph (Joe) W. Queen and in the pilot's seat was 1st Lt. Robert (Bob) S. Rainey. As they circled the area several times, Soviet commanders ordered four Yak fighters to escort the B-29 to a landing field nearby. When Queen, who was specifically instructed not to land, continued searching for the camp, a Yak moved up parallel to the B-29 and fired a shot across its nose. "When a fighter does this," Campbell said, "you have one of three things to do: land, fight, or get the hell out of there," so Queen ordered the gunners to hold their fire as he flew

out to sea with two Yaks in hot pursuit. One of the Yaks approached at seven o'clock low and began a pursuit curve, firing several bursts of machine gun and cannon fire at the B-29 causing considerable damage, including a direct hit on the No.1 engine resulting in a severe fire. A solid white sheet of flame a good ten feet thick rushed over and under the wing, extending past the tail.

When Queen believed the engine was about to explode, he ordered the crew to bale out. Two jumped from the rear of the plane and four others from the nose wheel, as Queen headed the Hog Wild back to shore. When the B-29 was too low to bale out from safely, Tech Sgt. Arthur Strilky, the radio operator, who was caught between the nose wheel well hatch and the turret, was ordered back into the plane. Queen crash-landed the Hog Wild on the short landing field. When the severely damaged B-29 came to a rest, Russians, threw dirt on the engine to extinguish the fire. The crew was then led from the plane, checked for weapons, and marched under guard to a nearby building where they were interrogated by high-ranking Soviet officers.

Some members of the crew who parachuted into the water later complained their personal life rafts had come undone and sank. Others said they had swallowed a lot of sea water. One crewman said that the

Yak pilot strafed him in the water, and another said he wouldn't have survived the night. Miraculously, all six crewmen - some of whom remained in the cold and rough sea for up to four hours - were eventually pulled to safety by Korean fishermen. Recently, all six airmen - four of whom were later awarded the Purple Heart for hypothermia and related injuries - were inducted into the Goldfish Club.

Why Russian fighters would shoot down an American bomber during peacetime has remained the subject of debate for nearly 70 years. The Russians offered various explanations, and each member of the Hog Wild crew offered his own. Flight Officer Marion J. Sherrill, the navigator, said the Russians might have thought it a good time to get their hands on a B-29, and while Strilky said he never knew for sure why the Hog Wild was shot down, he did recall the following conversation: "A lieutenant-general came out and apologized for shooting us down. He said two B-29s had been over the camp earlier in the morning and dropped supplies. Some of the drums came loose from the parachutes and crashed through buildings, almost hitting a Russian colonel. So the fighters were told to intercept any other planes and get them to land on the airfield".

CORRESPONDENCE

I had a most interesting email from Jan Inglis of Cape Town, South Africa who contacted me to see if we had any information about her late cousin Goldfish Christopher Oswald Towler DSM (7.7.1890 – 1.5.1984). She had found an item in a club publication that referred to her cousin wearing an unusual tie (ours) about which he was not prepared to divulge any information. She had discovered that he was in the RNAS during WW1, when he received his DSM but that he transferred to the RAF in April 1918. She had discovered that he joined the RN in 1906 and got his aviator's certificate on 2.10.1920 on an Avro biplane at RAF Henlow as a Flying Officer. He was promoted on 1.7.1927 to Flight Lieutenant and placed on the retired list on 11.4.1933. However, the plot thickens because he attended the Winter War Course at Aldershot in 1938/39 and appears to have spent the war years with No 1 RAF Movement Unit at Portsoken House, London EC3. He retired from the RAF for a second time on 7.7.1950 (aged 60 !). He spent 19 years on the air side of which 11 were as a pilot. Unfortunately, for the reason I outlined in the book review (Goldfish, Caterpillars & Guinea Pigs) in the last magazine, we have no record of Chris Towler and I would have dearly loved to have been able to have completed his story. I wonder if he ditched in WW1.

If anyone came across him please let me know. Ed

Received as a follow up to the item on the Royal Navy in the last issue.

"After contemplating my Naval insider I am able to add to your report. The new fleet of Type 4 destroyers is nearly ready for introduction so the MOD is now working on a modern type of cruiser. So called because it will be designed to cruise around overseas ports entertaining local people, 'flying the flag' and emphasising how marvelous the Royal Navy is. As the new cruisers will have no armament there will be plenty of room for entertainment and there will be ample room for a separate venue for VIPs and a hangar for the rest. As VIPs will be entertained there will be an Admiral on board. To maintain the policy of having more Admirals than ships, it will be necessary to appoint two Admirals in each cruiser.

