



The Old Collyerians' Association

Spring 2010

President's Message

Spring is here again, although you may not have noticed if you are still living under the UK's unique weather umbrella. With Spring comes a new OCA President and it is my pleasure to fulfil the role for 2010.

Like my predecessor, Derek Sturt, I can look back half a century and understand why Collyer's has stood the test of time. Today, although in a completely different form, Collyer's is as vibrant and educationally successful as it has always been due in part to its continual acceptance and implementation of change and maintenance of the high standards to which we were all subjected.

My time at Collyer's proved to be invaluable although, at the time, that may not always have been my opinion! Both the formal education and the non-curricular activities provided me with exceptional memories, valuable skills and lifelong friends, many now dispersed across the globe. Re-establishing contact with those in distant parts has been a highlight of my relatively short time as an OCA member.

My memories are of the era of such renowned academics as Wilson, Pointer, Reese, Kenyon, Twidle, Soper, Routley, Jones, Tidey, Young, Hanratty, Whitbourn... the list seems endless; eminent peers, such as Easterbrook, Scully, Pearmain, Sinclair, Goodwin, Lister, Pugh, Robins, Taylor; and the less academic opportunities opened up with activities such as the CCF under the enthusiastic command of the late Peter Pointer and performing electrical trickery to light up the school plays.

It would have been reasonable to assume that, with the closure of the Grammar School all those years ago and its continuation as a Sixth Form College, the OCA would slowly fade away in parallel with the advancing age of its ex Grammar School pupils. Well, I am happy to report that nothing could be further from the truth.

The OCA Dinner last November hosted almost as many members as it did exactly 50 years ago. Some in particular made trips back to the UK specifically to attend the dinner and renew acquaintances. We are

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very grateful for everyone's efforts and support, particularly those that made long journeys.

We are fortunate to have such 'statistical' information recorded for posterity in the school magazines. These make very interesting reading and hopefully, some promised additions to these on our website will be in place soon. As the one responsible for providing this content, I am attempting to make time available this year to accelerate the effort. However I am handicapped, as I have probably mentioned before, by the irresistible urge to read every page during the preparation process such is their intrigue after the passing of time.

As a guest at the Mercer's School annual luncheon in February, it was clear to see that their membership had not fared quite so well, the school having closed in the late 1950s. They are faced with a dwindling population and the need to consider their future. Nevertheless, the devotion and support of their membership was an example to us.

In contrast, the future looks rosy for the OCA especially with the 'baby boomers' amongst us reaching formal retirement age and having time on our hands. Well, that was what the script said! We also have the added advantage of being able to attract College students to our ranks so they may take over in the future.

Our membership numbers continue to stand firm, sadly losing a few each year to the next life but continuously welcoming new joiners from near and far. I would, however, always urge any members to encourage their OC friends, who are not members, to join and experience the camaraderie. The annual cost is almost 'loose change' and lifetime membership very affordable. Mark, our Membership Secretary, is constantly manning the phones!

The Summer reunion will be upon us in short order so please read the details of the event and join us if you possibly can. The event is extremely informal, interesting and generally a great chance for a chat about old times in a cordial environment. Hunger and thirst are always considered too.

Thank you if you have opted to receive this newsletter online as that helps us maintain the very affordable membership fee especially with the ever increasing postage charges. If you have not yet opted in and would like to do so, please let Anthony, our General Secretary, (or any of the committee members) know.

You will now find most of the newsletters from the early 90s online. These are very readable and have some interesting information about, amongst other things, some of our esteemed tutors.

Enjoy this one and have an excellent Summer.

Gary Jones, (1956-63)

J o t t i n g s

Derek Sturt and Hon Secretary Anthony Barnard attended the opening of the new **John Dew Building** at the college, which was officially opened on 6 November by the Horsham MP Francis Maude. Both were impressed with the new facilities .

*Our secretary Anthony Barnard received this e-mail from Chris Tapster with **more Collyerian memories...***

I was at Collyer's 1966-1973 and while not an OCA member do peruse the newsletter online. The autumn 2009 issue in particular stirred many memories, not least of all sparked by the recollections of my old buddy Rich Gradie.

