



# Noddys Notes



*Newsletter No.18 July 2009*

*The Newsletter of 103 Maintenance Unit Royal Air Force Reunion Group  
RAF Aboukir and RAF Akrotiri 1925-1975*



**Welcome** *Summer? What summer? Rain, Credit Crunch, Rain, Swine Flu, Rain and yet more rain. So instead of the garden it's been changing all the doors upstairs and more decorating! Funny how these things didn't occur until I retired for a quieter and more relaxed life. The garden hasn't been totally ignored and we've tried going down the "grow your own" path. To successfully in the greenhouse as we have kept the whole road supplied with cucumbers, cannot believe how they grow with little or no effort. Haven't totally ignored the garden or we would have been disappearing in a jungle. Ten tons of rock for the new rockeries had to be moved and five ton of local top soil picked up, loaded and unloaded by hand and a small trailer. That is why this Newsletter is headed—No.18 July 2009, because that is when I started, but didn't get very far. With October getting closer and closer I had to stop and get down and get things together.*

*My main concern is this years Reunion. I haven't checked with the Hotel for a couple of weeks So hope that some more friends have booked their places? If not I will have a problem will spare rooms etc. If you do intend coming to this years Reunion but either haven't booked with the Ramada or not let me know, please do as soon as possible either by returning your form or phoning or emailing me. Many thanks.*

***This years 25th Reunion will be held at the  
Ramada Hotel, Solihull, West Midlands  
Saturday the 3rd October 2009***

***If you are attending the Reunion and haven't let me know yet can you please do so asap. You can either return the completed Reunion form (another is included with this Newsletter), email me or even a quick phone call - there is a 24hour answer phone.***

***Many thanks.***

Following the last Noddys Notes, I received a phone call from our friend Sid Evans to say that he was on the same troopship, the HMV "Dilware", it now appears that Sid, and Alf (Fred) Adams were at Aboukir at the same time. Alf Adams article about his time in the RAF was included in the last Newsletter. As well as being able to include more of Charles Crabbs photos I am able to include some of Fred Adams collection. There are some real coincidences, such as all belonging to the Sailing Club and having in a number of instances similar photos of incidents at Aboukir such as the Sid Evans photos of the Short Singapore that hit the Aboukir sea wall and was wrecked. These or others of the same incident appear time and again as do JU 52's at Aboukir including Joseph Goebbels visit in 1939 when he was refused refuelling facilities.

***I have just spoken to both Sid Evans and Ian Crabb. Sid had a bad chest infection last Autumn that has still not cleared up properly and has just had a replacement knee operation. He is now home and being supervised by his daughter who is trying to keep him on the straight and level!***

***Ian has also just left hospital following a foot operation. He is hoping to recover and get on his feet quickly as he has to walk his daughter down the isle in four weeks time.***

***Get well both of you and hope to see you at the Reunion again this year Sid. Ian we hope the day goes well for you and your family. Best wishes to you all.***

## Spitfire Mk V from Danish website



A Mk. VB just after take-off.

A Mk. VB in the air - with Charlie Brown at the controls.

The Mk. VB was a descendant from the Mk. I/IIB, but had revised wings which were fitted with 2 20mm canons and 4 0.303" machineguns. The engine was also a Merlin 45. There were not many changes from VA to VB. The Mk. VB was the most commonly used Spitfire Mk V at the European theatre. The Mk. VC was the ultimate Mk. V. It had taken around 90,000 man-hours to design the Mk. V, especially the C version. Using thicker skin on the airframe further strengthened the airframe. The Mk VC was equipped with a new type of "universal" wing, which could house different kinds of armament:

8 0.303" machineguns (like the previous marks.

2 20mm cannons and 4 0.303" machineguns.

2 20mm cannons and 2 ½" (12.7mm) machineguns (on later marks).

4 20mm cannons.

On the 20mm cannon equipped versions the old problem with frozen guns re-occurred. It was no longer enough to heat the weapons with warm air from the radiator. The system was changed so that additional warm air from the exhaust was led through the pipes down to the weapons. Tests with 2 ½" guns combined with the 20mm cannons showed the need for further strengthening of the wings. This led to the "E"-wing, which was used, on later versions of the Spitfire.

