

Newsletter No. 14 – September 2019

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

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Reflection

The UK still hasn't left the European Union – Brexit Day is now potentially October 31; whatever your political colour, a Leaver, a Remainer or somewhere in between, an EU national or a British citizen, we wait to see what will happen. The only sure thing is that there will be change for us all.

Meantime, life goes on as it has for centuries. My granddaughter has just started at the school my sons attended, and my brother before them. Almost certainly in existence before 1476, the 'modern' school was founded in 1553 and re-founded in 1693. It's oldest building dates from 1695. The school has grown in numbers and now includes girls, but old traditions remain. Recently, I met Jeff and Carlota Barwick in Oxford where the oldest university in the English-speaking world was established in 1096. The Magna Carta, the basis of our justice, fairness and human rights, was signed in 1215 and the English and Scottish Parliaments were established in the 13th Century.

This summer, we visited Maryland, named after Queen Mary of England and founded in 1634, and its State Capitol in Annapolis, the oldest state house in America still in continuous legislative use. These are all milestones in our history and much has happened since: American Independence in 1776, the Industrial Revolution, WW1 and WW2 have all changed the UK and the USA and the way we live, but our great institutions remain to educate and legislate as they have done over the centuries.

Clewiston changed in 1941 when the first RAF cadets came to the City which still proudly flies the flags of the two countries. And after 20 years, Judy Kirkpatrick has hosted her last British Memorial Day Service in Arcadia – as Judy says, *"Our lives are so different now, but every year we relive that time in history"*. We say 'thank you' to Judy on page 2. There will always be change - in our personal, national and global lives, but let us always remember those who have gone before, the lessons they have taught us and the traditions they helped to maintain which support our lives and our nations today.

'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

#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

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

US Contact: Harold Kosola – hkairplane@aol.com

63rd Annual British Memorial Day Service 2019



May 27 was a beautiful day – blue skies and hot sun – and around 200 people came to remember and honour John Paul Riddle and the 23 cadets who were killed in Florida and are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia. As always, thanks are due to the Rotary Club of Arcadia for their support and leadership, and it was very humbling to see how many still come to remember the 5BFTS cadets who didn't make it home.

Thank you to all those who spoke during the service, placed a poppy and Union flag by each headstone and to the organisations who laid a wreath. Once again, it was a great pleasure to hear Ross Allen of the Jacobite Pipe and Drum

Band of Sarasota play the bagpipes. This Memorial Day was the last time that Judy Kirkpatrick hosted this service after 20 years of chairing or co-chairing the relevant Rotary Club Committee. Paul Seusy is taking over. Paul is an Arcadia lawyer and a past president of the Arcadia Rotary Club. Thank you, Paul.



Over this time, as Judy says, things have changed, not least because so many of those directly associated with WW2 have died or are now too frail to attend. But the legacy lives on thanks in no small part to Judy and the efforts she has made to ensure each service is special and a poignant remembrance for those young men whose permanent home is at Oak Ridge Cemetery.

← *Paul Seusy and Judy Kirkpatrick*

Judy – from all of us who have a direct or indirect connection with 5BFTS, THANK YOU VERY MUCH for all your hard work and dedication. We have appreciated it.

The British Memorial Day Service 2018 in pictures



British Plot Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia at dusk May 26



Terry Stewart leading the singing



Raising the flags



*Walter Neff – WW2 army veteran aged 97.
Holder of a Purple Heart*



*John Paul Riddle – his ashes were buried
alongside 'his' cadets who never left Florida*

Lunch at Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit with sons and daughters of Instructors, Jean F Reahard Jnr (1941-1945) and Fred Brittain (1943-1945), RAF cadet George Hogarth (Co 3) and USAAF cadet, Charles A Sweet (Co 18)

L-R: Jean Carmolli (née Reahard) and Dave Carmolli, Jean Reahard III (known as Chip) and Robin Reahard, Susan Sweet Phillips, Vicki Brittain, Jenny Harding née Hogarth, David Harding and Alan Cesar representing Embry Riddle Aeronautical University



Annual British Memorial Service 2020

The next **Annual British Memorial Service** will be held on **May 25, 2020** 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.

