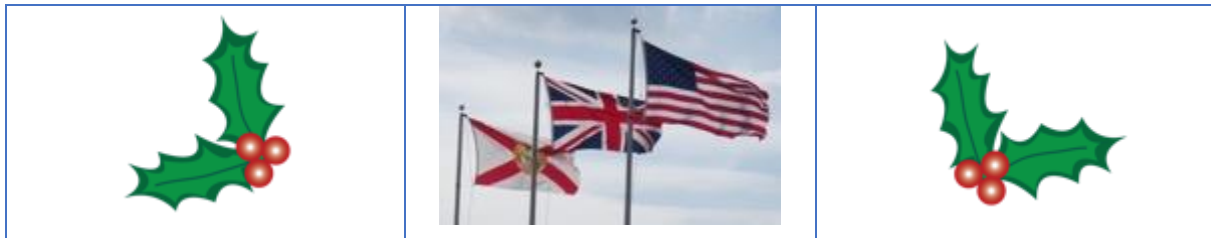


Newsletter No. 24 – Christmas 2022

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

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Reflection for the Season

It has been another strange year as life slowly comes back to normal. The UK has had two Monarchs and three Prime Ministers. We have experienced extremely cold weather and also extremely hot weather. Florida has had two hurricanes – Hurricane Ian (category 4) which made landfall near Fort Myers close to where Hurricane Charley (also category 4) made landfall in 2004 and then proceeded to destroy the last remaining 5BFTS WW2 building (a hanger) at Airglades Airport (aka Riddle Field), and Hurricane Nicole (category 1).

In August, I spent a week in Florida, mostly at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) in Daytona Beach to help with building the 5BFTS Digital Archive. While I was there, I drove to Jacksonville to visit a wonderful lady who had been a little girl of six living with her parents and two older sisters in Fort Myers in 1941. This family hosted my father George and his three 'best friends' nearly every weekend throughout their time at Clewiston and after WW2, strong ties remained between their family and ours. I was so glad that I had visited and spent an afternoon reminiscing with her, because the next week, I heard that she had died. As far as I know, she was the last living link I had with George when he was in Florida between October 1941 and March 1942, and I shall miss her. There are 5BFTS people who are fortunately still with us, but none who knew him at Clewiston during these dates.

Many of the cadets formed similar friendships during their time at Clewiston and retained links between their families and Florida families. I know I speak for them all as I say 'Thank You' to the wonderful people who befriended these 'boys' who were a long way from home, and generously made them feel so welcome in Florida. Long may the links remain.

And this is why we need to build and maintain the 5BFTS digital archive at ERAU; so that these stories, and the many documents and photographs that have been collected over the years can be preserved for future generations. People are asking what their grandfathers/great-grandfathers/great-uncles, etc, did during WW2. And now, thanks to ERAU, if they were at 5BFTS, they will be able to find out a little more!

And to everyone, I send Season's Greetings using the words of Gerry Beardsmore, 5BFTS Chairman from 1998 to 2005:

"From me and mine to you and yours, Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and Health and Happiness and Peace in the New Year"



Five 5BFTS Facts

Opened in July 1941 at Carlstrom Field

Moved to Riddle Field September 25, 1941

26 Courses

1434 graduates (1325 RAF and 109 USAAF)

Closed in September 1945



Jenifer Harding

65th Annual British Memorial Day Service May 30, 2022



After two years of enforced absence, it was lovely to be able to join everyone once again at Oak Ridge Cemetery for the 65th Annual British Memorial Day Service. As always, a big 'THANK YOU' - to the Rotary Club of Arcadia, to Paul Bennett Seusy, British Memorial Service Chair, to Judy Wertz Strickland who stood in for Paul on the day, to organisations who laid a wreath, and to everyone who attended to remember and honour John Paul Riddle and the 23 cadets who died in Florida and are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Arcadia.

← *The British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery, May 30, 2022*

Please see the September 2022 Newsletter (no. 23) for pictures and more information.

