1 Jun 21

**MINUTES OF IX(B) SQN ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 26 MAY 21 VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE.**

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| Present | Air Marshal Evans  Gp Capt Sharrocks  Gp Capt Nixon  Mike & Eve Pritchard  WO (Ret’d) Wood  CT Swanson  Gp Capt (Ret’d) Ferguson  Sqn Ldr (Ret’d) James  Wg Cdr (Ret’d) Lenihan  Flt Lt Ady Hargreaves  **Members:**  Ian Walsh  Dave Robertson  Peter Gooding  Yvonne Blackburn  Roger Blackburn  Caryl Carr  Dave Rose | President  Chair  Vice Chair  Treasurers  Sec  Dep Sec  Reunion ProjO  Historian  CC Advisor  OIC Standard |
| Apologies | Air Cdre Hay  Wg Cdr Batt  Sqn Ldr Bryan Parsons  Rob Williams  Monty Montgomery  Ian Dugmore  Alan Greenbank  Jim Brackley | Vice President  OC IX(B) Sqn  Sqn Mentor |
| **Item 1 - Welcome**   1. The Chairman opened the Meeting and welcomed those members who had been able to connect virtually to the 2021 IX(B) Sqn Assn AGM. The Chairman stated that the Assn is holding together well despite the Coronavirus Pandemic and recognised that it had touched every member of the Assn in one way or another. He discussed Assn plans for this next year and expressed his hope that all of the committee’s work is rewarded by a successful year of activities for Assn members. The successful refurbishment of the IX(B) Sqn Memorial at the NMA was cited as one of the great successes of the past year and the Chairman once again gave thanks, on behalf of all Assn members, to Alfie Ferguson who oversaw the refurbishment project. Reflecting on the other successes of 2020, the Chairman also thanked those members who attended the Remembrance on the Green Service at Bardney, in November. As the only act of Remembrance the Assn was able to attend in any numbers, the poignant day at Bardney reminded us all once again of the sacrifice our forebears made on behalf of us all. Receiving TABS through the post in a branded envelope was a highlight and the Chairman thanked the Editor and all those who had contributed to edition 39, TABS 2021, requesting that members continue to contribute articles for inclusion in edition 40 and beyond. 2. The new Assn Committee Governance Team was thanked for stepping up to the plate and the outgoing team members were thanked for their sterling contributions in keeping the Assn running successfully over the previous five year period to 2020. Indeed the Chairman highlighted the continued participation of Air Cdre Nick Hay, stepping up to the Vice President role, Paul Lenihan for continuing as the Committee’s Charities Commission Advisor and Alfie Ferguson for his travel agency, in trying to ensure that as many Assn members as possible can attend the Reunion Weekend in Scotland this year. 3. The Chairman stated that the year to come still contains some significant challenges; RAF Messes have their own obstacles to overcome in dealing with a backlog of Service requirements including requests to host associations. Our very own reunion dinner remains uncertain but he reiterated the commitment to hold the reunion weekend in Scotland and told of contingency plans being made by the ProjO. The Committee is absolutely determined to provide a COVID rebound and to give as many opportunities, to as many members as possible, over the coming years. 4. Those present were also informed of the Chairman’s intent to push forward with a digital recruitment campaign to boost Assn membership numbers.   **Item 2 – Minutes of the last meeting**   1. The minutes of the last meeting were reviewed. The only outstanding actions were the movement of the ALARM Memorial at RAF Marham and an update on potential assistance to the IBCC Lincoln. The Dep Secretary and Chairman was able to update the AGM:    1. The ALARM Memorial move from the old IX(B) site continues to be delayed due to the COVID-19 crisis. The Deputy Secretary stated that the Memorial is safe in his custody, cleaning had begun and that the Memorial will be positioned at the Heritage Centre outside the wire at RAF Marham, enabling family and Assn members to visit without the requirement to book on to the Station.    2. Contact had been made with the IBCC but little is known of any opportunities to assist as the Coronavirus Pandemic is enduring; the Chairman will make contact again over the coming months.   