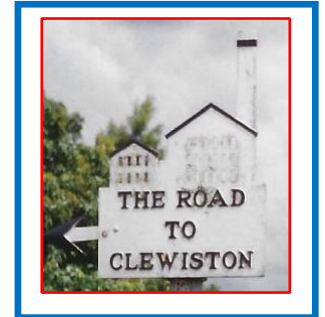


Newsletter No. 22 – March 2022

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

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Reflection

Covid is still with us, and cases are rapidly increasing as the latest variant takes hold (fortunately, although more infectious, much less deadly and incapacitating). Occasionally a Covid story makes headline news, but just now, most people will be thinking about the people who live in the Ukraine as we hear about and see pictures of the devastating scenes in their country. We live in relative safety thanks in part to those who fought for and protected our countries during WW2.

But it was not without cost and what follows is a story about a group of nine school friends who spent their weekends and holidays cycling, hiking, swimming, playing tennis, etc, and eventually, they all volunteered to join the RAF. Eight were accepted including Ron Middleton. I have already written about Ron (Newsletters March and September 2021) an Arnold Scheme cadet at Carlstrom. Of those nine friends, only two survived – Ron and the young man who was rejected by the RAF but went on to command an anti-aircraft battery. The seven who died served in Bomber Command, Fighter Command Training Command and Coastal Command and died between February 1942 and October 1944. One helped to sink the German battleship Bismarck. Thanks to John Middleton, Ron's son, for sharing this story, written by Ron as a Remembrance Day tribute.

In the UK, we are donating time, money, goods, homes and service to help our European friends, and in one of many gestures of solidarity in this country, people are decorating our post boxes in blue and yellow as a visual reminder to the suffering in another European country. The post box in the picture is in Worcestershire. It helps us remember.....



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



66th Annual British Memorial Day Service May 30, 2022

After two years of enforced absence, I am looking forward to coming to Arcadia on Memorial Day once again and taking part in the British Service to remember and honour John Paul Riddle and the 23 cadets who were killed in Florida and are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia. We owe an ongoing debt of gratitude to the Rotary Club of Arcadia and the many others who contribute to the Service.



Annual British Memorial Service May 30, 2022

Covid permitting, the service will start at 10am

The Service is organized, as it has been for the past 65 years, by Arcadia Rotary Club

Address: PO Box 1492, Arcadia, FL 34265-1492

Telephone for information at 863-444-0664

Email: BritishMemorialService@gmail.com

EVERYBODY IS WELCOME

And for lunch, try **Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuit**, 10 South Polk Avenue, Arcadia, Florida 34266. I believe it has changed hands and is now owned by DJ and Sam, her husband.

Reservations are always a good idea – phone 1-863-494-0615. For more information about Mary Margaret's Tea and Biscuits, and details of their menu, please visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/MaryMargaretsTeaAndBiscuit/>

In Memoriam

I have not heard of the deaths of any ex-cadets since September, but I found out that two family members had died fairly recently. Both deserve to be included in this section as you will see when you read their obituaries.

Jean Leeks died December 30, 2018, aged 81 years



5BFTS Association – Last Annual Reunion Dinner, Bedford. September 14, 2013

L-R: Jean Leeks, John (Co 18) and Muriel Broome, Gordon Newsham (Co 24),

Jean accepting her gift at the Reunion Dinner

Jean Leeks was the wife of the late Harry Leeks (Course 5) who died in 2009 aged 87 years. She was a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and died after a long battle with cancer. Jean's funeral was held at All Saints Church, Renhold, on January 22, 2019.



Harry and Lean Leeks – Harrogate Reunion
1987



Jean and Harry Leeks – Midland Reunion 2001
(see 'Featured Reunion')

Jean was the 5BFTS Association Secretary and with Harry, organised the annual reunions in the UK and the periodic reunions in America. In recognition of her years of service to the 5BFTS Association, she was presented with a gift at the last annual reunion dinner held in Bedford in September 2013. In the last 5BFTS Association newsletter (July 2014), the Chairman, John Broome (Course 18) wrote, "Jean has been one of our mainstay supports for many years, without her guiding hand, many of our functions would have been sad disappointments". The following is taken from her letter of thanks, printed in that newsletter.

Jean grew up in Manchester. She wrote, "*as a young girl sheltering under my parents' dining room table during the air raids, little did I know that one day I would marry 'one of those men up there that drive aeroplanes' and through him become part of the wonderful No. 5BFTS Association*". She first became involved in 1973 doing administrative work for the 'Back to Florida' Reunion in November. She married Harry in 1981 and attended her first 5BFTS reunion at Gatwick Airport in November 1982. She was then able to put faces to names she had first heard nine years earlier. And like all of us, she enjoyed meeting and spending time with members, hearing their stories and learning about their experiences.