Another old problem was solved on Mk. VC: the negative G-force cutting the engine. Every time a Spitfire chased an enemy aircraft, which went into a dive by pushing forward the stick, the Spitfire had problems with engine cut-outs and consequent power and speed loss. The negative G's pressed the floats in the carburettor to top of their housing and thereby cut off the fuel and thus starving the engine and after that overdosing the engine with fuel and cause suffocation. So far the Spitfire pilots had to make a half roll before starting the dive. This slowed down the Spitfire during combat. Therefore a Bf109 could with relative ease dive away from a Spitfire, because the Daimler-Benz engine used in the Bf109 was fitted with fuel-injection system. Many attempts were done to overcome this problem. The best solution to this problem was to fit a restrictor into the fuel line ensuring that the engine never got more fuel than it could "eat". It worked quite well, but not until a standard SU AVT40 float carburettor was modified by removing the floats and replacing them with a diaphragm unit. This was the final solution to this problem and it came as a unpleasant surprise for many German pilots when they discovered that their old manoeuvre did not work any more. The engines fitted with the new type of carburettor was called the Merlin 50-series. A Bendix Stromberg injector-carburettor was also tested, however, it increased the fuel consumption at high altitude without being better than the AVT 40. Later Mk. V's used an SU injector-carburettor that depending of the altitude increased the top speed by 5 mph (8 km/h) and up to 15 mph (25 km/h) compared to AVT 40 carburetted Spits. Changes on small details on the Spit led to improved performance. It was determined that by giving better finish especially to the

leading edges but also to the fuselage, the top speed could be increased by 6 mph (10 km/h), polishing another 2-3 mph (4 km/h), changed design of the exhaust pipes 6-7 mph (11 km/h), a streamlined rear-view mirror 2-3 mph. By moving the windscreen armour from the outside to inside of the cockpit another couple of mph were gained. By measuring the efficiency of the propeller led to modifications, which improved the propeller with approximately 3 percent thus adding 5 mph. All in all the top speed could be increased by 30 mph which were good if you were in a bad situation or trying to catch up with an enemy fighter.



A perfect three-pointer

The Mk. V had performed adequately to match the fighters, which the Luftwaffe had in service so far. The Spitfire had no problems with the Bf109, which was the most common Luftwaffe fighter, however, in late September 1941 things started to go wrong. A Polish RAF pilot reported seeing a new German fighter fitted with a radial engine. This turned out to be the Focke-Wulf 190A, which became operational during the following winter. RAF soon discovered that this was a fighter which any aspect out-classed Fighter Commands best fighter, the Spitfire Mk. V.



[A Mk. VC with clipped wings.](#)  
[This specific aircraft, EP120, is the Spitfire](#)  
[still flying that has most kills - 7 German aircraft.](#)



In June 1942 RAF got hold of an airworthy FW190. It was tested compared with a Mk. VB from an operational squadron and the results were not encouraging for the Spitfire. At all altitudes from 0 to 25,000 feet, the FW190 was superior in speed - between 18 mph and 40 mph faster depending on the altitude. The 190's rate of climb was 450 ft/min (140 m/min) better. If you during flight at a high cruise speed started to climb, the difference between the 2 aircraft was even bigger. When it came to manoeuvrability the 190 was also superior to the Mk. V except when flying in tight circles. The conclusions was that if a Spitfire should survive flying over enemy territory, where 190 could be expected or if the Spitfire-pilot spotted an attacking 190 he should firewall the throttle and go into a shallow dive. That way he might keep the 190 behind him until he got home or to a safer area. The Spitfire pilot should never attempt escaping by going into a steep dive; then he would be easy prey. To compensate for the Spitfires inability to match the 190, Supermarine cut of a couple of feet of both wing of a Mk. V by removing the detachable wingtips. Supermarine hoped to make it roll, climb and fly faster. Short wooden tips replaced the detachable tips. This clip-tip Mk. V rolled faster due to less inertia of the wings, the speed was improved by 15 mph (25 km/h) but the climb was not improved and the stall speed was increased by 3-4 mph (5-7 km/h) - the aircraft stalled earlier than the normal Mk. V.

