

## Newsletter No. 17 – September 2020

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### Reflection

Back to normal by Christmas! Brave words from the UK Prime Minister in early September but even as he spoke, it seemed unlikely, and now we know that 'it' won't be over by Christmas. "Hands, Face, Space" – three words that now dominate every activity!

Globally, nearly a million people have lost their lives to Covid-19, of these approximately one-fifth are Americans. Jennifer Nuzzo, a public health researcher at Johns Hopkins put it in context "The [US] death toll from coronavirus is equivalent to a 9/11 attack every day for 67 days, and roughly equal to the population of Salt Lake City in Utah".

It is also roughly equal to the City of Southampton – from where so many have set off across the Atlantic for a new life, holidays, business and now, for the pleasure of a transatlantic crossing on the Cunard liner Queen Mary 2.

Titanic left Southampton on April 10, 1912, bound for New York. She sank on April 15 after striking an iceberg. In May, Canadian ships were chartered to look for bodies and victims were brought to Halifax in Nova Scotia. About two-thirds were identified and 150 are buried in Halifax. 121 are at Fairview Lawn Cemetery, a very peaceful place where they are forever remembered.

The 5BFTS cadets left Glasgow or Liverpool rather than Southampton but most arrived at Halifax. Letters record the kindness and generosity of people in Halifax, a place of refuge after a wartime sea crossing. Many would later die fighting for their country, a small number compared with the 70-85 million people (including civilians) who died during WW2, but each one an individual.

WW2 changed their world – Covid is changing our world. Every day, we hear the latest number of confirmed cases and the deaths. So many people have died, and it is easy to think of them as a number – but each is a person, an individual whose premature death is mourned by their family. Normally, we remember all those who were at 5BFTS, in whatever capacity, at Arcadia on Memorial Day. Except for this year, when Covid meant the cancellation of the Annual British Memorial Day Service – for the first time in 64 years.

As I said in March, I hope those of you reading this are safe and, if vulnerable or have signs and symptoms of Covid-19, are well cared for. If you have lost someone close to Covid, please accept my condolences and sympathy. With love, prayers and best wishes to you all.

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

### Five 5BFTS Facts

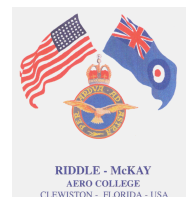
Opened in July 1941 at Carlstrom Field

Moved to Riddle Field September 25, 1941

26 Courses

1434 graduates (1325 RAF and 109 USAAF)

Closed in September 1945



*Jenifer Harding*

**Editor's note:** At the moment for family reasons, I am not at home in the UK but in Switzerland staying at my son's home near Lake Geneva. My original intention was to come and go between the two countries, but quarantine regulations mean that if I return to the UK, I have to spend 14 days in quarantine and when I come back to Switzerland, I will have to spend another 10 days in quarantine! So, at the moment, I am staying put here in Switzerland!

This does mean, however, that I don't have access to my personal 5BFTS archive including photographs, or anything that is stored only in hard copy. Fortunately, email is great, I do have a considerable amount of information stored in electronic format and the internet allows me to access a whole wealth of information wherever I am in the world! But apologies in advance that some things, like this edition's photographs from Hugo Trotter's albums which will be delayed until March 2021. I hope you won't notice too many gaps!

One interesting thing about Covid restrictions, however, is that many people have used their enforced lockdown time to explore their family history and I have been able to feature many interesting stories in this edition, with some unexpected co-incidences. My book about my father was uploaded to the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University archive website a few years ago, and I get monthly information about how many times it has been downloaded and where (which country) the downloads take place. There are usually between 4 and 10 downloads each month across the world, but these increased slightly after April and in August reached a heady peak of 320! If you are one of those people who have recently downloaded the book (George Hogarth – Clewiston and Beyond), thank you very much for your interest – I know now how authors must feel when they have a good print run commissioned!



### Annual British Memorial Day Service 2020

The 2020 **Annual British Memorial Day Service** should have taken place on May 25 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. But for the first time in the 64 years since the Arcadia Rotary Club began organizing the service, it did not happen. Arcadia was in lockdown and social distancing was not possible. In our hearts, we remembered these cadets, but were unable to join together at Oak Ridge Cemetery to remember them together.

Most flights between the UK and the US were cancelled, so even if the service had taken place, I should not have been able to go. Fortunately, we could still communicate by email and I should like to share part of two of the emails I received when we knew that the service would not happen. I am deeply honoured that these newsletters have helped fill the void left by the cancellation of the service. The writer of each email lives in Florida.