Martin Richardson recalls the indoor rifle range and also shooting on a range "somewhere in the South Downs". I was pleasantly surprised on a rare visit to Horsham this year to see that the old Nissen hut which housed it is still standing, although I suspect it is no longer used as a range. Some of us used to shoot there after school on a Monday under the auspices of Mr. Lawrence. On one occasion the school received a complaint from the CIBA factory on the other side of the railway, claiming that their premises had been hit by bullets from the range. Highly improbable, as the low velocity small-bore rounds were effectively caught

by the stop-butt at the end of the hut.

The range in the Downs was Kithurst, which was constructed in 1942 for the Canadian forces who trained there prior to the Dieppe raid and which remained in use after the war. It was there that I first fired a full-bore rifle with the CCF, and field days and Saturday-morning range sessions at Kithurst stood me in good stead subsequently with the Army and HM Government. I went in search of the range earlier this year but it has long since been returned to farmland. Only a few chunks of concrete now remain.

Like Colin MacDonald I too remember Mr. Gosney and his amazing lung power; and, like Colin, Mr G encouraged me to continue with German after O Level and I went on to obtain an honours degree in the language. I remember him telling us, during a study session of our A level text 'Die Physiker', that he was related by marriage to the Danish physicist Niels Bohr. The teaching must have been good because while in Germany at Christmas 1989 I was mistaken for an East German refugee!

For those who remember them I'm still in touch with Richard Hirst, Jim Driver and Gary Booth, and at Easter the four of us were due to have a week's reunion in the Peak District.

The outgoing President Derek Sturt attended the funeral of Tim, son of former chair of the governors Rosemary Cowley. He said that it had been well supported in appalling weather conditions.

The Webmaster reports that he has installed a new and updated Home Page on the OCA web site and is continuing to download old copies of *The Collyerian*.

Derek Sturt has offered to deliver newsletters and address lists in central Horsham as a cost-saving measure - other volunteers to do this in other local areas would be welcomed.

Would those who think they will definitely be coming to the **winter reunion dinner** - to be held on 20 November - please get in touch with us (via the Hon Secretary or the editor) if they would not object to having their names and years listed in the newsletter. We think that if those who are not sure about attending could see the names of some of their contemporaries, they might feel encouraged to come along and renew old acquaintances.

The 'Historic Horsham' page of the *West Sussex County Times*, 1 January 2010, featured a follow up to an earlier story, which we also featured in our last newsletter. Andy Kynoch had wanted to re-create an old photograph of the **1969 Collyer's under-12 football** team, and was seeking his former team colleagues who had achieved 100 goals before Christmas.

With the help of former PE and geography teacher Peter Worsley the whole team was reunited for a new photograph, printed in the paper, for which they posed in football kit in the new Collyer's sports hall. The temptation of the ball in the picture was obviously too great, and an impromptu match took place ending with the first half-team to reach five goals. The team - Andy Kynoch, Chris Spicer, Colin Attwater, Graham Jackson, Steve Davies, Paul Greenfield, Chris Logan, Phil Hughes, Dave Allen, Nick Bainbridge and Mark Vickers - then went off with Peter Worsley to a reception at the Horsham YMCA FC in Gorings Mead.

No **college news** this time due to lack of space (smaller newsletter than normal to keep down postage costs because the membership list is mailed with this issue)

More memories of Mr Collins

Tony Collins writes:

I was startled and fascinated to see the memoir of my father, F A Collins, in a recent newsletter and it was good to encounter again his many cherished phrases ('cor and/or blimey' being a particular favourite).

Perhaps I could add a few details about my father's life?

My father was christened Frederick Arthur, but he decided very early in his youth that he could never be a Fred, and announced to all that his name was henceforth Peter - and it was by this name that he was known by all his family and friends.

