

## Newsletter No. 13 – March 2019

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

[jen@jennyharding.co.uk](mailto:jen@jennyharding.co.uk)



### Reflection

I am writing this on the day that the UK was supposed to be leaving the European Union – Brexit Day, March 29, 2019. Except that we haven't left and today, we don't know if we will, when we will or how we will leave. All options appear to be open. Whether you are a Leaver, a Remainer or somewhere in between, we are living in interesting times and we wait to see what will happen next week with Brexit Day now potentially being April 12.

Meantime, Springtime has arrived here – the daffodils and other spring bulbs are flowering, blossom is appearing on the trees and new lambs can be seen gambolling in the fields. This Sunday is Mothering Sunday but unlike the American Mothers' Day, it has a religious origin as the day when people would return to their 'mother' church. Half way through Lent, (the 40 days leading up to Easter Sunday) and marked by fasting from food and festivities (now people tend not to fast, but 'give up' something, eg. wine, chocolate), Mothering Sunday is a special day when traditionally, young people, mainly daughters, who were domestic servants were given a day off to visit their mother and family, and fasting rules were relaxed. As they walked home, they would pick wild flowers to take to church or give to their mother.

Half way between Mothering Sunday and Easter Sunday is the new Brexit Day. It remains to be seen if we really do 'Brexit' on April 12, but at the moment some are saying, "I did my best" with the extra unspoken words, "but I failed". I am sure that everyone reading this will have at some time, failed at something (Dave Stewart, Course 18, wrote to his instructor, Fred Brittain and asked Fred if he remembered his failure to land his airplane correctly during a cross country flight – but this failure didn't stop him graduating as a pilot – see 'The Instructors'). We all fail at things at times and then life can seem very dark and without promise, but perhaps it will help to reflect on the words of Henry Ford, who said, "*Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently*". Wise words indeed which promise hope!

**'Their efforts to preserve the freedom of the world were not in vain and will never be forgotten'**

*Jenifer Harding*

### Five 5BFTS Facts

Opened July 1941  
Closed September 1945

Riddle Field was 2,500 acres in size

Cost \$2 million to build

1434 graduates (1325 RAF and 109 USAAF)

23 RAF cadets died in training



Useful websites:

Clewiston Museum: <http://www.clewistonmuseum.org>

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Archives: [www.erau.edu/archives](http://www.erau.edu/archives)

#5 British Flying Training School: <http://www.5bfts.org.uk>

'George Hogarth – Clewiston and Beyond'. Memoires of George Hogarth, 5BFTS Course 3  
<http://commons.erau.edu/clewiston-beyond/1/>

Frederick J Brittain (Instructor): Flying was my Life 1918 – 2002 - [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)

Roy Mather DFC (Co 12): "A Pilot's Story – A Chesterfield Hero" [www.vickersvaliant.com](http://www.vickersvaliant.com)

US Contact: Harold Kosola – [hkairplane@aol.com](mailto:hkairplane@aol.com)

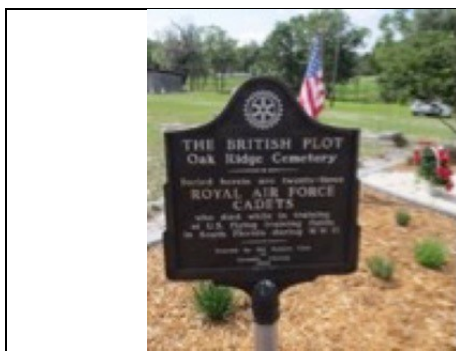
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### Annual British Memorial Service 2019

The next **Annual British Memorial Service** will be held on **May 27, 2019**, at the British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia, when we gather to remember the 23 RAF cadets who "*Crossed the river to rest in the shade of the trees*". They died during training and never left Florida to return to their homeland. John Paul Riddle's ashes are buried alongside the cadets.

Every annual service is special, and we owe an ongoing debt of gratitude to the Rotary Club of Arcadia for the organisation of the service and to the many others who contribute. I should like to thank Judy Fitzpatrick for all her hard work in organising the service.

And afterwards: If you feel in need of refreshment, can I recommend lunch at **Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit**, 10 South Polk Avenue, Arcadia, Florida 34266. Reservations are a good idea – phone 863-494-0615 or email [helenmc2010@live.com](mailto:helenmc2010@live.com). For more information about Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuits, and details of their menu, please visit: <http://marymargaretsteaandbiscuit.com>



#### The service starts at 10am

The Service is organised, as it has been for the past 62 years, by Arcadia Rotary Club  
Mailing address: PO Box 1492, Arcadia, FL 34265-1492

Telephone for information at 863-444-0664  
Email: [BritishMemorialService@gmail.com](mailto:BritishMemorialService@gmail.com)

**EVERYBODY IS WELCOME**

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## In Memoriam

### Dr Stuart James Cox (Co 11) died October 16, 2016

From time to time, I send a copy of a newsletter to 5BFTS Association members with whom I have lost touch, using their last known address before the Association disbanded in 2013. This Christmas, I sent a newsletter to Stuart Cox who lived in Kent. Sadly, unknown to me Stuart died in 2016, but his son, Bob found and read the newsletter I sent, and we have since spoken and shared memories and information. Bob told me that Stuart had written a brief history of his life and sent me a copy of the relevant pages where he wrote about his experiences in WW2 and the RAF. This is a fascinating and full account and it would not do it justice to summarise in a few words. So, this Obituary will be part 1 of Stuart's RAF life.