*“It feels odd and very strange not to be attending these services after more than 10 years of doing so, I can't quite feel comfortable and am looking forward to the next time these events take place.”*

*“I have been reading all of the past 5BFTS newsletters to honor everyone for this Memorial Day.”*



2019



Like many other businesses, **Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit**, 10 South Polk Avenue, Arcadia, Florida 34266 was forced to close during the Florida lockdown – although Helen Cooke was able to reopen the Tearoom in early May. We hope her business is thriving once more. 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>



### **Annual British Memorial Service May 31, 2021**

**Covid permitting, the service will start at 10am**

The Service is organized, as it has been for the past 64 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**

Ted Elkins wrote to us on Memorial Day. Ted was a sergeant in the US Marine Corps between 1964 and 1968 and was in Vietnam from 1967-1968. He wrote:

*We found this secret about 15 years ago when driving through Clewiston and visiting the famed Clewiston Inn. [We went] to Embry Riddle airfield [now Airglades] where the Union Jack is still flying! What was a birthday surprise for my wife Sharon, who is a pilot, turned into a more personal visit when we learned about the graves at Arcadia.*

*Now, on our Memorial Day, we visit Oak Ridge Cemetery and ensure these young brave lads are not forgotten. We noted that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is now tending to these boys and the site is quite polished, unlike years past with old palm trees and grassy areas needing a good gardening - rather like the old Florida that cared for these young men. This honorable place and its honorable purpose is not forgotten. We'll continue to visit as long as possible and give them a nod, and from myself a salute."*

Editor's note: Thank you, Ted. If flights between the UK and US resume and the Memorial Day Service goes ahead in 2021, I look forward to meeting you and Sharon in Arcadia.

We owe an ongoing debt of gratitude to the Rotary Club of Arcadia and the many others who contribute. Paul Seusy, an Arcadia lawyer and a past president of the Arcadia Rotary Club, has taken over the organization from Judy Fitzpatrick and we look forward to next year.

*In Memoriam*

### **Revd Kenneth MacVicar DFC (Co 3) died May 23, 2017 aged 95**

Kenneth MacVicar was born in August 1921, in the Manse at Southend on the Mull of Kintyre. He studied at Campbeltown Grammar School before going to Edinburgh University in 1940 where he joined the University Air Training Squadron. He volunteered for the RAF and was sent to 5BFTS in Florida to train as a pilot where he became part of the University Flight (Course 3). This course was so called because all the 50 cadets on the course were members of the University Air Squadrons of Edinburgh, Oxford and Cambridge. Kenneth was one of the 13 cadets from Edinburgh (my father, George, was also one of the Edinburgh 13). He graduated from 5BFTS in March 1942 and, like all the cadets of Course 3, was immediately commissioned.



*Cadet Ken MacVicar with Cadet George Hogarth (my father) Co 3 October 1941*



*Course 3 Cadets Bill Cooper, Ken MacVicar and George Hogarth at Riddle Field 1941*



*Revd Kenneth MacVicar*

In Spring 1943, he was posted to the India-Burma theatre with 28 Squadron. His nickname was 'MacPorridge'. Flying over Burma, the Hurricane he was flying was shot down. He spent days avoiding capture and going without food until, after various adventures he found himself flying again, at night, to strike a village where the top Japanese Intelligence staff were meeting. The strike was successful. With considerable understatement Kenneth MacVicar noted that *"all the information we got concerning the strike indicated we had more than upset a lot of the Japanese army's plans by our visitation of their intelligence"*. In 1944, he was awarded the DFC.

Kenneth had three brothers who all served during WW2. Archie and Angus were in the Army. Archie was killed in 1943 in Sicily. Angus survived the war and became an author of great repute. Willie served in the Navy, also survived the war and eventually retired as a senior captain with the Anchor Line.

When war ended, Kenneth MacVicar returned to the manse of Southend, and there, as he put it, *"was the birth of the feeling that I should follow my father's footsteps in the ministry"*.



*Ben Lawers across Loch Tay*

In 1946 he married Isobel McKay, and they set up home in St Andrews where Kenneth trained for the Ministry. In 1970, he was ordained and inducted to the parish of Kenmore, Perthshire. He remained in Kenmore from ordination to retirement (in 1990) and beyond. Kenneth and Isobel had four children, Angus, Kenneth, Cameron and Jean. Isobel predeceased him in 2015. When asked why he remained in Kenmore, he would simply take people out to the manse garden and show them the view of Ben Lawers seen across Loch Tay.

Kenneth MacVicar was far more than a parish minister, though he would have said it was the most important role he had. He was a county councillor for a number of years. He served as convener of the General Assembly's committee on H M Forces, and he was vice convener of the Assembly's committee on unions and readjustments (bringing the number of parishes into line with the available number of ministers, and consequently on occasions persuading congregations to be united or linked with others). He was a chaplain to the Queen in Scotland. In 1996, Kenneth published 'The Wings of the Morning' – his autobiography.

Over fifty years after Archie's death, Kenneth visited his grave in Catania War Cemetery, Sicily. This quote is from his book, *The Wings of the Morning*, *"He lies there with three thousand of his comrades. Remembering all the happy days at Southend, the fun and the laughter and the brightness which seemed always to surround Archie, we wept the tears we could not shed when he was killed."* They lie at peace, under the shadow of Mount Etna.