He was a man who always found teaching difficult, despite his success at the job, because he was a very private individual. My mother, Joan Collins (yes, I know!) was deputy head at Springfield Park, back in the days when this was a private girls' school. She taught French, Maths and Latin (it will come as no surprise that I went on to study French, combined with English) and when she retired from her own teaching position he took the opportunity to retire as well, at the age of 61. I am glad that he did so, because he died of a heart attack at the age of 73 (while putting out chairs for a French Circle meeting). His health had been badly affected by his years in the Middle East, notably Syria, during the Second World War, when he became a captain in the Gunners and was one of the liaison officers between the British and Free French forces in the area. I still have a letter of appreciation written at

the close of the war by the French General with whom he had most contact. There were other dangers to face besides Germans and local bandits: he contracted dysentery, spent months in hospital, and suffered ever after from bowel and blood pressure problems.

Despite deteriorating health he used his retirement years to the full. He tied many a fly using the vice that 2H had so kindly purchased, and his venerable MG Magnette (the higher spec ZB, not the ZA, as he would point out with relish) could indeed be seen at Roost Hole and other favourite fishing spots. (I too had many a fine evening's fishing for the good but elusive roach at Roost Hole. There also used to be a shoal of deep, dark bronze bream that were almost never caught but you occasionally spotted them in the shallows.) He was a careful fisherman, and for that matter a careful gardener, and left many notebooks detailing baits, observations of weather conditions, fish caught and measured etc. He and my mother also joined the chorus of the Horsham Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society and performed in several Gilbert and Sullivan operas, until my mother, as she put it, could no longer pass for a maiden! Having previously studied French and Spanish, he (and my mother) set about the learning of German, and together they made many forays into the Rhineland to practice their new skills.

My abiding memory is that of a man who enjoyed life immensely. My warmest thanks to Mark Collins and Graham Lipscomb for recalling him.

Financial matters and membership subscriptions

Following my election as Treasurer at the 2008 AGM, I have now been actively managing the Association's finances for 12 months. As well as dealing with all the necessary transactions, I have taken the opportunity to look at the trends of income and expenditure over the last 10 years. I have concluded that although the financial situation may be described as "healthy" for an organisation of this nature and size, there is no room for complacency. Further, the finances will need careful management in the future.

Broadly speaking, our income is from four sources:

- * Investment Income. Unfortunately, this has dropped by about two thirds since the start of the millennium, but, unless you have been living in a cave during this decade, you will realise that this is an inevitable consequence of what is happening in the market place; i.e. we are at the mercy of the Bank of England.
- * Membership renewals/subscriptions. This has fluctuated according to the number of long term and life members joining in any one year. Fortunately, the combination of investment income and annual membership subscriptions has been sufficient, in all bar one of the last 10 years, to cover our essential outgoings.
- * Raffle money at the Winter reunion dinner. This is obviously influenced by the number of diners who purchase tickets.
- * Ticket sales for the Summer and Winter reunions. Again, this amount fluctuates according to the numbers attending. The Summer reunion traditionally makes only a very modest profit. The Winter reunion produced losses in November 2007 and 2008, and the impact of these losses was felt in the Association's overall profit and loss accounts for the respective financial years. Fortunately, these losses were reversed in November 2009.

Meanwhile, our outgoings may be listed in three categories:

- * Newsletter and publicity. In the "evenly-numbered" years, 2006, 2008, 2010 etc, this increases quite significantly to take account of the circulation of the membership list.
- * Prize-winners for creative writing amongst current students. This is a relatively new initiative, which has been very well-received by the College, and serves to enhance our profile with the current student body. The raffle money at the Winter reunion has been used to fund this.
- * Expenses in connection with the summer and winter reunions. We aim to keep these to the minimum

necessary, and continually strive to ensure value for money from our external suppliers, caterers and the like.

Any organisation which wants to improve its finances should of course aim to increase revenue and reduce costs wherever possible. This brings me to the impact of all of the above information on you, our members.

