



**Wing Commander Eric James Brindley Nicolson VC, DFC.
This year sees the 75th Anniversary of his action.**



Twenty three year old Flight Lieutenant James Nicolson won the only V.C. of the Battle of Britain on 16th August 1940. His aircraft was set on fire during an action with the enemy near Southampton, he was about to bale out when he saw an Me 109 and settled back into the burning cockpit to shoot it down:

“Flight Lieutenant James Brindley NICOLSON (39329) No. 249 Squadron.

During an engagement with the enemy near Southampton on 16th August, 1940, Flight Lieutenant Nicolson’s aircraft was hit by four cannon shells, two of which wounded him whilst another set fire to the gravity tank. When about to abandon his aircraft owing to flames in the cockpit he sighted an enemy fighter. This he attacked and shot down, although as a result of staying in his burning aircraft he sustained serious burns to his hands, face, neck and legs.

Flight Lieutenant Nicolson has always displayed great enthusiasm for air fighting and this incident shows that he possesses courage and determination of a high order. By continuing to engage the enemy after he had been wounded and his aircraft set on fire, he displayed exceptional gallantry and disregard for the safety of his own life.”

It was perhaps an unexceptional act of bravery amongst so many fighting to defend Britain that summer – yet it was unique because it was witnessed by a number of people on the ground. The need for witnesses to corroborate individual acts of bravery meant that very few RAF crew were nominated for an award of valour. Nicolson was the only fighter pilot to receive the award during the Second World War. Nicolson was wounded in the eye and foot in the first attack that set his aircraft on fire, and his hands were so badly burnt that he was unable to release his parachute once he landed.

Yet his ordeal was not over – he was peppered in the leg by a shotgun fired by an enthusiastic member of the Home Guard who was the first to approach him. He made a good recovery and was extremely modest about the award – he had to be reminded that it was a discipline offence to be improperly dressed when he was slow to sew the medal ribbon onto his uniform.

Nicolson was later promoted to Wing Commander. He died in May 1945 whilst an observer on an aircraft that crashed into the sea off Burma.

2014 Annual reunion at North Weald

The Annual reunion was held on 6th September at North Weald.

Once again 249 Millennium ATC Squadron provided us with the Honour Guard. Our Chairman Roger Kissane read a list of members who had passed away in the last Year. The wreath laying ceremony led by our past President, Air Marshal Sir John Sutton. Remembrance crosses were also laid for Air Vice Marshal Peter Harding and Flt Lt Barry Wilkinson.

After laying the wreath we adjourned to the "Squadron" for refreshments and the renewal of old friendships.

Once again our thanks go to those who brought prizes for the raffle, which raised a healthy £163 towards association funds.



Sir John Sutton Laying the Wreath



249 ATC Squadron Guard of Honour



Curly Hancock Norman Johnston Joan Kelly.



Dixie Heron



Hebie Larkman Dave Tisbury Reg Mable



Julia De Burca Fred Hubbard

Charles Wilson

5—A Long Range Strike



One of the most interesting and successful missions that I took part in was a long-range strike starting from Zara in Jugoslavia to Graz, Bruck, Zeltweg and Klagenfurt in Austria. We carried no bombs on this operation and all the damage to transport and installations was to be done by strafing.

To achieve a surprise attack it was decided to take off from Termoli in the afternoon of the day before the strike and land at Zara for a very early morning take-off. Four Mustangs were to carry out the mission.

At 15.45 hrs, on March 23rd 1945, the four Mustangs of Red Section had taken off and were getting into formation, setting course for Zara. Shortly after take-off the windscreen of my Mustang started oiling up so I had to return to base for an-

To achieve a surprise attack it was decided to take off from Termoli in the afternoon of the day before the strike and land at Zara for a very early morning take-off. Four Mustangs were to carry out the mission.

At 15.45 hrs, on March 23rd 1945, the four Mustangs of Red Section had taken off and were getting into formation, setting course for Zara. Shortly after take-off the windscreen of my Mustang started oiling up so I had to return to base for another aircraft. I took off again at 16.40 hrs and after 40 minutes landed at Zara. I don't remember how we passed the evening there but we must have gone to bed early as take-off the following morning was at 05.25 hrs.