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. 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 63 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

EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

In Memoriam

This is the first newsletter not to record the recent death of a 5BFTS person, so instead, we are going to remember one of the cadets who is buried at Oak Ridge Cemetery.

Michael Kevin Hinds (Course 19) died July 13, 1944 aged 20

Michael Hinds was born in 1924. His parents were Michael and Anne Hinds of Burnopfield, Co Durham. Michael enlisted at Padgate, Warrington, after November 1941, arrived at Riddle Field in February 1944, and was just a few weeks shy of finishing flight school in Clewiston when he was killed in a crash while practicing a landing at Riddle Field. Like 22 of his British RAF cadet colleagues, he is buried in the British plot at Arcadia’s Oak Ridge Cemetery.

In May 2018, I spent a few days looking through the archives at Clewiston Museum. Amongst the many photographs there, I found some that were taken at Michael Hinds’ Funeral. They are remarkable for three reasons:

- The photographer has managed to capture the dignity and solemnity of the occasion;
- The floral displays which, although in black and white, suggest colour and beauty;
- The pictures show the British Plot (as we now know it) in July 1944 when Michael became the 20th cadet to be buried. Several of the headstones are waiting to be placed including that for Leonard G Stone who was killed on August 24, 1943.

Michael Hinds’ girlfriend, Marjorie Tait, discovered she was pregnant after Michael was sent to Clewiston, but he died before the baby was born. The baby, a boy, was born towards the

end of 1944. In those days, single parenthood was not welcomed, so Marjorie's mother raised the little boy as she would her own.



The Funeral Service – Oak Ridge Cemetery July 1944



Michael Hinds at Clewiston



Oak Ridge Cemetery May 2016



After the service. Headstone for Leonard G Stone lying on its side in the foreground.



Officers (RAF and USAAF) and John Paul Riddle look at the headstones

Neil Tait a retired police detective now aged 68 of Wickham, Newcastle Upon Tyne, England grew up calling his mother "Marjorie" rather than Mother or Mum. His birth certificate had a blank space where his father's name should have been which intrigued him, but his grandmother refused to answer any questions about his father. Yet there were hints that the young Neil wondered about. For example, each Christmas, he received a package from the British Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund and one day, as a child, he saw the name 'Michael Hinds' on a legal document.

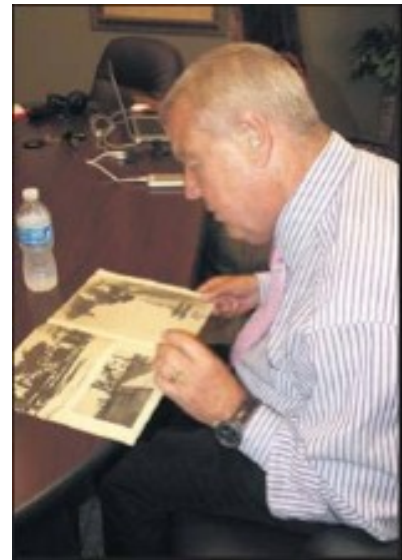
Many years later, Neil's niece Kerri started researching the family's history but drew a blank with the name of Neil's father. Neil, now with children and grandchildren of his own, suggested the name 'Michael Hinds', and this was how Neil found his father!

Neil and Audrey travelled to Florida in 2011. Just before they left England, Neil's newly discovered Aunty Florrie — Michael Hinds' sister, and now 90 years old — sent the couple a note. Florrie wrote, *"On behalf of all the family I'd like to say, God Bless on what is bound to be a very emotional journey next week, and I hope it will make up in some small way all you missed during your young days"*.



Neil Tait at the Memorial Day Service May 30, 2011

Neil and Audrey Tait attended the annual British Memorial Day ceremony in Arcadia for the first time in 2011, to honour Neil's father. Always a moving service, it was extra-special for Neil because he was finally able to visit his father's resting place. And, as a bonus, as well as new British relatives, Neil found another new family of friends in Arcadia.



