

Tiger News No 46

Compiled by Bob Cossey

Association President	Air Marshal Cliff Spink CB, CBE, FCMI, FRAeS
Honorary Vice President	AVM B L Robinson FRAeS FCMI
Association Chairman	Gp Capt Dick Northcote OBE BA
Association Treasurer	Rhod Smart
Association Secretary	Bob Cossey BA (Hons)

Special 90th Anniversary Issue

The 90th Anniversary Reunion

Thanks to the 101 Tigers who travelled down to the Hilton Hotel at Warwick for this year's Reunion on March 1st the weekend was a great success with all who attended remarking on how much they had enjoyed it, particularly those who were present for the first time. There is no doubt at all that what we have in the Association is a very special camaraderie which becomes ever more apparent as each year passes. This camaraderie, this Tiger spirit, is what made 74 such a fine squadron when it was operational: to experience it when it is no longer operational is testimony to the very special people who are determined to maintain what they were part of when they served. It's also a remarkable thing to realise that Association membership increases year by year. In each Tiger News we read of departed friends but these are outweighed by numbers of joining friends. Since 1992 when the Association reformed membership has increased from 140 to 260. This number includes Associate Members too - historians, researchers, those who served on the same station as 74, family and friends of ex-Tigers and so forth - all of which goes to show that interest in the squadron and all it stands for has never been greater. Which gives us great hope for the future of the Association of course. We will be around for a few years yet!

As you see from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting, our President, Air Vice Marshal Boz Robinson, has decided to retire. Boz has been a great advocate of the Association and the squadron itself, promoting both whenever he has had the opportunity. We thank him sincerely for that and wish him well for the future in his new home in Thailand. Boz becomes Honorary Vice President and we look forward to seeing him at future Reunions. Air Marshal Cliff Spink becomes our new President. Cliff was one of the four Commanding Officers of the Tigers after their reformation on the Phantom. Like Boz he is a great advocate of his former squadron and has always considered it to be the premier squadron with which he served - you only need to look at the markings on his Spitfire to understand that! We look forward greatly to Cliff's term of office which we hope will last equally as long as Boz's sixteen years!

The story of the evening is best told in the photographs on the following pages. What must be mentioned first though are the following points.

- Dr Lawrence Lewin and his wife Lin flew over from the USA to join us. Lawrence has become a good friend of our own John Freeborn and has consequently become an Associate Member. He met John for the first time at Warwick - hitherto they have known each other only through the medium of the telephone or correspondence. Lawrence writes later in this issue about his particular interest in the Spitfire.
- Another long distance traveller was Ian Cadwallader who flew from New Zealand to join us. Ian was a Tiger in the days of the Hunter and you will have become familiar with some of his photographs in Tiger News over the years.
- Presentations of inscribed cut glass paperweights were made to those present who served with the Squadron during World War II as air or ground crew - and to the widows of those who served. Wing Commander John Freeborn DFC*, Squadron Leader Doug Tidy MA, Flt Lt Derek Morris, Warrant Officer Ray Racy, LAC Albert Bartholomew, Mrs Irene Skinner, Mrs Angela Cordell and Mrs Josephine Smith were those honoured.
- Everyone who attended received a commemorative glass inscribed with the Squadron crest and '90th Anniversary.'
- The RAF Reserve Collection at RAF Stafford is where all 74's surviving artefacts and memorabilia, paintings, prints and diaries were stored upon their disbandment in 2000. It is those which will form the core of the Tiger Squadron Museum. A selection was chosen for display in the hotel over the weekend and special thanks are due to Kev Wooff for collecting and returning it.
- Special thanks are also due to Con Spirito, the string quartet which entertained us with light classics during the dinner. Their presence added just the right note of sophistication to proceedings!
- Finally, but by no means least, our appreciation must be tendered to the Hilton Hotel. Without a good hotel and an attentive staff such events as ours are not all they could be. This event was everything it could be thanks to the efficiency, friendliness and professionalism of all concerned.