Jean went on to write, "A big thank you to all our friends in the USA for their continuing support over the last 70 years or more. Their connections with our Association for such a long time are proof of the mutual love and respect held between us all. The work they do on our behalf especially in Clewiston with the Museum and the Memorial Garden by the Clewiston Inn, is a constant reminder of time you [the pilots] all spent there as young cadets. They 'Keep our flag flying' and this is very much appreciated.

Over the years, we have spent many happy times together, both in the UK and with our friends in the USA whether it be at reunions, air shows, holidays or simply visiting each other socially and many lasting friendships have been formed. It is sad these occasions must now come to an end, but the comradeship, friendships and memories will last for ever – I am proud and grateful to be part of No. 5 BFTS Association.

Finally, I wish you good health and happiness in whatever lies ahead and try to keep in touch with each other. Take care, with love to you all. Jean"

Editor's note: It is fitting that Jean is included in 'In Memoriam' – it is clear that without her, the 5BFTS Association would have disbanded very much earlier than it did and not had as much fun. Thank you, Jean, for what you did for the Association and my apologies to readers that I only found out for sure that Jean had died when the September 2021 newsletter was returned marked 'deceased'. I then discovered that she had died nearly three years previously.

Alma Mary Newsham died June 26, 2020, aged 95 years

Alma Newsham was the wife of the late Gordon (Course 24) who died in May 2016 (Obituary Newsletter 5, September 2016). She was a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Gordon had been a member of the 5BFTS Association from the early days. He and Alma lived in Leicestershire and when my father, George Hogarth (Course 3) and mother started to organise Midland Reunions, Alma and Gordon became great friends and supporters. When

George became too frail to continue in 2002, Gordon willingly took over organisation of Midland Reunions. Whether the reunion was an outing or pub lunch, if near to their home, it was invariably preceded or followed by refreshments at Alma and Gordon's home, Old Hall Cottage, with excellent cakes baked by mostly by Alma. I was fortunate enough to attend several of these when I acted as a chauffeur for my parents – wonderful company and hospitality led by Gordon and Alma. They usually attended the annual 5BFTS Association reunions and I got to know them very well when I took my parents, and then my mother after my father died in 2011.



Gordon and Alma Newsham – Harrogate Reunion 1987



Alma and Gordon, Old Hall Cottage – Midland Reunion 2001 (see 'Featured Reunion')

Gordon and Alma took a lead role in the original arrangements for the 5BFTS Grove at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in 2002. Gordon knew that the NMA had agreed to replace the plaque by the trees but sadly, he died before just before the plaque was installed in August 2016 and so never saw a photo of the new plaque; however, although Alma never visited the NMA to see the new plaque, she was delighted with the replacement.

After Gordon died, Alma sent me some papers and small artefacts relating to 5BFTS and she thoroughly enjoyed reading the newsletters. She moved to Tilehurst in Reading to be near family, but continued to receive newsletters, frequently sending me a letter or Christmas card thanking me for sending them.

Alma deserves her place in 'In Memoriam' because of the wonderful support she gave to Gordon and the 5BFTS Association since the start, and to the Midland Reunions, making them the success that they were since the 1970s. I shall always fondly remember chatting to her at various reunions and the warm hospitality everyone received when visiting her home. And her cakes were amazing. Thank you Alma.

We remember with thanks these friends who have done so much to support 5BFTS and make the Association what it was. We remember all pilots who have handed in their logbooks, and to other 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!



Back to normal, Duxford opens daily from April 1, 2022. 'IWM Live', a one-day event is on June 11 and there are two air shows – the Summer Air Show on June 18 and 19 and the Battle of Britain Air Show on 10 and 11 September. Please visit their website for more information. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford>

Secrets of the Imperial War Museum, a six-part documentary looks at all five of the IWM's museums. You can find out what it takes to organise a spectacular air show and hear the stories behind some of the objects in their new WW2 and Holocaust Galleries. Visit My5 – www.channel5.com/show/secrets-of-the-imperial-war-museum/season-1

As I mentioned in the Christmas newsletter, it was great to see Anne Hughes at the 4BFTS Reunion at Bentley Priory in November 2021. Thank you, Anne for all your hard work

developing the 5BFTS Archive held at the American Air Museum, Duxford.