It was also determined that the drag was higher during hard manoeuvring. This version was used for operation in medium altitudes and models with normal wings in high altitudes. As a vitamin supplement at high altitude operation the Merlin 46 engine was introduced. It gave the best performance at 14,000ft (4.300m) instead of at 9,250ft (2.820m). With a Merlin 46 fitted the top speed was increased by 6mph at 28,000ft (9.200m). As a result of this variants of a model were built: the LF (low fighter), F (fighter for medium altitudes) (and HF (high fighter) which was introduced with the Mk. VIII). These variants could have different wing tips and different engines. The Germans used an other philosophy, however, they had 2 equally good aircraft, the Bf109F and FW190. The former took care of work at high altitude and the latter at medium altitude. Together with the LF Mk. V came a new term: "The clipped, cropped and clapped Spitty". The LF Mk. V had "clipped" wings and a Merlin 45M, 50M or 55M with "cropped" impellers in the supercharger, which allowed operated at a higher boost - +18psi against the normal +12psi - when running at max. boost. (I.e. the blades in the centrifugal compressor had been cut in order to avoid a compressor stall because the compressor delivered a higher boost than normal at higher compressor speed.)

The "clapping" was pure irony - the LF V's were often old airframes with engines, which had done many hours of flight. The LF Mk. V had a 10mph higher top speed at altitudes below 4,000 to 5,000ft (1.300-1.700 m) and could climb 700 ft/min faster at these altitudes, however, its performance decreased rapidly as the aircraft climbed. Equipped with a 250lbs or 500lbs bombs the LF Mk. V was used as a fighter-bomber at low level attacks. The pilots, who flew this version, were not happy carrying out this sort of operation in such old aircraft.

The Mk. V C was the first model to be equipped with a larger radiator and a better air filter, which enabled it to operate in a warm and dusty climate such as on Malta and North Africa. The air filter with which the Spits operating in North Africa was fitted, was manufactured by the company Vokes, and some modification to the air intake were required, because this filter was bigger than the standard one. The Vokes filter thus created more drag. In North Africa 103. Maintenance Unit at Aboukir changed the system and invented an air filter, which was much smaller and would fit into a slightly enlarged standard air filter housing. This homemade and unauthorised solution became the basis of air filters on later Spitfire versions.



*A Mk VC in desert colour scheme.*

*Note the big Vokes air filter which was to prevent the dessert sand from wearing the engine down in no time.*

*Also note the 4 20mm cannons.*

The German high altitude reconnaissance aircraft, Junkers Ju 86, was equipped with a pressure cabin and was able to operate at altitudes, which no available Spitfire could reach. These Ju 86 aircraft could approach take pictures and carry out recces over and behind the British lines. The people at 103. M.U. once again went into action. A Mk. VC was stripped of all equipment except for 2 machine-guns. The compression ratio of its Merlin 46 engine was increased by hand, the Aboukir air filter housing was modified so that a larger oil tank could be fitted, home made extended wing tips were fitted and a 4-blade de-Havilland propeller was fitted.

One day in this special Spitfire, in more than 50,000ft (15.5km) and without pressure cabin an almost 40 years old English fighter pilot pursued one of the Ju86 aircraft. Troubled by the "bends" (decompression sickness), which caused temporarily paralysis, with iced windshield and frozen controls he manoeuvred up behind the German and shot it down. On the back to the base he could enjoy the view - from Syria to Benghazi and from the Aegean Sea and down the Suez Canal. About this special Spitfire no technical data is available. The Mk. V was a flying test bench where different types of external fuel tanks and jettisonable hoods were tested - things that were used on later versions.

From 1943 the Mk. V withdrawn from front-line service in Europe, and later versions took over its part, however, it remained in front-line service in Asia until the end of the war.