Neil at Clewiston Museum looking through a 5BFTS Year Book

We remember with thanks this cadet who has handed in his logbook, 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!

Notes from the 'Old World'	
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Douglas showing off his RAF100 logo & RAF roundel at Tywyn Wharf Station

On February 21, 2018 the Talylyn Railway celebrated the centenary of its locomotive No.6 'Douglas' by revealing it in a brand-new livery of RAF Traffic Blue to mark the 100th anniversary of both Douglas and the RAF. Built for use by the Royal Naval Flying Corps at Manston (RAF Manston from 1 April 1918), Douglas moved to RAF Calshot sea plane base in 1921. When

the line closed in 1945, he was sold to Abelson and Co in Birmingham who donated him to the newly preserved Talylyn Railway in 1953.



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. Anne tells me that she has recently added Ron Cox and Stuart Cox (Obituary March 2019) to the website. They share a name but are not related – see Riddle Round-Up. Ron lent Anne a copy of the VHS video, 'The Flying Days of Riddle Field' originally produced in 2001 and she is trying to obtain permission from the VHS publisher to include extracts on the American Air Museum website so...watch this space.

Thank you, Anne, for all your hard work in developing the 5BFTS Archive

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.

Americans in Britain

Memorial Day in Cambridge, England, with a US Paratrooper



Cambridge American Cemetery



Paul and Sid Levit with Tony Foulds

Many people reading this will know Richard Nester, a Briton who has made his home in Fort Lauderdale, as he has attended several British Memorial Day services in Arcadia. Last October, Richard was in the UK to visit his uncle and the Royal Naval Patrol Service Memorial at Lowestoft. He then visited the Cambridge American Cemetery who invited Richard to come back on Memorial Day and escort a WW2 US veteran.

So, May 2019 saw Richard not in Arcadia but in East Anglia, England, with 94-year old US Paratrooper, Sid Levit, his son, Paul and Ryan Paton, of Honor Flight South Florida. Sid, whose grandparents were British, served with the 17th Airborne Division in the UK, France, Belgium and Germany. He was a Purple Heart recipient. They visited the Airborne Assault Museum at Duxford and the Bomber Command Lincoln Aviation Heritage Museum

At the Cemetery on Memorial Day, Sid met with US ambassador Robert Wood Johnson and with Tony Foulds who witnessed the 'Mi Amigo' B-17 Flying Fortress crash in Sheffield and now looks after their memorial. Then Sid, Paul, Richard and Ryan went to Cambridge Airport and flew in a Dakota C47 with the ambassador – as Richard says, *"an amazing experience!"*.

To read more about the Cambridge American Cemetery, please visit: <https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/cambridge-american-cemetery>. To read more about Honor Flight South Florida (mission to 'Transport America's veterans to Washington, DC to visit those memorials dedicated to honor their service and sacrifices), please visit: <http://www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/index.html>



Sid with Margaret, daughter of Colonel Korman 17th Airborne



Sid with the US Ambassador to the UK, Robert Wood Johnson



Richard with Tony Foulds

U.S. Ambassador Johnson Is on 'A Mission to Remember'

In March 2019, the UK Ambassador to the UK, Robert Wood Johnson launched his campaign "Keeping the Memories Alive" which aims to find living individuals who remember D-Day and the American military presence in the UK during World War Two. He said, "We want to recognize them and tell their stories to the next generation". Mali Gardner, Mayor of Clewiston, thought that the Ambassador should also know about the British military presence in America during WW2 and wrote to him about 5BFTS. She told him:

"There are so many unrecognized heroes with amazing stories of their flight training in America during WWII. These young Brits trained to be pilots in our community then returned to [Britain] to defend their homeland. There are so many stories [and] the attached newsletter [5BFTS Newsletter March 2019] has historical information and website links to where some of the stories are captured. The newsletter is also an introduction to Dr Jenny Harding (her father was one of the cadets). Jenny, Jeff Barwick and other Clewiston people have helped to preserve the history of the #5British Flight Training School in America's Sweetest Town. This will give you a glimpse into the wonderful history of what transpired during the war years (even before Pearl Harbor) as a testimony of the strength of England and America's inseparable bond. Airglades [Site of Riddle Field] still serves as a reminder of the UK-USA alliance by the flags of both countries flying side by side along with some archival memorabilia – the City also flies the flags side by side in our City Park as a testament of our sweetest heroes."