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

Wing Commander George Greaves AFC

In Newsletter 16 (March 2020), I told you that I had heard from David Sudermann, a retired history and language professor from Northfield, Minnesota, who was researching his relative Wing Commander George Greaves, commanding officer of 5BFTS from January 27, 1943, to November 10, 1943. In April 2021, I heard from Wojtek Matusiak, a Polish researcher and author specialising in the WW2 exiled Polish Air Force. Wojtek was working on an article about the training of several notable Polish fighter pilots at No. 6 OTU (Operational Training Unit), commanded by George Greaves, at the beginning of the Battle of Britain in July 1940. The article was published in a Polish Historical Aviation Magazine in February 2021. In Newsletter 20, September 2021, I summarised part of the article and other things Wojtek had discovered. Should anyone wish to read Wojtek's article, I now have a copy in English thanks to the efforts of David Sudermann. Thank you, Wojtek and David.

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 was about time spent in primary training, Part 5 covered advanced training and graduation, and Part 6 was about Going Home!

Part 7 covers the time Stuart when was posted to Barrow No 10 Air Gunnery School.

His job was to train air gunners by simulating attacks on bombers so that they could as near as possible experience what it was like to be attacked by fighters, and patrol over the Irish Sea to detect U-Boats which at that time were trying to attack our western ports. Stuart wrote that "it was a wonderful experience to be flying every day and a good way to gain valuable flying hours and responsibility." He was made flight commander which gave him an insight into RAF administration.

The most important event during this time was meeting Eithne Foreman whom he married on 26 August 1944. Both Stuart and Eithne were 21. Eithne was a WREN in the signals section and had a crossed flags badge on her sleeve to signify this. At one time, she was stationed at Speke Airfield in Liverpool. One weekend, Stuart borrowed an aircraft and flew down to Speke from Barrow to see her – "and luckily was not found out". This reminds me of my father flying from places he was stationed to see my mother, also a WREN, wherever she was stationed – his logbook notes these were flights for testing or carrying equipment, etc!

Part 8 will be in September 2022 and covers his posting to a Spitfire Operational Training Unit

Charles A. Neyhart (known as Chuck): Course 17 (October 1943 to April 1944)

I heard from Shirley Neyhart earlier this month to tell me that Lieutenant-General Darrell Jones (President and CEO of the Air Force Village where Shirley lives) was impressed with the donations she made in Chuck's name for the USAF Emergency Fund as well as to Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and Penn State University. She also told me that William (Bill) Thompson, Executive Director Engagement Initiatives & Eagle Heritage Project from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University and his colleague Steve Bobinsky were visiting her so they could learn more about Chuck and his aviation career. Shirley was also able to tell them about Chuck's father, Amos E. Neyhart who started a Driver's Education Course for Penn State.

Look forward to hearing more....

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 to donate to the scholarship fund.

William Charles (Charlie) Strong: Course 20 (April 1944 to November 1944)

Joanne Strong sent me some photographs of Charlie which I included in the Christmas 2021 newsletter. I also included a postcard she sent me showing unknown service men enjoying Christmas in their hut or barracks.

Joanne sent the newsletter to her niece (the daughter of Charlie's sister) who recognised the postcard as the same as one she had inherited from her mother. She thinks that the postcard dates from WW1 and shows Charlie's father (also called William) or possibly one of his brothers (Arthur and Herbert – regiments unknown) in a military hospital possibly in Manchester. His uniform shows that he was wounded and in a hospital. William Strong Senior was in the Wiltshire Regiment and served in Gallipoli and the Somme. He was probably a private and was a shoe smith, looking after the horses. He was sent to the hospital twice because of lice, boils and shell shock and was then sent back to the front. Charlie's niece wrote that *"It was a terrible time for him, and he suffered from nightmares for the rest of his life"*.

The Instructors

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

The ninth of a series about the instructors



©David Brannan (Peter Brannan Co 25)

Frederick J Brittain:

"Don't worry if your job is small and your rewards are few - remember that the mighty oak was once a nut like you"

A lovely quote from Fred, and a reminder that there is a lot of information about Fred on 'his' website, www.frederickjbrittain.com (developed by Fred's daughter, Vicki Brittain)

Emmett L Dugger:

In November 2020, we heard from Lee Dugger who was asking about his father, Emmett L (Dug) Dugger, and his uncle Noel Ellis, both of whom were instructors at Riddle Field. I am putting together a short piece about Dug and Noel, which isn't quite finished, but meantime, Dick Coleman (see below) sent me a newspaper clipping referring to Emmett L Dugger (No relation to his wife, Mary Ruth, whose mother's maiden name was Dugger). The clipping shows that during the 1939-1940 session, the University of Richmond ran a civilian pilot training programme, and one of the 11 graduates was Emmett L Dugger of Meredithville [Virginia]! More about Dug and Noel in September 2022.

