

No 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Association

www.74squadron.org.uk

Tiger News No 44

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Compiled by Bob Cossey

Association President

AVM B L Robinson FRAeS FCMI

Honorary Vice President

Air Marshal Cliff Spink CB, CBE, FCMI, FRAeS

Association Chairman

Gp Capt Dick Northcote OBE BA

Association Treasurer

Rhod Smart

Association Secretary

Bob Cossey BA (Hons)

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Thanks to the great efforts of John Crow (with the help of David Jones and Doug Tidy and with the understanding of John's wife Margie who kept losing him to his computer!) the Association website is up and running again - and it looks good. The intention is in time to develop it a little further but as it stands at the moment all the features that Buster Walsh built into it previously it remain intact. Please visit the site and leave any comments in the guest book. Thank you again John. I know that you have enjoyed the experience, having taken the job on without ever having worked on the building of a website before and consequently having climbed a very steep learning curve in double quick time. The results are there for us all to see. Enjoy!

De Panne

It's a year since a group of us went across to Belgium to honour the memory of Sqn Ldr John Colin Mungo Park over what was a memorable weekend in itself thanks to the great efforts of Johnny Recour who was the prime mover as far as arrangements at De Panne were concerned. It is proposed that if there is enough interest a further visit be made this June to again visit Mungo Park's grave and meet friends made last year - and for those who couldn't make the trip last year to also see the site where the Squadron Leader's Spitfire came down as well as enjoy a social occasion. The proposed date of the visit is the weekend of 16th/17th June. If you are interested contact me (Bob Cossey) and I'll put you in touch.

Annual General Meeting March 10th 2007 at The Falcon Hotel, Stratford upon Avon.

The minutes of the meeting are as follows. Please keep a copy of these and bring along to the next AGM as a reference for any matters arising.

1. Apologies were received from Boz Robinson, John and Annabelle Howe, Tony Hilton, Bill and Di Medland, John Loosemore, Peter and Edna Carr, Fred Waters, Bill Maish, Simon Bostock, Ken Goodwin, Stan and Anne Ralph, Russ Allchorne, Kev Wooff, Vinny and Denise Brown, Doreen and Nicolette Haselwood, Sarah Doidge, Ray and Jill Morrell, Sir James Brook and Derek Morter.
2. Chairman Dick Northcote welcomed members to the Falcon Hotel for the annual reunion and to all present who had supported the AGM by their attendance.
3. The minutes of the previous AGM as published in *Tiger News* were agreed. There were no matters arising not covered under the present agenda. Graham Clarke proposed that they be adopted as a true record of proceedings. Robert Johnston seconded.
4. The treasurer's report was presented by Rhod Smart and the accounts show a balance of £1,245.69. With money set aside for the 90th Anniversary next year, the forecast for 2007/2008 is a balance of £912.95 at March 1st 2008.
5. Committee members offered themselves *en bloc* for re-election. David Jones proposed and John Crow seconded that they be so elected. For the year 2007 to 2008 the Officers of the Association will therefore be:

President - Boz Robinson
Chairman - Dick Northcote
Treasurer - Rhod Smart
Secretary - Bob Cossey

6. John Crow has agreed to become the webmaster for our website at www.74squadron.org.uk and has been working hard to bring it back into operation. There are still a few issues to resolve but even so that was projected to be by the end of April 2007. The Association's sincere thanks were proffered to John as they were to David Jones and Doug Tidy for their support whilst the site has been under reconstruction.
7. Next year marks the 90th Anniversary of 74 Squadron as a front line unit and a special reunion celebration will mark the occasion. Various ideas will be explored by the Committee - but the membership can play their part too by talking to all those that they know who were members of the Squadron but who are not members of the Association. If they can be persuaded to join and then book for next year's event we can enjoy a truly memorable evening with record numbers attending
8. Rhod and Bob made a short presentation on the City of Norwich Aviation Museum (CNAM) which is housed at the former RAF Horsham St Faith (currently Norwich International Airport) and which is very keen to include the Association's proposed Tiger Museum on its site. The plans for this are ambitious and include the purchase and construction of a purpose made hangar in which a Hunter aircraft in 74's

colours would be a centrepiece with surrounding display cases telling the Tiger's story. The total cost of this would be in the region of £55 - £60,000, approximately half of which would be available in grants and donations from charitable bodies and business. That leaves £30,000 for the Association and the trustees of CNAM to raise. Dick, Rhod and Bob will form a Museum sub-Committee to actively pursue ways of doing this and David Jones volunteered to join them. Any other members who wish to assist would be very welcome. We already have in excess of £500 in the Museum account largely thanks to Wg Cdr John Freeborn who donates the money he receives from book and print signings to the fund and for which we thank him.

9. RAF ACE (Royal Air Force Association's Combined Event) in September 2006 was highly successful despite poor weather. At the time the hope was expressed that it could be repeated and 2008 is a possibility as the 90th Anniversary of the founding of the RAF. The 56 Squadron Association has expressed an interest in taking the lead in organisation but it was suggested that as RAF ACE was our idea in the first place we may feel we would not want to hand it over to 56. The meeting however felt that with all our energies being directed towards the 90th Anniversary of the Squadron and the Tiger Museum, to take on the organisation of another high profile event would be a step too far. It was agreed therefore that 56 should lead if they so wished. The Tigers would of course support them in whatever way possible.

Date of Next Meeting - Saturday March 1st 2008

Annual Reunion - March 9th - 11th 2007 at The Falcon Hotel, Stratford upon Avon

Thank you to all who attended another very successful reunion over the second weekend in March. The weather was fine and the Company as ever very good!



Four senior members at the Reunion Dinner - left to right John Freeborn, Doug Tidy, Derek Morris and Ted Mansfield.