#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

RIDDLE ROUND-UP

Dr Stuart James Cox (Course 11 – September 1942 to April 1943)

Stuart Cox, who died in 2016, wrote a brief history of his life. His son, Bob sent me a copy of the relevant pages where he wrote about his experiences in WW2 and the RAF. In March 2019, Stuart's Obituary was part 1 of an amazing and very interesting RAF life. Part 2 follows.

In May 1942, Stuart was instructed to report to RAF Aircrew Reception Centre at St John's Wood, London. There, he was issued with his flying kit which included a heavy flying suit (which he never used), helmet (which is now in a glass case at RAF Manston History Museum), three pairs of gloves (silk, wool, leather), a steel helmet (never worn), a kit bag white with two horizontal blue stripes (everything that we had was crammed in this) plus shirts, socks and underwear. He never wore the shirts and underwear preferring his own Van Heusen shirts!

They had a rigorous medical examination in the famous Long Room at Lord's. Stuart writes, *"We all thought that we would go down in history as being the few who had had our trousers down in that hallowed place"*.

in June 1942, after a period in Brighton, Stuart was posted to No 6 Elementary Flying School, at Sywell, Northampton. This was to get them to first solo to ensure that they had the ability to proceed to further training. It was called 'grading'. Stuart records that, *"I see from my log book that I did my first solo on 19 June 1942 after seven and a half hours of dual instruction from Pilot Officer Somers in a Tiger Moth. I did twelve hours and twenty-five minutes flying time there altogether and was passed as suitable for pilot training"*.

The Tiger Moth was very primitive; the only communication with the instructor was by an inefficient speaking tube. The cockpit drill on getting into the aircraft was SPATS - Switches on, Petrol on, Altimeter set for take-off, Tail-trim set, Slots unlocked. *"Our lives depended on this drill"*. The engine was started by swinging the propeller. Stuart again, *"I do not remember first solo as being at all traumatic, one was concentrating so hard on doing all the routine things that no sooner was one up that it was time to land. My solo trip took ten minutes"*.

Next came time at Heaton Park, Manchester, an Aircrew Dispersion Centre. Stuart was there for seven weeks waiting for his posting, living in bell tents in much discomfort. It rained every day and mud was everywhere. They washed and shaved in cold water at primitive ablutions. Meals were taken at a large mansion in the Park entailing long queues. Some said that they started to queue for the next meal as soon as they had had the last! They were issued with 'irons', a knife, fork and spoon which were dipped in dirty greasy water to clean them after each meal. Leave involved a "nightmarish journey" to London and Chipstead and back. Stuart noted that wartime train travel was awful on very over-crowded trains where one was lucky to find a seat and train times were unpredictable. One always seemed to be travelling at midnight. They were given travel warrants but not first class until commissioned.

At last, he was off to North America. He left Heaton Park on August 25, 1943, travelled overnight to Greenock in Scotland and embarked on the USS Thomas H Barry. It was a cargo vessel with the holds fitted with primitive bunks one above the other. We were well down in the ship with just the steel plates of the hull between us and the Atlantic Ocean. The showers had cold sea-water and we had to use a special soap that lathered a little with sea-water. The ship was very crowded, and we had to queue almost continuously for meals.

They were in the Atlantic at a time when the U-Boat threat was at its greatest. *"Oddly I do not remember giving this a second thought. I think that the whole experience was a little unreal most of us never having been far from home before"*. They were in convoy with destroyers on either side and the battleship USS Arkansas for escort and their course took them south in the hope of missing the U-Boat packs. Stuart recalls *"Five days out I was below and heard a very loud explosion. I went up on deck to see what had happened and as I put my head up above deck level the naval gun that we had on board, and was only a few feet away from me, fired. A flash of light seemed to go through my head and the noise was enormous. An American ship, SS Manhattan, alongside us had black smoke pouring out of her and she pulled out of convoy. It had been hit by a torpedo and was listing badly. We all expected another torpedo at any minute but only in a detached sort of way. The firing of the gun left me deaf for a week"*.