Gordon Leo Sanders:

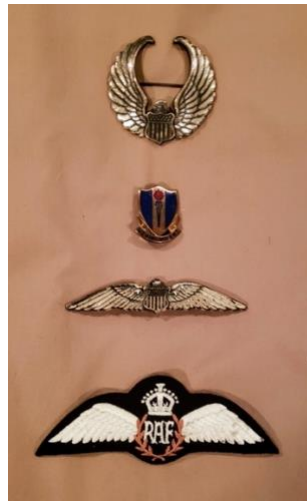
Last October, we heard from Richard (Dick) Coleman and Mary Ruth (née Sanders) Coleman. Dick wrote, *"My father-in-law, Gordon Leo Sanders, was an instructor at 5BFTS"* and told us a little more about his life.

Gordon came from a poor family in Arkansas. He had seven siblings but sadly, his father died at an early age. When WW2 arrived, Gordon wanted to join the Air Force, but he was color-blind and ineligible to flight. So, he decided to become a civilian flight instructor and trained at Randolph Field, Texas, which in March 1943, became the USAAF Central Instructors' School, training instructors for ground schools and instructor pilots including those for civilian contracts for all three phases of flying (primary, basic and advanced). Like many of his fellow instructors, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps on 5 August 1942 (this measure was standard to protect Civilian Flight Instructors from the draft as they were too valuable to lose). As a contract pilot in the 75th Flying Training Detachment, Gordon moved to Riddle Field sometime after April 1943 and stayed at 5BFTS until the airfield closed in September 1945. He was honorably discharged on 3 December 1945 and was immensely proud of his work with his "RAF boys".

Editor's note: Thank you Gordon for all that you did for your 'RAF' boys – it is appreciated.



Gordon Leo Sanders



Cap badge, Unit badge and Wings (USAAF and RAF)



Riddle Field, June 1944

While at Clewiston, he met Ruth Manville Dugger who came to a Clewiston school to be a PE and Biology teacher. Ruth's father had been a bomber pilot in WW1, and he and Gordon got on very well. After WW2, Gordon went back to Arkansas. At Clewiston, he recorded his home address as 416 Clifton Street, Camden, Arkansas. After about 9 months, he went to Newport News, Virginia to marry Ruth. He stayed close to Aviation, ending up as Chairman of the Airport Commission of Patrick Henry Airfield in Newport News. He kept flying as a private pilot.

Harvard Squadron March 1944 (Advanced training instructors)

Photograph from Flypaper March 3, 1944



RIDDLE FIELD'S HARVARD SQUADRON. Front row left to right: F/C Woodward, 1/O Bright, 1/O Fair, F/C Racener, AF/C Place, 1/O Hall, 1/O Greenwood, 1/O Altman and 1/O Mancuso. Center row, left to right: 1/O McDonald, AF/C Garcia, 1/O Barclay, 1/O Ohlinger, 1/O Feigel, 1/O Taylor, 1/O Darby, 1/O Brazell and 1/O Veltri. Back row, left to right: 1/O Cushman, 1/O Mangold, S/C Cousins, D/F Lehman, F/C Perry, 1/O Mulholland, AF/C Day and AF/C Brinton.

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.** This eighth selection shows them 'Going Home'.



Hugo packing



P.H. Dyson (left) and L. Edwards – still at Clewiston



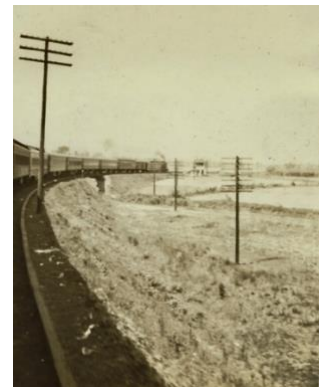
'Puff' Train and Pete Varley 'on the way'



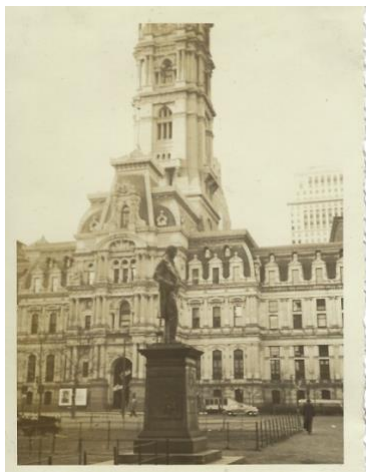
In Philadelphia



F.G. Shipton on a train – somewhere in America!!



