



TEMPSFORD VETERANS AND RELATIVES ASSOCIATION

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2018



Bob's Diary

Yet again, we were fortunate with the weather on Remembrance Sunday, although it was very cold. Those of us who live in sunnier climes notice it! We were delighted that members of 2500 (St Neots) ATC Squadron were able to take an active role in the service again; their participation means a great deal to us, and particularly to those on whose behalf they lay wreaths and tributes. Our thanks also go to Rev Margaret, and Mark Stafferton "our" bugler, who performs at the Tempsford service each year immediately after being on duty for the service in Sandy. As ever, we also owe thanks to Lady Erroll for allowing us to continue TVARA events on the airfield.

The only veteran present was Ken Hazelwood, and a wreath in tribute to the 138 and 161 Squadron Ground Crews was laid on his behalf. It is too easy to forget (or just not realise) that the Ground Crew also sustained casualties, and we remember them, along with members of Air Crew who lost their lives. Ken is seen here with Shirley Gibbons, widow of Mike, who attended our meetings for so many years.



In my role as MC this year, I was also delighted to be able to present to the cadets the Tempsford Trophy. This is to be awarded to the cadet who has most recently obtained promotion, and the first “winner” was Corporal Stamford. The trophy shows the three Tempsford runways, cast in bronze, and the base is made from stone

local to our home in Crete.



It was made by the jeweller who produces the “Runways to Freedom” pins, and you will see more of this design below!



Following the service, everyone adjourned to the village hall for lunch. Following the meal, Joan Munden, cousin of SOE agent Lilian Rolfe, gave a dramatised talk about Lilian, which was much enjoyed.



Later, Rev Margaret was presented with the second half of her retirement gift - those 3 runways again! Many thanks to Ken for agreeing to make the presentation. Margaret’s contribution to our services is extremely important, and we wanted to show just how much we appreciate her. She really is part of the TVARA “family”.



A DIP INTO THE ARCHIVES

RECEPTION COMMITTEES HELP WITH TRAINING REQUEST

From HS8-142, The National Archives.....

“As you are aware, S.T.S 51 train students in reception work. They find it difficult, however, to obtain first-hand knowledge of reception work in the field. To enable them to make this training as realistic as possible they would appreciate any reports from men returned from the field who had actually organised, or been members of, Reception Committees. The type of information required is:-

- Useful facts from the field regarding disposal of containers and cells.
- Numbers employed in Reception Committees for reception of agents and containers, agents only or containers only.
- Difficulties encountered.
- Any hints, or suggestions offered.

Would you please forward any relevant information which you may be able to obtain and keep them informed of any new facts which may come to light?”

And the reply, also taken from HS8/142

“The aim for a reception committee is to be as small as possible because it will be easily realised that it is not easy to move about the countryside at night in a large band. It is very difficult to give exact figures for any given reception, because it depends very much on the district, and whether or not there is a safe house in the near vicinity. If the ground is far from anywhere I would say:

For the reception of agents	-	2 men
” “ “ “ containers	-	4 men
” “ “ “ agents and containers	-	4 men

If the reception is in the grounds of a safe house it would be possible to have only one man as a reception committee in the case of an agent.

With regard to the method of assembling and dispersal, it is desirable that all members of the reception committee should arrive, if possible, singly and from different directions, converging on the scene at a given time, shortly before the expected time of arrival of the aircraft, the idea being not to hang about on the scene for too long. There may, however, be exceptions to this rule, because of the nature of the country it may be safer for the committee to arrive on the spot during the day time and stay in hiding until darkness. All the same they should not stir much before the arrival of the plane.

In the case of containers, or if there is equipment for burying, the hole should be dug beforehand. *(In the case of Holland the canals came in very handy -BB)*

One of the chief difficulties of reception is the danger of having to return to the spot several days running, if the aircraft does not turn up. It is most important that people used in this kind of work should have as reasonable cover as possible for being out in the open country at night. I think it is wise to warn agents that when they are received it is quite probable that having been told of their exact position, and once the receiver is satisfied that the agent has not hurt himself, he (the agent) will probably be sent on his own to a rendez-vous, probably the next morning. This of course is not so if the safe house has been arranged in the near vicinity.

It is practically essential to move the containers from their temporary burial place to a cache within 36 hours of arrival. Needless to say the cache will have been prepared in advance, and, if possible, motor transport procured for the carrying of the material. A farmhouse offers the best possibilities, but a garage is also worthy of consideration.

As circumstances vary very much between countries, it is not felt that any hard and fast rules can be suggested.”

Following from AIR40/2559 TNA

HAVING GOT ALL ARRANGEMENTS MADE AND THE DROP HAS GONE OK, WAS THE WORK APPRECIATED?

Report from the ground regarding a drop made in April 1942

“The reception committee were seized by an indescribable joy when they saw above their heads one of the planes of their ‘amis victorieux’”.

However, even the best laid plans etc.....

FOLLOWING OPERATION SYCAMORE.....

“Good navigation, Pilot overshot the exact spot by about 1 Km. But this is not surprising as there were no flares to guide him and it was quite dark, the moon being hidden by thick clouds. The result however, that he dropped me in a marshy valley, frequently cut by lines of tall trees, one of which I just touched, as a result of which I found myself hanging from a very tall tree indeed. The situation was so ludicrous that I had to laugh. By swinging myself I managed to close into the tree, and half slide, half scramble down, my parachute staying up there. I had to wait for dawn to find the second parachute with my pack, at which time peasants having seen the parachute come down, came to have a look, and saw my parachute covering the top of the tree. They fetched ladders and somehow got it down, (I did not wait to watch the proceedings). Useless to state I saw all this from cover.

Others had seen the parachutes, and it became widely known that two parachutists - a man and a woman!! had come down, but no mention was made of anything being found, the desire to keep the silk being sufficient inducement to keep mum.”

Poorly fastened equipment can damage your own "equipment"!

“Before taking the plunge I stupidly forgot to tighten my harness, so when the sail opened it was like meeting Joe Louis on pay night. The buttock strap slipped half way up my back and as into the bargain I was in a spin I felt like writing to the manufacturers. The moon was a honey so when I ceased pirouetting the three olive trees were very clear indeed. I did not strike any of them but landed like a sack of offal at the corner of a vineyard on a small rock. The harness question wrenched a lot of parts in my left groin which still complain, but this is a matter of no moment at all.”

OR.....



138 & 161 Special Duties Squadrons

Special then

Special now

Special always

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