Above - Air Marshal Cliff Spink and Air Vice Marshal Boz Robinson. Boz stood down as President and Cliff was appointed as President in his place with Boz now Honorary Vice President. Below left - the Presidential address complete with new headgear which henceforth shall constitute the President's badge of office!



Above right - presentations to honour two Senior Tigers, Doug Tidy and Ray Racy.



Veteran of the Battle of Britain, Wing Commander John Freeborn DFC* is always our guest of honour. Here he is with Chairman Dick Northcote and enthusiastically applauded by Lin Lewin who with Dr Lawrence Lewin were our guests from California.



Bart Bartholomew was a Tiger in 1944 and 1945. Irene Skinner's husband, the late Bill Skinner, was one of the longest serving Tigers of the war, some of that time being spent as a POW.

On the following pages are a selection of images of attendees - I only wish that everyone could be featured but with 101 Tigers and Tigresses attending that isn't possible I'm afraid. Apologies to those overlooked- it may be your turn next year!



David Jones, John Atkinson and Ian Cadwallader



A selection of Tengah Tigers and Tigresses



John and Annabelle Howe



John and Margie Crow



Stan Ralph and Mike Rigg



Lawrence Lewin, Josephine Smith and Doug Tidy

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Association
Saturday March 1st 2008 at the Hilton Hotel Warwick**

1. Apologies were received from Henry Riley, Billy Drake, Brian Harris, Geoff Steggall, Heather Cadwallader, Bill Preece, John Yeo, Debbie Parker, Trevor and Hanne McDonald Bennett, Henry Lether, Nick Spiller, Pete and Sue Shaw, Ian and Liz Hargreaves, Bryan Harvey and Ian Papworth.
2. Chairman Dick Northcote welcomed all present to the 90th Anniversary Reunion and thanked all those who had played a part in making it possible. He reminded members of the aims and objectives of the Association which were formulated when it was reformed in 1992 under the chairmanship of Group Captain Graham Clarke.
3. AVM Boz Robinson has been the Association President since that time but he has now decided to retire after sixteen years in post. To that end Air Marshal Cliff Spink, currently the Honorary Vice President, has been approached as to his willingness to take on AVM Robinson's former role and he has agreed. Thus Doug Tidy proposed that the appointment be made. Pat Thurlow seconded the proposal. AVM Robinson becomes the Association's Honorary Vice President.
4. The minutes of the previous AGM were agreed. There were no matters arising not covered under the present agenda.
5. The Treasurer's Report was presented by Rhod Smart. A full copy of the accounts is available on request.
6. Committee members offered themselves *en bloc* for re-election and this was endorsed by all present. For the year 2008 to 2009, in addition to the newly appointed President, the Officers of the Association will therefore be:

Chairman - Dick Northcote

Treasurer - Rhod Smart

Secretary - Bob Cossey

7. John Crow has created a first class website which comes up as No 1 on Google when interrogated and for which he has considerable plans for enhancing in the twelve months ahead. This includes the creation of a photographic archive for which he invites members to send in their images, preferably in digital form. John was concerned that some members had not had the opportunity to view the website which Rhod was able to project for those present to see. He asked that previous webmaster Iain Walsh's generosity in paying the domain name fee until 2009 be recognised and our thanks for his doing so be recorded.
8. The Tiger Museum funding appeal is gathering pace and considerable monies have already been raised [as can be seen from the accounts]. This is mainly thanks to the generosity of members who have made donations outright or have fund raised on the Association's behalf and our particular thanks go to them. Bob Cossey reported on the launch in the Spring of a major raffle with some top class prizes which will be promoted within the Association and nationally by ourselves and the City of Norwich Aviation Museum where the Tiger Squadron Museum will be situated. The raffle will be administered under the auspices of CNAM`s charity registration. Dick, Rhod and Bob are meeting Rob Walden, CNAM`s curator and Kelvin Sloper, CNAM`s Treasurer, to finalise details.
9. **Any other business.** The venue for the 2009 Reunion was discussed. The reason for the move to Warwick was the ongoing refurbishment of the Falcon which has clashed with our annual date. Whether we return to the Falcon depends on various factors - members' preferences and the weekend rate amongst them. Peter Clarke will be attending a RAF Police reunion at the Falcon in the Spring and he will report back on the new look hotel as will Dick Northcote when he is next in Stratford. Once all relevant information has been collected the matter will be put to the vote.
10. **Date of Next Meeting.** 7th March 2009



