



Volavimus  
Vecdidimus  
Vivimus

# THE KRIEGIE

NEWS-SHEET OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES EX-P.O.W. ASSOCIATION

Editor: CAL YOUNGER

N° 48 APRIL 2004



**The Editor wishes to thank:**

Mr Andrew Whiteside and Ms Shilpa Chauhan  
of Media Services RAF Henlow for this  
splendid issue of *The Kriegie*.

The Station Commander, Group Captain Paterson  
who gave his full support.  
Squadron Leader Bob Ankerson who arranged it all  
and

Ted Cachart who, for many years, has prepared  
*The Kriegie* for the printer, and without whom  
it would probably not still exist.

## RECALLING A GREAT DAY

The Editor had intended to produce a special issue of *The Kriegie* to commemorate the unveiling of our Memorial by HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, Patron of the Appeal, on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2003, but this idea was superseded by the much better idea of a video. Every member received a copy of the video, which, for those who attended the ceremony at the RAF Museum on that day, will remind them of a great occasion for the rest of their lives. For those who were unable to be present it will be the next best thing; they will sense something of the atmosphere of the event as well as witnessing the facts of it.

Despite the lasting value of the video, it may be still appropriate, almost a year on, to publish some pictures of the occasion, to recall some of it in print and to thank a number of people who contributed to a momentous day. The first thing to note, I think, is that 270 people were present. Members came who have not attended reunions or other Association functions for many years. For some it will be the last time they make such an effort. Present also were the C in C Strike Command, the Polish Ambassador and senior officers and officials from Commonwealth countries, also ATC cadets and members of the Museum staff. The atmosphere was truly wonderful; it was created by friendships which have lasted through the years or were renewed joyfully on the day, by memories of comrades who have gone, by the goodwill of our guests, including members' wives and families, and especially by the patent interest and enjoyment of the Duke, who seems to flourish among ex-servicemen. A nice touch, following the unveiling was his gesture to our sculptor, Pam Taylor, who was sitting in the front row, to join him for a photograph.

Our gratitude is due to many people. All members of the Committee worked hard, led from the front by the indomitable Charles Clarke, who was, as ever, full of ideas and for whom no detail was too unimportant to warrant his attention. His correspondence, always heavy, was prodigious. His was the idea of the Long March Memorial; he it was who won the approval of the RAF Museum for the siting of it. It was Charles who persuaded the Duke of Edinburgh first to become Patron of the Appeal and then to unveil the Memorial, wearing the Association tie. He was a brilliant Master of Ceremonies and host to the Duke and all our guests. He made the sale of models of the Memorial his business and personally delivered a number of them, each heavy enough to break your arms.

That we raised some £36,000 in a relatively short time was down, in the main to the late, much lamented Maurice Butt, who ran our appeal tirelessly,

persuasively and with panache, though throughout he was fighting what he knew was a terminal illness. Hundreds of members, their friends and families contributed and substantial donations came from businesses, especially in Maurice's area, and from charitable trusts.

Dave Bernard worked out the protocol for the Ceremony and provided lighting and equipment, not to mention the gold-tasselled rope, at some expense to himself. His arrangement worked perfectly. Squadron Leaders Bob Ankerson and Robbie Stewart removed the parachute covering the Memorial, a task deemed a little too difficult for the Duke. Peter Skinner, as always on these occasions, carried our standard. Our own member, the Rev. Victor Cooper dedicated the Memorial and gave a brief but memorable address. After the ceremony, using the address system, Dave Bernard told the story of the Long March and how it came about, for the benefit of visitors. Dave also took on the task of packing and dispatching the videos, and he provided the pictures included in this issue of *The Kriegie*. That's just for starters.

Phil Camp, Eric Hookings and Ted Duncan, among others, helped with the fundraising. Doug and Mary Endors, as always when there is something going on that leads to an influx of money, coped with incomings and outgoings from various accounts and somehow didn't get catering bills and payments for videos or models mixed up. Doug and Mary are as modest as they are meticulous, neither is in the best of health, but they go on quietly keeping things running on the financial front. It is said that no-one is indispensable Doug and Mary are. Now the invaluable Bill Bloxham has the task of auditing the complex transactions.