Five days later, they were in America! Read about what happened then in March 2020

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

James' grandson, Anthony Oakes is a pilot for Emirates Airline and has frequent stop overs in Florida (often Fort Lauderdale). In April, however, it was Orlando and he made a visit to

Clewiston Museum. He was fortunate enough to stay with Jeff and Carlota Barwick and sample their wonderful hospitality. Jeff says, *"We had a wonderful time and got a lot of information. He is trying to arrange his schedules so he can attend the event in Arcadia next month. He stayed with us overnight which just gave us more time to talk"*.

Unfortunately, Anthony's schedule prevented him making it to Arcadia this year, but as he says, *"Hopefully next year there will be tailwinds to Arcadia"*.

Anthony did, however, send a lovely message as follows: **"I am writing at approximately the time of the service in Arcadia, my thoughts are with those fallen heroes that gave their lives for our great country. I wish I could have been there to honour them"**.

Thank you, Anthony – hope to see you next year!

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

In February, I heard from Mike Willoughby of the Henley on Thames WW1/2 Remembrance Association who is creating a Memorial Book for the Men of Henley on Thames who died in WW2 of whom Forbes Robertson is one.

Forbes died following an aircraft crash on Saturday April 24, 1943. A 5BFTS report of fatal accidents from July 1941 to May 1945 shows that Forbes was by State Road 29. The "weather" was probably a turbulent storm causing Forbes to lose control of his AT-6 Harvard airplane. Kenansville is almost due north of Riddle Field (now Airglades Airport) which is some 8 miles to the west of Clewiston. The direct flying distance from the airfield to Kenansville is around 79 air miles. Kenansville is a very small place; in 2016, just 564 people lived there. In the 1940s, there was a store, bank, post office and the Heartbreak Hotel which is held to be where Elvis wrote 'Heartbreak Hotel'. There was also a depot (railroad station) on the Florida East Coast Railroad.



Headstone – May 27, 2019



Ron Selwood viewing Forbes' Headstone Memorial Day May 28, 1973. Ron was a member of the 5BFTS Association.

Charles A. Neyhart (known as Chuck): Course 17 (November 1942 to May 1943)

Chuck died in November 2017 (Obituary March 2018) from cancer associated with his exposure to Agent Orange whilst serving in Vietnam. Shirley Neyhart emailed me in April to tell me she has generously donated a further \$10,000.00 to the Major Charles A Neyhart No 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship bringing the total to \$50,000.00. As Shirley says, *"This will help young men become excellent pilots"*. For details of the Scholarship, please see the March 2019 edition. **Thank you, Shirley, for your generosity.**

Should anyone wish to support the scholarship at ERAU, please go to givingto.erau.edu/bfts and make a donation to the scholarship fund

William Charles Strong (Course 20 – April 1944 to November 1944)



Joanne Strong emailed in July to tell me about Charlie's wallet which he was given when he left Clewiston. Joanne sent me a picture, and as can be seen, the wallet has been very well used. Joanne has treasured it since Charlie died in 2004. The words read, 'Compliments of RIDDLE-McKAY AERO COLLEGE'. My father had a similar wallet – his is also inscribed Gen[ui]ne Alligator!
To read more about Charlie's life, please see the September 2018 newsletter.

Ron Cox (Course 22 – August 1944 to March 1945)

Ron wrote to me in April having read the March 2019 edition. He told me that until he read this newsletter, he had never heard of Stuart Cox although they share a name and like Stuart, Ron entered the RAF by way of an RAF University Short Course at Queen's University Belfast. As he was living in Cornwall at the time, he always assumed that someone at Air Ministry thought Cornwall was close to Ireland so sent him there little knowing it was a 2-day journey in wartime via London then Stranraer in Scotland. Ron really enjoyed his six months there, and like Stuart lived in The Queen's Chambers across the road from the University. He made some good friends including two local Irish boys, Harper and Ringland who were to play rugby for Ireland after the war (and Ron notes that he was privileged to play with them at Queen's!). Ron continued: *"My memories are enhanced by the fact (forgive the boast) that I was awarded the then Air Minister, Lord Wakefield's prize for the best all-round cadet at the end of the course"*.