## Ralph D Black (Co 18) died March 8, 2020 aged 95

Kelly Thompson wrote to tell me the sad news that her father, Ralph D Black of Weedsport, New York State, died on March 8. Kelly said that Ralph was very proud of his membership of the 5BFTS Association and looked forward to the newsletter to keep up on the latest information. As a US serviceman he was equally proud to have been in the service of the RAF as well as the USAAF. He made lifelong friendships that he cherished and enjoyed visiting his British colleagues as well as maintaining those friendships.



Ralph D Black



1<sup>st</sup> Lt - USAAF



Born in Montezuma on February 10, 1925, Ralph proudly served his country in the U.S. Army Air Force from 1943-1946, rising to the rank of 1st Lieutenant. He was always appreciated by his family, neighbors, and friends for his wise counsel and for lending a hand. He retired as the Superintendent of Public Works from the village of Weedsport, and then served as Water System Operator for the Cayuga County Water Authority ultimately retiring in 2010. He also ran his own business, Ralph D. Black Service, where he sold, commissioned, and repaired pagers and two-way radios. Ralph was proud of his business, operating it well into his 80s. He truly enjoyed helping others. Above all, Ralph loved the time he spent with his family. He was always ready for an adventure and cherished time spent traveling with his loved ones.

*Editor's note: I keep in contact with quite a few sons and daughters of USAAF pilots who were at Clewiston during WW2. They all say the same thing that Kelly said; that their fathers were proud to have both the RAF and USAAF Wings. Fred Renshaw's uniform, with both Wings in place, is displayed in Clewiston Museum. Fred was on Course 12, the first course for joint RAF and USAAF pilot training and Ralph was on Course 18, the last course for joint training.*

**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!**

Notes from the 'Old World'



**May 8, 2020: Victory in Europe – 75 years on:** May 8, 2020 was VE 75. And what a strange day it was too – apparently, quite a contrast to the real thing. No public gatherings or events, no church services or concerts – Covid had changed the day beyond all recognition from what had been anticipated. In the UK, a wreath was laid by the Royal Family – but not in London at the Cenotaph. In just the presence of a lone piper and a TV camera, the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall led the nation in a two-minute silence at the war memorial at Balmoral and then Prince Charles laid a wreath on behalf of the Nation. A physically distanced wreath-laying

took place in the Palace of Westminster. The government encouraged those in lockdown to join in from gardens, doorsteps and living rooms to celebrate Victory in Europe 75. Katherine Jenkins sang in an empty Albert Hall and during the afternoon a socially distanced band played in the garden of Downing Street. Around the world, similar quiet, peaceful - and distanced - ceremonies took place. It was all very respectful and dignified and was a fitting remembrance for those who fought and died, and those who survived so that we can remember today.



Prince Charles at Balmoral



Red Arrows fly past over the statue of Sir Winston Churchill in London

### Death of Dame Vera Lynn:



Dame Vera Lynn died on June 18, 2020 at the age of 103. Her funeral was held on July 10, 2020. People lined the streets of her hometown of Ditchling to pay their respects to the woman who came to be known as the Forces' Sweetheart.



Two Spitfires flew over the funeral procession of Dame Vera Lynn as family, friends and fans said goodbye to the Forces' Sweetheart. Her cortege was accompanied by the Battle of Britain flypast as it travelled through Ditchling in East Sussex at midday. The World War Two fighter planes made three passes over the village. Hundreds of people had gathered to await the arrival of the cortege and the crowd applauded as the aircraft flew over. Representatives from the Royal British Legion stood with flags as they waited to honour Dame Vera.



I recently I had a request from Jocelyn Condon to link her up with Anne Hughes as she and her friend Kathryn Masters, (daughter of pilot Hugh Harrison) are looking at archives for the Falcon Field Association (4BFTS), Mesa, Arizona. Jocelyn said, "This has become a fun and worthwhile quarantine project!"

*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, Riddle Field and/or Clewiston.

### RIDDLE ROUND-UP

#### Dr Ian (Jock) Alastair Campbell Blue DFC MD: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)

Ian (Jock) Blue and my father, George Hogarth, were two of the 13 cadets on Course 3 who had been members of the Edinburgh University Air Squadron. After WW2, Ian and his wife kept in contact with my parents although they lost touch after the early death of Ian in 1981. In 2018, a

chance viewing of a photograph taken by Kyle Blue led me to make contact with Kyle, Ian's son. Around 2000, Kyle met an ex RAF man, Don McClen, who subsequently wrote a quite detailed history of Ian's wartime career which made up a chapter of a book he published. This is the second extract from that book which takes up Ian's story after he left Clewiston.

Back in Scotland at the Flying Instructors' school at Montrose, Pilot Office Blue recorded three words in his logbook on June 4, 1942 – "Prang at Glentennar". This actually meant that Ian had flown low over Lord Glentanner's house in Aberdeenshire, damaged his aircraft and endangered his life and that of his passenger! Ian was court marshalled and dismissed from the service, but subsequently reinstated by the Air Council although demoted to the rank of Sergeant Pilot. The Commanding Office of RAF Montrose wrote to Ian's father explaining this and noting that such breaches cannot be overlooked even though he attributed the incident to "*boyish spirits*". It was this spirit coupled with Ian's exceptional flying ability that allowed this pilot to continue flying and contributing to the eventual victory.