We are grateful to Dr Michael Fopp, Director General of the RAF Museum, and his staff, especially those who took part in organising the event. There were several meetings at which they helped the Committee resolve various problems. Through Bob Ankerson's good offices, Media Services at RAF Henlow produced a wonderful commemorative programme and an entrance ticket which also was beautifully designed and produced (see page 10). We thank the Manager, Andrew Whiteside and his staff. Members of the Middlesex Wing of the ATC gave a disciplined performance, forming a Guard of Honour and imbuing the occasion with a sense of continuity. Pianist Simon Townley played a very important part, particularly when he marked the entrance of Prince Philip. I am bound to have omitted the names of deserving people and to them I offer my apologies. Their contributions won't be forgotten.

(CY)



*ATC Cadets Form Guard Of Honour*

#### **A Note from your President/Chairman**

I am pleased that Cal Younger is producing another edition of the *Kriegis* to record the unveiling of our PoW Memorial. It was a great effort on the part of all members and friends to fund the Memorial and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed in any way. Many of you also sent letters and I am only sorry that I was unable to respond to them all. Even my postman was overwhelmed.

It was difficult to choose a subject to symbolize our differing experiences and privations, but it has been generally agreed that a prisoner of war pulling a sledge on the long march is fairly evocative. We were fortunate to have the help and enthusiasm of Pam Taylor, our distinguished sculptor, to interpret our design to our time scale.

The unveiling by HRH Prince Philip set the seal on our efforts and the video shows only too well his interest in all the members present and their exploits.

The Memorial now forms the centre-piece of the PoW display at the RAF Museum, Herndon and it is now up to all of us to support the display by donating or loaning any memorabilia we have. This fits in well with the aim of the Ministry of Defence to remind all school-

children of the debt they owe to WW2 veterans.

This year will also be marked by commemorations at both Sagan and in the UK, and a number of TV channels will be showing special programmes featuring PoW life.

Many thanks for all the support you have given the Committee, and we certainly need all the help we can get as our numbers decline.

**Charles Clarke**

#### **BATCH'S KNEE**

Three years ago, Batch got rid of a knee that was giving him problems. Especially it made the march on Remembrance Sunday something of a nightmare. Unfortunately, the new knee proved to be a bit of a dud, so Batch has had that jettisoned too and now he has a new new knee. This time he is more confident that it will work and he is making good progress. Batch has had several setbacks in recent years but it hasn't stopped him giving the Association of his best. When it comes to organising a function he is unbeatable. We owe him a debt of gratitude for the huge amount of work he has done, and done with a smile, over very many years.

## RECCO REPORT

**Arthur Crighton** told an interviewer from *Edmonton Journal* that the best years of his life were spent in Stalag Luft 3. Music was the key. A band teacher before the war and a music professor at the University of Alberta after the war, Arthur conducted the camp orchestra in Luft 3 and played trumpet in the dance band. On the Long March Arthur nearly died of hyperthermia "and followed it with four days in a packed rail car with no food or bathroom facilities." Arthur was sceptical of recent claims about the number of prisoners who didn't survive the war. He knows of only four. Although he mentioned the Great Escape, he seems to have forgotten the "fifty".

Crighton's interview naturally prompted a response. Members of the Edmonton Branch of the RCAF ex-PoW Association wrote to the paper. Although they respected Crighton's opinion, they did not remember their experiences "in such a favourable light". They cited a Canadian War Crimes Commission report of 1953 which concluded "that many of the conditions and deprivations imposed on Canadian prisoners of war in Europe constituted maltreatment."