The 66th Annual British Memorial Day Service will be held on Monday May 29, 2023

The service will start at 10am

The Service is organized, as it has been for the past 66 years, by Arcadia Rotary Club

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

Telephone for information at 863-444-0664

Email: BritishMemorialService@gmail.com

More details to follow in March – everyone is welcome

November 2022 at The British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery

Memorial Day is traditionally the day when Americans remember their military personnel who have fought and died during wartime while serving in the United States armed forces, and it is appropriate that the annual 5BFTS British Service is held on Memorial Day as it remembers and honours RAF cadets who died in America while serving their country during WW2.

Armistice Day, later known as **Remembrance Day** in the UK and Commonwealth and **Veterans' Day** in the United States, is on November 11 and is in remembrance of the end of WW1 at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Sometimes given a different name, the day is a public holiday in many countries. The National Service of Remembrance in the UK and Commonwealth, equivalent to the American Memorial Day, takes place on the nearest Sunday to November 11, and other BFTS have chosen to remember their cadets who died while training on Veterans' Day or on Remembrance Sunday.

Because 5BFTS chose to honour their cadets on Memorial Day, nothing formal takes place on November 11 or Remembrance Sunday, although occasionally a special remembrance service is held. On Remembrance Sunday 2019 (November 10), RAF personnel from CXX Squadron and engineers from the Poseidon Line Squadron based at Naval Air Station Jacksonville in Florida attended Oak Ridge Cemetery, laying crosses and poppies at the graves of the 23 RAF cadet pilots (See Newsletter 16, March 2020).

In November, I heard separately from two ex-RAF personnel who had moved to America after retiring from the RAF and live locally to Arcadia. They both asked me about Oak Ridge Cemetery and The British Plot.

The first to make contact was Bill Kirk

Bill went to Oak Ridge Cemetery on November 11. In his words:

"I wasn't able to find any poppies locally, so I placed a Union flag on each grave. I also met three Canadian veterans who were placing poppies on all of the gravestones. Just as I was about to leave, I met a couple who had a relative buried there and were paying their respects. I mentioned you and the 5BFTS Association to them all as well as pointing out where to find the history behind those graves".

Thank you, Bill, for going to Oak Ridge and paying respects to the cadets who are buried there.

And thank you for sharing your pictures. I have never been to Florida in November and The British Plot certainly has a very different look in November compared with May.

*The British Plot, Oak Ridge Cemetery →
November 11, 2022*



A few days later, we heard from Phil Nash Broker

Phil visited Oak Ridge later in November. He took a photograph of every headstone in the British Plot and made a short video at the cemetery and has kindly allowed me to share the pictures. The pictures and video will be uploaded to the ERAU 5BFTS Digital Archive (see later), but meantime, here is a small selection of the headstones. As you can see, the poppies placed by the Canadians, the flags placed by Bill and the picture of Leonard Stone are still there.

<p>Leonard G Stone Died August 24, 1943</p>	<p>Robert A Wood Died September 15, 1943</p>	<p>Dennis H Washer Died April 28, 1943</p>

In Memoriam

Sadly during 2022, we heard about several ex-cadets who had 'handed in their Logbooks.

Obituaries and other details about their lives are in the September 2022 Newsletter.

- Ron Pottinger (Course 7). Died in 2021 aged 101;
- Charles Holliday (Course 18). Died on July 5, 2022 aged almost 99;
- George E W Shaw (Course 24). Died on April 3, 2021 aged 96;
- John Anthony Glover (Course 26). Died in 2021.