Somewhere between New York and MacAdam, Canada



*Looking pretty similar 70 years later!!
Left: Philadelphia City Hall 1943
Right: Philadelphia City Hall 2014*



*Below:
New York City*

Left: Skyscrapers just visible in the distance



Finally, the newly graduated pilots of Course 11 reached Moncton ready for the final leg of their journey to Halifax and the troopship that would take them home to Britain. The final selection of photos - 'Leaving North America!' - in September 2022



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

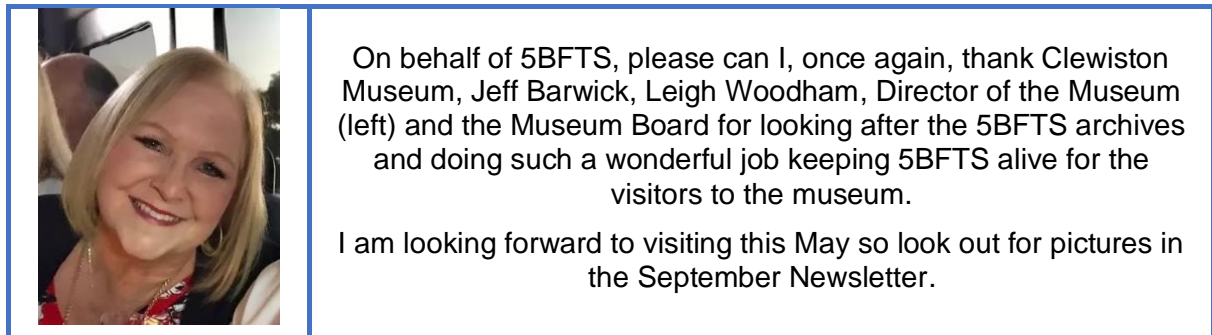


Clewiston Update



The Museum displays information and links, which connect to photographs and other archives on the subject of 5 BFTS.

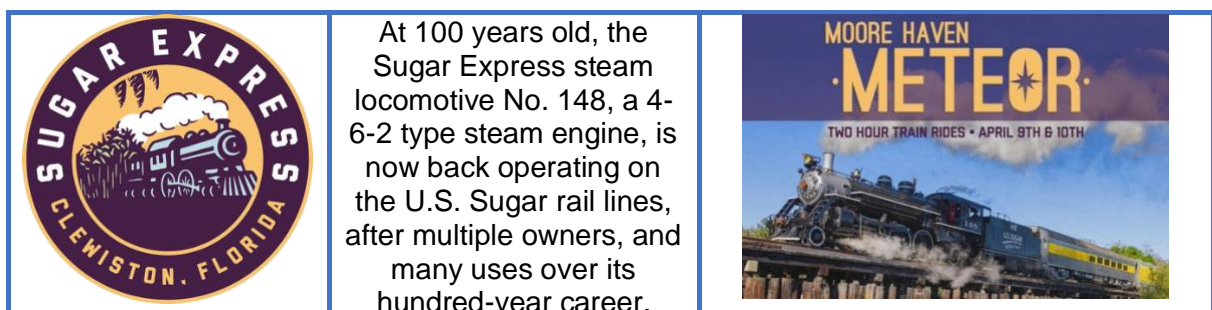
The museum now has a new-look website with a new web address: <https://www.theclewistonmuseum.org>. Clicking on the 5BFTS logo takes you to photo archives and clicking on the words, 'Clewiston and beyond' takes you to my book about my father in the ERAU archives. Look in Digital Archives for copies of 'The Clewiston News' published between 1941 and 1945 – a great way to find out what was happening at Riddle Field!



Other news from Clewiston – THE SUGAR EXPRESS

The station, known and loved by so many cadets as the start of new expectations as they arrived in Clewiston and the beginning of their journey back to Britain to join the fight for their country as they left, is no more, but passenger trains have returned to Clewiston – historic ones anyway!

The railroad never left Clewiston as it was vital to the sugar industry, but passenger traffic ceased. U.S. Sugar is the only sugarcane farming company in continental United States that transports all of its cane to a sugar factory by railroad. You can now learn about the sugar industry as you take a trip through the sugar canes pulled by historic locomotive No 148.



News from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU)

Recently, I heard from William (Bill) Thompson and Alan Cesar.

Bill has a new role and is now Executive Director Engagement Initiatives & Eagle Heritage Project in the Office of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement. Congratulations Bill and the good news is that Bill will still be involved with 5BFTS.

Alan, who was Assistant Director of Digital Engagement and Philanthropy working for Bill, left ERAU on March 1 and moved to Purdue University in Indiana, where he will be working for the Purdue school of aeronautics and astronautics, part of their College of Engineering. His job will entail a lot of the same digital marketing work that he did at ERAU as well as working on their annual magazine. His office is now in a building named after Neil Armstrong – wow! (Neil Armstrong graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in aeronautical engineering from Purdue in January 1955). Thank you, Alan, for all the work you have done for 5BFTS. We will miss you on Memorial Day in Florida, but hope you now get to see far more of your family who live close by in Chicago.