On 11 November 2003 HM Queen Elizabeth unveiled the Australian War Memorial at Hyde Park corner. An official commemorative group, made up of veterans of all three services, was sent by the Australian government. One member was Professor **Alex Kerr** who is Vice President and Secretary of the Australian Branch of our Association. Started by the late Dan London when he emigrated to Australia in 1982, the branch was until recently the Western Australia branch. However, enough ex-kriegies from other states have joined to warrant the branch going national. It has always been a lively branch and members have recounted their experiences in three best selling books. The Australian Red Cross benefited from the proceeds.

Alex has had a remarkable career. Before the war he was a cadet reporter. He was on No 1 Course of the Empire Air Training Scheme. Shot down on 10 May 1941, Alex was badly wounded and was pushed out of the aircraft. His amazing story was told by Vic Gammon in *Not All Glory*. In prison camp he studied economics. He continued his studies after the war and became a distinguished economist, deputy vice chancellor of Murdoch University and a visiting professor to universities in several countries. Following his retirement he became a successful business man.

Kiwi **Jack Hardie**, a 51 Squadron Halifax pilot shot down on 27 January 1943, celebrated the 50th and 60<sup>th</sup>

anniversaries of his parachute descent by doing it again, though attached to a tandem master. Jack landed in thick snow in Holland and it took villagers an hour to find him. A 13-year old boy named Antony Vlute was the only person in the village who spoke English. In 1991 Jack returned to the village. This prompted him to search for his interpreter. It took Jack two years to find him - in New Zealand. Antony Vlute had moved there in 1950.

In a letter to Charles Clarke 12 months ago Jack mentions the death of his great friend **Syd Scales**, a FEPOW captured in Sumatra. Syd was for thirty years cartoonist on the *Otago Daily Times* until his retirement in 1981. Drawings he had made in prison camp and buried were found thirty years later and are now in the Imperial War Museum in London.

**Eric Sturgess**, the South African Davis Cup player, who was a finalist in the French and US Opens, has died aged 83. A Spitfire pilot on No. 4 Squadron SAAF he was shot down in Italy and sent to Stalag Luft 3. He ended up at Luckenwalde.

**Air Commodore "Bill" Tacon**, a kiwi who transferred from the RNZAF to the RAF in 1938, spent the war in Coastal Command, mostly flying Beaufighters. On 12 September 1944 he led 40 Beaufighters against a convoy assembling in Den Helder harbour. The aircraft dived through a hail of fire. Tacon's Beaufighter was badly hit and his navigator killed. The aircraft exploded, he found himself in the air and pulled the ripcord only just in time. He landed on Texel, was ferried ashore by German soldiers then beaten up by sailors before being taken to Dulag Luft and then to Luft 1 where he saw out the war. Earlier he had led a force of Beaufighters which, using 25lb warheads, sank a German destroyer and a torpedo boat. In 1946 Tacon became Captain of the King's flight for three years then, following a series of postings in this country and abroad, he retired in 1971 to New Zealand where he ran a children's charity and was involved in the management of Air New Zealand. He was much decorated, with bars to both the DFC and AFC as well as a CBE and MVO. Bill Tacon died in September 2003 at the age of 85.

### For members of 44 (Rhodesia) Squadron Association

Secretary of this Association Henry Horscroft has asked us to give some space to inform any of our members who may be interested that the 2004 Reunion is to be held on 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Further details can be obtained from Henry whose address is: 9 Church Lane, Eagle, Lincoln LN6 9DJ. His telephone number is 01522 868653 and his email address is [44sqnassn@bhorscroft.freemove.co.uk](mailto:44sqnassn@bhorscroft.freemove.co.uk)

## A TRIBUTE

By Peter Skinner

In the late 70s I attended my first RAFs Ex-PoW Association AGM, held at the RAF Club, Piccadilly. I had previously entered the Club in the line of duty whilst serving in the RAF as an NCO during the 50s, but never on a social basis.