The MOD committee is considering calling new cruisers 'Nottingham Class' to commemorate HMS Nottingham which was holed on a rock when moving from one venue to another, and had to be repatriated on a Dutch salvage ship".

Submitted by Goldfish Derek Martin

A group of RAF officers stationed at RAF Squires Gate airfield always used the casino bar for a drink, a favourite for aircrew. One night they were 'invaded' by a few 'la-de-dah' Army officers in full regimental dress with chain mail on their shoulders. Too much to bear! One RAF type wandered over and enquired – "Could you settle a bet for us RAF types – which colliery band do you play for?"

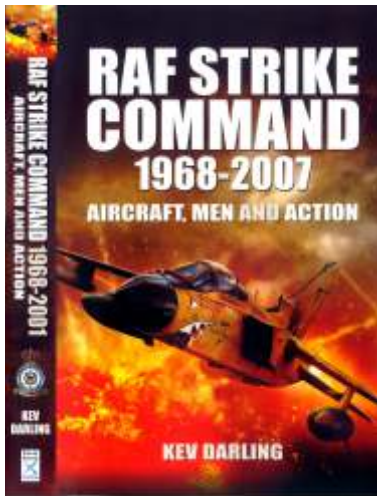
Submitted by Goldfish Harry Andrew

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To save on postage our policy is now to advise members who are two years in arrears that they should contact the Treasurer if they wish to continue receiving the magazine. This applies to the following: H J Elsee Canada, J J Aldous, T M Bailey, P D Myers (USA), Mrs S Dooley (New Zealand), M Hardaker, G M Holland, B Jones, Mrs O King, G Pearson, K D G Stowe, R A Singleton, Mrs S Tebbitt, V C Wood, Mrs L M Wheeler (St Germans).

BOOK REVIEW

RAF STRIKE COMMAND 1968-2007
Aircraft, Men and Action
By Kev Darling



In 1968 a decision was made to combine the RAF Commands that had become famous In World War Two. Thus Fighter, Bomber, Coastal,

Air Support and Signals Commands were combined into the single Strike Command. This amalgamation was to see service throughout the remaining years of the Cold War and action in the Falklands and the Middle East in Operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm and Granby.

When Bomber and Fighter Commands were shoehorned together many thought that this particular marriage would not work. Fortunately for Britain's defence, Strike Command would play its part well. Kevin Darling uses his first-hand experience to explain the origins of the World War Two Commands and their outline histories until 1968. The organisational change caused re-equipment, base changes and increasing economic restraints – an all too familiar story. The Royal Navy was now responsible for the UK's nuclear deterrent in the form of the Polaris submarines, so the RAF's Victor Force was now relegated to tanker operations, while some of the dwindling number of Vulcans were sent to the Falklands conflict.

The Command's fleet of fast jets became more adaptable, with single types able to assume the roles of fighter, bomber, reconnaissance and marine attack. The aircraft also became multi-national in their design and manufacture as Britain's post war lead in aircraft design had been frittered away by years of thoughtless government

and our aircraft manufacturers devolved into a single company. Apart from the brilliant Harrier, which the US continues to operate, other aircraft flown by the Command were from European syndicates, the Tornado and Jaguar being examples. The US supplied the transports in the form of the faithful Hercules and Europe most of the Helicopter fleet.

RAF Strike Command 1968-2007 looks at the operations that took place during Strike Command's existence, the aircraft they flew and the men who flew them. It is a tribute to the fast-dwindling strike power of the Royal Air Force.

Kev Darling has written many aviation books such as P-51 Mustang, Warbirdtech 28: English Electric Lightning and Merlin-powered Spitfires. He is one of Britain's most highly respected aviation authors.

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47 Church St, Barnsley, Yorkshire

My part in the Japanese Campaign.