Course 11 'Listening Out'  
Flypaper April 2, 1943



Taken between 1944 and 1946



President - Queen's University  
Students Union © 1950

Stuart Cox was born on April 1, 1923 and lived in Chipstead, Surrey. Soon after leaving school, he saw an RAF advertisement for their first University Short Course entry. The RAF was expanding rapidly and there was a shortage of suitable entrants for commissioned rank, so successful applicants would be sent to a university for two terms and then enter the RAF as aircrew for the duration of the war. A place at university and a grant after the war was promised. Stuart applied and was successful and although he did not realise it at the time, it was a turning point in his life – had he not done this, he would never have gone to university after the war and qualified in medicine.

Stuart worked as a clerk in the City of London whilst waiting for further instructions from the Air Ministry. He was in London throughout the Battle of Britain and contributed to the war effort by becoming a member of the Home Guard. Eventually, he was told to report to Queen's University of Belfast - and had to look in his school atlas to find out where Belfast was! He travelled across the Irish Sea from Stranraer in Scotland to Larne in Northern Ireland and on arrival, thought the grass in Ireland was very green! Stuart and his 24 fellow 'would-be RAF aircrew' became members of the University Air Squadron. In fact, they were the only members because they took up all the facilities for their initial training in flying, navigation, Morse code and signalling, meteorology, air law, drill and so on.

Stuart had rooms in Queen's Chambers, opposite the main gate to the university building. It was very comfortable indeed; each student had a single room with a bathroom to every three rooms. Meals were taken over the road in the refectory and good meals they were. He was in Belfast when America entered the war. Stuart says, "*Late one night in December 1941 I heard a strange shuffling noise in the road outside. I looked out of the window to see endless marching men; the shuffling sound was made by their rubber soled boots. I realised that they were Americans who had just come into the war (Pearl Harbour having been bombed by the Japanese on 7 December 1941). They were the first Americans to arrive in the UK.*"

In April 1942, Stuart went home having enjoyed university life. After a week or two he was instructed to report to RAF Aircrew Reception Centre at St John's Wood, London on 2 May 1942. From there, on May 23, he went to Brighton until June 10 then to No 6, Elementary Flying School, Sywell, Northampton. On July 7, he went to the Aircrew Dispersal Centre at Heaton Park, Manchester and then finally on August 25, he was at Greenock bound for North America. He eventually arrived in Clewiston as a member of Course 11. On this same course were Hugo Trotter, Pete Varley, Peter (Puff) Train and George Watt - see Hugo Trotter's photographic archive for contemporary photos.

After Clewiston, Stuart was posted to several airfields in the UK, one being Barrow in Furness where he met and married Eithne Forman. Stuart was also sent as instructor to the Central Gunnery School, escorted Anthony Eden to Berlin and was in the June 1946 flypast over London. He was offered an instructors job at Cranwell but as this did not involve much piloting he resigned and went to Queen's University, Belfast to study medicine (one of his lecturers

was Errol Flynn' father, Theodore). Qualifying in 1953, he became a highly respected GP in Gillingham, Kent until retiring in the early 1980s.

Stuart became a local councillor and later Chairman of Kent County Council. He was a JP, and Chairman of Kent Police, Fire Service and Health Authority at various times before fully retiring. His interests were sailing and golf and he was Commodore of the Medway Yacht Club. One of his greatest achievements was to rescue a local hospice from closure by making it part of his duty to local healthcare. Stuart's happiest memories were from his flying years and supported many flying charities, in particular the RAF Benevolent Fund.

*There will be more about Stuart's life in the RAF in the next newsletter.*

### **John R Midlane (Course 17) died November 4, 2017**



*RAF Cadet John Midlane October 1943*

John Raymond Midlane died on Saturday, November 4, 2017, in Scarborough, Ontario. His wife, Patricia predeceased him. He is survived by his two daughters Rachel and Helen, five grandchildren and a great-grandson. After Clewiston, John became a fighter pilot and later a lover of horticulture and a world traveller.

John Midlane was a member of the 5BFTS Association joining during the 1990s.

### **Geoffrey Lindsell Reynolds (Course 22) died July 31, 2018 aged 93**



*RAF Cadet Geoffrey Reynolds August 1944*

Geoffrey Lindsell Reynolds died July 31, 2018. His funeral service took place at All Saints Church, Ravensden, Bedford.