It was still dark the following morning when we climbed into our Mustangs, rubbing the sleep from our eyes while carrying out our cockpit checks. Then at 05.25 hrs we were wide awake with our engines running, ready for take-off and the first leg of our flight to Celge. We found nothing of interest to attack at Celge so we headed for Maribor and soon spotted a train with about 20 trucks going all out to reach the cover of a small wood a few hundred yards ahead. We just managed to get in a few bursts at the train as it entered the wood, so we made no claims. A few miles north of Maribor we attacked another train and tracks but the train did not blow up. Heavy 20mm anti-aircraft fire carne from a flak truck on the train but fortunately none of the Mustangs was hit so we flew on to Graz. Here, the railway marshalling yards made an excellent target with three trains and many trucks. The a/a fire was heavy but we got hits on the trains and damaged many of the trucks.

Between Graz and Klagenfurt we attacked two more trains and one blew up. Early morning fog in some of the valleys made attacks too risky but our total claims were: one train destroyed, seven trains damaged and at least thirty trucks badly damaged. If a train did not blow up it was only claimed as damaged. With our ammunition almost exhausted we started on our return flight to Termoli. The operation from take-off to landing took two hours and thirty-five minutes of intense concentration and, fortunately, no Mustangs were lost. Certainly a very successful strike.



Final Take Offs

Wg Cdr R G Middlemiss DFC CD



It is with regret that I have to report the death of Wing Commander Bob Middlemiss RCAF, Bob served with 249 during the defense of Malta. Our Condolences to his family and friends.

Squadron Leader Harold Herbert Moon



It is with regret that I have to Announce the death of Harry Moon who served with The squadron during the defense of Malta. Our Condolences to his family and friends.

Mr J A D McCallam.

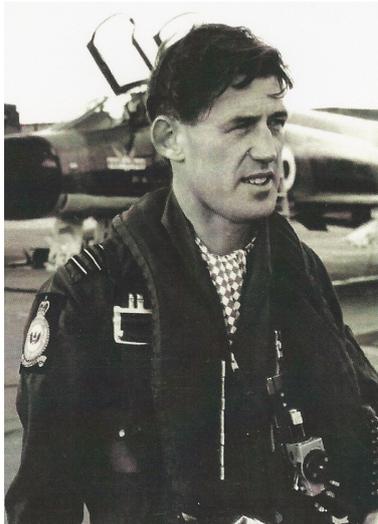
It is with regret that I have to Announce the death of Mr J A D McCallam. He was served with the Squadron during the Venom Era. Our Condolences to his family and friends.

Chiefy Ben Bennett



It is with regret that I have to Announce the death Ben Bennett, Ben Served as engine boss on Canberras during the Squadrons time at Akrotiri, Our Condolences to his family and friends.

Air Marshal Sir John Sutton KCB



It is with regret that I have to Announce the death of Sir John, Sir John was Commanding officer of 249 from 1964 until 1966 and President of our Association until 2013. Our Condolences to Lady Angela, family and friends.

He is greatly missed by all in the Squadron Association

Jim Lang



It is with regret that I have to Announce the death of Jim Lang who served as a Radar Mech on the Squadron from 1962-1964. Our Condolences to his family and friends.

As we were



Football Match at Akrotiri



Hero's Square Limassol



Squadron Personnel Nov 1963



Akrotiri 1963



Squadron Ground Crew Ta'Qali 1941



Squadron Beach Party Malta 1942

A Query From Rob Vaughan

I have Recently received this email from Rob.

"I Wonder if you can help me out regarding a photo I found in my father's collection

The attached is a photo of a number of RAF Officers, clearly having a good time in the mess but I think Group Captain **Syd Clayton is holding a 249 Squadron badge ?**

I was wondering if you can see what the connection is as I am a bit confused.

Some background;

The photo was taken some time between 1950 – 1955 Names on the back are Dennis Founds, Roy Haydn? **Ned Sparks,** (I Vaughan) and Norman Clayton Any info on whom these are would be well received. My father is 2nd on the right (I Vaughan, not named) and he was based in RAF St Athan and I assume the dinner was there but I see a link to 249 Sq. (unless the aircraft were being maintained there)."



If anyone can give info on this query please let me know, T.C.

249 Hailsham Squadron ATC – 2014

The squadron has over 30 enrolled cadets and regularly parades 24 or more twice a week. These are not bad numbers for a relatively small rural town especially as our comrades (!), in the Army Cadet Force detachment, have similar numbers.