In relation to income, the only item over which the Association has direct influence is the membership renewals and subscriptions. I have noted that these have been unchanged for at least 10 years now: £2 for annual membership, £35 for long-term and £55 for life. With the passage of time and the effect of inflation, these amounts look very modest indeed. Look at it this way: What does £2 buy you in the shops, the restaurant, the pub, or the railway station ticket office? What other organisations do you know that charge a smaller annual membership?

The Committee thus believes that it is time to review this. So I am therefore going to propose at the November 2010 AGM that, firstly, the annual subscription be raised to £5. On paper, this looks, in percentage terms, like a huge jump. But if you are disconcerted by this, let me repeat the same questions: What does £5 buy you in the shops, the restaurant etc...

At the same time, it would be fair and prudent to increase the long term and life membership subscriptions as well. The Committee has discussed potential new figures, and I shall be proposing a rise to £50 and £75 respectively. The new rates for all three types of subscriptions would come into effect for the year beginning 1st September 2011.

In return for such increases, the membership would quite properly expect the Committee to look at ways of cutting expenditure. We have agreed, in principle, that this 2010 spring will be the last occasion on which the membership list is automatically printed and posted with the newsletter. From 2011 onwards, we suggest that it is made available primarily on-line. It should be made available by post only to those that request it, provided that they supply an appropriate stamped addressed envelope.

I hope that you will understand that these proposals are both necessary and reasonable, and that you will give them your full support in due course. If you have any concerns, or indeed any fresh ideas, do please e-mail me at clive.barham@tiscali.co.uk, or write to me at 18 Hill Mead, Horsham, RH12 2PU.

Clive Barham, Hon Treasurer
February 2010.

OCA Q&A

Question: How does one learn to dance at a boys' school?

Answer: Go for weekly lessons at the local girls' high school.

This was the solution in the late 1950s and early 60s. I remember the first time I went down to Worthing Road after school with a group of friends. We chatted non-stop, perhaps trying to show bravado, as we walked down North Parade. Things became a little tense as we walked up the drive to the High School. As we went past the school hall and into the cloakroom to dump our coats and bags the atmosphere became quieter and more nervous. The time came to brave the battleground.

Question: How can a large group of lads go through a narrow door with nobody at the front?

Answer: It's impossible.

The group of us manoeuvred through the door each trying not to be first. Even those who sort-of were pretended to be behind someone else! The girls were at

the other end of the large hall watching this performance. They seemed calmer; they were on home ground.

The teacher was between us and quickly started by showing us the steps of our first dance. The two groups moved up and down the hall for some time copying her steps. Then – oh horror! – she asked in her plummy voice for the men to take a 'parrtner'. Ballroom dancing is hand-to-hand combat compared to many of the modern dances. As small groups of us walked towards the girls we could sense their unspoken thoughts – "Oh no, I don't fancy yours."

Classes settled down after this first fraught day but we were always at a disadvantage being on foreign territory. It might have been more comfortable if the classes had alternated between the High School and Collyer's. A few of us continued lessons for a while at the Theatre Royal in the Carfax. Some may be dancing still. Watch out John Sergeant!

Peter Shilson

OCA summer reunion 2010



Sunday 13th. June 2010 - N.H.S. Gardens, WISLEY, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. (Take the A.3 off Junction 10 on the M.25 - follow the signs).

Cost : Adults - £9.50

Children 6-16 : £3.00; Under 3 - Free

We will meet there at the main entrance at 11.00 a.m.

There are four or five eating places at the gardens, ranging from a snack/coffee bar to a 3 course meal restaurant. Alternatively please bring a picnic lunch.

If you wish to come please let us know by 1st. June, 2010 at the latest and send a cheque (payable to Old Collyerians' Association) advising numbers involved to - Derek Sturt, Social Secretary - OCA, 8 Old Guildford Road, BROADBRIDGE HEATH, Horsham, West Sussex RH12 3JU.

If you require further information please contact

Derek on sturt99@hotmail.com or visit the NHS website which is very comprehensive : www.rhs.org.uk/Gardens/Wisley.



RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER BY E-Mail

We are hoping to hear from still more members prepared to receive their newsletters by e-mail. All monies saved on publishing and distribution, as a result of this, can be re-assigned to other useful activities of the Association.

And it arrives faster, and in glorious colour.

To receive your newsletter by E-mail, please send your name and years of attendance at Collyer's, exactly as it appears in the Address List, to the Hon. General Secretary

ANTHONY BARNARD at: ocawalnutclose@btinternet.com

2009 AGM and winter reunion

The above were held at the College on a rather wet and miserable Saturday 21st November - however, the weather didn't seem to have any detrimental effect on the proceedings.

The AGM was held in the afternoon in what is now the college library and the attendance was a little better than in recent years, due, mainly, to a number of OCs having come some distance for the event. The items on the agenda were dealt with promptly, the writer handing over the presidency for the coming year to Gary Jones, with John Meese and Ken Holmes being elected as Senior and Junior Vice President respectively.

We currently have 540 members, most of whom are life members and the subject of future funding of the Association was discussed in some detail and I think you will be able to read more on this elsewhere in this newsletter.

In the evening just under 80 members and partners gathered for the annual dinner - nearly 60% more than in 2008, a very welcome occurrence! We were pleased to welcome as our guests Graham Baird, chairman of the governors of the college, Andrew McMillan, the Master of the Guild of Mercers' Scholars, the college principal, Dr Jackie Johnston and Robyn van Ryssen and Iain Waddingham representing the students. We had also hoped to have our good friend Rosemary Cowley with us but she had just suffered a family bereavement, so our thoughts were with her. I had managed to catch up with a number of my contemporaries from the Hive of '55, Messrs Cattell, Ehrhart, Leedham, Pethick, Richardson and Smith who, along with Peter Ticehurst *et moi* made up about half of our year. I have to say that although I did not initially recognise one or two of them, in general the years seem to have done us reasonably well. Martin Richardson came over from Canada and Chris Pethick from Denmark and the rest from various parts of the UK. Others amongst us had also travelled some distance to be present and I do hope that those of you who made it felt your journey worthwhile and will consider coming again. I tried to get round to have a natter with all present but if I missed you out I would sincerely apologise.

We had a change of caterers this year due to a few problems that we had experienced previously

and were pleased with the fare provided for us by DH Caterers - our starter was chicken liver pate & melba toast, followed by loin of lamb & veggies then fruit salad and cream, cheese and biscuits and coffee and mints. Catering facilities at the College leave a bit to be desired so I personally felt that Dave Hughes and his staff made an excellent job of the evening.

As usual, speeches came and went, some a little quicker than others, and some more audible than others too! These problems have been addressed by the committee, by the way and we hope will be noticeably absent in the years to come. Anthony Barnard persuaded all present to subscribe to the raffle and a net profit well in excess of £300 was achieved - this goes towards the creative writing prizes that the OCA awards each year at the college. The bar was its usual excellent value for money and the last folk present left around 1130pm. So, all in all, I think it was a most enjoyable and happy evening.

So to 2010 - well, as usual, the AGM and dinner will be held on the third Saturday in November which this year will be 20th November. I do hope that as many of you as possible will be able to join us at the college so please make a note of the date in your diaries. Details of price (hopefully the same as 2009) and menu etc will be advised later. If you'd like to give advance notice of your presence or have any suggestions drop me an e-mail at sturt99@hotmail.com

*Derek Sturt -
immediate past president*



A photograph found by Lawrence Windwood of the OCA dinner, November 1960. How many people do you recognise?

Obituary - Mrs Rose Davies

Mrs Rose Davies died in December 2009. The OCA sends its condolences to Vernon and Jonathan Davies on their loss.

English with Mrs Davies was the first lesson that many Collyerians experienced at the school. Rose Davies understood well that Collyer's could be an intimidating place for boys who had just arrived from smaller junior schools, and was welcoming and helpful to newcomers. However Rose also expected very high standards of politeness and behaviour. She pounced on any casual conduct, and was especially strict when dealing with talking in class, awarding merit marks and splitting up persistent offenders.