Geoffrey Reynolds was a member of the 5BFTS Association joining during the 1980s and attended several of the Annual Reunions especially after 2002.

### **Ivan Dennis Sneezum (Co 22) died October 2018**



*Cadet Ivan Sneezum  
August 1944*



*One of the "Old Bold Pilots" – Ivan Sneezum with his wife, Wyn, in the Clewiston Museum – April 2010*



*At the final Reunion Dinner, Bedford, September 2013*

Ivan Sneezum of Downham Market died on October 3rd, 2018, aged 93. Beloved husband of Beryl (deceased) and Wyn. Ivan is survived by his three children, his stepchildren and two grandchildren.

Ivan was an almost life time member of the Downham Market and District Royal British Legion as his father was a founder member of this branch and Ivan was brought up to be involved. Ivan was a past president of the Legion.

He had been a member of the 5BFTS Association for many years attending the Annual Reunions held in the UK and those in Florida. In 2010, the Clewiston News featured the Florida Reunion on their front page under the headline, "For the Old Bold Pilots". Despite dwindling numbers and declining health, six British ex-cadets, some spouses and widows were joined in Florida by several American ex-cadets, instructor pilots and other affiliated people who live in the United States. On the way to Clewiston, where they stayed in the Clewiston Inn, they visited Arcadia's Oak Ridge Cemetery and the graves of the 23 cadets who died during their training. They went to Clewiston Museum and saw film footage from their training days and photographs of the cadets and their classmates – and it was here that the photo of Ivan and Wyn that featured on the front page was taken. The following day, they went to Airglades Airport for a ceremony in honour of 5BFTS and later, on behalf of 5BFTS Association, Wing Commander Brian Spragg (Co 10) laid a wreath at the 5 BFTS plaque in Clewiston Civic Park.

**Donald MacIntosh DFC (Co 11) died January 10, 2019 aged 96**



*Cadet McIntosh August 42*



*Flight Lieutenant D McIntosh*



*'Mac' at the Squadron Reunion in 2007*

Donald MacIntosh was born in Glasgow in May 1922. He was the son of Donald (a policeman) and Janet McIntosh. He later changed the spelling of his surname. Leaving school at 14, he became a telephone operator for the Clydebank Police and subsequently a police cadet. Donald MacIntosh's first real taste of WW2 was as an 18-year-old police cadet caught up in the Clydebank Blitz in 1941. This experience of the Clydebank Blitz spurred him on to join the RAF and he asked to be released from his reserved occupation.

After Clewiston, he was posted to No 9 Squadron at Bardney in Lincolnshire. From there he led his crew, with great courage, on missions including raids on a destroyer in Poland's Gdynia harbour, on dams, oil refineries, viaducts and bridges, flying bomb sites and cities. But he admitted that his first experience on operations – a night raid in a 600-strong stream of bombers over Stuttgart – left him a changed man, as he witnessed the city ablaze, while fighting to survive himself, evading the searchlights and repeatedly corkscrewing to dodge enemy fighters. "As dawn lit the cockpit, I became aware that I was not the same person as the one who took off in the twilight the day before. All the reading, all the talk, all the training was one thing. Now I knew". That night, 65 aircraft failed to return, and although Donald made it safely back to base he knew, logically, that the chances of surviving the experience another 30 times – the usual length of an operational tour – were pretty poor and that the odds were stacked against him; however, he had faith that somehow he would survive the war unscathed. That self-belief, aided by generous doses of courage, skill and luck, was prophetic and "Mac", as he was known to his

crew, went on to complete more than 40 missions, including the successful raid that sank the Tirpitz in November 1944, earning him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

His final target, on 25 April, 1945, was Berchtesgaden, home of Hitler's Eagle's Nest retreat. On the way back he noted the ruins of Munich and Stuttgart lay "*peaceful and shattered beneath us, all their terrors gone*".

After WW2, he wanted a career in civilian flying and headed to Group HQ at Coningsby. There he found the WAAF in charge of postings and asked to be put on the next Transport Command conversion training course at Dishforth, Yorkshire and gave her a pair of nylon stockings "*to help her remember*". Two weeks later he left for Dishforth. He then spent another 30 years as a civilian pilot, "*some of which was almost as lethal as wartime*", he said.

Based in the Bahamas, he flew for British South American Airways and married his first wife, Brigid, in Nassau on Armistice Day 1948. They had four daughters and a son. He went on to fly the world's first passenger jet, Comet 1, to Africa and the Far East. Divorced, he had a brief second marriage to a model and lived for a time in Australia, before finding renewed happiness with his third wife Joan. Together, they spent spells in Los Angeles working as personal assistants for Miles Copeland, manager of The Police and Sting, where Joan arranged dinners for Hollywood guests, and he drove Copeland to the Oscars. He and Joan (who predeceased him) lived in Crieff for many years and he worked for some time in Scone instructing young pilots, his strong work ethic and love of flying forever with him. He was awarded the Legion d'Honneur in 2016 for his help to the French civilians during the war.