During 2014, there have been five new corporals, two promotions to sergeant and one

to flight sergeant. Cadets have attended JNCO, SNCO and radio courses and have gained several qualifications. These include BTEC in Aviation Studies and First Aid. In addition, one cadet gained a BTEC in Music Studies through participation in the Sussex Wing and the London and South East Region bands. On a musical note, the squadron was presented with some drums in 2013 and early last year, the Corps of Drums had their first public outing by drumming in the haggis at a local care home on Burns night. This was quite an experience, even if the haggis was still in its plastic wrapper.

On the shooting front, the squadron participates in a corps-wide postal air rifle competition and is currently in the top half of the squadrons taking part; some of our best marksmen are girls. A number of cadets have also been awarded marksmanship badges for shooting with the .22 and the larger bore L98 rifles.

There have been opportunities for cadets to take part in field craft training. For those who are unfamiliar with field craft, it involves dressing up like cabbages and crawling around in muddy ditches! To help in this type of training, Sergeant Heulin has held a couple of field cooking evenings. He has demonstrated how to prepare a chicken or rabbit and to produce a stew over a small gas stove. The cadets have enjoyed these sessions and their results have been remarkably tasty.

There has been no opportunity to fly since February last year. The reason for this lack is that the Tutor fleet has been grounded because of maintenance issues and the glider fleet is being up-graded. On top of these problems, 5 Air Experience Flight, which provides powered flying for us, has moved from its base at RAF Wytton to RAF Wittering. This will mean a round trip of 300 miles for the cadets to fly. We may have the occasional detail at RAF Benson but this is still around 100 miles away. Does anyone remember when we had RAF stations all over the country?

The usual sporting events have taken place with cadets taking part in the Sussex Wing Athletics meeting and the annual Wing swimming gala, with reasonable success. Other cadets represented the Wing at football, association that is, not rugby and cross country running.

The squadron has participated in a number of public events during the year. We attended the Earl Haig service, a parade in Hailsham and a church parade in nearby Polegate to mark 100 years since the outbreak of the Great War. We took part in the Hailsham Town Summer Fete, where we raised funds by running a climbing wall for people to try. There are three members of staff who are qualified to run the mobile climbing wall and it was also present at the Eastbourne Air Show, Airborne, for three days.

As in other years, we attended the annual Battle of Britain service and the Remembrance Day parade. On Remembrance Day, there were 70 cadets from the two units, ATC and ACF and staff brought the total to over 80. This was by far the best turnout ever. Cadets also raised money for both the Wings Appeal and the Poppy collections. They also helped at two fund-raising RAFA music concerts in the town. On top of these, we also paraded at a service at the Bomber Command Memorial on Beachy Head.

Other regular events were our annual presentation evening and the Christmas dinner, both of which were attended by our Squadron President, Mr Peter Field, the Lord Lieutenant for East Sussex. Just after Christmas, we took part in our annual quiz night with the Army Cadets, winning once again! The other highlight of the year was our visit to North Weald for the 249 Squadron reunion. This is an occasion that is looked forward to and greatly enjoyed by the cadets.

There was a particularly sad happening towards the end of the year when one of the cadets, Callum Bean, died in a tragic accident, he was not quite 18 years-old. The funeral was attended by over 200 people including many representatives from staff and cadets of Sussex Wing. Instead of flowers, his family asked for donations to the squadron and over £1000 was given. This money may well be used to fund a flight simulator as this was something that Cadet Bean was particularly keen on. In this way, we will be able to perpetuate his memory.

On a lighter note, some of you will know Fg Off Katie Calvert who was once a Cadet Warrant Officer with the squadron and regularly attends the North Weald get-togethers. She is currently attached to Crowborough Squadron as a squadron officer and early this year, she was promoted to Flight Lieutenant.

There are many other activities that occupy the cadets on parade evenings and at weekends and it is down to the tremendous efforts of the squadron staff that these activities are provided. Many require special qualifications, such as running the climbing wall, shooting and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Members of staff frequently spend time at weekends gaining these qualifications so that the squadron can continue to flourish. We are preparing for yet another busy year and it has rather sneaked in under the radar but 2015 is the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of 249 Hailsham, The Millennium Squadron. ATC!



Bomber Command



Haggis



North Weald



Callum Bean



Poppy Appeal



Climbing Wall

Secretary's Report

This past year has been a sad one in the history of 249 not only did we lose two of our stars, but also the loss of two Malta veterans. Our past Chairman and Secretary Terry Gill also sadly lost his wife Muriel.