So here I was on the first floor, trying to remember the concierge's directions, when a beaming face with piercing, twinkling eyes confronted me. "Hello, old chap, is this your first meeting? Let me buy you a pint. Follow me." Within minutes I had a pint in my hand and had been introduced to two other first-timers and some of the Committee. Then my host was gone and greeting other arrivals with the same kindness and humour.

His name was Maurice Butt and for many years we enjoyed a pint and each other's company, and always a Christmas card. A staunch supporter of our Association and of other causes too, and in particular, determined to see our Memorial come into being, Maurice was to me, first and foremost:

"An officer and a gentleman".



## TARGET ATTAINED

Maurice Butt died on 27 February aged 84. Despite a terminal illness, which he bore with typical fortitude, Maurice took on the task of co-ordinating the appeal for our Memorial. He sought donations with perseverance and good humour and recorded literally hundreds of gifts, always keeping a running total, which made things easier for the Treasurer and the auditor.

An early member of the Association, Maurice contributed a great deal to it over the years, including his chairmanship of the Committee during which he hosted the 1977 Jubilee Reunion dinner at which Prince Philip was our guest-of honour. In the last few years he organised our very active East Anglian branch. His death follows that of Dick Troward, his very good friend.

Another close friend was Bill Garrioch, who died in October 2001. Together they joined Armstrong Whitworths, Coventry, as indentured apprentices in 1936. They were paid 9 shillings and eleven pence per week. They joined the RAFVR as sergeant pilots in 1938, training on alternate weekends and receiving one shilling per hour. Both ended up in Germany but did not meet each other until after the war, Maurice having been commissioned and Bill not. Maurice was one of the very early prisoners incarcerated at Spangenberg and was an escape enthusiast right through his years of captivity.

After the war Maurice continued his engineering career, becoming a college lecturer.

The editor plans a further tribute in the next issue.

## EDWARD BISHOP

Edward Bishop, who died in October aged 79, was the *Telegraph* obituarist specialising in the aviation field. He was responsible for the obits of many old kriegies, among them Dixie Deans, Wally Floody, Cyril Aynsley, Roland Beaumont, Lee Kenyon, Bill Reid and many, many more. Often he would 'phone me and in his genial tones would ask for information or leads. As the numbers of the more interesting of us dwindled, I heard from him less and less. I last saw him at the memorial service of Bill Reid VC. He was a good friend of the RAF, though he was in the Royal Navy during WW2. He tried but failed to become a Fleet Air Arm pilot. He had a very varied career and wrote a number of books including *The Debt We Owe* about the RAF Benevolent Fund.

(CY)

## RON GOODWIN

Honorary member of the Association and composer of our March, Ron Goodwin died at the age of 77 in January last year. Introduced by Vic Gammon, who became a close friend, Ron took a keen interest in the Association. Shortly before his death he made a generous donation to the Memorial Trust. Among the sixty film scores for which he was responsible were 633 Squadron, *Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines* and *Where Eagles Dare*. He also wrote most of the music for the 1969 film *Battle of Britain* after the score commissioned from Sir William Walton was considered unsatisfactory, much to the annoyance of the distinguished composer.

## LEONARD PEARMAN

A mosquito pilot shot down on reconnaissance after the first 1000 raid on Cologne, Pearman spent his PoW life at Stalag Luft 3, where he became an expert forger. He was on the Long March to Luckenwalde which was overrun by the Russians in April 1945. The inmates were held by the Russians until 19 May. After the War Pearman returned to his old employer, Michelin. Retiring as a senior executive in 1978, he let his artistic talent go free and became an extremely successful painter of wildlife. The print of his painting *Siberian Tiger* was a best seller. Pearman died, aged 90, in July 2003.

## PETER HOLMES

One of the Association's stalwarts, Peter Holmes died on 10 January 2003, aged 83. He was second pilot of a 61 Squadron Lancaster shot down by a night-fighter on the night of 3/4 June 1942 and he was the only survivor. Earlier he had skippered a Manchester and was on his 19<sup>th</sup> op. He began PoW life at Stalag Luft 3 and went on to Heydekrug, Thorn and Fallingb. Peter made several attempts to escape and at Heydekrug, when six kriegies got away before one tunnel was discovered, he was one of those who remained underground until the Germans got them out one by one.