**We remember with thanks these pilots who have handed in their logbooks, and to other pilots, Riddle Field staff and friends known to us who have done so much to keep their memories alive.**

***WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THEY WERE THERE!***

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Notes from the 'Old World'	
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**The RAF Schools Project**  
**RAF History and STEM activities for secondary schools**

Historians and physicists working in education will create an active learning opportunity for schools and youth organisations, exploring 100 years of the RAF and its changing role and personnel and including WW1 and WW2; The Cold War; The Falklands Conflict and Humanitarian relief.

1. Origins and Aircraft design
2. The Battle of Britain and Radar
3. Codebreakers and communication
4. Relief operations and Airdrops
5. The Jet Age and Helicopters
6. Aerial reconnaissance and stereo images
7. The Falklands War and navigation
8. Medicine, War and Rescue



The 5BFTS section on the American Air Museum Internet Archive continues to expand. This was set up by Anne Hughes, a volunteer researcher at Imperial War Museum, Duxford.

Readers may remember that Anne holds a private pilot's licence and she was recently elected as a Freeman of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. This was established as a Guild in 1929 to ensure that pilots and navigators of the (then) fledgling aviation industry were accepted and regarded as professionals. Modelled on the lines of the Livery Companies of the City of London (originally established to protect the interests and standards of those involved in their respective trades or professions), the Guild was formally recognised as a Livery Company and in 2014, was granted a Royal Charter. For more information please visit <https://www.airpilots.org>.

And, in addition to her work with Duxford, Anne has been appointed as Chair of the Vintage Aircraft Club (which provides a focal body for owners, pilots and enthusiasts of vintage and classic light aircraft) and is involved in other areas of aviation finding herself occasionally at receptions in the Houses of Parliament - an interesting destination at the moment!

Anne says, "It is a real privilege and an honour to be elected as the first lady chairman of the VAC. I feel passionately about aircraft and also that opportunities for girls and women in every aspect of aviation should be the norm. I also feel that we should aim to encourage a "family and friends" feel for the club and enjoy the "Team VAC" opportunities we have at Bicester and Sywell". For more information, please visit <http://www.vintageaircraftclub.org.uk>.

*Thank you Anne for all your hard work in developing the 5BFTS Archive and many congratulations on these two achievements.*

To read about 5BFTS people on the American Air Museum Internet Archive, please visit <http://www.americanairmuseum.com> and search on 5BFTS and/or Riddle Field.



### #5 British Flying Training School Clewiston, Florida. Website Update



As always, it is a great pleasure to receive requests from people asking about relatives.

Any photos that are passed to us will, with the owner's permission, be uploaded onto the 5BFTS website and if relevant, to the American Air Museum Archive at Duxford so that we can all share them. The 5BFTS website can be found at [www.5bfts.org.uk](http://www.5bfts.org.uk)

### RIDDLE ROUND-UP

#### **Charles A. Neyhart (known as Chuck): Course 12 (November 1942 to May 1943)**



Sadly, Chuck died in November 2017 (Obituary Newsletter 10, March 2018) from cancer associated with his exposure to Agent Orange whilst serving in Vietnam. In April 2018, his widow, Shirley, donated his Log Books to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU). These started in 1939 and continued until he retired in 1968.

In October 2018, she generously set up a scholarship at Embry-Riddle which is called the **Major Charles A Neyhart No 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship** and has since donated a further sum to support this endowment. The Scholarship is to help those full-time students enrolled at the Daytona Beach Campus who have financial needs. The students must be seniors in the College of Aviation, major in Aeronautical Science and be actively enrolled in Flight Training.

← *Chuck at the 1993 5BFTS Clewiston Reunion*

In addition to this generosity, Shirley has also set up a similar Scholarship at Penn State University. This is in the centre of Pennsylvania at State College, from where 44 Neyharts have graduated over the last 100 years.

Should anyone wish to support the scholarship at ERAU, please go to [givingto.erau.edu/bfts](http://givingto.erau.edu/bfts) and make a donation to the scholarship fund.

Thank you Shirley for your generosity and please keep in touch.

### James Gordon Oakes: Course 12 (November 1942 to May 1943)



Course 12 cadet



From Course 12 Listening Out



"Roger Out"

In January 2019, Anthony Oakes who works as a pilot for Emirates Airline contacted us to ask about his grandfather, James Gordon Oakes, a member of Course 12. Anthony told us that his grandfather was from Northumberland and eventually settled down in Yorkshire. He married Patricia, who was a Wren, during the war. Sadly, both Anthony's grandparents have died. James was only 65 when he died, and Anthony only 9 so doesn't remember much of what James told him about his time in the RAF. But he does remember James telling him what great hospitality he received in the US and how Americans made him, and all the British cadets, feel very welcome. James would often be invited to dinners and BBQ's by the local families, something that Anthony knows he greatly appreciated.