We were particularly pleased to welcome five new members. Albert Bartholemew, who was a Tiger from 1944 - 1946, brought his family with him - his wife Doris, daughter Beverley and son in law Michael. Irene Skinner's husband Bill flew with 74 during the Battle of Britain but a year later was shot down and captured, spending the rest of the war as a POW. Bill sadly died a few years ago but his widow decided she would like to join us at Stratford and we were absolutely delighted that she did. Irene is 86 and drove herself up from Rottingdean to do so. She's a true Tiger! And then we had a pair of Tengah Tigers with us for the first time - Des Schweppe and John McCarthy. Those from the Lightning era were in the ascendancy this year, outgunning the Phantom boys by several to one although ex Phantom Tiger Keith Griffin did his best to narrow the gap by flying in from Brisbane, Australia, for the occasion, thereby winning the virtual prize for travelling the longest distance to be with us!

Incidentally a few of the Tengah Tigers are returning to Singapore in June to revisit old haunts and take a look at the base which is now in the hands of the Singaporean Air Force. They will be visiting the Tiger Brewery as well and will take with them items of the Association's memorabilia and a Squadron shield for presentation. Have a great trip guys and tell *Tiger News* all about it when you return!

Our guest of honour was, as always, Wg Cdr John Freeborn DFC* who always enjoys being amongst fellow squadron members at Stratford and is with us every year. John is now 87 and has never lost that Tiger spirit and determination.

We must say a special thank-you to Dave Ketcher for bringing along his flight simulator software. He has Tiger aircraft from all eras and at the end of the evening the room echoed to the roar of jet engines as Hunters and Meteors and Lightnings took to the virtual skies - and indeed remained airborne into the early hours.

Next year is the 90th Anniversary and some very special events are planned. So please put the weekend of Friday 29th February to Sunday March 2nd 2008 in your dairies. And please spread the word. There are still many ex Tigers out there who haven't joined the Association and who are known to many of you. Please get in touch with them and tell them to get in touch with me, Bob, through the website www.74squadron.org.uk.

The Falcon Hotel

Whilst we enjoyed this year's reunion as much as we always do and the staff were as helpful and friendly as ever, there is no doubt that the hotel itself is beginning to look very tired and the bedrooms in particular are in urgent need of refurbishment and refurnishing to bring them back up to the standard we have come to expect over the years. To that end I have been in touch with Mr Kevin Skeet, the Regional General Manager of Legacy Hotels (who own The Falcon), and received this reply.

"Thank you for your very constructive email regarding your weekend at the Falcon and I am very pleased to note that overall you enjoyed your weekend with us. I have passed your thanks on to our team.

"I firstly would like to reassure you that the hotel is absolutely committed to continuing the great tradition of hosting the many reunions such as yours over the years to come. It is with this in mind that I have personally championed the need to commit a serious investment in the hotel and its fabric in both bedrooms and all public areas. The refurbishment program represents an investment in excess of £2.2 million and is due to last thirty weeks. This should put us on target for a completion in late October/early November and certainly before Christmas.

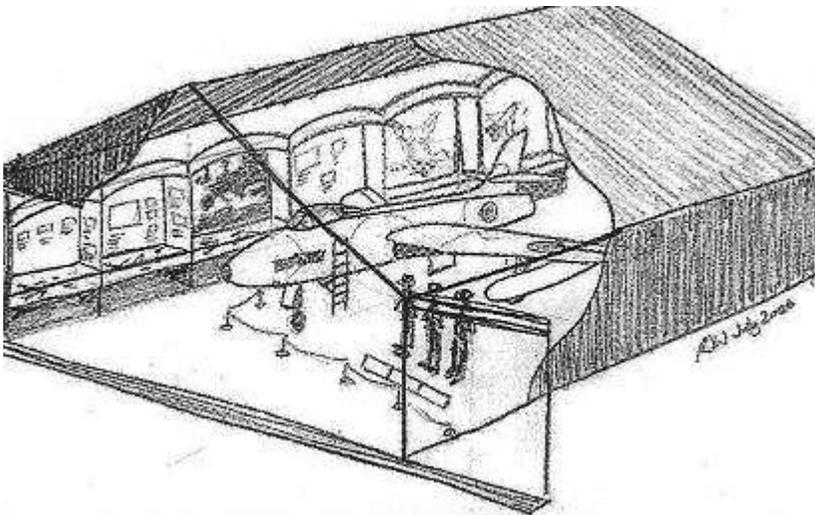
"Despite the size of this investment may I assure you that as a consequence we would not be looking to increase rates other than the normal increase we would levy from year to year.

"I look forward to welcoming you and the many members of the **74 Squadron Association** for your 90th anniversary celebrations in 2008."

Tiger Museum Update

Overwhelmingly supported by association members at the AGM was the proposed Tiger Museum in which we would display much of the Squadron's memorabilia. Sadly this is currently stacked in a warehouse in packing cases as part of the RAF Museum's reserve collection and is likely to stay that way unless we can provide a home for it. The City of Norwich Aviation Museum (CNAM), which was established in 1978 and is accredited by the Museums and Galleries Commission, is very interested in working with us to do just that - and they are an appropriate organisation to do so given that their site is at Norwich International Airport which was formerly RAF Horsham St Faith at which the Tigers were based for fourteen years in the late 1940s and throughout the `50s. RAF Coltishall, sadly now closed, is just a few miles down the road and 74 were there during the war and in the early 60s. Fifty miles south of Norwich is RAF Wattisham from where the Squadron flew its Phantom F4Js and FGR2s. Geographically this all fits in well with CNAM`s objective of telling the story of aviation in Norfolk and East Anglia.