In July 1943, over a year after the Glentannar incident, Ian was posted to 182 Squadron flying typhoons from RAF New Romney in Kent. The Squadron moved on to other RAF stations and in January 1944, Ian was promoted to Flight Sergeant.

On April 21, 1944, Ian records that General Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander, had been listening to radio exchanges while watching the squadron practising interceptions in the Slapton area and in his logbook for April 28, wrote "*Fired in a 40' dive from 7000ft to 1000ft*". On May 4 and 5, he recorded that he took part in an exercise with the Army protecting a convoy off Slapton Sands. This was Operation Tiger, one of the large-scale rehearsals for the Allied D-day invasion in Normandy. Slapton Sands was chosen because it resembled Utah Beach where American forces were to land. Unfortunately, coordination and communication problems on April 28 resulted in friendly fire deaths and a US convoy positioning itself for the landing was attacked by German E-boats. About 749 American service personnel died (compared with about 200 who died on Utah Beach during the actual landing) of which the 248 whose bodies were recovered were buried in Brookwood Cemetery in Surrey on April 29.

The squadron carried on preparing for D-Day by attacking Fort George on the German occupied island of Guernsey on May 27. Ten days after the invasion of June 6 ("*the great day at last*"), he landed on French soil for the first time and "*gave sweets to French kids*". Worth mentioning is that of the 27 pilots in the Squadron at this time, 10 were from Commonwealth countries, 4 Canadians, 3 Australians, 2 South Africans and 1 New Zealander.

See Newsletter March 2021 for Part 3 of Ian's RAF career

### **John Penman: Course 3 (October 1941 to March 1942)**

John (Johnny) Penman was another of the 13 Edinburgh University Air Squadron cadets on Course 3 and was one of the eight cadets in my father's hut at Riddle Field, Clewiston. These eight young men also included Ken MacVicar (see Obituary) and Ian (Jock) Blue (see above).

The first weekend that they were in Clewiston, a motorcade drew up and the cadets were told that anyone who wanted to spend a weekend with a family from Fort Myers should join the queue. Four of the cadets from Edinburgh (Bill Cooper, Sandy Manson, Johnny Penman and George) were picked up by Mr Ed Simpson<sup>1</sup>, in what seemed to George to be an enormous car, and taken to his home in Stella Street, Fort Myers, to meet his wife, Ruth, and daughters, Laura (then 14), Mary-Lou (11) and Marion (7 or 8). From then until the end of the course, one or more of these four cadets (and often all 4) would spend most weekends, as well as Thanksgiving (with turkey and all the trimmings) and Christmas with the Simpsons. The cadets stayed in a flat above the Simpson's garage, they were fed and entertained – and, as George said, '*nobody could have been kinder*'. Bill and Sandy died on active service during WW2. George and Johnny survived the war but sadly, lost touch with each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Ed Simpson was later to become Mayor of the City of Fort Myers (1960-1962)

Imagine my surprise then, when out of the blue I had an email from John Fockler (John F) in August mentioning John Penman (John P). John F, a Canadian, has been researching his father's flying activities during WW2 and came across the book I wrote about my father which mentions John P – who was one of pilots stationed with John F's father in India and Burma from 1942 onwards. John F suggested it might be the same person. And indeed, the Johnny Penman from Edinburgh University, who was a close friend of my father, is the same John Penman who flew with John F's father, Eddie, and was his best friend on the Squadron. And furthermore, John F was planning to meet John P's son (also called John) on August 12.

John F writes, "John [John Penman junior] and I had a good meeting. I think we both felt a kinship and enjoyed some laughs about our fathers". John F has shared a letter that John P senior wrote to Eddie Fockler in November 1946. In it, John wrote that he had returned in June to Scotland with his wife, Bella. He implies that they had been in India possibly in Poona. They were *"just trying to get used to the climate. It is so cold just now that a brass monkey<sup>2</sup> daren't move from the fireside"*. He and Bella were living with his parents and he says that they had very little chance of getting a home of their own.



*Johnny Penman (left) and George Hogarth with a PT-17 Stearman Primary Trainer Clewiston October 1942*



*"Round the Bend": Eddie Fockler on left with John Penman in Burma*



*L-R: John Penman, Sandy Manson, Bill Cooper and George Hogarth at Fort Myers*



*John Penman Camp Worli Burma*

One of the really amazing things about being the editor of this newsletter is the co-incidences that people write and tell me about! Not only did John Fockler tell me about Johnny Penman, but he also told me about Ken MacVicar and a pilot with the name of I Gibson!