From James' log books, Anthony knows that he went on to fly different variants of the Wellington bomber and ended up at an Air Gunnery School (4 AGS) at RAF Morpeth (also known as Tranwell Airfield) in Northumberland flying the Avro Anson. Anthony believes that they would fly down the coast to provide shooting practice for the gunners who were about to head off into battle. At the end of the war, James was a Pilot Officer but never flew again. But clearly, he had fond memories of his time in Clewiston; he kept a laminated photograph as a bookmark on his bedside table, of him flying an AT-6 Harvard with the canopy open. Anthony comments that, "They must have been in tight formation to get that photograph!"

Anthony says, "On behalf of my grandfather I would like to say a big thank you to the American families that looked after him and the British during their time in America".

### Forbes McKenzie Robertson – Course 13 (died April 24, 1943)



Course 13 cadets- Forbes (RHS) & G W Morse



British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia



In February, I heard from Mike Willoughby of the Henley on Thames WW1/2 Remembrance Association who wrote, "I am creating a Memorial Book for the Men of Henley on Thames who died in WW2 and I was wondering whether you could help me to find the type and serial number of the aircraft in which Forbes Robertson crashed".

Forbes was born July 23, 1922, in Henley-on-Thames and was the son of David L and Christine W Robertson. He arrived in Clewiston on January 17, 1943, one of the 70 RAF cadets and 17 USAAF cadets in Course 13. He died following an aircraft crash on Saturday April 24, 1943 and his funeral service was held on Monday, April 26 at Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia.

When he died, Forbes had started his basic/advanced training and we know very little about this section of his training, but thanks to Vicki Brittain and the website she has dedicated to her father, the instructor Fred Brittain (Frederick J Brittain Flying Was My Life 1918 – 2002 [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)), we do know about Forbes' primary training as he and three other cadets were the Course 13 cohort allocated to Fred. Details of the training flights Forbes took, and the airplanes used, are all detailed in Fred's logbooks on the website.

Forbes' instructor Frederick J Brittain (Fred) arrived in Clewiston during December 1942. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Fred finished his refresher training to enable him to instruct the cadets on January 1, 1943 and started by instructing Course 12 cadets on January 6, 1943 before moving on to Course 13 cadets later in the month. In addition to Forbes, Fred was allocated three other Course 13 cadets, two RAF cadets, J P C Cowan and E Thorpe, and an USAAF (US Army Air Force) cadet, G W Morse (Courses 12 to 18 had a number of USAAF cadets training alongside the RAF cadets). Fred instructed these four cadets throughout their primary training for eight weeks from January 20 to March 16.

Forbes flew 46 times during his Primary Training of which 6 were night flights. His first solo flight was on January 30, 1943. He learnt to use his instruments, do spins and stalls, and flew cross country over LaBelle to the west of Riddle Field (air distance of about 50 miles return) and Palmdale to the east (air distance of about 45 miles return).

He was flying an AT-6 Harvard when he crashed but the serial number is unknown. Mike now has the reference for the reel at Hendon that contains the crash report and is hoping to find out more details. Thank you, Mike. Watch this space for more.....

### **William Walker (known as Bill): Course 19 (February 1944 to August 1944)**

In January we heard from Chris Walker. Chris' father, William, died some 13 years ago and Chris was looking through some photo albums when he came across one which was all about his time in Florida learning to fly. After looking at the 5BFTS website, Chris was intrigued to find out that Sir Jack Hayward (Obituary – Newsletter 1 March 2015) was on Course 17. Sir Jack was the long-time owner of Wolverhampton Wanderers football club, and Chris comments that although his family are long-time supporters of the Club, Bill never mentioned that he was at Clewiston at the same time as Sir Jack! I was able to reassure Chris that his father wasn't hiding a great secret, but probably never knew that his time at Clewiston overlapped by some two months with the owner of his football club. In practice, there little mixing between the different courses and although people at Wolverhampton probably knew that Jack had been a WW2 pilot, that was all they really knew.

Bill went on to lead an active sporting life. Only three winter Commonwealth Games were held, in 1958, 1962 and 1966. All of these were at St Moritz in Switzerland and at one, Bill won a silver medal as pilot of a two-man bobsleigh. More about Bill and his other sporting achievements in a future newsletter.

### **A Hicks: Course 22 (August 1944 to March 1945)**

Colin Hicks wrote to us in January 2018. He was trying to find out some information about his late father who was on Course 22. He had been released from his post as a Buckinghamshire Police Constable to join HM Forces between 23rd August 1943 and 1st Sept 1945 and Colin wondered what he was doing between August 1943 and his arrival in Clewiston 12 months

later. We haven't been able to shed any light on this to help Colin but did suggest that he could apply to the Ministry of Defence for his father's records. Colin said that his father never saw active service – this is probably because after Clewiston, the new pilots had to undertake further training before being posted to operational duties, and the war would have come to an end before Colin's father had completed this additional training.