Working with Rob Walden, who is the Curator at Norwich, we are proposing an ambitious plan which will necessitate considerable fundraising on both our parts. To do full justice to the telling of the Squadron's story photographically as well as with the memorabilia, a small hangar is necessary. In its aircraft collection CNAM has an ex-Royal Danish Air Force Hunter F Mk 4 which has been restored in 74`s colours. This will be further refurbished and will form the centrepiece of the proposed exhibition. The hangar, which will be prefabricated, will of course protect it and everything else from the elements. Around the sides of the hangar and across the back will be the display cases - the accompanying sketch gives you some idea of how it will look.



But this doesn't come cheaply. Total cost is estimated at £55,000 to £60,000., approximately half of which would be available in grants. That still leaves the Association and CNAM to raise around £30K. We are looking at five years before the display opens which means three years or so to raise the money. Which is where we all come in - putting on our thinking caps to devise ways of doing so. Dick Northcote, Rhod Smart, David Jones and I have formed a sub-Committee and our initial brief is to come up with some proposals.

CNAM has a Board of Trustees, one full time employee and a host of volunteers. Virtually everything at CNAM has been built by, restored by, assembled by or maintained by the latter. When it comes to the Tiger Museum there will be an appeal for volunteer help there as well.

See www.cnam.co.uk for a full overview of what the museum has to offer and what they already have there as well as details of opening for those of you who want to go and have a look.

And please - contact any Committee member with any thoughts and ideas you have as regards funding. Thank You.

In the National Archive

Have a look at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/films/1951to1964/filmpage_streaked.htm to see the Tigers and the newly into service Lightning F1 in a 1960 recruiting film. David Jones and Martin Bee did much of the flying with cockpit shots taken in the simulator with David all dressed up and posing as the pilot!

Thanks to Ian `Hagar` Hargreaves for flagging this up for us. He particularly recommends the music that accompanies the film.....

Goodbyes.

Our condolences go to Associate Member Debbie Parker whose husband Owen passed away after a long illness on 26th October last year. And to the family of Mike Cooke, a Tiger on the first RAF Lightning F1 squadron in the early 1960s, who died on January 12th. An appreciation of Mike's life appears below.

Flight Lieutenant Mike Cooke RAF (Ret`d)

As noted under `Goodbyes`, Tiger Mike Cooke died on January 12th at the age of 69. By his courage and determination in the face of overwhelming odds, and with the support and dedication of his wife Patsy, Mike's life was one that should be an inspiration to us all.



A gathering of Tigers in 1962, all colleagues of Mike Cooke and including others who are sadly no longer with us either. From left to right - Pete Clinton (JEngO), Mike Dodd, Martin Bee, George Black, Peter Philips, Peter Botterill (CO), Mike Cooke (in civvies), Jerry Brown, David Jones, Maurice Williams, Jerry Cohu, Ted Nance, Glyn Owen and Vaughan Radford.

Martin Bee penned a moving obituary which was published in the Daily Telegraph and Eastern Daily Press.

"Mike joined 74 (Fighter) Squadron at RAF Horsham St Faith in 1958 as a young first tour pilot flying the Hawker Hunter. In 1960 he moved with the squadron to nearby Coltishall which had a longer 7,500 foot runway to accommodate their new English Electric Lightning F1s. Mike, who was the squadron IRE, was also soon a member of the nine aircraft Tigers aerobatic team which represented the Royal Air Force at the Farnborough and Paris air shows in the early 1960s. Hanging in to a diamond nine aircraft formation while it looped and rolled was no mean feat for the young pilots who averaged about 23 years of age.

"In 1963, 56(F) squadron took over duty as the RAF aerobatic team, again with Lightnings. With his earlier experience Mike was assigned to this new team at RAF Wattisham in Suffolk. But during a practice show over his home airfield on 6th June 1963 two Lightnings collided at low level. One of the two aircraft managed to land safely but the aircraft that Mike Cooke was flying was out of control and he ejected from the aircraft. His parachute opened shortly before he hit the ground but in the process he became tangled in some of the nylon lines and he broke his spinal cord. Despite a helicopter transfer to hospital and many months at Stoke Mandeville spinal injury rehabilitation unit Mike became a quadriplegic and never regained the use of his limbs."

Henry Ploszek was part of the formation when the accident happened.

"Mike had been flying in the No 3 position to Jerry Cohu, who was leading a Front Five Ship practice on a fan break from crowd front at Wattisham. On the break the brief was for Nos 4 and 5 to turn 60 degrees outwards followed by Nos 2 & 3 on a 30 degree split, followed by a rejoin at crowd rear. As Mike turned his port wing swept up under No 5's (Mo Moore's) belly, knocking Mo's dummy Firestreak off, which landed in the married quarters, but in the process damaging Mike's port aileron which led Mike to loose control as he pulled up, and so he ejected.

"I was flying in the practice in No 4 slot. On my reversal I saw a ground explosion followed by a pilot in his parachute. I continued my turn towards him and on flying past him noted that he was hanging lifeless in the chute and did not move even upon landing in a field. I managed to direct the rescue vehicles to the field, as they were primarily heading to the smoking crash site, as well as trying to return to the Station on receipt of a message that part of the aircraft had crashed in the Married Quarters. The medics finally arrived and ATC informed me that Mike was alive.

"He was taken to the Station Medical Centre, where his injuries were assessed, and then transferred by civilian ambulance, travelling at 5 mph under a Police escort, to Ipswich Hospital. On the way Claydon Level Crossing was kept open, closing down the London-Ipswich-Norwich main line for a period. He was later airlifted by the RAF helicopter to Stoke Mandeville Hospital."

Continuing with Martin's tribute:

"After a long stay at Stoke Mandeville Mike returned to Norwich. Undaunted, he settled into civilian life as a young man in a wheelchair and went on to build his own company, Wensum Agency Insurance Brokers. Despite total reliance on one finger touch typing and a lever operated telephone he created a leading East of England brokerage specialising in motor insurance - all this long before the benefits of the computer age we now enjoy today.