The Minutes were accepted as a true record: Proposed by the Deputy Sec and Seconded by Caryl Carr.  **Item 3 – IX(B) Squadron Update**   1. The Sqn update was brought forward on the agenda to enable OC IX(B) Sqn to present whilst on operations in Romania. In true TABS tradition OC IX(B) was called upon to do what IX(B) Sqn does best, take the fight to the enemy, and was in fact airborne on operations as the AGM progressed. As a former IX(B) Sqn Commander, the Chairman stepped in to present the Sqn update from slides provided by OC IX(B) Sqn, the brief covered Sqn Growth and the Aggressor Role and is summarised below: 2. In Jan 19 the Sqn was deemed safe to operate and by April the Sqn stood up with 5 aircraft performing Quick Reaction Alert and Aggressor flying duties as well as providing personnel for the defence of the Falkland Islands. By Jan 21 growth had advanced to Initial Operating Capability, 9 pilots, 110 engineers and 7 aircraft ready to perform enhanced air policing. Growth trajectory is on course and the Sqn is predicted to meet it’s interim capability milestone in Dec 21, with 10 pilots, 120 engineers and 7 aircraft. By 2023 IX(B) Sqn will be at full operating capability, fully equipped and manned with 16 pilots, 142 engineers and 10 aircraft, operating from New Gotham at Hangar 2 RAF Lossiemouth.     8. The Sqn has been on constant operations from home soil in the QRA role, intercepting those who pose a threat to UK shores. In addition, the F35 Lightning and Typhoon forces have felt the full benefit of IX(B) Sqn in the aggressor role, where sqn pilots replicated enemy techniques, tactics and procedures to challenge and test air combat skills, better training our own forces. IX(B) Sqn is uniquely furnished for the role, providing radar equipped supersonic threat replication of the 4th generation, by pilots well trained in tactical awareness, utilising helmet mounted sights, radar interception techniques and enemy missile simulation. Defence engagement on behalf of UK interests featured heavily during the Sqn deployment to Turkey, on Ex TAM(T), working effectively with a key ally on the bridge between Europe and Asia.  9. Currently deployed on operations in Romania, the Sqn is operating in a NATO air policing role on Op BILOXI, flying from an airfield east of Bucharest in Romania. This deployment has been met with the signature IX(B) Sqn professionalism and tenacity, with the Sqn pilots achieving the required NATO certification and being airborne on ops before the RAF Expeditionary Air Wing was fully established.  10. Building work continues at RAF Lossiemouth as Hangar 2 (the new Gotham) takes shape. This will be a state of the art operating area, fit for the RAF’s oldest and premier bomber sqn.    11. **Future Plans:** A new OC IX(B) will take over in July 2021, unfortunately the nominated individual has not currently been made known by the RAF. The sqn will re-role to Tranche 2 Typhoon (the mark currently being operated in Romania) and is likely to become a full multi-role sqn by 1 Apr 25 when the Tranche 1 Typhoon is retired; finally putting the ‘Bomber’ back into the Sqn.  **Item 4 – Financial Situation**   1. The Treasurers provided an overview of the Financial situation and informed the Membership that the financial position was very good, with a current balance of £22,882.69. 2. It was noted that a considerable number of members had now increased their subscriptions to the £10 previously notified. The Treasurers gave thanks to those committee members who had pushed this matter and stated that income from subscriptions was currently at a healthy £2355.00 against a planned annual income of £2440.00. 3. Donations to the Assn had far surpassed any expectations, being supported by most generous members; £1000 predicted donations had in fact reached and eight fold increase of £8060.00. 4. Gift aid for this Financial Year is £255.50 and the virtual raffle held before Christmas, yielded £360.00 5. In terms of expenditure, the Treasurers declared that the Restricted Fund is now obsolete, having fulfilled its purpose with the works on the Sqn memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA). The in-perpetuity arrangement with the NMA, for memorial maintenance, was made with financial foresight, to obviate annual expenditure which would have entailed considerable long-term financial pressure on Assn funds. The final expenditure on the Memorial was £16,234.10. 