

# No 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Association

## Tiger News No 22

*Compiled by Bob Cossey*

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Association President AVM B L Robinson FRAeS FCMI RAF Ret`d

Association Chairman Dave Roome OBE

Association Treasurer Flt Lt Vinny Brown

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### 74 Squadron Disbands

A heading which we all hoped would never appear, but on Friday 22nd September at RAF Valley 74(F) Tiger Squadron disbanded. It has to be said that it was seen off in fine style. Three black tiger-headed Hawks were the backdrop to the parade, for which the Reviewing Officer was our President, AVM Boz Robinson, and during which the Standard was proudly marched off, overflowed by a quartet of Hawks. Further fly pasts and a small flying display followed. This included our Chairman, Gp Capt Dave Roome, in a black Hunter and a fine salute from a Royal Navy Sea Harrier. Tornados and Jaguars also thundered through to say au revoir.

In conjunction with the ceremony, a photographic opportunity for local enthusiasts had been organised with the Valley Aviation Society and over four hundred people attended, raising over £4,000 for local charities in the process - a super legacy of the Tiger's presence at Valley for the past eight years. Other Tiger Squadrons had been invited to bring aircraft over for this and we were very pleased to see the French Air Force (Mirage FIs and Mirage 2000s) and German Air Force (Tornados) represented.

The crews of these were invited to attend the Disbandment Lunch in the Officer's Mess. It is a significant fact that in total 74 people sat down for this! Following lunch, during the speeches from OC 74 Flt Lt Bret Archer and AVM Robinson, tribute was paid to the Squadron past and present. None of those serving to the end particularly relished the idea of moving across to 19 Squadron - their crest depicts a Dolphin after all! • but the truth is that although 74 may have stood down, the Royal Air Force carries on and all those who have been Tigers will continue to serve proudly and with commitment with whichever unit they are posted to.



It is difficult to find the exact words on occasions such as these to express what everybody was feeling. A mixture of pride and sadness certainly. Pride at having the opportunity of serving, or being associated with, the greatest Fighter Squadron in the RAF. Sadness at the passing of that Squadron and the thought that it may not be seen again in the future. The Tiger is dead. But long live the Tiger. We have the Association, alive and well, to perpetuate the name of 74 (F) Squadron through the annual reunions and other activities in which we will be able to share in the years ahead.

Particular thanks must go to Fit Lt Bret Archer and all members of 74 who provided such a Fine and fitting send off for the Tigers. Bret has created a little bit of history himself as the only Commanding Officer 74 has had with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. And our thoughts on the day were with those former COs and all other former serving members of 74 who could not be at Valley to bid their farewells to their old Squadron. As one sentiment expressed on the day put it, the 74 Squadron Tiger's roar may have been silenced - but the Tiger is a protected species. There is every hope that it will survive and that some day in the future it may once again proudly adorn the fin of a future RAF Fighter. It remains to be seen whether that hope will turn to expectation and that expectation to reality. Only time will tell.

### Membership Matters

**Group Captain Graham Clarke** has moved to Marham as he continues his convalescence following the stroke he suffered last October.

**Ian Cadwallader** can now be contacted via E Mail. This prompts me to ask you all to amend your membership lists which I sent out with the last Tiger News for I realised too late that for those members living abroad I didn't designate the country at the end of their

addresses! The list is as follows (with the exception of the American addresses which are rather more obvious!):

H G Cooper - Australia  
Sqn Ldr K G Griffin - Hong Kong  
D L Johnston - New Zealand  
Gp Capt Henry Let her - Saudi Arabia  
Dave Mitchell - Jersey  
Wg Cdr E Nance - Jersey  
Wg Cdr Tom Rowland - South Africa  
M. Marcel Boisot - France  
John Church - New Zealand  
Gp Capt Glennie-Carr - South Africa  
Sqn Ldr Jim Hayter - New Zealand  
Bobby Laumans - Belgium  
Wg Cdr T Maddem - Belgium  
D Morter - France  
Gp Capt R Northcote - Saudi Arabia

### In Brief

Congratulations from all in the Association to former Tiger Boss **Cliff Spink** whose promotion to Air Marshal has recently been announced. Cliff always finds time in his busy schedule to attend Reunions and is a great supporter of the Association. Amongst the many things in which he is involved outside his Royal Air Force career is his flying on the warbirds' circuit with Ray Hanna's Old Flying Machine Company at Duxford - about which there is an article elsewhere in this *Tiger News*.

**Colin Butcher** has a 16x10 photograph of aircrew at Horsham St Faith, showing a Meteor and a Hunter, which he is willing to exchange for a photograph of the full squadron, showing all personnel, taken at the same period.