Part of the special 90th Anniversary display mounted at the Reunion

The **Malan Memorial Sword**, along with the Squadron Silver (some examples of which can be seen on page 17), is kept in the Officer's Mess at RAF Valley and we were able to arrange its presence at the Reunion. Furthermore, with five former Commanding Officers of 74 Squadron present it was the ideal opportunity for an historic photo call.



From left to right - Gp Capt Graham Clarke, Gp Capt Dick Northcote, Sqn Ldr Peter Carr, Air Vice Marshal John Howe & Air Marshal Cliff Spink

www.74squadron.org.uk

John Crow has spent a lot of time developing the Squadron website with new features regularly being added and with plans for extending it further in the year ahead. The work he does is very important to the Association for not only do researchers and historians as well as those with a general interest find much that is of use to them within its pages (and when 74 Squadron is Googled the website comes up as Number One!) but it has become an invaluable point of contact which leads to an increasing number of Tigers joining the Association. When you visit the site, please leave a message in the Guest book from time to time - it's good to know who is using it and it's good for John to get some feedback as well.

As many of you may know John has been fighting prostate cancer for five years and true Tiger that he is he manages to lead a full life at the same time. One of the features of the website is a series of articles John has written about the condition - so please, if you haven't done so, read them. If you don't have access to the internet and would like to read them please get in touch and a printed copy can be sent to you.



Farewell To Old Tigers

We were told of the death of **Hugh Rees** just as the last *Tiger News* was going to print. His wife Liz has since told me about his funeral:

'We had a wonderful celebration of Hugh's life' she wrote. 'The church was packed with family and friends and the whole service paid a great tribute to a very gentle and good man. I know he was my dearest love but he was such a good person and had such a strong faith in God and love for his fellow man. The local Air Crew Association (he was their Chairman for ten years until he became too ill) were in their best bib and tucker as a guard of honour at the church door and the standard bearer did a wonderful job with the standard. Members of the local Probus group were there (he was a past President) and his friends from the Aviation and Military History Groups he belonged to also came as did so many of his friends from his past working life. The Revd Simon Stevenette knew Hugh well and in his address he captured the essence of my husband's warmth and humour and his love of the RAF, especially his beloved Tiger Squadron. Our sons Michael and David read some wonderful words about what their father meant to them and another vicar read some words from me. There was a special hymn from our wedding and the service ended with 'Guide me O thou great Jehovah' with its strong associations with Wales and with Rugby, both of which he loved. Although it was such a very sad event it also was uplifting and joyful too and a fitting farewell to Hugh. Thank you to all the Tigers for your kind thoughts and support.'

From the Lightning days we sadly have to report the death of **Gerry Crumbie** who died on 7th February. Gerry was on 74 when they were based at Leuchars flying the F3 then F6 versions of the aircraft.