Kenneth MacVicar (see Obituary) was also posted to the India-Burma Theatre and John Fockler sent me this picture which included John Penman – and Kenneth MacVicar – and I Gibson!

<sup>2</sup> The phrase 'Brass Monkey Weather' refers to very cold weather that is extremely out of the ordinary; cold enough to freeze the tail, nose and ears of a brass monkey





L-R: J Penman, L Greenwood, K MacVicar, I Gibson, B Brown, B Holliday, B Buckland, J Dorman

I Gibson is almost certainly Ian Alexander Scott Gibson – another graduate of Course 3, 5BFTS! Ian was in 28 Squadron when he was awarded a DFC (London Gazette October 2, 1945 page 4858)

### **Robert Gordon Fallas Lee DFC: Course 4 (November 1, 1942 to May 2, 1943)**

In Newsletter 11 (September 2018) I wrote about the incredible story of Flight Lieutenant Robert Lee as told by Ernie Pyle (a well-known American War Correspondent). Pyle was attached to an American force somewhere in France in the summer of 1944 when they discovered Robert Lee alive and conscious inside his crashed plane. He had been there for eight days lying on his back and trapped in the cockpit without food or water. He had numerous injuries and his back was so badly burned that gangrene had set in. The article goes on to recount how Robert was rescued.

In August, I heard from Bob McGavin who wrote, *“only found out about the amazing story of Robert Lee yesterday, and my internet search led to 5BFTS Newsletter 11 and your email address. Robert Lee is my father’s cousin. Surprisingly, I was brought up in ignorance of his story; this in part will have been to my father having died when I was a small child”*. Bob said that he had spoken to his aunt (his father’s sister) who lived in Surrey near to Robert’s family and visited on a regular basis when she was a child. She told him that Robert made a good recovery. He did not have his leg amputated as he wanted to be able to drive. In time, he took over his father’s engineering business.

Robert was born in the Croydon area of London in late 1917. He was on Course 4 at 5BFTS. Part of an intake of 50, he started training at Riddle Field on November 1, 1941 and was one of the 39 pilots who graduated on May 2, 1942. Not all were commissioned, but Robert was one of those who was and left Clewiston as a Pilot Officer. After each course, the Best Ground School Cadet, the Best Flying Cadet and the Best All-Round cadet were named. For Course 4, Robert was named as the Best All Round Cadet. He was a Flying Officer by November 1, 1942 and sometime after that, but before his crash, he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant.

Robert was stationed with 245 Squadron, part of the RAF Second Tactical Air Force (TAF). When he crashed, the 2nd TAF was supporting the US Air Force in the Battle of Normandy between the Germans and the Americans which lasted from August 7 to August 13, 1944. Robert crashed on day 1 of the battle, but American forces didn’t check the aftermath of the battle zone until the battle was over which is why it took so long to find Robert. He was flying a Typhoon Mark 1b, a single seater airplane, so he was alone when he crashed.

After his return from Florida, Robert married Margaret in the Wokingham area in 1942. Their daughter Claire Margaret was born in 1943. He died in Cornwall in 1989 aged 71.

### **Frank Whitford Jackson: Course 6 (January 25, 1942 to August 18, 1942) who died on active service on June 12, 1943 aged 20**

In August, I heard from Frank Golding who was doing some research into his uncle, Frank Whitford Jackson. Frank Jackson was 20 when his Wellington crashed at 02:20hrs on June 12, 1943 at Stanhoe Hall near Bircham Newton after being hit on the way to bomb somewhere in Europe. He died along with the Navigator Ron Lea though the Wireless Operator, Bomber Aimer and Rear Gunner survived the crash. Many years later, in 1975, the rear gunner, Ivan Prothero wrote, *“Our skipper, Pilot Officer Frank Jackson gave his life trying to save us and the aircraft, he never saw*

his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, a courageous and brave young man which we had the honour to serve under". Frank is buried in a Commonwealth War Grave at New Hunstanton, Norfolk.

Prior to joining the RAF, Frank Jackson had been studying medicine at Trinity College Cambridge. He grew up above Euston Fire station where his father was an officer. Frank Golding's mother was born Joan Jackson and was Frank Jackson's sister. Joan passed away after a long illness when Frank Golding was 11 so he didn't get to know too much about his uncle whose death was something Joan never really came to terms with. At the time of his crash, Joan was training to be a nurse at the Hammersmith Hospital and joined Princess Mary's RAF nursing service in 1944 prompted by the death of her brother. Frank and Joan Jackson had another brother, Peter.



Frank Golding sent me a picture of Frank Jackson probably taken in Canada in January 1942 shortly after he arrived at Halifax. Frank Jackson is shown here on the left holding his camera. The cadet on the right is unknown at present – but it seems that the two boys have identical cameras, the origin of which is unknown. 50 cadets started on Course 6 but only 32 graduated (of whom obviously, Frank was one!).