"Mike married Patsy Cumming in 1960 and shortly after his accident their only child, Simon, was born. Despite his profound disability Mike embraced fatherhood with typical enthusiasm, ensuring that his son learnt essential life skills such as how to bowl a cricket ball and cook a Sunday roast. He inspired all of his family in many ways and never regretted his time in the RAF. Some years later Simon served as a Doctor in the Royal Marines and his nephew Charlie joined the RAF, each in part taking inspiration from Mike. Charlie is currently on exchange with the USAF flying the F117. Simon now practices medicine in Norwich.

"For more than 40 years Mike & Patsy made a good and happy life out of the adversity which had so suddenly befallen them. They appeared at air shows and met old friends. Each ran successful business ventures and on their retirement to Catton Hall, in the village of Old Catton next to RAF Horsham St Faith, they established yet another new and successful business around them, this time in property. These tremendous successes were true landmarks because, though the RAF and the RAF Benevolent Fund initially provided much help, the excellent life style they later enjoyed was due entirely to their own determination and hard work."

Mike's funeral was held on January 25th at St Margaret's Church, Old Catton, Norwich. The service was an emotional and moving one. As is so often the case in these instances, all who attended probably learned so much more about Mike as an individual beyond their immediate experience of him. What came across the strongest was the incredible love of the family for Mike and he for them. We all knew of the courage and dedication shown by Patsy in dealing with the awful accident but of course that was borne out of her absolute devotion to him and the knowledge that he was as devoted to her.

Tiger **David Jones`** address summed up precisely what the RAF meant to Mike.

"I served with Mike as a pilot on No 74 Squadron. I'm deeply honoured that the family trust me to try to put Mike's time in the Royal Air Force into perspective, and mindful of the fact that I will never be able to do justice to such a great man - a true giant amongst men. I first met Mike in August 1958 when I was posted to No 74 Squadron - which was then based at RAF Horsham St Faith, now of course Norwich Airport. Mike had been posted in several months before me and was already well established on the Squadron, but he immediately extended the hand of friendship and introduced me to all the other pilots, at the same time letting me know all their various idiosyncrasies. Which as a new boy is incredibly useful information.

"In those days virtually all of us were bachelors. We came from all corners of the UK and beyond. One of our number was from New Zealand. But Mike was unusual in that he had lived in Norwich for some years. His local knowledge was invaluable to us all as he knew the locations of all the best pubs and dance halls!

"Mike became a talented Hunter pilot and in 1959 became the top scoring pilot on the Squadron firing live ammunition against an airborne target. His skills were recognised and he was soon selected to become an Instrument Rating Examiner. And he personally checked me out on two occasions.

"74 Squadron moved to RAF Coltishall in 1960 and was re-equipped with the English Electric Lightning - the first Squadron to receive this wonderful new aircraft. The Lightning had double the performance of the Hunter. The Hunter could just go supersonic in a near vertical dive whilst the Lightning would happily go supersonic in a steep climb. Mike was one of the first pilots on the Squadron to go solo and in doing so became the first Flying Officer in the RAF to be truly supersonic and join the 1,000mph club. Going solo for the first time in a Lightning is an unforgettable experience. I remember Mike telling me that he just could not believe the power and performance of the aircraft. I, at that stage, still had this experience to look forward to.

"74 Squadron being the first Squadron to fly this aircraft, it was soon required to perform at the Paris Air Show and at Farnborough to show the world that England could still produce world class aircraft. Being part of a diamond nine aircraft formation while it looped and rolled was no mean feat for the young pilots. And one of these young pilots was, of course, Mike. Then in 1963 No 56 Squadron at RAF Wattisham took over the mantle of being the RAF Display Team. Mike was one of the pilots posted in to assist them with their new task and our paths diverged.

"I shall always remember his modesty and his fine sense of humour. He was wonderful company."

The cemetery at Old Catton lies at the very end of the Norwich Airport runway and no better place could ever have been found for Mike to rest. The flypast by a 2 Squadron Tornado after the Last Post had

been sounded was absolutely splendid. It was fast, it was low and it was over the heads of the funeral party. It was a beautiful afternoon weather-wise and tears sprang to many eyes when the pilot pulled the stick back and did a near vertical climb, afterburners glowing, just as Lightnings did.. It was exactly what Mike would have done for a colleague under similar circumstances - and I am absolutely sure he enjoyed the fact that a fellow airman had honoured him in such a fitting way.

Finally, I was with Mike last November, talking to him about his time with 74 as part of the research I am doing for a biography of Mike's then CO, John Howe. He told me about his first flight in a Lightning and from my notes a précis of that part of our conversation reads as follows:

Each pilot approached his first sortie in different ways. Mike Cooke had flown his many times in his room, sitting in his chair with his eyes closed and imagining the flight from walking out to the aircraft to climbing down from the cockpit and debriefing. As for pre-flight checks he called into play the mnemonic TAFIO - Trim and Tailplane: Air Frame: Fuel and Flaps: Instruments: Oxygen. Only then was it was time to taxi out to the threshold. Mike's had been planned as the fifth solo, but Jerry Cohu who had been detailed to go before him had developed a cold so Mike was called upon a day earlier than he expected. He walked out to the big, shiny, impressive beast and on his cockpit check found a problem with one of the instruments, so he walked back to the crew room to wait whilst the problem was fixed, which did absolutely nothing for his nerves! This was mercifully done quickly so he was soon on his way back to the aircraft, adrenalin flowing again. There was perhaps a hint of showmanship in his take off which went contrary to the briefing which had stipulated a climb straight ahead and then a turn away from the centreline initiated at a set height. Mike in fact started to turn as he climbed almost immediately his wheels had left the runway: perhaps it was a statement born of confidence as to how easy this aircraft was to fly?

Whilst he was aloft on this first sortie the wind direction at Coltishall changed which meant, for approach, changing runway ends. He came in on a visual, concentrating hard every inch of the way and made one of the best landings of his life. Mike had just become the first supersonic Royal Air Force Flying Officer.