Joyce Webster was the widow of Eden Webster and both were regular attendees of Reunions. Eden was a Tiger during the early days of the Second World War and was responsible for looking after Sailor Malan's aircraft. Joyce's father was in the RAF as well, serving with 1 Squadron during the First World War. They were a charming couple and they will be greatly missed as they made so many friends amongst their fellow Tigers and Tigresses. The world will be a poorer place without the



Reg Grundy died on 16th September after a long residence in Caroline House at the Colman Hospital in Norwich. He was with 74 on Meteors, Hunters and Lightnings at Horsham St Faith and Coltishall, serving with the Squadron between 1954 and 1963 as an airframe fitter and holding the rank of Sergeant. After the Tigers Reg served with 1417 Flight at Aden, 226 OCU back at Coltishall, 19 Squadron at Gutersloh and at Marham working on technical decoding. In 1976 he was discharged on medical grounds from the RAF then twenty nine years ago he went into Caroline House for a fortnight's rehabilitation having been diagnosed with MS - and never came out. In the process he became the longest serving resident of the neurological unit and became a legend in his own wheelchair which he got around in by operating it with his mouth and chin. With his communication pipe he could switch lights on and off and operate his TV and radio - but he used to joke that it could never

pick out horses that won. In short he was an inspiration to all around him and will not easily be forgotten by all those whose lives he touched.

George Farley was a Tiger in 1943 serving in the Middle and Near East. He died in January and his family prepared this obituary.

Born to the sound of Bow Bells on 10th April 1922 George was proud to say he was a Cockney. He was good at sport and at Richmond ice rink excelled at figure skating and ice hockey. The son of a craftsman he inherited the desire to create and always had a project on hand, whether it was to build his own boat or assist Margaret

Thatcher with his 'Inflation Negation Plan'. When the family moved to Three Bridges, he helped his father to build a new home.

George was a good scholar, always with a clear understanding. He studied aeronautical engineering design at Kingston Polytechnic. It was a time of rapid development in the aviation industry and his sister Kathleen got him a job at Hawker Siddeley Aircraft in Kingston. But his main interest in life was not to design aircraft but to fly them and he was accepted into the Royal Air Force on 12th October 1940 and was awarded his Wings eleven months later. His log books show that he spent time in Africa flying a variety of aircraft including Spitfires and Hurricanes. Whilst there he was involved in an accident as passenger in a jeep and suffered a badly damaged left arm. No longer able to fly, he was demobbed from the RAF, but his own determination and with the attention of a top surgeon his arm was given back most of its mobility.



Before long he was back in the aircraft industry at De Havilland's at Kingston where he worked on the Comet and the Venom. At the same time he was phasing in some flying again and on 15th March 1949 he rejoined the RAF. He was a highly capable pilot and was the envy of colleagues because he understood the dynamics of flight so well. He spent the majority of his career training others. He designed flying aids to calculate range and to demonstrate flying on one engine. For this and his other achievements he was awarded the AFC.

When he left the RAF the family home was established near Chichester. He was employed by a number of airlines such as British Eagle, Lloyd, Britannia and spent time in Kuwait in pilot training. He was in some scrapes, the worst of which was a 'wheels up' landing at RAF Manston in Kent. Sadly a bad heart condition finished his flying career and he spent the rest of his life in management. When his children flew the nest George and Marie moved to Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch on the Isle of Anglesey where, far from resting, he built a conservatory, a summer house, three boats, two model aircraft, lots of furniture and maintained the car fleet!

The Tigers and Hurricanes

We featured a story in the last issue about the Hurricanes 74 flew in the Middle East. This was a confusing period in the Squadron's history as they had lost all their Spitfires when the ship carrying them was sunk, were then without aircraft for a while with some aircrew going to 73 Squadron and ground crew working on USAAC Liberators and finally second hand Hurricanes arriving in dribs and drabs which the Tigers flew until they finally got their replacement Spitfires! The photographs we featured were of Hurricane BP708 - and member Brian 'Titch' Harris confirms that this was assigned to 74 for he consulted his log book and found that he had flown it twice.

The Tigers At Duxford - have you had the opportunity to visit Duxford recently and look the new Airspace Hangar? If so you will have seen the 74 Squadron Lightning F1.



Elsewhere at Duxford the Tigers are well represented too - with a Phantom FGR2.....