*Frank Jackson: Airspeed Oxford Training Aircraft  
RAF Harwell 1943*



*Frank's Medals: From left – 1939-1945 Star, Air Crew Europe Star, Defence Medal, War Medal*

Frank also sent me some more photos of the Jackson family who made road trips round Europe in the 1930s – they show a young Frank with his father (also Frank), grandfather (Arthur), uncle (Walter – wearing a fedora) and his sister, Joan and brother, Peter.



**← Kaiser's Palace, Potsdam 1934**  
*Frank Jackson between his father and grandfather*

**Ypres 1934 →**  
*Frank on the left with his uncle, grandfather, brother and sister*



### **Dr Stuart James Cox: Course 11 (September 25, 1942 to April 8, 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 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 in September 2019 saw his arrival in America. Part 3 told of his journey and introduction to Riddle Field. Part 4 (below) is about flying training.

Flying training was in two parts, primary and advanced. The primary aircraft were the excellent Stearman PT17 and for advanced, the North American AT6A (known in the RAF as the Harvard). All instructors were American from a variety of occupations including crop dusting, flying circuses and 'barn storming'. *"Some had a very strong southern American accent which we soon became used to. They all had a 'seat of the pants' approach to flying"*.

Another important part of training was the Link Trainer. This was a simulator consisting of a small mock-up of an aeroplane linked to a table nearby which had on it a 'crab' which moved across the table responding to movements of the controls of the 'link'. It was used for instrument flying training. A hood came down over the cockpit so that one had only the instruments to show what was happening. It was absolutely vital to be good at instrument flying for night, cloud and fog flying. Extreme concentration was required for instrument flying when the movement of the plane could deceive the senses and one had to be very strong minded indeed to ignore one's basic instincts and rely on the instruments.

There was ground school where we had lectures and practical work in air law, navigation, meteorology, signals, armament etc., and physical training which included games. Soft ball was very popular as was athletics. *"Once we made up two teams of fifteen and played a demonstration game of rugby in Clewiston on a cinder baseball pitch wearing American football boots and socks up over our knees. The Americans could not understand how we could play such a violent game without body protection"*.

My father, George also recalled an impromptu rugby match! Part of the entertainment for the newly arrived Course 3 cadets in October 1941, was going to an American football match which the cadets thought was a *"funny sort of game"*. George remembered that at half time, there was a 'pitch invasion' when some of the RAF cadets gave a *"rough and ready demonstration, with the accent on rough, of British rugby"*. George comments that he imagines the American public couldn't understand why *"we didn't wear protective clothing and seemed to sit on each other"*.

A regular exercise was cross country navigation. This would involve setting a course to visit towns around Florida and working out the courses to steer according to the weather and wind speed and direction. Stuart visited towns such as Punta Gorda, Immokalee, LaBelle, Brighton, Moorhaven, Venus, Olga, Brooksville, Bonita Springs, Fort Meade, Fort Ogden, Hilolo, Boynton, Melbourne, Frostproof, Murdock, Fort Myers, Plant City, Ocala, Lakeland, Sarasota, Fort Pierce, Myacca City, Naples, Babson Park, Kissimee, Belle Glade, Winterhaven, Stuart, Arcadia, Palm Beach, Sebring, Homestead, Fort Lauderdale to name but a few!!

Primary training finished on 29 November 1942. *"We then moved on to the AT6A (Harvard). We felt like aces. On primary we had worn yellow flashes in our caps; now we were excessively proud to wear red flashes and looked down on yellow flashes as real beginners. It really was quite an exciting experience to move from a small open cockpit biplane to a powerful closed cockpit low wing monoplane. We were all grateful to King George VI for giving us such a treat"*.

Part 5 (more flying and graduation) will be in March 2021.

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

It is always lovely to hear from Shirley Neyhart who was born in the UK and lived in Surrey, although since March, our chats have mainly been about how Covid is affecting our lives!

Shirley told me she lives on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor of her apartment block and can see open fields – but also lots of building of new houses and highways. We talked about bluebells (as we know them in England) and she told me that although they grow in the eastern US states, they are not in the southwest; however, Texas lays claim to the Bluebonnets which grow wild and are blue and white.

*A Texan Bluebonnet: so called because it resembles a lady's bonnet  
Since 1901, it has been the state flower of Texas →*



In July, it was very hot in Texas and life was pretty boring! As seemingly everywhere else in the world, wearing masks, keeping your distance and staying at home dominated all activity. Shirley lives in a retirement village with about 700 residents, of whom 90% are ex-military. Rules are followed and visitors banned! Exercise consisted of walking the halls and up and down the stairs!

Shirley trained as a nurse in Guys Hospital, London. She then worked in the Northwest Territories of Canada and for 6 years, as a Physician's Assistant in the University of Alberta in Edmonton. After time in these cooler (or cold) climates, the hot weather in Texas must seem quite extreme!

Shirley has kindly donated a further sum to her husband's 5BFTS scholarship fund. Thank you so much Shirley and please continue to keep in touch. A reminder that should anyone wish to support the **Major Charles A Neyhart No 5 BFTS Memorial Scholarship**, please go to [givingto.erau.edu/bfts](http://givingto.erau.edu/bfts) to make a donation to the scholarship fund.