**Fred Taylor** of Sudbury has asked about markings which could be applied to a Spitfire Mk XIV which he is building and has decided on ML296/4D-N. This is no plastic model kit that Fred is tackling. Rather it is an electrically powered flying scale model with a 48 inch wing span. There are a great many parts in it – over 60 in each wing for example - so the whole thing is taking a considerable while of patient time to complete. Fred is going to let me know when the maiden flight takes place.

Talking of models, Corgi have issued a fine 1:72 scale die cast model of Sailor Malan's Spitfire Mk I as flown in the early stages of the Battle of Britain.

In this 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year, several Battle of Britain Exhibitions have been opened, including one at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. Groundcrew, former members of the WAAF and balloon barrage and operations room personnel joined more than twenty Battle of Britain pilots there on 16th June to mark its opening by Professor Robert

O'Neill. Chairman of the Trustees of the IWM in the presence of the guest of honour. Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Grandy. Sir John was a Hurricane pilot in the Battle, was Station Commander at Duxford in 1942 and was Chairman from 1975 - 1989. Included in the exhibition are many remarkable exhibits such as a newly restored Hurricane, a Spitfire, a Blenheim and a rare Messerschmitt Bf109E that saw action during the Battle of Britain and crashed in Sussex in 1940. Visitors can see inside a reconstructed air raid shelter as a family takes cover from enemy bombers, view rare colour archive footage and hear veterans' accounts of their fight to protect their country. The Imperial War Museum at Duxford is open every day.

Another Battle of Britain Exhibition is to be found at North Weald, an airfield that, like Duxford, played a key role. It is open every Saturday and Sunday until 31st November between 12 noon and 8 pm and is housed in Ad Astra House, Hurricane Way.

Three Association members spent a splendid Battle of Britain concert evening at Tangmere organised by RAFA during which they were treated to some fine music, experienced a spectacular and evocative sunset and fireworks display were presented to Prince Edward. For **Eden Webster**, **John Loosemore** and **Geoffrey Burge**, that will be an evening to remember.

### Squadron Badge at Capel-le-Ferne

As indicated in Tiger News No 20, the Squadron badge has now been painted on to a fanlight of the new building at the Battle of Britain Memorial on the Kent cliffs. Funding for this was initially going to be by the Association but the Squadron subsequently stepped in and paid for it themselves in the light of the news of disbandment, seeing it not only as a fitting memorial to those members of the Squadron who fought during the Battle but as a lasting memorial to the Squadron itself. Thank you to all at Valley.

### Sgt Thomas Kirk

*Appearing in the local Northallerton (North Yorkshire) newspaper recently was the following article:*

Local hero Sgt Thomas Brian Kirk will be honoured in a ceremony at Northallerton College to commemorate his efforts and those of other local pilots during the Battle of Britain. William Hague will present a memorial plaque to the College where Sgt Kirk was educated. Born at East Hasley, he joined the Auxiliary Air Force in June 1939. He was shot down on October 20th 1940 by which time he was with 74 Squadron and died of his wounds in July 1941 aged only 22. He had taken off from Biggin Hill at 1405 with [Association member] Clive Hilken with orders to rendezvous with 66 Squadron and patrol at 30,000ft. The pair sighted 30 Bf109s over Maidstone and dived on them. They were spotted and the German formation split up, with one half climbing higher followed by other Squadron members, Mungo Park and Draper. Thomas Kirk followed Draper and attacked a Messerschmitt. He saw his fire hit the fuselage and wings but had to bale out

after being hit himself, Clive Hilken was also shot down. Clive survived to fight another day. Sadly Thomas Kirk didn't.....

## OFMC's Tiger Squadron

The official supporters' group for the Old Flying Machine Company (OFMC) at Duxford has been relaunched following the sad loss of Mark Hanna in Spain last year. Interestingly as far as we are concerned, this supporters' group is called Tiger Squadron and Dave Roome and Boz Robinson had made contact with them (in their role as display pilots of classic aircraft) after the relaunch. In addition, Cliff Spink flies many of OFMC's aircraft on the warbirds' circuit both in this country and abroad. As an Association it makes very good sense for us to strike up a rapport with them. Tiger Squadron manager Stuart Downs and I have agreed to keep in touch - and any of you who visit Duxford or indeed any shows where Tiger Squadron's sales stand has a pitch should make yourselves known to them if you feel so disposed.

I will keep you informed of Tiger Squadron news. It is appropriate, a year on, to pay tribute to Mark Hanna who died in the tragic accident flying the Hispano Buchon (Spanish built version of the German Bf109) last year. His father Ray, with whom Mark had developed the OFMC over 18 years or so, has vowed to keep their aircraft flying as a tribute to his son. Mark was born into an aviation family and enjoyed a successful career in the RAF which he left in 1988 to run OFMC. Flying was always Mark's greatest passion and he had a talent for displaying historic aircraft in a relevant and exciting manner. He flew over 100 types in his career and his skills were in regular demand from film studios.