.....and an F4J (now in USMC colours but it was one of the aircraft 74 flew from Wattisham). And our President's Spitfire qualifies as well of course with a Tiger on the engine cowling!



Spitfires and Me by Dr Lawrence Lewin.

American Lawrence Lewin has joined us as an Associate Member. He became interested in the Squadron through his correspondence with Wing Commander John Freeborn. Lawrence is one of the lucky civilians to have flown in a Spitfire and how that all came about he relates below. We were delighted that he and his wife Lin were able to join us at the Reunion this year.

My first recollection of this airplane was at the first movie I can remember seeing about World War II. This was a 1942 movie, "Eagle Squadron," with Robert Stack. I was 6 or 7 years old. There were "good guys" and "bad guys." The "good guys" wore handsome, dark uniforms and flew beautiful airplanes. The "bad guys" were Nazis and flew Messerschmitts. Identification was an easy process, and from that time forward, at least for the next several years, I wanted to fly a beautiful airplane and shoot down Nazis. (Nazis and Germans were synonymous.) I seem to recall the elliptical wing and the beautiful curve of the wing to fuselage fillet. I recall the roundels and the relative grace of the Spitfire by contrast to the angularity of the 109. The flight gear of the heroes was handsome as well.

During the war metal toys all but disappeared. There were punch out toys of cardboard and I recall P-40s, often with the shark's mouth of the Flying Tigers, F4Fs of the U.S. Navy and possibly a Spitfire. These were toys that I played with and I fantasised myself as the pilot shooting down the Nazis or killing the "dirty Japs." Life was quite simple and quite safe in my Chicago home. Somehow, somewhere in this, perhaps because of the sound of British accents or the heroic musical accompaniments, my perceived heroic fantasy was to fly Spitfires in the RAF. I had no idea at that time of the actual existence of Eagle Squadrons comprising Americans who had done just that.

The Spitfire was a real airplane, however, and it was absolutely beautiful, fast and powerful, and it had weapons with which to express anger.... Good self-righteous anger! The movie cuts from a Messerschmitt in the sights of the British pilot, the four Browning machine guns in the wing flashing as they were fired, the bullets striking home, the pilot of the enemy aircraft struck and reeling over, the Messerschmitt rolling onto its back and arcing downward, streaming smoke and crashing into the sea. Then the heroic pilot returned home to a warm greeting from comrades and pretty girls, in that order. There was a cigarette called "Wings." One of my aunts smoked this cigarette and gave me the cards which came with it. These included a Spitfire and there was a description, as I recall, on the back of it. Thus Rolls Royce Merlin entered my vocabulary and a top speed of 378 or 382 m.p.h. sticks in my mind.

Airplane models in balsa and tissue paper were available but terribly complicated for my skills. You had to cut out the fuselage formers and invariably I failed at this. But the plans showed a very recognisable shape and labelled features such as the underwing radiator, the oil cooler, the carburettor air intake. I could see the landing gear and the wheel wells in the wing and the fixed tail wheel. The box art always promised a very realistic model but the skills of the builder were tested and always found wanting. There were other collecting cards with less than accurate representations, including something from a series called "War Gum" which, for a penny, came with a picture as opposed to a photograph and a piece of bubble gum.

The public library was a great source of knowledge even though it was a mile and a half away and I was limited by the number of books that could be withdrawn at one time. Finally - and this sealed it - The Museum of Science and Industry on Chicago's south side had an exhibition that showed me the very first

Spitfire I ever saw. I remember the sand and spinach dull paint and the light blue underside and the roundels and the machine gun ports. It was hanging from the ceiling and my recollection was that it was a veteran aircraft that had seen service and was brought over to the United States along with a Junkers Ju 87 Stuka dive bomber that had been captured in Africa. The descriptions were factual. The German plane was both fearsome and ugly in its angularity. It had bullet holes in it and, as I recall from a description on the accompanying placards, there was an account of its characteristics. Here was the conqueror and the conquered, the aesthetic and the ugly, the good and the bad. I was hooked! For life! The first thing I would do on many a return trip to the museum is return to that gallery to soak up another dose of intoxicating fantasy. This is the story of my first love and how it began and how other, later and more important objects of love and pursuit were once merely impediments and obstacles between me and my airplane fantasy.