### **John McKenzie: Course 21 (June 20, 1944 to January 21, 1945)**

Another co-incidence! In March, I heard from Stephen Carr whose father-in-law was John McKenzie (Course 21). Stephen wrote that he had been reading the March 2020 Newsletter when he spotted the photo of Course 21 on page 15. This was part of an article on the Harrogate Reunion of 2000 and the 4 cadets from Course 21 who attended that Reunion.

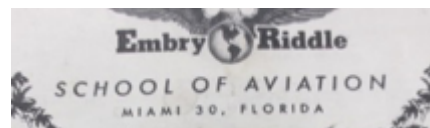
Stephen wrote: "John is in the middle row on the far left, and as you can see, he was a small man, only around 5ft 4inches". In 1944, when the photo was taken, his home was in Durham City. He was still living in County Durham, at Peterlee, when he died on December 8, 2000.



### **The Instructors**

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

The sixth of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

### **Frederick J Brittain:**

Fred's daughter, Vicki, and I exchanged emails after the world closed down because of Covid! She was thinking about her grandmother who was taking care of her new-born baby in July 1918. This baby was Fred Brittain (Vicki's father) and he was born in the midst of the Spanish Flu pandemic. Her grandmother was all by herself as her husband (Vicki's grandfather) had died in March 1918 in an accident. It's hard to imagine what that must have been like, but she must have done as good a job, because Fred survived to become a super instructor to so many 5BFTS cadets!

A reminder that there is a lot more information about Fred on 'his' website, [www.frederickjbrittain.com](http://www.frederickjbrittain.com) (developed by Fred's daughter, Vicki Brittain)

## Albert Mueller:

In August, I heard from Robert Mueller, whose father, Albert, was an instructor at 5BFTS. Robert said that he had recently found a box of Albert's belongings that included various training papers and maps. He also found logbooks belonging to 4 cadets on Course 23.

Robert has kindly sent me the Logbooks belonging to these four cadets and when I am back in the UK, I shall try and locate any relatives to see whether they would like their logbooks returned to them. In the meantime, if anyone reading this recognises their names or knows anything about them please let me know. Robert also sent me a lot of documents, pamphlets and maps which I am really looking forward to reading properly when I get back home.

**Robert - thank you so much.**



E D Pett from London



Archie Piercy from Kelso, Roxburghshire



Christopher W Thomas from London



J V Turnock from Glasgow

## The Hugo Trotter Archive

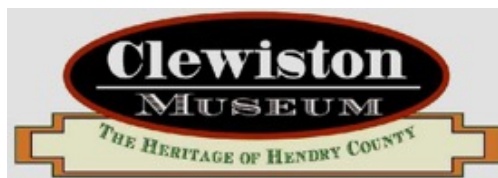
Hugo (Course 11) loaned me his album with photos from when he arrived in Canada to when he went back to Britain. **Thank you, Hugo.** The sixth selection is deferred until March 2021.



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)

## Clewiston Update



*I understand that the museum is currently closed; we look forward to an update soon.*

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 Jason Sims for looking after the 5BFTS archives and doing such a wonderful job keeping 5BFTS alive for the visitors to the museum.*

**Covid in Clewiston:** In September, Jeff was quite upbeat about the situation in Clewiston. He wrote, *"Florida is dipping, and our county is down to 20 or so cases per week after weeks and weeks of 150 per week. Schools are now open (but with online courses for some of the classes), football has started back and businesses are getting back to normal...all with masks and social*

*distancing*". It seems though that the development of the Airglades International Airport may be on hold, a blow for the local economy. The construction phase was planned to start at what has turned out to be a very bad time as Covid restrictions came into place at the same time. Reading the internet makes it sound very positive, but there seems little to substantiate this positivity! We hope that things will improve – meantime, watch this space.

### News from No. 1 British Flying Training School Museum in Terrell, Texas

The museum has had a major increase in visitor traffic. With over 2000 guests coming through our doors in fiscal year 2019, and over 1180 so far this fiscal year, we're seeing audiences quickly growing beyond our typical aviation enthusiast and veterans. More and more families with small children are visiting the museum and our volunteers got together to do everything in their power to inspire new generations to appreciate the history that happened here in Terrell. The museum has an amazing collection and we are proud to announce our new focus on providing a hands-on experience at the museum. Due to Covid the Museum was closed from March 18 to June 3, 2020



America acted as Britain's neighbor during WW2 by allowing British cadets to learn to fly in places like Terrell, Texas at 1BFTS. The crest of the training school was designed by Cadet Frank Miller, and was a shield divided into four equal parts. Each section contained a symbol of the friendship between our two countries: a British lion, an American eagle, a Texas star and a pair of hands clasped in friendship. The whole was surrounded by a belt, whose buckle contained the words "1 BFTS". In the spirit of cooperation, the belt carried these words in Latin: The Seas Divide and the Skies Unite.