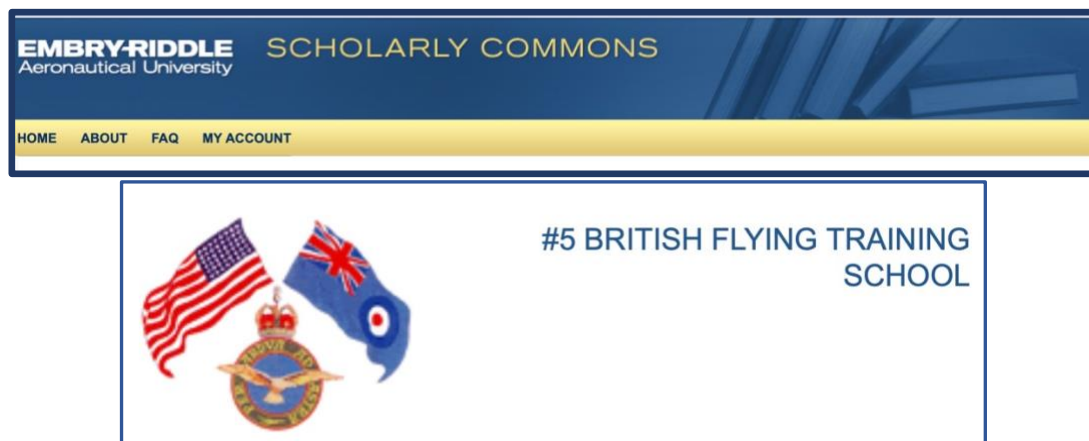
In 2022, we heard about four other people who had died – all widows of pilots who supported the 5BFTS Association as family members and contributed greatly to its success. Their obituaries were in the March and September 2022 Newsletters.

- Jean Leeks, widow of Harry Leeks (Course 5) who died December 30, 2018, aged 81;
- Margaret (Peggy) Charlesworth, widow of Fen Charlesworth (Course 11) who died May 26, 2022 aged 97;
- Winifred (Wyn) Sneezum, widow of Ivan (Course 22) who died April 28, 2022;
- Alma Mary Newsham, widow of Gordon Newsham (Course 24) who died June 26, 2020, aged 95.

We remember with thanks these pilots who have handed in their logbooks, and to other pilots, Riddle Field staff and friends known to us who have done so much to keep their memories alive.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THEY WERE THERE!

5BFTS DIGITAL ARCHIVE



The 5BFTS Digital Archive has landed!!

<https://commons.erau.edu/british-flying-training-school/>

With thanks to so many people, the 5BFTS Digital Archive is now available for viewing, sharing, contributing, etc. It is very early days and there is a huge amount of material to be added (and much of this still to be scanned), but we have made a start and there are currently five collections being populated.

A lot of people have been involved in setting up this website, but there are three people in particular that I want to thank – because without them, we would not have even been able to start – let alone get as far as we have! So - thank you to:

- **Bill Thompson**, Executive Director Engagement Initiatives & Eagle Heritage Project, who has provided funding;
- **Dr Sally Bloomstrane**, ERAU Professor of Communication, Humanities and Communication Department – and Bill's wife - who is supporting the project;
- **Chip Wolfe**, ERAU Scholarly Commons Administrator, Hunt Library – without whom, nothing would have happened and who has been patiently instructing me in the basic skills needed to upload and manage documents in a website.

What will you see when you 'click' the link above?

Browse the #5 British Flying Training School Collections:

[#5 British Flying Training School, Clewiston, Florida](#)

[Biographies](#)

[British Memorial Day Service](#)

[History of BFTS](#)

[Images](#)

[Related Resources](#)

Clicking on the first link

<https://commons.erau.edu/bfts-5bfts-clewiston/>

takes you to links to a number of resources from our own UK based website so ably managed by webmaster, Eddie. The direct website link is: www.5bfts.org.uk

And the interest in 5BFTS is already spreading! The project has captured the imagination of others at ERAU such as a couple of students who are getting involved in the project as part of their own research.

Click: <https://commons.erau.edu/british-flying-training-school/> and you will see this screen and choose to view any of the current five collections.

A reminder that it is early days, but I should love to hear what you think. Any ideas, comments and offers of source materials all gratefully received.

Images of Aircraft

If you look on the website, you will be able to search through several images, all taken during WW2 by instructors, cadets or other staff working at Riddle Field. They feature either the Stearman PT-17, Vultee BT-13A or Harvard AT-6 which were the three planes flown by cadets at 5BFTS. I scanned these images, which were then uploaded by an ERAU student (Thank you Maddy). And the trigger for doing this was an email from Ben Jolly!