After the War, Peter won a scholarship to Jesus College, Oxford, where he read English and distinguished himself in sport. Oxford was dear to him. He married Betty there in 1948; they built a house there in 1953 and most of Peter's career as a teacher was in Oxford schools. On his retirement in 1981 one of his many interests was to act as a full-time Oxford guide. He loved the Arts and was himself an author and poet.

## WALTER BRADLEY

Brad's death on 28 November 2002 occurred after the last issue of *The Kriegie* went to press. **Doug Endors** writes:

Brad was an observer with No. 10 Squadron, flying Whitleys, and was shot down over Holland on the night of 16/17 August 1940. With his love and knowledge of music he soon got together with Johnny Fender to create a dance band. Later, at Lammsdorf, Brad established a written music department, initially to copy music from records. It was a painstaking task copying the music on to homemade manuscript paper. When the majority of RAF prisoners were brought together at Stalag Luft 3 in 1942 the need for written music grew as Frank Hunt was busy forming an orchestra and Jack Murray was assembling choirs. I joined him at this time and helped set up the project. The written music department flourished at Luft 3 and reached its zenith at Stalag Luft 6, Heydekrug when 10-12 of us were fully occupied in the little music room generally known as the vicarage. In fact we were kept busy all day and every day until almost the end of the War.

Apart from records, music came into the camp in personal parcels, through the Red Cross and sometimes by purchase from the Germans. Often it was a single copy of sheet music and, depending on its suitability, Brad would orchestrate it for Orchestra, Dance Band or Choir. His knowledge of music was extensive and he could play anything by sight at the piano. His masterpiece was his orchestration of *The Mikado* from a piano score.

Brad negotiated with the Germans a supply of paper, also pens and ink which were officially banned in the camp. This enabled us to supply forgers working for the Escape Committee.

Brad and I escaped together from the march when we were evacuated from Stalag 357, Fallingb., in April 1945. He was anxious to get home for his daughter Anne's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday he had never seen her. After a week of hair-raising experiences we got through to the British lines near Luneberg Heath on Friday, 13 April.

Brad's musical activities continued in peace time with his association with the Leeds Girls' Choir of which he was the founder. They found him a charismatic and extremely talented person, as I am sure many old kriegies would agree.

## PRISONER OF WAR

By Stewart Ross

Hodder wayland (Hodder Children's Books)  
£10.99

This is one of the *My War* Series produced by Hodder for children of 9-11. The series sets out to "bring history to life" and, in this instance certainly, it achieves that aim. This book tells the stories of five PoWs: a soldier captured in Singapore, a Royal Air Force chaplain taken in North Africa, a member of the Parachute Regiment who landed in Holland in 1944, a French soldier and our own Bob 'Smudge' Coles, whose photographs and paintings are a feature of the book.

*Prisoner of War* is divided into a number of sections such as Joining Up, Capture, The Camp, Keeping Busy, Freedom at Last, with each of the five men contributing to each section and the author adding explanatory text. There are pictures, some never published before, on every page. There is a glossary, also an index, and the book is handsomely presented. At £10.99 for 32 large pages it may be a little pricey, but it gives children a clear and lucid account of PoW life. It is a pity it was not published when our grandchildren were the right age for it, but it is a book which most children of 9-11 would find rewarding and, of course there are the great

grandchildren coming on. Heaven help us!