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

The latest BFTS Link newsletter (Summer 2021) be found at:

<https://www.bftsmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/BFTS-Link-Summer-2021-Final-8-13.pdf>

The Annual Remembrance Day Memorial Ceremony to honour the cadets who were killed while training at Terrell was held at 3pm at Oakland cemetery on **November 13, 2021**.



The Museum has a Museum Wall dedicated to 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 BFTS.

- Above left: Pictures of John Paul Riddle and John McKay on the Wall donated by ERAU
- Above right: The Wall

Thank you 1BFTS Museum for remembering 5BFTS.

If anyone is in Terrell and would like to go and see the Museum, information is on their website: <https://www.bftsmuseum.org>

The Seas Divide Us but the Skies Unite Us – Celebrating Co-operation Between the United States and Great Britain

Linking No 1 and No 3 British Flying Training Schools – The AT6 Monument

In September 2021, I wrote about the **AT6 Monument** and the contribution the Choctaw Nation has made to remembering the four No 1 BFTS RAF cadets who were killed on February 20, 1943, while on a formation training flight of twelve AT-6 airplanes, between No1 BFTS at Terrell TX and No 3 BFTS at Miami, OK. Each February the Choctaw Nation gathers to honor these four cadets who crashed near Antlers, OK. The brief ceremony on the side of the mountain is followed by a reception in the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Hall in Antlers. This year, the small private ceremony took place on February 20, 2022.

To read more about this memorial, please visit https://military.wikia.org/wiki/AT6_Monument

News from No 4 British Flying Training School (Falcon Field)

Kathryn Masters, daughter of pilot Hugh Harrison, Course 27, who lives in Lincolnshire, writes a newsletter to keep all those who are interested in 4BFTS connected with each other. Newsletter number 7 was published in January 2022. Please tell me if you would like a copy.

Arizona November 2021: Regular readers will know from the Christmas 2021 Newsletter, that I made it to Arizona in November for the celebrations to mark the **80th anniversary of the establishment of #4BFTS** organised by The Wings of Flight Foundation (WoFF) in Mesa, Arizona Gala. www.wingsofflight.org. Details and photographs of the celebrations were included in the Christmas newsletter.

Meeting Tuck and Bill: There was more to come as we were in Arizona for a further 10 days, during which we had a wonderful day out visiting the Desert Museum in Tucson with Tuck Renshaw, and dinner at the home of Tuck and Reiko Renshaw in the lovely Ora valley. They had also invited Bill and Jane Coleman to the dinner. We shared friendship, good conversation, memories and more over dinner.

Bill's father, Jed was an instructor at Riddle Field and Bill has memories of living in Moore Haven during WW2 (see the Christmas newsletter for more details).

Tuck's father, Fred, was a USAAF cadet on #5BFTS Course 12, the first course in Clewiston to have USAAF cadets training alongside RAF cadets. Fred's uniform is on display in Clewiston Museum; like other USAAF cadets graduating from a BFTS, he proudly wore both the RAF Wings and USAAF Wings. I had met Tuck and Reiko before in Clewiston and corresponded with Bill, but it was great to be together and chat.

Tuck & Reiko and Bill & Jane live close and know each other well now, but this has only been since they retired to the Ora Valley. And it was the 5BFTS connection that brought them together.

Tuck and Bill featured in the first Newsletter I wrote in March 2015. Bill wrote, *"Tuck Renshaw and I belong to a speakers' group here in Tucson, Arizona. Several years ago, at lunch we started talking about flying and lo and behold we discovered both our dads were in Clewiston at the same time. My dad had learned to fly in the 1930's in New York State, after paying \$5 at the county fair and experiencing his first flight in an open cockpit double winger. In the winter of 1942-43 my mom, my two brothers and I joined my dad in Clewiston. John Broom [Last 5BFTS Chairman], who I met in Bedford, England, in 2012 at the 5 BFTS reunion, remembers my dad [Jed Coleman] as his flight instructor. Jed passed away in 1985.*

My dad worked for IBM before the war and returned there after the war. He did some private instructions for several years but ceased doing that when the plane he was flying lost power and he did a belly flop on the Susquehanna River in New York. I believe the year was 1947".



Newsletter no 1 included a photo of Bill, Tuck, Jane when they met up in December 2014 at the home of Tuck's cousin, James, in Coolidge, Arizona. They had dinner with Harold Kosola at a Greek restaurant in Florence, Arizona, which is where the photo (left) was taken.