Examples of aircraft photos from ERAU 5BFTS Digital Archive



A T Ball (Course 5) Dec 1941-June 1942)
AT-6 #212



Pete Orchard (Course 16 – July 1943-Feb 1944)
AT-6 #209

Ben wrote to us in November and said that “my great uncle Cecil Jolly learned to fly at Clewiston, flying the PT17 Stearman, BT-13A Vultee and AT-6A. Sadly Cecil was killed in early 1944 over Sicily, flying a Spitfire Vb. I am making models of each aircraft he flew. As part of my research, I have found a photograph of a Stearman based at Clewiston painted silver with fairly basic markings”.

Ben then went on to ask us, “Do you know if the Vultee and Harvard at Clewiston were also painted silver? Plenty of photographs show them blue and yellow, although I can’t find any photos from 5BFTS”. This prompted me to look through the various photographs I have at home to see whether I could help Ben.

Cecil Jolly was at Clewiston from October 1941 until March 1942 and was a member of Course 3, the same course as my father, George Hogarth, and so, I was able to tell Ben what the Vultee and AT-6 looked like when Course 3 flew them. The nose cones of the AT-6 had a bare metal finish, with black on the top in front of the canopy (this will be a matt ‘anti-glare’ finish so as not to annoy/blind the pilots with reflections). The tail had a blue vertical strip and red/white horizontal stripes. This is similar to AT-6 #212 shown above which, along with other AT-6 planes, was flown by my father between January 27 and March 6, 1942.

The three numbers, clearly shown on each of the two planes pictures above, is their Riddle Field AT-6 aircraft identification code. These codes changed from having three numbers to two letters during summer 1944.

As well as the black and white photos, I found some rare colour pictures of AT-6 planes (not yet in the digital archive) which I believe were taken at Riddle Field. These planes clearly have a three number code but have coloured nose cones. I wondered whether anyone remembered seeing and flying AT-6 planes with coloured nose cones.

- I asked **Ron Cox** (Course 22 – August 1944 to March 1945) who said that he has no recollection of coloured nose cones and in fact, as we were speaking on the phone, Ron was looking at a picture of himself by an AT-6 with a silver nose cone. The AT-6 planes he flew had a two-letter identification code.
- I asked **Roy Lightfoot** (Course 26 – started June 1945) the same question. Roy said there was no colour in the nose cones of their planes – and sent me a picture of himself by an AT-6 to prove it! This AT-6 has a code of CT.



Roy Lightfoot standing by AT-6 #CT 1945



Coloured photo of AT-6 planes taken in 1944?

Investigations into coloured nose cones underway! More in subsequent newsletters.

Meantime, Ben has made a model Stearman PT-17 and has given me some interesting facts from Cecil's Logbook which I am comparing with my father's Logbook. Again, more to follow...



LETTERS TO AND FROM HOME



Letter written by my father shortly after he arrived in Clewiston to a friend in Edinburgh

*“Letters of thanks, letters from banks,
 Letters of joy from girl and boy,
 And applications for situations,
 And timid lovers' declarations,
 And gossip, gossip from all the nations,
 Letters with holiday snaps to enlarge in,
 Letters with faces scrawled on the margin,
 Letters from uncles, cousins, and aunts,
 And none will hear the postman's knock
 Without a quickening of the heart”*

Lines from 'Night Mail' by W H Auden, 1936

Being able to write letters to their families and receive letters from home was very important for the cadets, especially at Christmas, and many letters survive. The Christmas Newsletter in 2016 included the card my father sent to his parents from Clewiston for Christmas 1941, and the Christmas 2021 Newsletter includes an airmail letter that Tony Donell (Course 10) sent to his sister, Joan, when he was serving in the RAF India Command. Reading letters from 5BFTS cadets enables us to see what life was like in Florida during WW2 and the comparison

between Clewiston and wartime Britain. Some letters, such as those written by Russell Cooke (Course 1) to his parents throughout his time in the RAF are also very emotive as Russell was killed on active service and his letters abruptly stop in July 1942. Hard copies of these are in Clewiston Museum, and Russell's family have given consent for his letters to be available via the Digital Archive to a limited readership.