The graduation of Course 22 on Saturday, March 31, took the number of "Riddle trained sons of Britain" to almost 2000.

**Readers may be interested to know that if you are a direct relative of someone who has served in the armed forces, you can apply to the Ministry of Defence for their service record - see <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>**

### **John Ambrose Hibberd: Course 26 (started June 1945 but not completed)**



Last October, we heard from Nigel Hibbert asking if we had any information about his father, John, who was a member of Course 26. Course 26 was the last course at Clewiston and the cadets on this course, along with those on Course 25, did not complete their training as WW2 came to an abrupt end in August 1945. Records dating from 1984 to 2001, show that John joined the 5BFTS Association between these dates, and a guest list shows that he attended the 1998 5BFTS Association Reunion in Buxton.

Yet again, we are benefitting from the website Frederick J Brittain Flying Was My Life 1918 – 2002 [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com) for the following information.

Fred's log books record that on July 30, 1945, a 'Cadet Hibberd' flew a PT-13D (Stearman biplane used for primary training, which was the earliest part of the training programme) for 50 minutes.

Nigel sent us a picture of John with an AT-6 Harvard obviously taken during a later part of his training as AT-6s were used for basic and advanced training.



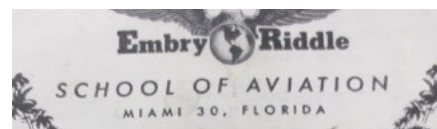
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## **The Instructors**

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

The third of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

### **FREDERICK J BRITTAIN FLYING WAS MY LIFE 1918 – 2002**

This is the name of the website Vicki Brittain has developed dedicated to her father, Riddle Field instructor Fred Brittain. In the last two newsletters I included a little about Fred's life and some information about his time at Riddle Field and more follows. [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com)

A big 'Thank you' to Vicki for developing the website. As you can see, it has been used to find out more information for two of the cadets mentioned in Riddle Round Up this month.

Fred seemed to have kept in touch with several of those pilots he trained, and Vicki has

included six letters from grateful cadets on her website.

**David Stewart** (Course 18 – December 7, 1943 to June 17, 1944) wrote to thank Fred for his 'XMAS card and photo just arrived two days ago'. The letter is dated March 31 [1945]! Dave was a sergeant pilot in 668 squadron RAF SEAAF (South East Asian Air Force) but although he had clocked up some operational hours, he wasn't flying at this station. His letter mentioned quite a lot about Clewiston and reminded Fred of a day when Fred was instructing him on cross country flying. Dave was required to make a surface landing at Lakeland and on his first attempt, ran completely off the runway. A subsequent attempt wasn't much better as he caught his sleeve in the flag lever and things went wrong! Dave comments that "*strange to say, he is still alive and still going strong*".

Dave did not name where he was (the censor's stamp is very clear on the envelope!), but an internet search tells us that 668 squadron was a glider squadron formed in November 1944 at Calcutta (now Kolkata) – and his letter is stamped with two stamps from India - as well as one from British Guiana (now Guyana) in the Caribbean!

### **Riddle Field Instructors at Carlstrom Field September 1941**

Riddle Field wasn't yet ready for business, so 5BFTS instructors and cadets were still at Carlstrom Field where they were nicknamed 'Clewiston Rebels'! Would-be Riddle Field Instructors were having refresher training and Flypaper for September 15 reported that Ernie Smith assisted by Bob Johnston, ex-chief pilot for at Municipal in Miami, and R. F. Hosford were handling the refresher school for the Clewiston rebels. Their present class includes E. E. Willie, [W]. R. King, W. K. Everette Jones, F. S. Perry, C. C. Clark, H. J. Grummer, T. L. Teate, A. R. Brink, Chas. C. Benson, G. F. May, J. L. Cousins and C. W. Bing.



*W R King and T Teate in March 1942.*

*Instructors for Advanced Training*

### **William J Britton - died April 1942**

In 'Wings over Florida by Will Largent, Hugh Tudor (Co 5) talks about their instructors "*In particular, we were extremely fortunate to have marvellous instructors. They were civilian pilots with very diverse experiences in flying. Some had been flying the mail, some had been barnstorming from a young age, and some had been flying school instructors for many years*".

One of Hugh's instructors was William J Britton who was killed on Easter Sunday, April 5, 1942, when his two-aircraft was in a mid-air collision over Miami. William was survived by his widow and young son, David. He was the son of the former world's welterweight champion (1921–1922), Jack Britton, and brother of Bobby Britton, a well-known fighter.