Rose spent much of her career at Collyer's teaching first and second years. She had clear targets that she wanted her pupils to achieve in spelling, grammar and handwriting. Rose also encouraged her pupils to read widely. There was a good selection of books in the library in Room 22 where Rose taught, and one period a week was a reading period. Boys could bring in their own books during this lesson, but Rose always very quickly spotted any titles that she regarded as poor literature, and banished them from her classroom. Rose's scholarship was perhaps best appreciated by the A-level students she taught towards the end of her time at Collyer's. One set was taught by the combination of Rose and Frank Whitbourn, a pairing that clearly communicated their love of the literature that they taught.

Outside the classroom, Frank Whitbourn cast Rose as leading lady in a number of the plays that he produced. One particularly powerful performance Rose gave was when she played Lady Macbeth to Rod Mengham's Macbeth in 1971. Reviews highlighted the strength Rose brought to the role, as the temptress urging Macbeth towards murder and calming him once he had done the deed. Frank Whitbourn also claimed that he decided that Rose should play Joan of Arc in Shaw's *St Joan* after seeing her arrive with a short cut one morning. This may have been the only instance when the choice of Collyer's play was determined by the hairstyle of its lead.

Rose will be remembered by Collyerians for her long partnership with Vernon Davies. Vernon Davies related that, when he came to Collyer's in 1946, he intended only to stay for three or four years. However the Davieses liked the town, school, staff and boys. As a result they stayed in Horsham for almost 60 years, with their son Jonathan attending Collyer's as a pupil.

The foundation Rose's teaching provided helped many Collyerians in their more advanced English studies. What may have given Rose most delight was the feeling that she had passed on her love of literature to the boys and girls whom she taught. On encountering a former pupil in the train once, she expressed her pleasure when she saw him reading *David Copperfield* - and suggested he should try *Bleak House* next.

Nick Weller

More jottings

Peter Shilson, whose memories appear on p6, says that writing them down proved interesting as he had to dredge his memory and stir up the mud. He hopes to stir a bit more mud on the CCF and school ski trips to Switzerland. Peter recalls Peter Sibley as one of the masters who accompanied them but, he asks, was Dick Tidey another? "I need a bigger stirring stick!" he notes.

Peter also draws our attention to the Wikipedia entry for Collyer's. He notes it includes a short list of famous alumni, including more than a fair share of cricketers, but feels the list should be longer.

From the Editor: OCs cannot have failed to notice that the treasurer and committee propose an increase in subscriptions. This of course is well overdue, and inevitable, but the next increase can be delayed by cutting costs. By far our biggest expense is postage and distribution of the newsletter, and if more recipients opted to receive it by e-mail it would go a long way towards protecting the OCA from future increases in the cost of postage and stationery. And, of course, you receive it much faster, and in colour. See the panel on page 5 for details of how you can subscribe this way.

Richard Collyer Masonic Lodge and Chapter

The Richard Collyer Masonic Lodge is almost as old as the OCA, having been formed in 1927, while the Chapter is a mere junior having been formed in 1958. Both are very active organisations and meet regularly at Horsham Masonic Hall. The Lodge members would be delighted to hear from any old Collyerians who would like further details or who might be interested in joining.

Full details may be obtained from: Peter R Ticehurst, Flat 32, Bowes Close, Horsham RH13 5SZ.

Škoda works raid 1943

An old Collyerian's role

During the Second World War RAF Bomber Command flew thousands of operational raids against German industrial cities. Night after night hundreds of aircraft took off under the cover of darkness.

The German arms industry was hit hard during raids on Essen in March and April 1943. As a result of damage to the Krupp's factory many workers were transferred to the Škoda works at Plzeň in Czechoslovakia.

By April 1943 the Škoda work force had reached 67 000. The main product line was guns of calibres ranging from 3.7cm upwards; anti-aircraft guns at 8.8cm and heavy guns up to 21cm. Using all the work force available and extending the working hours to 72 per week, the management succeeded in boosting the works output to 2,677 guns in 1943, which represented 5.4% of the total production in German territory. The Škoda works was also a major repair centre for tanks, for both the German army and their allies.