← L-R: Bill, Tuck, James, Jane and Harold

Menu cards at El Tovar, Grand Canyon

One of the many places we visited during our two weeks in Arizona was the Grand Canyon National Park where we found a BFTS connection. El Tovar, the hotel in Grand Canyon Village has displays of historic artefacts including menus. We had been told that one of the 4BFTS cadets had returned to El Tovar several years later and donated his 1944 menu cards to the hotel. If the actual menu cards on display are not those he donated, they are certainly very similar (see below).



And we saw some airplanes! Not just any airplanes, but planes similar to those the cadets would have flown. In Mesa, we saw several Stearman PT-17 airplanes – in the historic hanger at Falcon Field, in a fly past on Veteran’s Day and on the ground and in formation flying at the Anniversary Gala Dinner held in the hanger.



Stearman Fly-past over Mesa on Veteran’s Day – November 11



Stearman PT-17 in the Falcon Field hanger being restored by a father and son team



November 13 – Gala Anniversary Dinner



Above left: Three Stearman PT-17 on the ground

Above right: Stearman Fly-past before the dinner

Left: Two Stearman PT-17s fly in formation as the sun starts to set in Mesa with Red Rock in the background

PIMA Air and Space Museum

Towards the end of our stay, we visited the PIMA Air and Space Museum in Tucson. And here we found all three of the planes that the cadets flew – the **Stearman PT-17** for primary training, the **Vultee BT-13** for basic training and the **Harvard AT-6**, known to Americans as the Texan AT-6, for advanced training.

The Vultee was a difficult plane to fly (its nickname was ‘The Vibrator’ which is maybe a clue!) and Roger Crosskey (Course 3 – 5BFTS) lost his life when his Vultee crashed as he was coming into land in fog after a night flying exercise. Following an inquiry, the Vultee was withdrawn from use by BFTS cadets and both basic and advanced training was undertaken using the Harvard.



Stearman PT-17 suspended in Hanger 4



Harvard (Texan) AT-6 suspended in Hanger 5 followed by a Vultee BT-13



Vultee BT-13 in Hanger 5



Harvard (Texan) AT-6 in Hanger 5

ALL-BFTS MEETING in 1985

For a few years, there was some joint work undertaken in the UK between the various BFTS Associations. During Lockdown, I found a few records in my personal archives and this is the first selection. More will follow in September 2021.

On March 18, 1985, Bill McCash, Chairman of the Falcon Field Association, hosted a meeting at the Victory Club in London at which five UK BFTS Associations were represented – the two not represented were No 2 (Lancaster, California) which closed in 1942 and No 7 (Sweetwater, Texas) which was only active for three months in 1942. Those present were:

BFTS	Location	Representatives
No 1	Terrell Texas	Alan Bransom (Chairman) and Bert Allam (Secretary)
No 3	Miami, Oklahoma	Jack Taylor (Chairman)
No 4	Mesa, Arizona	Falcon Field: Bill McCash (Chairman), Ken Lawley (Vice-Chairman) and Herbie Buckle (Secretary)
No 5	Clewiston, Florida	Riddle Field: Ray Searle (Secretary) and Bob Peters (Press and Publicity)

No 6	Ponca City, Oklahoma	John Hicks (Represented 6BFTS at the meeting). John had been at No 6BFTS until it closed in April 1944 when he transferred to No 4 (Falcon Field). John was hoping to start a No 6 Association.
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During the 2½ hour meeting, areas of common interest were discussed to share ideas and see if there was anything that could be carried out collectively. It was agreed that this meeting would be followed up at intervals, but I have no evidence that this happened on a regular basis. Most Associations had a tie for their members to wear, and Falcon Field shared their fund-raising ideas including sale of tea towels, head-squares (presumably for the ladies) and car stickers. Our Bob Peters explained about the recent 5BFTS Association publicity campaign (seeking new members) using local radio and newspapers and agreed to spearhead a campaign seeking cadets who went to any of the BFTS. The suggestion of a joint video made under the auspices of RAF Hendon was discussed. This was considered in 1984 and had progressed to a suggested cost of £100 per BFTS although I am not sure what happened next!

There was no enthusiasm for a shared reunion although it was agreed to publish details of reunions in Association newsletters in case anyone wanted to attend another BFTS reunion (subject to space). In 1996, a proposal for a 'Grand Reunion' for BFTS and Arnold Scheme cadets was considered, although I am not quite sure if it was ever more than a 'good idea'!

The one thing that did eventually happen was that a joint BFTS Plaque was donated and installed at the RAF Museum at Hendon. More about this in September 2022.