### **Neil Mangold**

Don Mangold told us about his brother, Neil, who was an instructor at Riddle Field from 1943 until it closed. One night it became very foggy while a night flight training session was taking place (Florida fogs can come on very suddenly!). Neil was 'in the pattern' that night and said that he would go up and find any lost returning pilots and glide them back to the plane

path. Neil brought in about six AT-6s to Riddle Field and an additional two or three he glided into the town. Altogether, he rescued about 14 -16 cadets that night. Don was the night mechanic that night so was a witness to his brother's courage and dedication to duty. This momentous feat is recorded in local history books used by Clewiston High School children, so it won't be forgotten. In retrospect – thank you Neil.

*Don Mangold was a mechanic at Riddle Field – see Newsletters 4 (March 2016) and 5 (September 2016) for Don's story*

### **Tribute to their instructors from Course 7 (March 14, 1942 to September 23, 1942)**

Fly Paper of September 17, 1942 carries the Listening Out of Course 7. In it, they say, "*We give Tribute to our Instructors. For binding us enough to keep us awake and yet not leave us 'rigid', for persevering when we ourselves knew we should be out on our necks, for giving us just a sigh and a "D" when we deserved a blast and an "E".*

More about the Instructors in September 2019

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### **More from The Hugo Trotter Photographic Archive**

As a reminder, Hugo Trotter (Co 11) was at Riddle Field from September 25, 1942 to April 8, 1943. In November 2017, he sent me his photo album which contained photographs of Course 11 from the time they arrived in Canada to the time they left to sail back to Britain. The first batch of photos was in the March newsletter (see [www.5bfts.org.uk](http://www.5bfts.org.uk)) covering his journey to Riddle Field and the Camp in 1942 and the second batch in September 2018 compared the City of Clewiston then with now, and looked at the primary flight line in 1942.

This third selection shows the friends at leisure – fishing on Lake Okeechobee.

The Okeechobee hurricane of 1928 was one of the deadliest hurricanes in the recorded history of the North Atlantic Basin. Along the southwestern shore of Lake Okeechobee, the towns of Clewiston and Moore Haven were both flooded, but most houses suffered more damage due to strong winds. To prevent a recurrence of similar disasters, the Florida State Legislature created the Okeechobee Flood Control District which was authorized to cooperate with the US Army Corps of Engineers in flood control management. They drafted a plan to provide for the construction of floodway channels, control gates, and major levees along the shores of Lake Okeechobee as a long-term system designed for flood control, water conservation, prevention of saltwater intrusion, and preservation of fish and wildlife populations. The construction of the Herbert Hoover Dike was between 1932 and 1938 with various gates built in to allow access into the lake. One of these gates is the Hurricane Gate in Clewiston built by what is now Roland Martin Marina and Resort.

Fish Camps around the various Florida lakes were plentiful in the 1940s, the glory days for sportfishing when fish camp visitors would regularly be photographed holding up huge bass. A fish camp was just that, a place with a number of wooden cabins set by a lake where people could stay overnight or just use them for day visits. Some were grander and more elaborate than others which were little more than a shack.

In 1943, Johnson's Fish Camp was by Hurricane Gate in Clewiston and would be where the boys, intent on a day's fishing would hire boats, lines and everything else they needed from the fish camp. In the 1960s, Roland Martin came to Clewiston to enjoy fishing. Later he bought his wife Mary Ann and in 1981 bought a little fishing shack, marina, some vacant property, and decided to open up Roland Martin Marina. They have been offering fishing trips since 1981 and now the well-known Roland Martin Marina and Resort consists of motels, condos, professional guide service, restaurant, TIKI bar & grill, marina store, tackle store, airboat rides, marine service center, RV park, etc. I am sure that Hugo and his friends would not have envisaged all of this when they went for a simple day's fishing on Lake Okeechobee in 1943!



*Postcard showing Johnson's Fish Camp. Hurricane Gate, leading out to Lake Okeechobee, is in the background.*



*Hugo's photo of the fish camp*



*Photo taken from the present-day Hurricane Gate looking back towards Roland Martin Marina and Resort. The boats moored in the postcard above are approximately in the same place as those moored in this photo taken in 2017.*



*A lighthouse on the Lake*



*Hugo*



*Hugo again – on a different occasion*



*Unknown cadet surveying the scene!*



Pete Varley



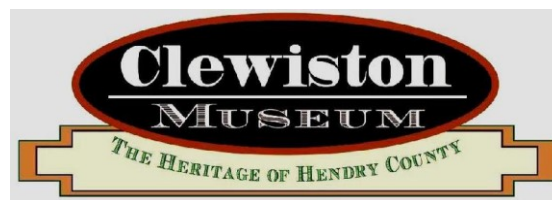
Pete again – on another day



'Puff' Train looking towards the camera

Next time – sports at Clewiston and maybe even some more airplanes!

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### Clewiston Update

Coming soon – new jobs for Clewiston!