Geoffrey Reynolds (Course 22 – August 1944 to March 1945)

Further to Geoffrey's Obituary in the last newsletter (March 2019), the following is taken from his Obituary in Eagle News, the magazine of the Old Bedford Modernians' Club, Issue 118.

Geoffrey Reynolds was born in 1924 in Bedford. He was educated at Bedford Modern School from 1931 to 1942, leaving to join the family agricultural engineering business. Geoffrey joined the RAF and was sent to Clewiston. After graduation, he wanted to become a fighter pilot, but the war in Europe was almost over, and so he retrained with the Fleet Air Arm. His father died during WW2 and after the war, he helped his mother with the business. This was eventually sold, and Geoffrey bought Traylesfields Farm in Ravensden. The farmhouse needed restoration, so Geoffrey learnt the necessary building skills. Aged 63, he married Wendy but sadly she died after two years and he never really overcame her loss. He was an active Freemason from 1953 and became Master of the Old Bedford Modernians' Lodge in 1965. He was a regular attender at Ravensden Church and St Peter's Church in Bedford. He sold the farm and moved to a bungalow in Bedford, and in 2017, surprised his friends by taking and passing the ROSPA driving test. He spent his last four months at Airedale Nursing Home.

Ron Cox writes: *"Geoffrey Reynolds was a charming fellow who owned a farm with an Elizabethan farmhouse in Bedford. Geoffrey met his future wife when he was around 50, but they were unable to marry until her mother died as she was her mother's carer. When he was 63, they did marry, but sadly, she died two years later"*.

Editor's note: Traylesfields Farmhouse is a timber framed building dating from the late 16th or early 17th Century. It was given Grade 2 listed status in 1983.

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

Last October, we heard from Nigel Hibbert telling us about his father, John, who was a member of Course 26. Since then, Nigel's sister found some photos from John's time at Clewiston. A selection is included this time, and more in the next edition – including some airplanes!



John A Hibberd



Time for a soda!



John and friend



Fun at the beach!



Riddle Field



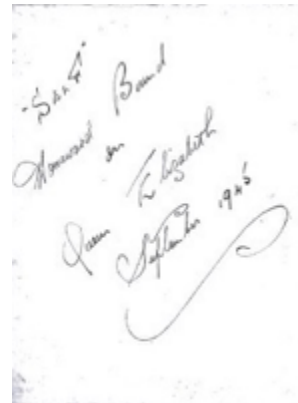
Swimming Pool



Going home



Homeward bound on



Queen Elizabeth

The Instructors

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

The fourth of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

“I used to think that the most dangerous flying I ever did was flying with students, until I flew with instructors”. Gus Grissom, Astronaut

It is 50 years since man first walked on the moon during the Apollo 11 mission. This and the subsequent moonwalks are celebrated at the Apollo/Saturn V Center at Kennedy Space Center in Florida.



But alongside is the Apollo 1 Tribute – dedicated to the three astronauts who perished while training for the first Apollo mission. Gus Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffee died on January 27, 1967 when the command module interior under pre-launch test caught fire.

Before the mission, Scott Grissom, Gus' son can remember talking with his father and asking him about the most dangerous flying he had ever done. Gus, a veteran of WW2 and Korea, and later, a test pilot, replied with the quote above!

FREDERICK J BRITAIN FLYING WAS MY LIFE 1918 – 2002

This is the website Vicki Brittain developed dedicated to her father, Riddle Field instructor Fred Brittain. What follows is more from this fascinating website. www.frederickjbrittain.com

'Don't worry if your job is small and your rewards are few – remember that the mighty oak was once a nut like you!' Anonymous quote beloved by Fred.