Fuelled by the heroic movies of the 1940s I could dream of being a fighter pilot. At age eleven or twelve my nearsightedness brought on the need to wear glasses and the pilot fantasy receded into the background. The big choice soon became what career I wanted to pursue as an adult. In that decision I was influenced by a desire to be my own boss. The models of success in this area were a maternal uncle who was a physician in San Pedro California, where he had settled after service in the Army Medical Corps; and a paternal uncle who had been an MP and returned to a legal practice in Chicago. Proximity to Uncle Herb permitted me to work in his office, filing papers and going to lunch with him and his lawyer friends. It wasn't the drama of *The Defenders* on television and by default I decided to be a physician. The intensity of the preparation and the concentration on achieving this goal put any dream of flying into the background. An interest in cars and a shift of focus to powerful terrestrial locomotion appeared to displace the dreams of boyhood. Still, spare time reading was about World War II and airplanes. In the 1970s, my medical career seemingly well anchored, my second wife Jaroslava encouraged me to take action on the dream of being a pilot and I learned to fly in a Cessna 150 - an underpowered, high wing tricycle landing geared trainer. I think I was pretty average in my skills and found wanting on my first check flight for a licence. I remember my surprise when the check pilot informed me that I was to land the plane without using flaps and I was expected to sideslip the plane to line it up on the runway from an approach that was too high and fast. I failed and managed to pass on a second check ride, though I still think that I couldn't manage a successful side slip. Recognising that an awful lot of time and effort was going to be necessary if I was going to move beyond mediocrity and a good deal of money was necessary (even then a really high performance aircraft would be out of financial reach as well as beyond the level of aeronautical skill that I seemed capable of attaining) I gave up flying after about fifty five hours.

But I continued to read about the war and flying and went through a series of sports cars, almost all Porsches, with more than twice the horsepower and a higher top speed than my Cessna. My thrills were much closer to the ground and quite happily confined to two dimensions. There was a store in our area that catered to military enthusiasts and aviation enthusiasts in particular. He made his money by selling prints by aviation artists and selling models, books, photographs and autographs. He also organised dinners with World War II pilots of note. My wife, Lin, and I would attend these dinners at the Nieuport 17 Restaurant. One month it would be veterans of the Flying Tigers, the next veterans of the Eagle Squadrons, then pilots of the USN and USMC from the Pacific theatre. At these dinners I met Adolf Galland, a gentleman pilot of the old school who stood up to Goering when the RHeichsmarschal asked what was needed to defeat the British in the fall of 1940. His answer.... "a squadron of Spitfires..." was widely quoted in post-war aviation circles. I also met the famous Zero ace, Saburo Sakai, years after reading his flying memoirs. It was about as close to boyhood fantasy as I thought I would ever get.

Some years later Lin and I found ourselves at Cambridge University taking a three week course on "Postwar Britain, Changing Society, Changing Values." Mixing military history with sociology I took advantage of the proximity of Duxford to show her an actual Spitfire. This was the place where I had first heard a Merlin powered Spitfire in 1969. The thrill of seeing a Spitfire flying over a Battle of Britain airfield was another unforgettable experience. I took Lin from one hangar to another and pointed out the location of the underwing radiators in the Spitfire, the under the fuselage radiator in the Hurricane and comparing the solution that Mitchell achieved with the grace of the Spitfire compromising ground stability with its narrow based landing gear to the Hurricane solution. On and on I went, trying to inspire the same kind of awe and admiration I felt, but she seemed more interested in talking to the white coverall clad men who were performing various maintenance activities on the airworthy planes in the Imperial War Museum collection. So it seemed to end, although there were various coy questions about whether Mustangs were as memorable as Spitfires and the questions as to whether I harboured a desire to ever fly in one. Several years later Lin startled me by saying that if I would lose twenty five pounds she would have a wonderful surprise for me. As I have been in some stage of overweight from about age seven onward and she was well aware of this flaw, it seemed odd that she would pick this moment to find fault with me. She would give me no further details. However, she said it would be really worthwhile and I went along with this, dropping about the required weight only to learn that this would earn me a trip to Aspen, Colorado, in February.