And recently, a 4BFTS archive has been set up on the IWM American Air Museum Website. Similar to the 5BFTS archive, it can be found at <https://americanairmuseum.com/unit/4175>

Featured 5BFTS Midland Reunion: Lunch at Old Hall Cottage followed by a Canal Cruise July 11, 2001

I have featured reunions held in Royal Tunbridge Wells 1995 (September 2018), Bedford 1999 (March 2019) and Harrogate in 2000 and 1987 (March 2020 and September 2021).

This time, I am writing about a Midland Reunion held in July 2001 as a tribute to Alma and Gordon Newsham. The majority of the Midland reunions were organised by George Hogarth and Gordon Newsham. Every Annual or American Reunion is a tribute to Jean and Harry Leeks, but they also attended Midland Reunions - and here, they were able to relax and enjoy themselves as they did not have to do any organising!!

And as you can see from the photographs, an excellent time was had by all!

Editor's note: nearly all the gentlemen are wearing their 5BFTS tie!



The 17 5BFTS Association Members attending (most accompanied by their wives) were:

- Course 3: George Hogarth and Rodney Scrase,
- Course 5: Harry Leeks,
- Course 6: Sid Slape,
- Course 10: Brian Spragg,
- Course 11: John Potter,
- Course 14: Ron Ballard,
- Course 15: George James,
- Course 18: John Broome,
- Course 22: Ted Whittles,
- Course 23: Cliff Mitchell, John Stephenson and Reg Williams,
- Course 24: Gerry Beardsmore, Brian Gait, Jim Moxom and Gordon Newsham.

Margo Loch and Mary Rochford represented their late husbands, Ian Loch (Course 7) and AM Cooper (Course 17) respectively.

Above left: John Potter (Course 11 and President of the 5BFTS Association) helping with lunch at Old Hall Cottage



The day started with lunch when 35 Midland members enjoyed an excellent meal at Old Hall Cottage, Bardon Hill in Leicestershire, the home of Gordon and Alma Newsham.

← Mary Rochford sampling the cheese board with John Potter looking on.



Post lunch relaxation:
George James (Course 15), Ted Whittles (Course 22) and Brian Spragg (Course 10)



Doing the dishes!
Kath Moxom (wife of Jim, Course 24), Ian Newsham (Gordon and Alma's son) and Mary Beardsmore (wife of Gerry, Course 24)



After lunch, members drove to Sutton Cheney Wharf to take an Ashby Trip canal cruise on the 72-foot narrowboat, Rose, along the Ashby de la Zouch Canal. The 1½ hour trip sailed past Ambion Wood, the setting for the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485) and close to Ambion Hill where King Richard fell during the Battle, before turning round at Shenton for the return trip.

← Gordon Newsham (Course 24) alongside 'Rose' at Sutton Cheney Wharf



Looking down the narrowboat.
Left in a white coat: George James (Course 15).
Right foreground: Brian Spragg (Co 10). Right middle distance: Rodney Scrase (Co 3)



Ron Ballard (Course 14) and Maureen Stephenson (wife of John, Course 23) and the Ashby de la Zouch Canal



John (Course 18) and Muriel Broome



John (Course 11) and Pat Potter



Cliff Mitchell (Course 23) and his wife



Jim (Course 24) and Kath Moxom

Ron Middleton, Cadet at Carlstrom Field, Arcadia

In January 2021, I heard from John Middleton who lives in Canada. He knew his father, Ron Middleton, was one of the RAF cadets who trained as a pilot in Arcadia, Florida, and while having a basement clean-up found some photographs taken at Carlstrom Field in Arcadia and the story included in 'Reflection' this month. Some of the photos were in the 2021 March and September newsletters. This month, I heard from him again – the basement clean-up has continued, and he has found more photos. So...watch this space.

The Sarasota/Gulf Coast Welsh Society remains a good friend of 5BFTS, and I am invited to many of their activities. I'm only sorry that it is a little far for me to go for the afternoon! St David's Day was March 1, and this year, they held an afternoon "Te Bach" (afternoon tea) with refreshments, singing and socializing in the fresh air at the Philippi Estate Park Gazebo in Sarasota. Attendees brought a plate to share (sweet, savoury or perhaps Welsh cakes or Bara Brith! They held a brief Annual Meeting and a time of Remembrance before the picnic.

Useful websites:

- Clewiston Museum: <https://www.theclewistonmuseum.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'. Memoirs of George Hogarth, Course 3 <http://commons.erau.edu/clewiston-beyond/1/>
- Frederick J Brittain Flying was my Life 1918 – 2002 www.frederickjbrittain.com
- Roy Mather DFC (Co 12): "A Pilot's Story – A Chesterfield Hero" www.vickersvaliant.com

The next long newsletter will be published in September 2022. Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc. by the end of August 2022. 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. And for now.....

"Until we meet again, "good-bye to y'all".