Airglades International Airport is a proposed airport development on the existing county-owned Airglades Airport, in Clewiston, Florida. It is proposed that the site be developed into an integrated freight logistics hub to capitalise on the trade in cut flowers, fish and other perishables flowing between the US and Central and South America. Currently, this is all channelled through Miami International Airport. The project is jointly owned by three parties: Florida Fresh Produce (49%) (aka Florida Cargo Fresh), while the remaining 51% is split between US Sugar Corporation and Hilliard Brothers, a diversified agricultural operation. The airport is planned to feature a new 4000m runway, reportedly costing USD400 million which will run north/south rather than use the old east-south-east to west-north-west runway.

Completion is due December 31, 2019.

The Museum website [www.clewistonmuseum.com](http://www.clewistonmuseum.com) has display information and links, which connect to photographs and other archives on the subject of 5 BFTS.

*Jenny Harding writes: On behalf of 5BFTS, please can I, once again, thank Clewiston Museum, Jeff Barwick and Curator, Butch Wilson, for looking after the 5BFTS archives and doing such a wonderful job keeping 5BFTS alive for the visitors to the museum."*

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### Lois Heflin Blount - Riddle Field Remembered

A reminder for new readers – Lois worked at Riddle Field during WW2 and lives in Clewiston. In October 2018, she sent me a newspaper cutting about the planned development at Airglades (see above) which says that the development is being accelerated. The perishable

food facility will be a Perishable Air Cargo Complex (PACC).

In January 2019, Lois updated me about her family. All three sons have names beginning with 'R' – Richard, Raymond and Robert. They are all doing well. Lois went to Christmas dinner with Richard and his wife Cindy. She told me her youngest son, Robert, is 63 and she is 92.

Thank you, Lois, – it is great to hear from you. Thank you for your letters – keep them coming!

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### Good news about Carlstrom

Thanks to the American Ideals Foundation, Inc, restoration of the Historical Carlstrom Army Air Field / Base in Arcadia is progressing along with developing Museums, a large research Hospital and a fantastic national/ international Job Training Center! Plus much more...so, watch this space.

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### Featured Annual Reunion – Bedford 1999

In November 2017, Dina Moore (Dina's husband was L O Moore Co 17) sent me a lot of information about various Reunions they attended and now each newsletter features one of the Reunions. This time, we go back to the Millennium Reunion of 1999 which was held in Bedford. From 2005 onwards, all Reunions were held in Bedford including the final one in 2013, but this was the first time here. As you can see from the hotel brochure, the hotel (which was the Moat House and is now the Park Inn) is mostly a rather dull tower block, but it has a lovely view of the river, the Great Ouse, from the bar and lounge area – especially on Sundays when the adjacent Bedford Rowing Club opens its doors and the crews come out to practice. The Saturday expedition this year was to Duxford. As in 1995, two instructors, John S W Davis from Clewiston and Reed Clary from Miami attended the weekend along with their wives.



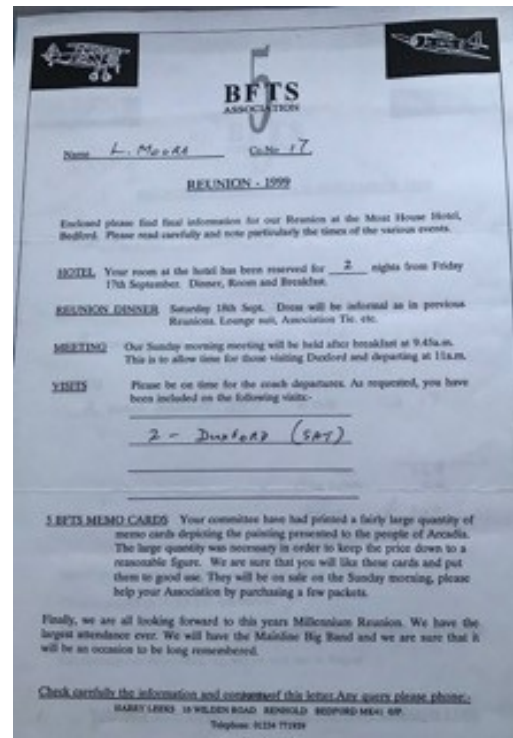
*The Band!*



*At Dinner. Dina and Lawrie Moore are in the centre of the table*



*Ronnie and (instructor) John SW Davies*



*Relaxing in the bar*



*Hanger 3 at Duxford*

Thank you to everyone who has shared memories. I'm sorry if there hasn't been room in this edition for everything I have been sent, but please keep it coming – your interest is keeping the memories alive!

Does anything in this newsletter jog any memories? Please let me know and keep sending pictures and information especially if you know anything about anyone or anything mentioned. You can get in touch with anyone contributing to this newsletter via me ([jen@jennyharding.co.uk](mailto:jen@jennyharding.co.uk)).

The next newsletter will be published in September 2019. Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc, by the end of August 2019. The more you tell me, the more interesting the newsletter will be – and I would especially like to hear if anyone worked with, or knows, any of the people mentioned in this newsletter. Anecdotes, stories and pictures would be great. So - over to you and .....

***“Until we meet again, “good-bye to y’all”.***