To understand the immediate disappointment of this revelation it must be understood that the only other time I had been to Aspen was to a medical conference during the ski season. This had provided me with more acquaintance with the sport of skiing than I wanted and the opportunity to prove that even mediocrity was beyond the skill level to which I could aspire. Little old ladies were trying to help me to stand, an effort that precluded taking the next step. Aspen in February demanded great faith in my wife!

I had lost the weight, or most of it, never understanding quite why, until the plane landed at the snow covered airport and we were greeted by a man with a white BMW 2002. This was Bill Greenwood and we went off to a hangar at the airport and there it was, a Spitfire trainer, a two-seated rarity converted from the usual single seater configuration to assist transitioning pilots to learn to handle the high horsepower of a thoroughbred without breaking their necks. Of twenty or so conversions in 1945 perhaps four were still in existence and Lin had followed a trail from the Imperial War Museum and Duxford, through the actor, Cliff Robertson, to Bill Greenwood. Robertson's trainer was undergoing repairs and there was only Greenwood's in the United States and Lin, with all of her determination and considerable charm, convinced Bill to give me the flight that I had longed for since childhood. Right then and there I told her that she should never try to surprise me again because this was a feat that could never be approached, let alone equalled!

I helped Bill wash down the Spitfire prior to our flight scheduled for the next day and with Lin watching he handed me a series of papers, a release of legal responsibility for any unfortunate occurrence that might take place when an "experimental aircraft" left the ground. It seems that the FAA considers the Spitfire not to be a suitable passenger aircraft or a suitable aircraft for civil aviation. Lin realized now, to some extent, that this could turn out to be more than a joy ride. She gained no reassurance from a brief rehearsal of evacuation procedures consisting of releasing the shoulder harness but not the parachute harness, cranking back the aft canopy, lowering the tiny ledge door and leaping over the side of the cockpit into space, aiming for the left elevator and tucking in to avoid the vertical stabilizer. There

was no comfort in Bill's warning that when he declared an emergency I would have 30 seconds to leap before I was the sole occupant of the troubled plane and fifty five hours of flying time would be of no aid whatsoever.

The next day, with English fighter pilot goggles, I climbed aboard with my camera and the warning that we would be in grave trouble if the control wires were fouled by anything I should drop - and keep my feet off the rudder pedals and suck in my gut so the stick would have a freer fore and aft range on takeoff. The acceleration was exciting and the Merlin pulled to the right with Bill correcting with left rudder. We roared off smoothly for a thirty five minute flight punctuated by a mere 3G diving turn to buzz Bill's favourite restaurant on the ski slopes. I declined an aerobatic demonstration, being fairly well convinced that medicine was undoubtedly a better, as well as a safer, choice for my career. When the offer came to take the controls I took them and for about two glorious minutes I was a Spitfire pilot. Walter Mitty could not have imagined a greater triumph and this story has been recited at every opportunity since then, undoubtedly the jaw time exceeding the flight time by a factor of twenty!

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The Squadron Silver includes a splendid Spitfire, a menacing tiger and a shiny Lightning - all were at Warwick for the Reunion Dinner.



Tengah Groundcrew

Peter Osborn has been delving into his photo archive and come up with these shots of his fellow groundcrew at RAF Tengah.....



On the left is Peter himself.

Dinger Bell



Pete Anning



.....and (?) Hodges. Christian name anyone?