Other news - Nigel Lamb has been appointed to manage the OFMC Breitling Fighters - the team for this season having consisted of the Spitfire Mk.IX, Curtis P40 Kittyhawk, P51 Mustang, Corsair and L39 Albatross.

The OFMC Tiger Squadron website can be located at **[www.ofmc.co.uk](http://www.ofmc.co.uk)**

## Tiger Bars



As a follow up to Colin Dawson's recollections of Tiger Bars constructed in Tengah as described in Tiger News 18 & 19, Peter Johnstone has sent a scan of this beer mat which was specially made for the bars once they were completed. Our tiger looks as though he is anticipating the opportunity to indulge in the beer trickling down the outside of the glass onto his mat - or has he, perhaps, already indulged!

## Sqn Ldr Jim 'Spud' Hayter

During the war, artists were commissioned to produce prints and paintings of well known personalities from fighter and bomber squadrons and 74 was well represented in the gallery of drawings thus produced. Eric Kennington was one such artist and Cuthbert Orde another featured in Tiger News 20 with a portrait of John Freeborn. Here you can see, courtesy of Doug Tidy, Orde's drawing of Jim 'Spud' Hayter (74's Boss from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1943 to 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 1944. I wonder if Jim remembers sitting for it?



## What's In A Name?

With the news of 74 Squadron's disbandment, our resident poet Hilary Howarth has been moved to put pen to paper on the subject of the merging of 74 with 19 Squadron under the latter's banner....

I hear that things are changing  
And may never be quite the same.  
Squadrons of 'planes are merging  
And may even have a new name,

The mottoes could be mixed up too  
But I think that. I can help you.....  
79 Squadron Tigers and 94 Squadron Dolphins  
With yellow stripes and dorsal fins  
How named the Phinrots or Dolphers.  
Motto? No Man Can or I Fear No Tigers,  
Or maybe the Tindols and Phigers.  
If 28 Squadron and 22 SAR join in too  
More interesting things I could do.  
The motto Tigerets Are The Cutest  
I'll have to put that to the test!  
Or the Phigerats Are The Best.  
The ratarchers motto. Be Brave Man,  
Arid Tigerpens say I Think I Can?  
Whatever the name at the end of the day  
They still will be perfect in every way  
To disband a squadron is very sad  
We lose the living history we had  
Some never knew, some didn't care  
But we will keep the memory there.

### The Case of the Falling Fuel Tank

*Member Tony Alderton wonders whether any Meteor Tigers remember the day a ventral tank fell on his foot at Horsham St Faith! As usual, this incident produced a ream of paperwork and Tony has kept it!*

#### Statement from 4103097 SAC Alderton on Ventral Tank Accident on 16-10-1953 at Horsham St Faith.

Myself and three other Air-frame Mechs were changing the air bottles when we were approached by two Engine Mechs and asked if we could assist them in releasing a ventral tank on a Meteor Mk 8 so we obliged. As we got to the aircraft both of the Engine Mechs, LAC Woods and LAC Vickers, informed us that the ventral was empty, To make sure they both tapped it with their knuckles and the sound made was a hollow one. Then one of the Engine Mechs unclipped the ventral feed pipes and one of the Airframe Mechs, LAC Ovenden, climbed into the cockpit. The rest of us got under the ventral tank to take the strain and support it. I got in front of the tank to support that part, LAC Woods was supporting the rear with LAC Vickers and Airframe Mech LAC Turner supporting the port Side and Airframe Mech LAC Crosland supporting the starboard. With everyone in position I shouted to LAC Ovenden to release the ventral, but when that was done the force of it coming down was too much for us to handle as it did have fuel in it. The tank fell on my foot and I had to be taken to sick quarters for treatment.

Tony's RAF service between June 1952 and May 1955 was 1 week Cardington for kitting out, 9 weeks Bridgnorth for square bashing, 13 weeks St Athan for trade training, 6 weeks at Oakington and 2½ years at Horsham St Faith. Recent retirement from Marshall's Aerospace at Cambridge led to a VIP visit to Duxford as part of his retirement present. At Duxford of course is the superb Lightning F1 in 74 Squadron colours - and an ex 74 Squadron F4J which was repainted in US Marine Corps colours before being displayed in the American Air Museum.....

### A Trenchard Brat

A new book has appeared in the shops published by The Pentland Press. Titled *A Trenchard Brat* it is written by Frank Tarns and is the entertaining story of his career spanning nearly thirty years in the RAF from 1930 onwards, beginning as a sixteen year old apprentice in Lord Trenchard's Aircraft Apprentice Scheme. He trained as a pilot and flew with Coastal Command before the war. He became a POW after being shot down over Brest in 1941 and his vivid prose takes the reader inside the infamous Stalag Luft I and Stalag Luft 3. He plays a part in, and is witness to, numerous daring escapes and escape attempts including The Wooden Horse Escape and The Great Escape. After the War he returns to Coastal Command before being posted to Advanced Air Headquarters Kuala Lumpur, providing air support to the army during the Malayan Emergency. He describes dangerous sorties to remote jungle airstrips, taken on in a spirit of adventure rather than a sense of duty and for which he is mentioned in dispatches and awarded the OBE.