By Goldfish D R (Bim) Wells

Bim joined up in 1943 after the ATC at school in Leicester. Initially he mustered as a Telegraphist Air Gunner (TAG) but after coming in the top 10 of his course was selected for pilot training which he completed in the USA in June 1944. On 11 November 1944 he left New York on the liner `Aquitania` which sailed, with no escort, to Gourock (near Greenock) on the Clyde. On arrival he was posted to RNAS Inskip (HMS Nightjar) which is between Preston and Blackpool, where they practiced Dive Bombing and Dummy Deck Landings. He then had three weeks embarkation leave before being posted as a Temporary Acting Sub Lieutenant to 828 Squadron at RNAS Halston (HMS Sparrowhawk), Kirkwall, Orkney. 828 Squadron had been attacking Tirpitz with Barracudas but the squadron was re-equipped with Mk 1 Grumman Avengers. A lot of training was carried out including a six week detachment to RNAS Fearn (HMS Owl) on the Cromarty Firth.



Grumman Avenger Mk 2

In March 1945 the squadron joined the aircraft carrier HMS Implacable off the East coast of Scotland. They set sail through the Bay of Biscay, round Gibraltar through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal down the Red Sea and arrived at RNAS China Bay, Ceylon for a further 6 weeks of training, much of which was deck landing practice. They left Ceylon,



HMS Implacable

called at Freemantle and arrived in Sydney. The aircraft flew off the carrier and were based at Jervis Bay, 70 miles South of Sydney. Eventually they rejoined the Implacable and headed North to join up with the British Pacific Fleet. One night (4 June 1945) he was doing a catapult take off at night (his first!). The aircraft went into a violent starboard spin and went over the side of the ship and dropped backwards into the sea. Bim does not know how he got out but when he did he found his observer and gunner already out of the aircraft and all three were picked up by the attendant Destroyer, HMS Terp. Sichore`s safety boat. Implacable could not use the catapult until they knew what had happened so Bim was returned to the carrier to explain. As usual the first thoughts were that it was pilot error (brakes on etc) but no

skid marks were found on the deck. Eventually they came to the conclusion that one of the two securing attachments to the aircraft undercarriage had broken off. Bim was now a member of the Goldfish Club.

On 5 August 1945 the squadron attacked the Japanese held Truk Island (part of the Carolinas). This was a dive bombing operation, at 5 sec intervals, there was no fighter opposition and very little flak. All the aircraft returned safely. After Truk the

carrier went to Manus in the Samoa Group of Islands with its attendant destroyers and cruisers. Many of the aircrew were suffering from heat exhaustion. Now with Mk 2 Avengers they set off on 25 June to meet up with the British Fleet which included the aircraft carriers Victorious and Formidable. Implacable then suffered severe vibration and it was discovered that a thrust block for one of the four propellers had seized and the nearest repair yard was back in Sydney. The Chief Engineer decided to do the repair at sea, which was successful, and all four propellers in action meant that aircraft could operate from the deck. They joined the American 6th Fleet on 11 July 1945 and 828 squadron were busy doing all the British night flying effort. On one occasion Bim was returning to the fleet from a night sortie and

could not identify his ship from the limited night masthead lights. Eventually a ship flashed a green 'C' so he joined the landing circuit and landed on the 'Formidable'! The following day the whole fleet, some 30 ships, had to turn into wind for him to take off and land on Implacable. The Captain of Formidable was not too unhappy about the situation but the Commander Flying on Implacable was very unhappy and told Bim to report to him with his CO at 10.00 hrs. Bim thought he was for the 'high jump'. However it was all sorted out and Bim heard nothing more.

On 24 and 25 July 1945 828 squadron attacked the Japanese airfield Tokushima by day which is on the island of Shikaku. The first attack on the Japanese mainland had been by RN Corsairs. After the Truk raid observers were only carried on the lead aircraft of each flight. This meant that the squadron had to fly in formation on the inbound leg and assemble at a pre-arranged RV to go back to the ship. Bim took part in further strikes on 28 Jul Harima Bay and 30 Jul Suzuka Airfield. After this the fleet had to withdraw to replenish from the fleet auxiliary's waiting some distance to the rear. This took 5 or 6 days. On 6 Aug the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb was dropped. Then followed two attacks, now changed from airfields to shipyards and

installations, by 828 squadron on 9 and 10 August following the second Atomic Bomb on Nagasaki on 8 August. On 12 August the British Fleet was ordered to return to Sydney. The Indefatigable and the Battleship Duke of York remained to witness the surrender in Tokyo Bay on 15 August 1945.

'Splice the Mainbrace' was the order of the day and Bim remembers going to the Air Gunners mess and becoming legless on 'Pussers Rum'.

As Bim said "I felt as though I had done my little bit"

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