The Veterans Agency

Member **Hugh Alderton** has reminded me that men and women who served in the armed forces before and/or during World War Two are entitled to a UK Armed Forces Veterans Lapel Badge. This includes members of the Home Guard, the Cyprus Regiment and Polish Forces under UK Command. Men and women who enlisted in HM Armed Forces between 3rd September 1945 and 31st December 1959 are also entitled to the badge. There is no qualifying length of service and it is hoped in the future to extend the current 1959 deadline. Veterans who served with the armed forces of other countries and those who served alongside HM Armed Forces - such as the Canadian Navy and the Royal Australian Air Force - are not eligible.

Badges cannot be issued posthumously as they are survivor's badges which are to be worn on civilian dress.

To apply for a badge either [1] apply on line at www.veteransagency.mod.uk, [2] write to Veterans Agency, Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire, FY5 3WP, [3] e-mail help@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk, [4] fax 01253 330561 (UK) or +44 1253 330561 (overseas) or [5] call 0800 169 2277 (UK) or +44 1253 866043 (overseas).

Taffy Jones

Member **Derek Morris** sent a friend of his a copy of *Tiger News* which included details of the refurbishment of Taffy Jones' grave near Carmarthen which our President visited as one of the Trustees of the project formed to look after it. Vic Hand is an ex Apprentice Armourer as was Derek and he knew Group Captain Jones when he was Station Commander and OC 53 OTU at RAF Llandow in 1941 and 1942, Vic writes:

"Taffy designed an unofficial badge for 53OTU by adding wings to the tiger's head of his 74 Squadron, but I cannot recall the motto. Maybe it was in Welsh. He had a habit of raising his drinking arm to the horizontal when toasting 'One f-f-for the T-t-tiger' in his unfortunate but endearing stutter. Likewise when referring to we, his ground staff, as 'm-my m-mechanics.' He composed verses such as 'The Brave Old Fifty Third' as shown in his book Tiger Squadron and another I recall for his young pupil fighter pilots was

Always remember in air fighting
Close range and accurate sighting
Range judging done on Spitters
Makes a Heinkel give you jitters. (or words to that effect!)

"Once, when demonstrating a Spitfire take off he slithered to an ignominious halt at the end of the runway with wheels retracted. Unhurt and unfazed he ordered 'g-get m-me another S-Spitfire' and this time his take off was a good one! On another occasion he marched an entire course of pupils to the morgue to see for themselves the tragic results of flying indiscipline, such as foolhardy attempts to fly through an arch of the Severn Bridge.

"Sadly, Taffy's well known affinity with John Barleycorn probably contributed later to his enforced early retirement. A favourite pub was The Bear at Cowbridge where he was reputed to sink a dozen Baby Bass at a time! Likewise the occasional jaunt to the Seabank Hotel at Porthcawl.

"One night Taffy and some fellow officers were being driven from their Penlyn Castle Mess to a Station dance when they came across a group of girls looking lost and bewildered in the wartime blackout. Asking if they could help it transpired the girls were also bound for the dance but had arrived at the wrong side of the airfield. So Taffy kindly offered them a lift if they didn't mind sitting on the gents' laps. So the girls arrived at the dance where the ever chivalrous Taffy asked the girl who sat on his lap to dance. A few months later I happened to meet this same girl to whom I have now been very happily married for 64 years! Linda well remembers the kindness shown to herself and her friends the night she sat on the lap of and danced with the inimitable Group Captain Ira 'Taffy' Jones!"

Churchill's Funeral Cortege

The item about the pilots who followed Churchill's coffin at his funeral in the last *Tiger News* reminded **Bob Lightfoot** that he too was involved as he was one of the catafalque guards in Westminster Hall for the seven days up to the day of the funeral. "We stood guard for thirty minute sessions every hour through a six hour watch," he writes, "and were then relieved by one of the other watches from the Army, Navy or Marines. (Incidentally, many others in the RAF watch were from the Valiant force which had just been grounded following a wing spar crack.)

"At the time I was on the Lightning conversion course at Coltishall before joining 74 at Leuchars. At Colt I had the interesting challenge of flying the Lightning after a posting direct from a Jet Provost FTS at Acklington. The first few flights were quite stunning, particularly the second flight with an engine fire!"

Signatures Please!

I receive occasional requests from those who are looking for the signatures of air and ground crew who served during World War II. One such has recently arrived but this is a little different in that it came from the Czech Republic. Vitek Formanek is a 40 year old who has been interested in those who served during that time for many years now and has, in his native country, published seven books on the subject. He has also collected over 2,000 signatures. His last two concerned Allied airmen/groundcrew who became POWs and he would appreciate the opportunity of corresponding with them on that subject as well. If you wish to help **Vitek Formanek** his address is **V Raji 320, 533 41 Bohdanec, Czech Republic.**

Californian Tigers

In a zoo in California a mother tiger gave birth to a rare set of triplet tiger cubs. Unfortunately the cubs were born prematurely and died shortly afterwards. The mother tiger, after recovering from the delivery, then declined in health although physically she seemed to be fine. The vets charged with looking after her decided it was the loss of her litter that had caused her to fall into a depression and so they decided that if they could surrogate another mother's cubs she would perhaps improve. But there were no cubs in other zoos of the right age to introduce to the grieving mother. Sometimes though a mother of one species will take on the care of a different species. The only orphans that could be found were a litter of pigs so the zoo keepers wrapped them in a tiger skin and placed them around mother tiger. Did it work or did the piglets become pork chops? The answer is below.....