*Another nice landing!*





**Above:-**  
**HQ Flight RAF Aboukir 1938 with Fairey Gordon 1's.**  
**Sergeant Charles Crabb is seated right centre.**  
**The Officer— centre - is wearing a black arm band which probably dates it as early 1936 at the death of King George V.**

**RIGHT:-**  
**Flight Sergeant Crabb sits front left (totally disinterested!) in front of a Fairey Battle at RAF Upwood, 35/40 Sqdns. There is no date on the photo but two of the Corporals are wearing Observer brevets which even the RAF Museum researchers find interesting.**



**Below—Charles and Catherine Crabbs wedding at Aboukir in 1937**



**Below and over page are two more articles from research into the history of RAF Aboukir and 103MU. Interesting to link this photo with the one from Charles Crabbs album above.**



*Thought to be a Fairey Gordon Mk I, built originally as a Fairey III F to Contract 35535/30 between August and December 1930. Delivered to Home Aircraft Depot on 15 December 1930. to Packing Depot on 29 April 1931. To Aircraft Depot Aboukir on 09 June 1931. To Aircraft Depot Aboukir. Converted to Gordon in December 1934 as KR1729 fellow beside the plane is LAC Arthur Masters RAF 112 Squadron dates details unknown. The type had mostly been retired from Royal Air Force and Royal Navy service prior to WW II, although RAF 6, 45 and 47 Squadrons and still operated the type in Egypt. Six of these aircraft were transferred to the Egyptian Air Force. Forty-nine Gordons were dispatched to the Royal New Zealand Air Force in April 1939, 41 entering brief service as pilot trainers. The RNZAF found the aircraft worn out and showing signs of their service in the Middle east — including at least one scorpion. The last of these — and the last intact Gordon anywhere — was struck off RNZAF service in 1943.*

Hawker Hind (G-CBLK), L7181, manufactures serial number 41.H82971 is an Afghanistan Air Force survivor. It was constructed in 1937 and originally issued to (5 Gp.) 211 Squadron based initially at RAF Grantham, the squadron moved to RAF Helwan, Egypt in the spring of 1938 and the Hinds being shipped to Aboukir on the 28th of April. After service there, the RAF sold L7181 in April 1939 to the Royal Afghanistan Air Force. Little is known about its use in Afghanistan prior to its discovery at Kabul Airport in 1967.



L7181 is closest to the camera



The Hind during operational service with 211

In 1970, the Afghan Government donated four airframes to Shuttleworth Collection, the RAF Museum and National Aviation Museum of Canada; the whereabouts of the fourth was a mystery, until it was learned that the Canadian museum took two aircraft, to make one out of the two. Both aircraft however, were in similar condition, and thus only one was restored, whilst the fourth remained in storage. This fourth aircraft was acquired by Aero Vintage in 1995, and its restoration is now well established.



L7181's fuselage in storage at Duxford



Identity revealed under clip on wing strut

It is now known that the aircraft's identity is L7181. This was shown following the removal of the clip on one of the interplane struts, which had for years been hiding the RAF serial number. During the recovery process from Afghanistan, all the data plates were removed from the aircraft for safekeeping by a member of the recovery team. After some hunting the original data plate has now been reunited with the aircraft, which confirmed its identity as L7181. The Kestrel V engine for the aeroplane was missing, but an unused Kestrel V was obtained from a museum in Holland.

AEROPLANES.															
Type	HIND	RAF No.	L 7181												
Manufacturer	Hawker	Contract No.	626201b												
Type of Engine	Kestrel V 60	Wakers No.	8635												
		W.D. No.	113581												
Lighting	Installed under by A.I.D. to R.A.F.														
Taken on charge of	205th P.D. in														
Date taken on charge	18.5.38 P.D.														
Authority	R.A.F. in 1938														
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date</th> <th>Remarks</th> <th>Authority</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>20.4.38</td> <td>5ff 21152</td> <td>7674</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14.5.38</td> <td>P.D.</td> <td>9053</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28.4.38</td> <td>Aboukir</td> <td>9381</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date	Remarks	Authority	20.4.38	5ff 21152	7674	14.5.38	P.D.	9053	28.4.38	Aboukir	9381
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20.4.38	5ff 21152	7674													
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28.4.38	Aboukir	9381													

RAF movement record card copy showing movement to RAF Aboukir on 28.4.1938.