(CY)

## A BENEFACTOR'S VIEW

*Rodney Hedley, Secretary to the Trustees of the Hilden Charitable Fund, which donated £2,000 to the Memorial Appeal has sent the following:*

I was very pleased to attend the unveiling of the Memorial Statue at Hilden last May. I found the event most moving. My Trustees were delighted to help fund the sculpture. Seeing Pam Taylor's designs come to life was also most interesting. From what I could gather at the event there was great admiration for her work, and I found that the sledge, with contents therein, really brought home to me the hard slog faced by the "Kriegies". Over a glass of wine, or two, I learned more of the fortitude of you all, who had not only to cope with such awful deprivation, and experience incidents of brutality, but were always under the threat of mass execution. As someone born after the war, and one who has never experienced such destitution and fear, it was chastening to hear the stories. The sculpture is now for future generations to remember.

I thank you for the privilege of being with you all.



*Air Commodore Clark talks to HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, watched by Squadron Leaders Robbie Stewart and Bob Ankersen and standard bearer Peter Skinner*



## A Time for Reconciliation

By Alf Jenner

*Alf sent this piece in September 2001 but I was unable to find space for it in the last two issues of The Krieges. It is still valid. (Ed.)*

The small German town of Barth on the Baltic coast would seem an unlikely place in which to experience a remarkable manifestation of reconciliation between old enemies. Yet that was true of the occasion last September when men who were hating, hurting and killing sixty years ago were now greeting one another in the spirit of true friendship.

This transformation has been brought about by a small group of German men and women who belong to the Association for Documentation and Dialogue at Barth who seek the unvarnished truth about man's inhumanity to man during World War II. They aim to initiate and support research into the local history of Nazism, the war and consequent injustice in post war years. A focus of their quest is the site of the Stalag Luft I memorial (the unveiling of which was described in an earlier issue).

Although those attending from outside Germany were largely American and British veterans, this was not just another reunion; rather it was a conference at which the lessons of the past were discussed, not just by the old warriors, but also by their wives, children and grand children and by German dignitaries and other civilians, including their children. A former Russian Army Sergeant who was involved in the fighting in the area also attended with his interpreter-grandson.

The conference was as concerned about the hardships endured by German civilians and the inmates of the concentration camp set up outside Barth later in the war as with the inmates of Stalag Luft I. In fact, the all-pervading spirit of reconciliation was probably best epitomised by the attendance of a German woman whose father, a member of the camp intelligence staff, was shot dead by a newly liberated, enraged American. She was in tears at the conference banquet, mystified by how such a tragic event could have happened, yet her very presence bore eloquent witness to her lack of animosity towards Americans.

The banquet was in honour of Helga Radau, who worked so hard to make the conference a success and whose work for the Association deserves wider understanding. Such a gathering had to have a deeper significance than simply to afford old airmen an opportunity to reminisce. Equally involved was that Russian soldier, the German survivors of the last battle in which he fought and, most importantly, children from the local school. Their participation may well

prove to be the most significant outcome of all the effort put into this unique quest for international understanding. Few who were there will easily forget the session at the school when groups of 12 to 13 year olds eagerly questioned the veterans who had fought against their grandfathers.

At this international conference a number of in-depth talks were given by, among others, Helga Radau, Stephan Scherer whose father was Commandant of Stalag Luft I, the Russian soldier, Vasily Bezugly, and Mary Smith of the USA who explained why she and her sister had created a website for their father and other kriegies. I had the opportunity to pay tribute to Dixie Dears.

Three memorials were visited, that for Stalag Luft I, the memorial for victims of the concentration camp and that for the dead of the Red Army. Later, basking in the glow of goodwill, the delegates said their farewells totally unaware that, within 48 hours, international understanding would again be sorely tested by the deadly attack on the Twin Towers in New York.



*The Duke is interested in Dave Bernard's medals*

## First Light

By Geoffrey Wellum

Penguin Books (Paperback) £7.99

First published by Viking in 2002 and by Penguin in the following year, *First Light* was deservedly a best seller. It is a magical book with the same kind of impact as Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy*. Wellum, who incidentally took part in the recent TV programme on Spitfires, kept no diary but made notes from time to time and has a prodigious memory. At 17 he joined the RAF on a short service commission shortly before war was declared. His initial training was with civilian instructors, then he went on to Harwards, with a splendid Flight Sergeant instructor at Little Rissington. His training was not without setbacks but he made it eventually to 92 Spitfire Squadron. The CO was Roger Bushell who was not greatly impressed as Wellum had yet to see a Spitfire. But Wellum learned to fly the Spitfire while his commanding officer was shot down to become Big X at Stalag Luft 3 and to be murdered by the Gestapo.