Sir John Sutton's death came as a great shock to us all and we send our sympathy to Lady Angela and Sir John's family and friends, as we indeed do to all those who have been bereaved this past year.

Moving on, we have had two very successful reunions this past twelve months, one at North Weald and we returned to Abingdon after a break of 5 years for our weekend get together.

There will be at least one extra event this coming year, the annual reunion will take place at North Weald on 22 August and the weekend reunion at Abingdon on 26/27 February 2016. The extra event is a commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain at North Weald. The North Weald Community have invited us to join them for this event. 249 ATC Squadron will be parading their colours on the day. I am including a booking form for each event with the newsletter.

Once again I would like to thank all those who generously sent donations to help the Association's Finances. Again our main expense is postage, packaging and printing, any donations will be gratefully received.

Any future donations should be made to "249 Squadron Association" and sent to me at T. Cullen, 12 Bywell Avenue, South Shields, Tyne and Wear, NE34 6RP.

The membership of the Association stands at 165 and 24 associate members.

Hon Sec Tommy Cullen.

Association Accounts 2013-2014

Receipts

Bosworth Hall Deposits	892.00
Donations	269.00
North Weald receipts	1,169.65
Abingdon Deposits	<u>300.00</u>
Total Receipts	2,630.65

Expenditure

Bosworth Hall Payments	891.90
Postage, Printing and Stationery	357.20
Wreaths	43.00
ATC Expenses	30.00
North Weald	<u>862.35</u>
Total Expenditure	2,184.45

Balance	446.20	Minus Abingdon Reunion Deposits
	300.00	
To be carried forward	146.20	

Abingdon Weekend Reunion

We returned to Abingdon after a break of five years. There were fewer of us this year but never the less the reunion was very successful and we have elected to return next year.



Reg Mable and Ben Bennett



Perce Blakeney with the Cory's



The Calverts



The Kelly's and Pat Mable



The De Burca's, Kelly's, Jim Ellis, Roger Kissane



The Bar

North Weald Invitation

We have been invited to Join the North Weald Community in Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of Britain, our ATC Squadron will be part of the commemoration. If you decide to attend, we will be meeting at the North Weald Airfield Hurricane Gate Guardian at 12.00hrs on Sunday 12th July.

Below are the details of the day. Let's hope we get a good turn out.

T.C.

This charity fund raising family day out is staged by Weald Aviation and Epping Forest District Council, with the support of airfield users/tenants and the local community. Each year it attracts more than 4,000 people and has a different theme linked to the 99 year history of our still very active airfield. Aimed at saluting all those, service and civilian, who served with /supported the 50 Squadrons from 7 Nations that flew from RAF North Weald between 1916 and 1964; while celebrating *The Spirit of North Weald* which continues to thrive in our community in the 21st century.

This year's theme is the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, when young pilots and their comrades on the ground, both service and civilian, fought and died for our freedom while serving at airfields like RAF North Weald. Commemorating their vital role in the battle and featuring a parade and sunset ceremony, 'A Salute to The Few', staged by RAFA South and Eastern Area.

Although not an air show as such but a day out for all the family; helping to raise funds for the events two nominated charities, one of which is the Royal Air Forces Associations 2015 Wings Appeal. It will incorporate a number of flying displays, with a display by a Spitfire and Hurricane of the RAF Battle of Britain Flight booked, other RAF involvement requested, and a variety of visiting aircraft expected. Most of the airfields home based aircraft will also be on show, including; Mustang, Spitfire, Hurricane, Dakota, Seafire, Tempest, Jet Provost, Vampire, Hunter – to name a few. Alongside a 'Battle of Britain' Exhibition area, with WW2 re-enactment groups and military vehicles, various stalls, a varied range of refreshment outlets and the ever present Essex Air Ambulance. **Entrance is once again only £5 per person, with all attractions in the children's Adventure Area still free; gates will be open from 10am, with arena displays starting at 12.30.**

The spirit of the young men of 249 who flew from RAF North Weald during the Battle of Britain is today commemorated by the Hurricane Gate Guardian that welcomes all who enter our still very active airfield; and on the day will be represented by the standard of 249 Squadron ATC. So I look forward to hearing that you are able to be with us on Sunday the 12th July, in the meantime if you need any further information I can be contacted on 01992524440 or at arthurmoreton@btinternet.com .

Yours Sincerely

Arthur Moreton

Chairman. North Weald & Ongar Royal Air Forces Association.