Such is the official promotional material. Having read it I can recommend *A Trenchard Brat* as a good read and one which everybody would enjoy whether they have been a member of that 'club' or not. The book costs £15 and is available now.

### Hornchurch, Group Captain Sammy Hoare and 74

Much has been written over the past couple of months about all aspects of the Battle of Britain including the airfields associated with it. The following article about Hornchurch appeared in the Romford Recorder. It was forwarded to me by Association member Hugh Alderton and tells the story of another Association member, Sammy Hoare, who flew from Hornchurch prior to the Battle..

*Group Captain DS 'Sammy' Hoare was just a 19 year old lad when he was stationed at Hornchurch. Now 83 his adventures can be found in the book Hornchurch Scramble [written by Richard Smith and published by Grub Street at £17.99]. He remembers his first impression of the aerodrome. I recall reporting to the Squadron Office and there I was greeted by the Adjutant, [Association member] Tom Rowland, who was very pleasant and began to tell me what a good squadron I was about to join. It was all very exciting for a youngster but I was disappointed when reaching the hangars to see mostly Gauntlets and a few Demons. 'Don Thorn, who joined the Squadron the same time as myself, was an accomplished gymnast and diver of international standard. I can recall*

*him spending time standing on his head or doing somersaults in a specially designed sand pit. He even did handstands on the wings of Spitfires when they eventually arrived.*

Sammy served with 74 from August 1937 to May 1940. On the 24th of that month he was hit over Calais.

*Although our instructions were to patrol the Channel coastline we were told we could go inland if we were investigating any aircraft. I managed to collect a bullet from somewhere. It may have been a German infantryman or light flak or it may even have been from our own troops on the ground. Nevertheless I reformed and was intending to go back to base when Mungo Park called me up and said I was streaming glycol. I thought the sensible thing to do was what Sqn Ldr White had done the previous day - go into Calais Marck airfield.*

For 36 hours Sammy tried to get home by climbing on board small boats docked in Calais from the sand dunes but he was unsuccessful. Eventually he was picked up by an SS Panzer unit and saw out the next four years in a POW camp. Today, still emotionally charged by the event, Sammy Hoare doesn't want to be branded a hero.

*Everything happened so quickly up there. You didn't have time to think about being brave. You just had to get on with it. People are always asking me about my time in the RAF. But I always think why? What did I do?*

### Hornchurch Scramble

Association member John Gill has been busy representing 74 Squadron with a series of book signings, the book in question being Hornchurch Scramble featured above. Its author, Richard Smith, is Vice Chairman of the Hornchurch Wing which has created a museum on the site of the former airfield and which undertakes all kinds of research into matters relevant to the Battle of Britain and other eras. John, together with other groundcrew from 54 and 222 Squadrons who were stationed at Hornchurch, joined with the former - Assistant Station Adjutant, Wg Cdr F Dowling, at Hornchurch Town Show to do the honours. Furthermore, on September 15th John and his wife were invited to the Imperial War Museum to join eight former Battle of Britain pilots in signing more books for members of the public. He, and they, were also asked to sign a book about Richard Hillary which has just been completed after fifteen years research. It was here that John was delighted to meet Gp Capt Sammy Hoare also featured above, who had travelled down with his wife and daughter.

The last time the two had met was at Hornchurch in 1940 when Sammy was a Flying Officer and, by then, Squadron Adjutant. John's next Battle of Britain memorial event was the moving Thanksgiving Service at Westminster Abbey on the 17th followed on the 23rd by more signings of Hornchurch Scramble in Romford.

It is good to know that John and Sammy have been keeping the Tigers to the forefront in this important year of remembrance. Thank you to both of them and all the other

Squadron members who have participated in the many events that have been organised. It is so important that those years are never forgotten. Sadly, in John Gill's experience, the young people of today do need to be increasingly reminded, or simply told, of what happened in British sides 60 years ago.

### Telling Poles Apart

There were two Jan Rogowski' s who served in the Royal Air Force during World War 2 and 74 Squadron had one of them. Doug Tidy has unearthed the photograph below, but does not know whether this was 74's Rogowski, or 303 Squadrons. I am aware of the fact that some of you may have served on the Squadron when Rogowski was there. It is a bit of a tall order given the time that has since passed, but do you recognise this fellow as 74s Rogowski? Let me know, please, if you do.