Letters sent from the UK will have been posted in a letter box which was probably red and a pillar box, wall box (box set in a wall) or lamp box (small box fastened to a telegraph post, lamppost or similar post). Anthony Trollope, the novelist, introduced the pillar box to Britain in 1852 when he worked as a post office surveyor in the Channel Islands. The first box on the mainland was erected in 1853 in Carlisle, Cumbria, England.

What readers who live outside Great Britain and Northern Ireland may not realise is that almost every letter box here carries a royal cipher which represents the monarch who was on the throne at the time the letter box was made. The earliest boxes have VR for Queen Victoria (Victoria Regina) and the latest boxes (to date) have EIIR (Queen Elizabeth 2 or Elizabeth Regina) except in Scotland which uses a Scottish Crown rather than a cipher. Now the cipher for King Charles (CIIR or Charles Rex) will be introduced. Most letter boxes are red (pillar box red!), but a few are gold (painted to recognise gold medal Olympians from London 2012 in their home towns and cities) and other colours are occasionally used to mark special events.

And so, as a reminder of how important letters were to families during WW2, this Christmas Newsletter is finishing with a series of pictures of the same pillar box in Ballater, Aberdeenshire, Scotland taken between December 2021 and 2022. Ballater is the nearest community to Balmoral Castle, a place loved by the late Queen Elizabeth and where she died in September 2022. I am indebted to my friend, Steve Johnson, who lives in Ballater and took these pictures. Steve has given me permission to share them.

The cipher shows that this pillar box was made while King Edward VII was on the throne (from 1901 to 1910). It is on the corner of Victoria Street and Bridge Street in the centre of Ballater. All post boxes have a code to enable them to be identified, which is made up of the first part of the postcode of the area and the specific number of the post box. This box in Ballater has the code AB35 214

A year in the life of a Post-box photographed by Steve Johnson



*Battered by Blizzards
December 2021.*



*Given a fresh coat of
paint in spring 2022*



*Decorated for the Platinum
Jubilee Weekend. June 2 to 5,
2022*



Made with love
'Thank you Your Majesty'



Snow again to end the year which masks the Christmas topper
December 2022

In Memoriam: Queen Elizabeth II 1926 – 2022

You can see crash barriers and a park & ride sign behind the letter box. These were needed to manage the huge number of people travelling to Balmoral and Ballater to pay their respects after the Queen died on September 8.

The next newsletter will be published in March 2023. Please can you let me have any articles, information, etc. by the end of February. The more you tell me, the more interesting the newsletter will be – and I would especially like to hear if anyone worked with, or knows, any of the people mentioned in this newsletter. Anecdotes, stories and pictures would be great.

Useful websites:

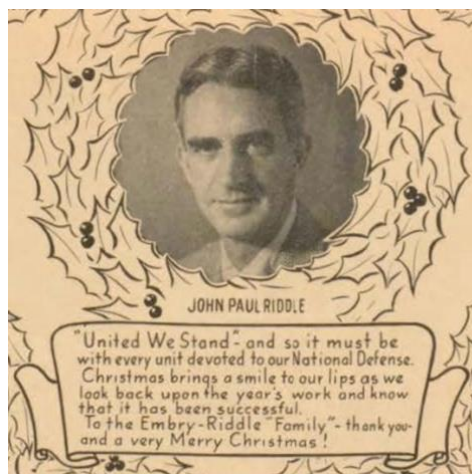
- Clewiston Museum: <http://www.clewistonmuseum.org>
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Archives: www.erau.edu/archives
- #5 British Flying Training School: <http://www.5bfts.org.uk>
- 'George Hogarth – Clewiston and Beyond'. Memoires of George Hogarth, Course 3 <http://commons.erau.edu/clewiston-beyond/1/>
- Frederick J Brittain Flying was my Life 1918 – 2002 www.frederickjbrittain.com
- Roy Mather DFC (Co 12): "A Pilot's Story – A Chesterfield Hero" www.vickersvaliant.com



Readers may be interested to know that if you are a direct relative of someone who has served in the armed forces, you can apply to the Ministry of Defence for their service record - see <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>

Last Words for 2022

Flypaper, December 25, 1942



Until we meet again, good-bye to y'all and may one and all have a very Happy Christmas and a safe and peaceful New Year