Last time, I wrote about a letter that Fred had received from David Stewart (Course 18). This time, I am writing about a letter from Flight Sergeant Don Skirrow, another Course 18 cadet who, like David, was stationed in the South East Asia Air Forces – this time in 670 Squadron, a glider squadron based in India.

Don writes on July 31, 1945 that there were several other Course 18 boys there whom he saw occasionally including David Stewart and J Richards. Don notes that there was nothing to recommend this part of the world – *“Just heat and dirt and disease. No cakes and hot fudge sundaes, no good beer and no women”*. Don had actually just finished a month's rest period up at a hill station at 7000 feet – *“...delightfully cool. Only snag is that it makes this place seem worse than before”*. He was hoping that the war would soon be over.

Above: Fred at the controls of his plane

Don Skirrow (left) and David Stewart at Clewiston →



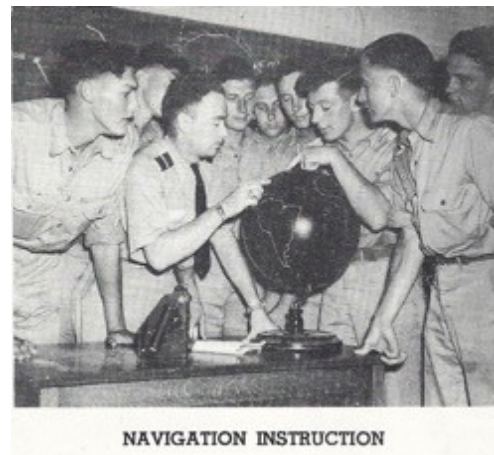
Harold C Cowlshaw

Senior Navigation Instructor and Chief Meteorologist 5BFTS 1941-1945

In April, we were contacted by Jean, who was searching for information about Harold Cowlshaw on behalf of Harold's niece. Harold was born February 2, 1915 in Queens, New York and died February 6, 1949 in Miami after three days in hospital. His father died when he was 9 and he, his brother and sister were then placed in a Masonic Home in Utica, New York. He married Lillian E Forth whom he met in the home. She died in North Carolina in 1996 living close to one of their sons. Harold and Lillian are both buried in Fort Myers. Their two sons both worked in aerospace and flying. Harold died when his younger son was just two weeks old.

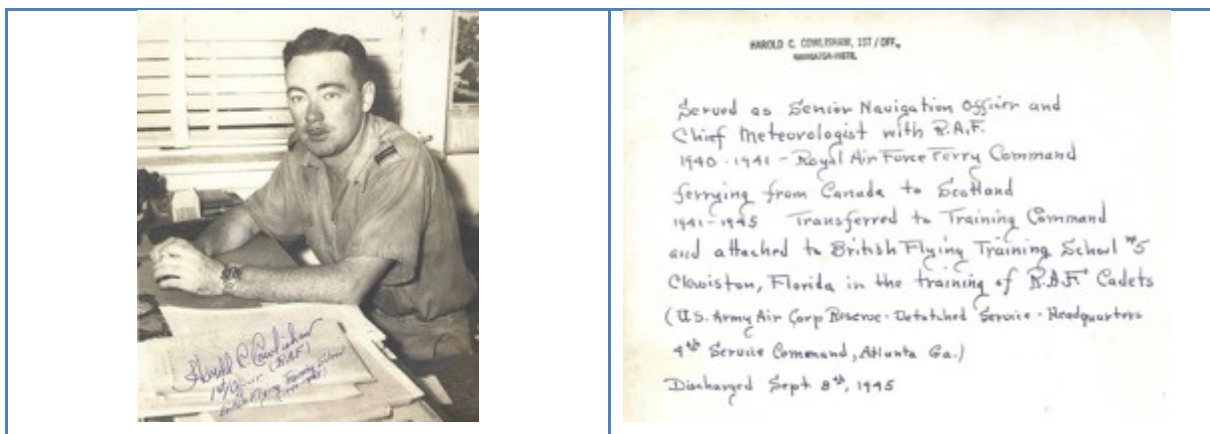
From 1940 to 1941, Harold worked for the Royal Air Force Ferry Command and ferried planes from Canada to Scotland. The Canadian, Lord Beaverbrook, was minister of the British

Ministry of Aircraft Production (MAP) at the time and arranged for civilian crews to ferry much needed aircraft across the Atlantic. The first plane flew over in November 1940. In 1941, MAP transferred organisation to the RAF Atlantic Ferry Organisation set up by a Montreal banker, Morris W Wilson, who hired the civilian pilots. On July 20, 1941, the RAF Atlantic Ferry Service was given command status as RAF Ferry Command.