Operation Frothblower

On the night of 16th/17th of April 1943 the largest force so far was sent to destroy the arms factory there. A force comprising 327 aircraft codenamed Operation 'Frothblower' set out. 271 aircraft were also tasked against Mannheim. Like the airborne landings at Arnhem, it was anticipated that a successful outcome to the Plzeň raid would considerably shorten the war and save many lives. One of the crews on this operation was captained by 31 year old Alexander Victor Bone of 49 squadron, an old boy of Collyer's School.

The regular complement of a Lancaster bomber crew

such as Bone's numbered seven. The rear gunner was also known as 'Tail end Charlie.' Crews were often supplemented by an additional crew member under training.

Each Lancaster or Halifax carried several tons of high explosives and over 2,000 gallons of fuel. They were so heavily loaded that it was a struggle to take off.

Bone's Lancaster took off from Fiskerton, Lincolnshire at 21:14 along with another six aircraft of the squadron at timed intervals. The moon was 90% full and above the horizon during the operation. It had been hoped that this would help in accurately targeting the factory and missing the town of Plzeň.

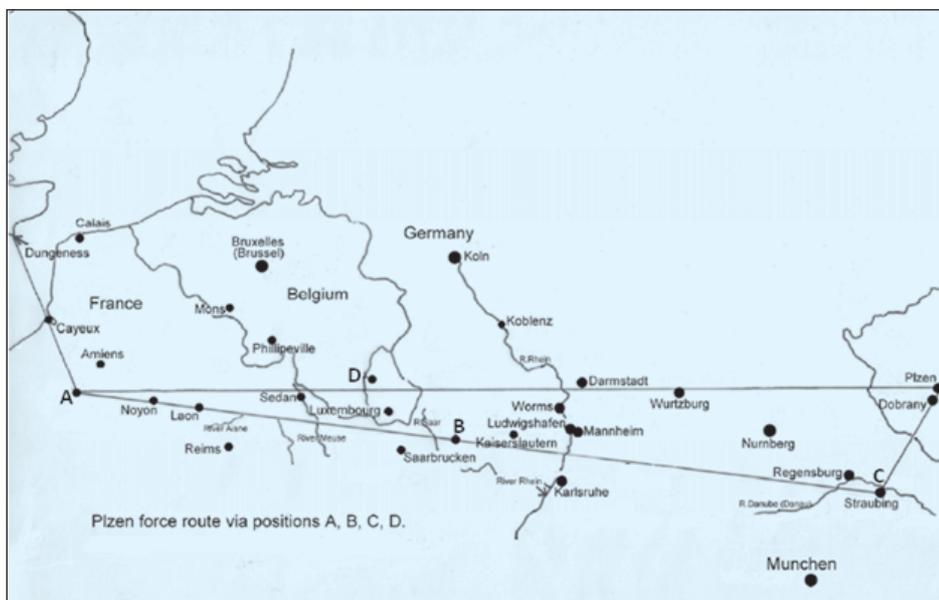
Bomber's moon

Of course, a bomber's moon was also a night-fighter's moon! Many crews did engage in air to air combat with fighters. The Virgo crew of 10 squadron, also on the Plzeň raid, shot down a Messerschmitt 110 over France on the outward journey. Sergeant Hill, the rear gunner, opened up with his four Browning .303 guns at short range, completely shooting off the wing of his adversary's aircraft. It was an uneven score though as only three German fighters were shot down compared to 38 losses for Bomber Command.

There were two major turning points in the flight path to keep the enemy guessing as to the intended target. The route is shown in the map (below left). The outbound route after position 'A', north of Beauvais, went in a straight line due east across France to the north of Saarbrücken and then continued on to Straubing ('C') on the Danube.