### Conversation with..... WW2 RAF Veteran Fl Lt Robert Reynolds in November 2019

Bob (aged 98) spoke about "Surviving an Emergency Landing in France". Bob was not at 1BFTS but is now a local Texas resident living at Georgetown. He is an experienced combat pilot who flew many sorties over Europe in a Lancaster bomber during WW2. His talk was about a crash landing he made in northern France shortly after the Normandy invasion in 1944. During a previous "Conversation with...", Bob talked about "Flying the Russian Corridor" or the challenges of being the first Allied pilot to land in Berlin shortly after the surrender of Germany.

Flt. Lt. Robert Reynolds



Over the past few months, Rudy Bowling, Executive Director of the Museum has been sharing pictures and some history of 1BFTS, the cadets and the camp in Terrell. There are some differences between 1BFTS and 5BFTS apart from geography - Texas is a cotton state and Florida a sugar state. But there is also a lot of similarity between No 1 and No 5 BFTS and the cadets who arrived for training.

Each BFTS was built to a general specification. The airfield was to be one-mile square with two runways and a control tower. Hangars and maintenance equipment were provided for the PT-17A (Stearman) and AT-6A (Harvard) aircraft, together with emergency facilities, parachutes, and accommodation for ground instruction, administration, dormitories, dining halls and Link training. The work had to be carried out by the contractors within 60 days of signing the Contract. 1BFTS opened on June 9, 1941 and 5BFTS on July 17, 1941 (although Riddle Field wasn't ready for occupation until September 1941 and 5BFTS Courses 1 and 2 started their training in Carlstrom. Course 3 was the first 5BFTS course to spend all their time at Clewiston).

June 10, 1941 was one of those red-letter days in the history of Terrell, Texas. That night, a small gathering of local citizens pledged \$22,000 toward the \$35,000 purchase price of 526 acres just outside of town to construct what became No. 1 BFTS. The entire amount was raised in 2 days.

First impressions at 1BFTS: Mud, mud and more mud is what the young Brits saw when they began arriving in Terrell, Texas in 1941. The unpaved airstrip, surrounded by cotton fields and its huddle of frame barracks, administrative buildings and a canteen, wasn't a glamorous introduction to America. And this was also the experience of those arriving at Riddle Field. When my father, George, and the other Course 3 cadets arrived at the beginning of October 1941, the conditions at the field were rather primitive. *"There was no swimming pool and no canteen block, no soda fountain or anything like that"*.

Many of the soon-to-be pilots had never driven a car, much less flown in an airplane. But, in a few short months, they would become pilots and return to Britain to defend their home country – and democracy around the world - from the expected Nazi invasion.



Pictures from 1 BFTS Archives



Bass Drug Store was a favorite hangout of the 1BFTS cadets. After years of food rationing in Britain, they couldn't get enough ice cream, candy, soft drinks, and chewing gum. They were excited to find eggs (limited to one per week in England), marmalade, fresh fruit, and vegetables were readily available in meals on base and in Terrell homes.

← Picture from 1BFTS archive

**The Sarasota/Gulf Coast Welsh Society** remains a good friend of 5BFTS. Many of their normal activities have been cancelled and until they can meet in person at their usual gatherings, the Gulf Coast St. David's Welsh Society committee has been staying in touch with their members through newsletters with topics of interest from Welsh news through to contributions of articles, photographs and jokes which are submitted. They kindly include me in the mailings, and I have found many of their topics very interesting. If anyone reading this is interested, let me know and I will pass on their newsletter.

**Lois Heflin Blount** still writes regularly to me – it is wonderful to hear from her.

**Featured 5BFTS Reunion**: deferred until March 2021

## Colour photographs of Riddle Field

In August we heard from Glenn Kimmell. Glenn is making a model of an AT-6 Texan (known as a Harvard in the RAF) used at Lakeland Florida. He said that he had seen a picture of a Texan circa 1942 that had identification letters of CD and BQ, and it looked like the fuselage was an aluminium colour, but the nose was either yellow or white although it was hard to tell as it was a black and white photo. Glenn wanted to know if we knew what colour an AT-6 nose cone was.

Amazingly, I do have four colour photos that were taken at Riddle Field during WW2 probably before 1944, as after 1944, airplanes tended to have letters and not numbers. On the photo without the control tower, the first AT-6 does have a yellow nose cone but is numbered as 255 and does not have letters.



*Almost certainly Riddle Field. My father's logbook shows he flew 212 which looks like the number on the second airplane from the front.*



*Riddle Field – my father's logbook shows he flew 214 in 1942.*



*Riddle Field – my father has no reference to flying 207, but he did fly 206 and 208.*



*Riddle Field*

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### 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, Course 3 <http://commons.erau.edu/clewiston-beyond/1/>
- Frederick J Brittain 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)

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The next long newsletter will be published in March 2021 (with a short one for Christmas 2020). Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc. by the end of February 2021. 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.

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