Wellum served with the Squadron through the Battle of Britain and on, doing well over 50 sweeps and escorts until he was told he had done enough. After a short spell at OTU during which his DFC came through, he was posted to 65 Squadron as a flight commander. It was March 1942 and he was twenty. More sweeps, often two a day, more air battles, more escorts, more friends lost. Wellum's writing is vivid and sensitive. He takes you into the cockpit with him and you are party to his thoughts and feelings. Using the notes he made at the time, writing in the first tense, he is compelling.

In July 1942 Wellum was posted overseas. Forty fighter pilots were assembled at Abbotsinch in Scotland, then conveyed to the aircraft carrier *Furious*, which soon joined three other aircraft carriers, two battleships, seven cruisers and a score of destroyers, all guarding a massive convoy which was to relieve Malta. In the Mediterranean forty Spits took off in four formations, one led by Wellum, with overload tanks, bound for Malta. After a long flight Wellum saw Malta appear "looking like a brown leaf floating on water".

Malta was in desperate straits and it was imperative that at least some ships from the convoy get through. The Spits were to patrol from first light with one squadron taking to the air as another landed. Operation Pedestal succeeded. Malta was saved, though at a heavy cost to the convoy and its escorts.

Wellum continued flying sorties over the Mediterranean but was having trouble with his eyes. He had chronic sinusitis, was operated on and returned to England. He had done, he writes, "two full tours on Spitfires, the Battle of Britain and nearly one hundred escorts and fighter sweeps over occupied France and I felt destroyed by the war". Six weeks later, batteries recharged, he was test flying Typhoons.

*First Light* won much critical acclaim. Max Hastings declared it "One of the best memoirs for years about the experience of flying in war." I couldn't agree more.

(CY)

## Great Escape 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Air Power Association Dinner

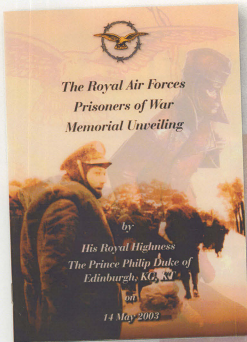
John Banfield writes:

I was honoured to be invited to the dinner given by the Air Power Association at the RAF Club on 24<sup>th</sup> March to celebrate the anniversary of the Great Escape. Wing Cdr H.K. "Shag" Rees, Jack Lyon and Alan Bryett, all participants in the Great Escape, were present, together with Melville Carson, Peter Harding, and Len Hall, former Luft 3 kriegies, and Committee members, Doug Endors and Peter Skinner. We were all treated as honoured guests and a toast was proposed in our honour. Air Cdre Paul Thomas introduced us and then gave an excellent account of the Great Escape, including the experience of Shag Rees who was about to exit the tunnel when it was discovered. He then invited Alan Bryett to say a few words about the escape. Both speeches were much appreciated.

We old kriegies were seated one to each table. High ranking RAF officers and civilian representatives of organisations affiliated to the AprA were particularly interested to hear of our experiences in the PoW camps. We were even asked to sign their menu cards. We all agreed it was a memorable evening.

## Reception At Imperial War Museum

Sponsored by Channel Five, who showed part of their new Great Escape film, and brilliantly organised by Chris Dowling, head of marketing at the Museum, the reception proved to be an exciting occasion for the twenty or so ex-kriegies who attended. There were probably as many cameramen. Jimmy James, Sidney Dowse and Ken Rees were made much of. Dr Geoff Cornish, a chief digger, came from Australia.



Memorial programme & ticket designed & produced  
by Media Services at RAF Henlow



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