GENERAL	
Serial No.	6010
Date of Issue	11.11.37
Place of Issue	AFGHANISTAN
Date of Issue	July 1939
<p>20. Date of Acquisition and Date when received</p> <p>21. Name given</p> <p>22. Description to</p> <p>23. Subsequent parts to</p> <p>24. Total cost</p> <p>25. Remarks</p>	

This confirms the aircraft flew with 211 Sqn and was sold to Afghanistan in July 1939

Wing Span: 37ft 3in (11.35m)  
 Length: 29ft 7in (9.02m)  
 Height: 10ft 7in (3.23m)  
 Power-plant: Rolls-Royce Kestrel V 640hp

Weight: 5298 lb (2403kg) loaded  
 Maximum speed: 184mph (298km/h)  
 Service Ceiling: 26,400ft (8045m)  
 Range: 430m (692km)

Armament: One fixed forward – firing 0.303in (7.7mm) Vickers machine gun & one 0.303in (7.7mm) Lewis machine gun in the rear cockpit.

Bomb load: Up to 510 lb weight of bombs under wing, on racks

Here are some of Alf (Fred) Adams photos from his early time in the RAF. Starting at No.2 Electrical and Wireless School at RAF College as an Apprentice Wireless Operator Mechanic, passing out in 1938. After working on aircraft at Cranwell he found himself , along with many others sailing from Southampton aboard HMV "Dilwara" via Malta to Alexandria on posting to Aircraft Depot Middle East, later retitled 103MU.



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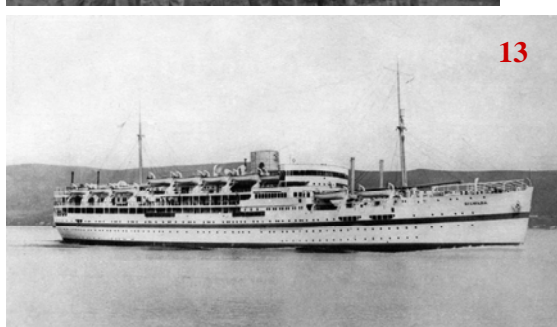
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11



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14



15

1. Vickers Valencia 3601, Cranwell- 1937

2. Empire Air Day, Cranwell - 1937

3. Hawker Osprey , Cranwell 1937

4. A.W. Whitley, Cranwell Air Day 1938

5. Hawker Hurricane Mk.1, Cranwell Air Day 1938

6. Airspeed Oxford, Cranwell Air Day 1938

7. Passing out parade, Cranwell 1937

8. Fred and sister Elsie

9. Hawker Audax over RAFC Cranwell 1937

10. Westland Wallace 6013 crash 1937

11. Vickers Wellesley crash landing

12. Inverted Hawker Audax

13. HM Troopship "Dilwara

14. RAF Band seeing off troopship March 1939

15. Embarking ship, Southampton March 1939

Charles and Catherine Crabb at Sergeants Mess, RAF Aboukir



On this page I reproduce some more photos from the album of F/Lt Charles McKirdy Crabb sent to me by his son Ian in Scotland Charles was a Sergeant/Flight Sergeant at Aboukir in the late 1930's and his son Ian was with 103MU in 1956 to '58.

At the Beach Hut



Parachute testing or training at Aboukir.

Why do people jump out of perfectly serviceable aircraft?



Graf Zeppelin flying over RAF Aboukir.

The "Graf Zeppelin" made two visits to the Middle East during its career. The first took place over four days in April 1929, without landing but during which mail was dropped to the large German colony at Jaffa in Palestine. The second flight took place in 1931 beginning on 9 April with a flight to Cairo, Egypt, where the airship landed less than two days later.