Sometime between September and December 1941, Harold transferred from RAF Ferry Command to Training Command and was attached to 5BFTS at Clewiston where he stayed until the airfield closed. While in Clewiston, Harold lived in Fort Myers going home weekends.

After American joined the war, the civilian instructing staff became liable for call-up and so they were joined into the US Army Air Corp Reserve which meant that they couldn't be called up (the notes on the back of the photograph below show Harold was in the US Army Air Corp Reserve - Detached Service - Headquarters, 4th Service Command Atlanta Georgia). This arrangement agreed between the US and Britain meant that experienced instructors remained at Riddle Field throughout the war and the quality of instruction remained consistently high. This also meant that Harold could refer to himself as 1st/officer (an American rank and not an RAF rank). This arrangement ceased when Riddle Field closed in September 1945 when WW2 came to a close. Harold was discharged on September 8, 1945.



insignia and badges worn by civilian flying instructors at 5BFTS

In June, we heard from Mike McLean, a researcher and historian, looking at insignia and badges worn by civilian flying instructors in the USA and Canada. With thanks to Bob Bennett (Instructor Marty Bennett's son) and Jeff Barwick, we found the following: Bugs Bunny leather patch on Marty Bennett's flying jacket, Marty Bennett's Identity bracelet (below), tunic badges and Marty Bennett's cap badge. Jeff also found a button on an instructor's tunic pocket in the Museum.





Bugs Bunny



Tunic badge



Button



Cap badge

More about the Instructors in March 2020

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. This is the fourth selection of photos (previous selections are in Newsletters March 2018 and 2019 and September 2018 - see www.5bfts.org.uk)



*Navigation lesson:
Puff George Pete*



Over West Palm Beach



As the navigation instructor, Harold Cowlshaw is featured earlier, I thought this fourth selection should include Hugo's friends, Peter 'Puff' Train, George Watt and Pete Varley at a navigation

lesson (not sure they were all fully concentrating!) and some views from cross country flights showing that someone was putting their navigational skills to good use (they did at least get back to Clewiston). Only the cross-country photograph of West Palm Beach is labelled, but the other photographs show how vast and empty Florida was in 1943 – it is still vast, but not quite so empty especially around Orlando! The long straight roads can clearly be seen. I haven't forgotten photographs of sports at Clewiston – they will now be in the March 2020 newsletter with maybe some more airplanes!



Clewiston Update

A new curator has been appointed at Clewiston Museum - He is the grandson of a long-time Clewiston citizen and has a background in history, a relevant college degree, etc. Good news and we look forward to hearing more about him and his plans for the museum.

A donation has been offered - A batch of about 20 letters between a Clewiston family who were connected with 5BFTS and the cadets they befriended during their time at Riddle Field has been offered to the museum. The gift includes letters from the families of the cadets. In due course, Jeff is planning to look at them in more detail to check out the names of the cadets.

The Museum website 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 the new Curator for looking after the 5BFTS archives and doing such a wonderful job keeping 5BFTS alive for the visitors to the museum."

A quick 'thank you' to **Amy Ferrell of the Sarasota Welsh Society**. Amy has been President of this organisation for six years and has recently resigned although remains a Trustee. The Sarasota Welsh Society is a good friend of 5BFTS; they attend every British Memorial Day service and lay a wreath to remember the cadets buried there. So 'thank you' Amy. Enjoy your retirement and we look forward to meeting members of the Sarasota Welsh on May 25, 2020.

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! Sorry, no space this time for a 'Featured Annual Reunion' but it will be back in March 2020.

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).

The next newsletter will be published in March 2020. Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc, by the end of February 2020. 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".