Yellow target indicators were dropped here by Pathfinder aircraft. Navigators would dead reckon from this point and time their run up to the target, which was also usually marked by flares and indicators dropped by the Pathfinders (specialist crews for marking targets). Night fighters were extremely active and met the force of bombers as they crossed 700 miles of enemy occupied territory. Light flak between the towns and heavy flak over cities was also a great danger.

The 327 aircraft which took part in this raid flew at much lower altitudes than the normal 15-20,000 feet. The average height flown was 9,000 feet with many





A Lancaster Bomber at RAF Syerston (Photo Cunliffe)

crews flying 'on the deck.' There was comparably light opposition over the target area with one Lancaster of 83 squadron being lost over the target. Most of the bombers lost over enemy territory were the victims of night fighters.

Some extraordinary stories of ingenuity and bravery were told by airmen returning home having evaded captivity. One airman actually landed on a Luftwaffe airfield, but still made good his escape. Squadron Leader Lashbrook MBE DFC AFC DFM MID, of 102 squadron, bailed out with seconds to spare and saw his Halifax crash and explode only a few hundred yards away. He then made his way out of Belgium and on up to Paris. He got all the way down to Bordeaux and over the Pyrenees. One airman named Allerdice evaded and found himself on a train to Bordeaux with German soldiers standing next to him in the corridor! Fortunately they didn't suspect anything.

Wrong target

The raid was a failure and the Pathfinder aircraft marked the wrong target. Some seven miles southwest of Plzeň, Dobňany received the brunt of the bombing, as the large asylum there was mistaken for the Škoda works. A German barracks was also hit. Dobňany unfortunately had very similar geographical features to the town of Plzeň.

38 aircraft were lost on the operation It was scant

Lancaster ED427 EA-O	
F/O Bone A.V.	Capt
Sgt Foster R.N.P	Flight Engineer
Sgt Yelland C.W.	Navigator
Sgt White R.C	Wireless operator/Air-gunner
Sgt Cope R.	Air Gunner
Sgt Rooney R.J	Air Bomber
Sgt Watt B.E. RCAF	Air Gunner

consolation that, of the aircraft which crashed or were shot down, 52 men were taken prisoners of war and 13 evaded captivity and made it back to the U.K. 199 RAF airmen were lost in action from the Škoda raid crews alone. Bomber Command losses as a whole were very high.

For example, of any 100 airmen who flew, 55 were killed on operations or died as result of wounds, 12 were taken prisoner of war, three were injured on operations or active service, two were shot down and evaded capture, and only 27 survived a tour of approximately 30 operations.

Almost 4,000 Australians died in Bomber Command in the Second World War. 10,000 Canadians, over 1,600 New Zealanders and nearly 1,000 Poles also gave the supreme

sacrifice. Many other nationalities such as Americans, French, Belgians, Czechs and South Africans also died in the service of Bomber Command. It is often forgotten that many ground crew were also killed.

Lost without trace

Although Bone and his crew are listed as 'lost without trace' on the Commonwealth war graves records, I discovered documents relating to their loss in the Canadian archives. They described an investigation after the war which found that the aircraft captained by Bone was flying westbound near Mannheim when it was hit by flak and crashed at Laumersheim, exploding as it hit the ground.

A German aviation archaeology group has subsequently located the exact site of the crash and hopes to excavate it this summer. However, due to the force of the crash it would be imprudent to raise hopes of any significant remains, so sadly, Bone and his colleagues may well remain 'lost without trace'.

On only his second operation, he gave a great sacrifice which leaves a legacy of freedom today that we are all grateful for.

Peter Cunliffe avro683@hotmail.co.uk

Note 1:

Plans are in place for a permanent memorial to men like A.V. Bone who gave their lives in Bomber Command during World War two. Donations towards this memorial can be sent to:

Doug Radcliffe MBE
The Secretary, Bomber Command Association
RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way
Hendon, London NW9 5RR

<http://www.rafbombercommand.com/memoralfund/>

Note 2:

The book 'A shaky do-The Škoda works raid 16/17th April 43' (ISBN-978-0955795701) is available direct from the author £12.99 + P&P

M e m b e r s h i p

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