Wing Commander John Freeborn DFC* and 118 Squadron



Our own John Freeborn is always guest of honour at our Reunions and he considers his time as a Tiger before, during and after the Battle of Britain to be a highlight of his career. But he was also proud to be CO of 118 Squadron to which he was posted at Coltishall in June 1943 before the squadron moved north to Peterhead for defensive duties in northern Scotland in the September of that year. In mid-January 1944 Sqn Ldr P W E Heppell DFC took over command when John, at the age of 23, went on to become OC of 286 Wing in Italy.

In October 2006, thanks to the considerable efforts of Wilf Crutchley, a 118 Squadron reunion was held at the Royal Court Hotel in Coventry and as a former Commanding Officer John was their guest of honour on the evening. A few weeks after the reunion John was invited back to the hotel, together with Carl Hicks and Roy and Georgina Smith (all members of the Tiger Squadron Association), where he was given

lunch and then presented with a sweater with the 118 Squadron crest and a photo album commemorating the reunion.

Incidentally, if you would like to learn more of John's RAF Career, copies of *A Tiger's Tale*, written by Bob Cossey, are still available. For details please contact Bob.

Ian Cadwallader points out that the photograph of XL568 included in *Tiger News 43* was not in fact taken at Cosford but was one he took at RAF Horsham St Faith in 1959, not long after Geoff had collected it. Below is one definitely taken at Cosford shortly after the opening of the Cold War Exhibition there this March (and well worth a look). XL568 is, as you can see, suspended from the roof and in the context of the exhibition as a whole, which contains many fine aircraft in a first class state of preservation, cannot be missed!



Geoff Steggall writes: I was so delighted to see the photo of `my` old Hunter XL568 in *Tiger News 43*. I joined 74 on 15th December 1958 after a short course at RAF Chivenor which included familiarisation with the T7. On the 19th I went to the MU at RAF Kemble with Flt Lt Henry Riley to collect the T7 that had been allocated to 74. It was XL568, brand new and very shiny! As I was the Squadron QFI I had the task of introducing the aircraft to each of the squadron's pilots, some of whom were not too keen to be supervised and fly an aircraft with a less powerful engine than the MK 6!

In July 1959 I was lucky enough to be chosen as a `spare` T7 pilot for the Daily Mail Blériot Anniversary Air Race between London and Paris. I was not so pleased with the `spare` connotation until I was told I would be spending fourteen days in Paris! XL568 was obviously very pleased as well as she found her way to FAF Villacoublay with little hesitation. I was called upon to make one race attempt with Sqn Ldr Charles Maughan, the commanding officer of No.65 Squadron. Villacoublay to Biggin Hill in just over eighteen minutes helped to achieve a race attempt record time of 43 minutes 36 seconds. This time was improved upon during later attempts and the race was eventually won by the team led by Squadron Leader Maughan when he completed the course between Marble Arch and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in a time of 40 minutes 44 seconds, travelling by Royal Air Force Police motorcycle and Bristol Sycamore Helicopter as well as XL568. The prize money of £6,500 was donated to charity.



My last trip in XL568 was on 18th July 1961. But the story is not quite ended. My last flying tour before I left the RAF in 1984 was at RAF Finningley on the Jet Provost Mk 5. On 25th April 1979 RAF Kemble was a refuelling stop on a low level sortie. I went into a hangar there to look at some Hunters and to my surprise XL568 was there, no longer new but still very shiny. I was sure that she said `take me away from this MU, I want to fly again!`

I am so pleased to see her restored and to know she was not scrapped nor had she ended her days in a smoking hole. Thank you Cosford.

*XL568 in action at Villacoublay with Charles Maughan climbing in during the race attempt mentioned above.
Via Geoff Steggall.*

Cruciform or Cuneiform?

In *Tiger News* 43 I published a letter from Sqn Ldr Chris Horn on the subject of Edgar Walsh`s theories regarding the supposed existence of a phenomena known as the Airman`s Cross. In Chris`s original letter he stated `the cruciform shadow of the aircraft spoke for itself,` meaning that it was not too difficult to know that the shadow of an aeroplane should resemble a Christian cross. Unfortunately in the transcription to the pages of *Tiger News* `cruciform` became `cuneiform` which of course suggests that an aeroplane`s shadow looks like a character from ancient Mesopotamian writing! My apologies for the error.

Vampires to Italy and Bluebird in America

Peter Carr was CO of the Tigers from July 1959 until February 1960, at which time he left the RAF to join Donald Campbell's team in his attempt on the world land speed record (Peter was first reserve driver). Amongst the squadrons he served with before 74 was 73, commanded at that time by Battle of Britain veteran Bobby Oxspring. In 1948 the squadron, then based at Ta Kali in Malta, received Vampire F Mk 3s to replace their Spitfires, thus becoming one of the first two operational jet fighter squadrons outside Europe - 32 Sqn at Nicosia was the other. In September 1949 Sqn Ldr Oxspring had the dubious honour of leading a squadron demonstration visit to Italy - dubious because the entire formation was lost near Milan. The squadron had been invited as guests of the Italian Air Force and Milan Aero Club to appear in a series of air shows as part of a good will tour. Alongside Bobby Oxspring were Flt Lt Frank Sumner, Fl Off Derrick Grubb, PII Geoff Parker and PII Peter Carr.

On September 22nd the formation set off for Rome where, after an overnight stay, they prepared to fly on to Malpensa, twenty miles to the west of Milan, which they were to use as a base because of the airfield's extended runway. Take off was at 1000 hours and course was set. Then the CO's radio failed but, nothing daunted, forty miles out from Milan he signalled the others by wagging his wings to close up to overfly the city to let them know we had arrived. Most of the inhabitants would never have seen let alone heard a jet before. This was completed successfully but then visibility came down to about a mile because of industrial haze. The formation headed for Malpensa but couldn't find it (they were map reading) so headed back to Milan. Three attempts to find the airfield there by the now thoroughly disorientated pilots failed too so they opted for the bomber base at Brescia. By now, after two hours airborne, their fuel was very, very low, with barely five minutes flying time remaining.