After a brief stop the "Graf Zeppelin" proceeded on to Palestine before returning to Friedrichshafen on 23 April, just an hour over four days after departure. The trip took 97 hours, covered 9,000 kilometres and crossed 14 countries on three continents. Flying over Alexandria at 13:00, following the Nile towards Cairo landed at Imaza (Almasy) airfield near Cairo. British air force soldiers comprising the ground crew. Thirty thousand curious onlookers must be held back with fire hoses.





# 103MU 25th Annual Reunion

Yes, it really is the 25th Reunion. Thanks to the late Ken Courtney and others who started to Annual Reunion and special thanks to Ken Sayers for reminding me as all this happened long before I joined the Group.

*This years Reunion will be held at the  
Ramada Hotel, Solihull, West Midlands  
on  
Saturday the 3rd October 2009*

*Ramada Hotel, The Square, Solihull, West Midlands, B91 3RF  
Tel: 0121 711 2121*

*As last year we have arranged that "Noddys" and friends attending book directly with the Hotel for their rooms etc. at the special rates that we have been able to negotiate. You will of course need a credit or debit card available when booking, as a confirmation. Please don't forget to quote the reference below when booking.*

**The Booking Reference for booking rooms for the Reunion  
both Friday and Saturday is GROUP NO. 248973.**

**Please remember to quote this number when booking to avoid  
problems later.**

*This year will be slightly different from the normal format. The Reunion Dinner will be held in the Butlers or Georges Rooms as last year which everyone agreed was a much nicer. This year instead of the normal Buffet I have arranged for a DINNER format. The final menu is to be arranged later, but the hotel has sent me a sample menu which I think you will agree should cater for all tastes. The Hotel has also agreed that if either of the rooms are available on Friday evening we may have dinner served in these rooms for those that arrive on Friday rather than in the main restaurant*

***Again PARKING is included in the Room Rates.***

**Sample Private Party Menu for Butlers/Georges**

*Thai marinated king prawns finished with a sweet  
chilli sauce & crème fraiche dressing  
Suffolk Hock ham terrine with mustard piccalilli  
Grilled Goats' cheese on a three tomato salad  
Soup of the day with a crusty roll(V)*

\* \* \*

*Chicken Breast on a red pepper and pineapple salsa,  
with baby spring roll and new potatoes  
Beef, red wine and mushroom pie, served with  
parsley mash and green beans  
Rump of lamb with savoy cabbage, fondant potato  
& glazed carrots and a rich jus  
Grilled Salmon with Hollandaise sauce served  
with new potatoes and leaf salad  
Somerset brie tart on a herb salad with new potatoes (V)*

\* \* \*

*Selection of ice cream  
Creme brulee with mixed berries  
Chocolate mousse  
Sticky toffee pudding with ice cream*

**Friday, 3rd October 2008**

£60.00 per single room, bed and breakfast.

£80.00 per single room, dinner, bed and breakfast.

+++++

£82.00 per double room, bed and breakfast.

£124.00 per double room, dinner, bed and breakfast.

**Saturday, 4th October 2004**

£82.00 per single room, dinner, bed and breakfast.

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£124.00 per double room, dinner, bed and breakfast.

Menu: £22.00 if not a resident in the hotel

**Car Parking is included**

**The *25th* 103MU Reunion 2009 will be held at the  
Ramada Hotel, Solihull, Birmingham  
on Saturday 3rd October 2009**

*This is not a booking form, it is just to let me know who plans to attend.*  
*Please remember to book directly with the hotel and quote the booking  
reference when talking and booking with them. Ref. **GROUP NO.248973***

NAME/s: .....

.....

ADDRESS: .....

.....

.....

POSTCODE: .....

TEL.NO.: .....

EMAIL ADDRESS: .....

I/We will be attending the 103MU Reunion 2009 and have booked room/s for  
Friday 2nd October 2009

Saturday 3rd October 2009

I/We will be attending and will require the dinner only for ..... people.

**Please Return the completed form to:-**

**103MU Reunion  
7 Lightfoot Close  
NEWARK  
Notts.  
NG24 2HT**

or email your details to: [reunion.103mu@ntlworld.com](mailto:reunion.103mu@ntlworld.com)