Attempts by those with working radios to contact Milan's emergency frequency were unsuccessful and with no airfield in sight their situation had become a very dangerous one. By now the formation was at 1,000 feet. Suddenly Bobby Oxspring started an approach to a small field, four hundred yards long. He went in under some power cables (50 feet above ground) and came to a safe stop. Each aircraft in the formation then attempted to do the same. Frank Sumner was next but he hit some trees at the end of his landing run. Derrick Grubb suddenly slewed as he hit an unseen ditch along the centre of the field. Geoff Parker decided that three aircraft in one small field didn't leave enough room for him so he tried to find an alternative. After an unsuccessful attempt into one field in which he suddenly realised he didn't have room and had to apply full power to lift his Vampire at a crazy angle over a bungalow roof, he dropped in over the hedge of the next field, undercarriage up, throwing up great clods of earth as he slid to a stop with one wingtip in a hedge. He couldn't stop the aircraft's engine because the HP cock linkage had buckled.

That left Peter Carr who had been watching with studied interest what had happened to his four colleagues. He decided to revert to the first field with three aircraft already in it. At least if his landing was a disaster help would be close at hand for hauling him out of the wreckage!

I approached slowly with my wheels up for the shortest possible landing but just before the roundout I noticed to my dismay that two or three people were running from the hedge on the left across my intended landing path. Full power was immediately applied for the overshoot but by then the aircraft was too low and actually slid on its belly some distance before climbing away. When I tried to throttle back, however, I found that it had jammed in the fully open position, caused apparently by the fuel mechanism on the underside of the engine being damaged when the aircraft hit the ground. It was difficult to give calm consideration to finding a larger and more suitable field for an engine off landing whilst rushing around at low level with full power and a dangerously low fuel state. A reasonable field some 600 yards long did appear however but despite my shutting down the engine at what appeared to be the appropriate moment on the approach, plus use of the speed brakes, flaps and undercarriage, I was obviously too conscious of the danger of undershooting with a dead engine because I crossed the threshold too fast, touching down some 300 yards past the intended touchdown point. From then onwards the ride was very fast and completely uncontrolled through the hedge at the far end, then a small forest and finally a garden, before coming to rest in a stream alongside a lone farmhouse.

Amazingly, apart from a few outwardly visible dents, the Vampire was essentially in one piece (although it was later judged damaged beyond repair) and Peter was uninjured. He was able to walk away with only his pride damaged and as soon as the five pilots had rested they were taken to the Grand Hotel on the shores of Lake Maggiore, five dirty, dishevelled and disheartened men in opulent surroundings. The squadron's Engineering Officer was informed of what had happened and he arranged for four replacement aircraft to be flown out - they arrived the next day - and the scheduled displays went ahead.

A great display of flying skill coupled with good fortune meant that the five had miraculously escaped from what could have been an awful catastrophe. The only injury was Frank Sumner's broken ankle, sustained when he jumped out of his cockpit! And as Peter says, some good did come out of the goodwill tour, for the Italians were so impressed with the structural integrity of the Vampire after so much tree felling they built 1,500 under licence.

After 73 Squadron Pete had a further Vampire tour, this time with 54 at Odiham, then two years at Leconfield as PAI instructor and was then on exchange with the USAF at Nellis AFB for a further two. From Nellis he went to 74.



Peter Carr's slightly bent Vampire parked in a rustic setting some twenty yards from the Italian farmhouse. The landing run cut through a swathe of trees (seen in the background) and then veered to the right at the last moment which saved the farmhouse and, incidentally, Peter.

A final word on Pete's later involvement with Donald Campbell. "During my time at Nellis I was asked to provide what assistance I could to Donald Campbell who was making an attempt on the world water speed record at Lake Mead. I did this, although it was initially unsuccessful because after the first run whilst *Bluebird* was being refuelled, wash from the dozens of spectator boats flooded the engine jet pipes and it started to sink. It was stopped from doing so and dragged towards dry land but was badly damaged underneath and that attempt had to be abandoned. *Bluebird* was repaired at Nellis by kind permission of General Roberts, the base commander, and a further attempt a fortnight later raised the record to 216.20 mph. In the process I became quite friendly with Campbell and later he offered me the post of Project Director and reserve driver on his land speed record attempts in the early sixties. The offer came not long after Duncan Sandys' infamous White Paper in which there were to be no more manned aircraft so I took the more exciting offer. Donald Campbell pulled a few strings, I got early retirement in March 1960 and I stayed with him until mid 1961. Of course the White Paper was hopelessly wrong and I lost out on commanding the first Lightning squadron which 74 became within six months. Duncan Sandys doesn't feature on my list of most popular characters!"



Frank Sumner`s resting place where he broke his ankle after undoing his harness and falling into the ditch. Note the bicycles parked against the tailboom of the aircraft and another Vampire in the field. beyond.

.With thanks to Peter Carr, to Don Minterne`s book 73 Squadron and to De Havilland Vampire by D. Watkins.

Why did John Colin Mungo Park crash?

Ian Simpson offers some fresh thoughts as to what might have happened when Sqn Ldr Mungo Park was shot down on 27th June 1941 by looking at the photos of the crash site previously published in Tiger News.

The full facts of Mungo Park`s demise may never come to light, but the photographs do reveal some possibilities.

It would seem X4668 came to earth in a dive at something akin to an angle of 40 ° and with its starboard wing down on impact. The front of the engine is partially buried in what appears to be a crop field, as is the starboard cannon. By this date the weather had held fine for a number of days and so the ground, although cultivated, would be relatively hard. The resulting impact brought the aircraft to an immediate halt and the airframe has shattered into various sections. The engine remained embedded at the angle of entry. The tail unit, while detached, appears sound although the rudder is not clearly visible.

One of the propeller blades appears undamaged suggesting that the engine was not under power at the time of impact. There is at least one significant hole to the port side of the top engine cowling, consistent with a cannon strike, which presumably disabled the engine. There doesn't appear to be any evidence of a major fire, either in the air or from the resulting impact with the ground. Witnesses on the ground did report a trail of smoke from the aircraft which was probably burning oil. There are two further holes in the lower rear fuselage, one to each side and with what appears to be the exit hole on the port side, but not consistent with a large calibre weapon, but possibly a machine gun round. Could this have damaged a control wire run?

The cockpit is substantially damaged to the port side which is slightly odd given that the aircraft hit the ground starboard wing down and broke up (one of the major breakages tearing the structure behind the cockpit area). The starboard cockpit side remained relatively undamaged and Mungo Park's body fell partially out of the cockpit onto the port wing root/trailing edge. Curiously someone has removed his left shoe and socks after his body was removed from the crash position. (His right shoe may have been dislodged in the crash)

Shortly before his death references to Mungo Park are missing from the 74 Squadron Operational Record Book - he was probably on leave. Having been operational since the onset of war he must have been ready for a break and you could argue should have been rested longer. Perhaps in a careless moment he rode his luck and paid the ultimate price. With a shot up engine trailing smoke, most pilots would react by taking to their parachute. However on June 16th he had survived such a scenario and made a safe forced landing. Could he again have been attempting another forced landing in a damaged aircraft but this time stalled and crashed? I don't think so as the extent of damage to X4668 is consistent with a fairly high-speed impact. I suspect he was killed in the attack and his Spitfire flew on until coming to earth. No other combats were recorded in the immediate area of his crash on the day, giving credence to X4668 continuing flight some time after being engaged and damaged.

Luftwaffe claims for aircraft destroyed on 27th June came from:

Ltn Siegfried Schnell	4/JG2	Spitfire	21:30
Ltn Siegfried Schnell	4/JG2	Spitfire	21:32
Hptm Rolf Pingel	Stab I/JG26	Spitfire	21:43
Major Wilhelm Balthasar	Stab/JG2	Spitfire	22:03
Major Wilhelm Balthasar	Stab/JG2	Spitfire	22:07

There was also a claim from Hptm Gerd Schopfel of Stab III/JG26 but all the more reliable sources state this was a Hurricane and was timed at 17:05 - thus outside the scope of Mungo Park's demise.

NB **Chris Faux**, Mungo`s nephew, is an orthopaedic surgeon and he and his colleagues, having examined the photos carefully, have made the following observations.

The position of the legs with reference to the body is abnormal. The left leg is sharply internally rotated and suggests a knee or upper tibial injury: the right leg is sharply externally rotated and possibly short, consistent with a femoral fracture but the definition is not that clear to be more certain. But where is the right flying boot? Has it been pulled off? Or is what we can see a sock or the sole of the Mungo`s boot? It looks totally different from the left foot.

Purely as a Matter of Interest - Again.

You may recall that a few issues ago I included a run down of the means by which the Airbus 380 wings were transported from Broughton to Toulouse. In the wake of the successful first flight of the 800 passenger capable aircraft and its continuing trials, testing and troubled production, you may be interested in more such details (courtesy of the journal of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport)

Seventeen airlines have ordered 166 A380s AT \$250 million each as at the beginning of 2007. But the aircraft is so much larger than any other that airports face the daunting prospect of making major design changes to accommodate it - or, like Dubai, building a new terminal specifically for it. Some 18,000 suppliers in 30 countries are involved in the aircraft's construction. But of all the components the wings are considered the most complex. The supply chain which enables them to be built looks as follows:

- 1 It starts in Western Australia where miners dig up a reddish, clay like material containing bauxite, the principal ore of aluminium, which makes up the basic structure of the A380. Bauxite is ground down and mixed with caustic soda and lime then heated to a granulated state.
- 2 It is then shipped to a smelting plant in Texas where it is poured into large pots and shocked with electricity to turn it into hard aluminium ingots the size of mattresses.
- 3 The ingots are shipped to the world's largest aluminium mill in Iowa. Stretching 1.2 miles along the Mississippi River it is the only mill that can fabricate aluminium pieces large enough for the A380. They are so long that Airbus had to design a single-bed truck trailer that can extend out, like a telescope, to carry the metal plates to Baltimore.
- 4 From Baltimore they are shipped to Broughton - home to the world's largest wing assembly plant covering an area of 12 football pitches.
- 5 The aluminium plates arrive in the basic shape of a wing. The wing skins are treated in a chemical bath. A three storey high automatic robotic riveting machine attaches the skins to a row of ribs made of composites and metals. 750,000 fasteners are used to attach the skins with difficulty to reach spots riveted by hand.
- 6 Workers then install the wing's internal equipment - electrical wiring, hydraulic and fuel systems and an air pump the size of a family car.

Other statistics:

- 1 The aircraft's efficiency is expected to reduce seat-mile costs by up to 20%.
- 2 Its range will be 10% longer than other large aircraft (up to 8,000 miles for the 550 seat version)
- 3 The freighter version will carry 150 tons over 5,600 miles.
- 4 The aircraft has `significantly reduced noise and emission levels.
- 5 It will burn 12% less fuel than competitors which at less than 3 litres of fuel per passenger over 100 kilometres is comparable to a family car.

Tailpiece From the collection of the late Hugh Murland are these shots of 74` s Spitfires in Germany towards the end of World War II.

Spitfire IXs with a 500 pounder (below), a 500 pounder and rockets (right) and an interesting shot taken from the prop spinner (bottom right). Ready to fly back from Drope in Germany to Colerne at the end of the War (centre below) are Gp Capt Guinness OC 145 Wing (of which 74 was a component) Wg Cdr Sampson, the Wing Leader and Fl Lt Charles, the Wing IO.