6. Refunds to members who had paid in advance to attend events which had been COVID cancelled amounted to £1514.00 and all other expenditure, including wreaths, standard travel, TABS production and all postage and packing was £854.88. 7. In conclusion the Treasurers stated that with our member’s support we are in a positive financial position going forward. Assn members were asked to accept and ratify the accounts for 2020/2021.   No objections were received and the accounts were accepted unanimously.   1. As part of the Annual Report the Assn is required to report on its charitable activities. The charitable articles and how we meet them were presented by the Treasurers and they reported that no charitable grants were made during this reporting period. 2. The Treasurers finished their presentation to the AGM with a brief note on the Financial Forecast, with some predicted allowance for a continued COVID affect. The Treasurers remain hopeful that we will continue to attract new members, Gift Aid will increase, donations will still be made and we can raise funds with permitted charitable activities. Without being too optimistic income is estimated at c.£10,000 and expenditure c.£9,000.   **Item 5 – 2021 Reunion**   1. The 2021 Annual Reunion will be held at RAF Lossiemouth over the weekend of 1 – 3 Oct 21 and members will be hosted by the Serving Sqn. The Reunion Dinner will be held on the evening of Sat 2 Oct and the final cost of tickets will be confirmed at the end of Jun. Alfie Ferguson, the ProjO for the 2021 Reunion, informed the AGM that expressions of interest from Assn members had transferred into 87 intentions to attend and that looking at historical attendance figures, this is a phenomenal response from our membership. He stated that we are potentially looking at 120 diners, including serving Sqn members. For those requesting them, rooms have been booked at the Premier Inn for an exceptionally low rate and in terms of strategic planning we are in a good place, however, there are things beyond Assn control which may impact the event. The important thing to note is that monetary deposits are not due until Aug 21 so time is on our side for those other elements to bear fruit in our favour. 2. The Committee had previously discussed the importance of holding the Reunion in Scotland and if not at RAF Lossiemouth, the challenge of getting serving sqn personnel involved to maximise the effect to expose them to what the Assn has to offer. The ProjO was able to inform the AGM of the ‘Plan B’ being worked on whilst we await the Officers’ Mess decision. The Stotfield Hotel in Lossiemouth Village has informed the ProjO that they can host 120 people for dinner on 2 Oct, sat at 12 tables of 10. The ProjO has pencilled in the dinner at the Stotfield and they have sent menus of available options. Pricing also looks extremely favourable. 3. Much debate took place regarding the Reunion Dinner and the President suggested that we should identify the last safe moment to make a decision on behalf of the membership, to ensure the reunion weekend takes place in Scotland, involves members of the serving Sqn and maximise opportunity for Assn membership attendance. 4. The Charities Commission Advisor informed the meeting that he is pushing hard for a decision from the Mess but warned that Ex JOINT WARRIOR is taking place over the same period and the Mess is full of participants. 5. Caryl Carr asked if the BBMF Lancaster will be available over the weekend but was informed by the Historian that it will not be possible this year. 6. The Chairman passed on collective thanks to the ProjO for his efforts in securing a contingency plan for the Reunion Dinner.   **Decision:** Unless we receive certainty from the RAF Lossiemouth Officers’ Mess by the end of Jun 21, we will opt for plan B and dine at the Stotfield Hotel.  **Item 6 – Remembrance Sunday Events**  27. The Chairman reported that the planning for Remembrance Sunday at Bardney and a follow-on wreath laying at the IBCC will continue as per previous years. For those wishing to attend there is a deadline of 14 Oct 20 to notify the Secretary or Chairman and the Chairman will inform everyone by 30 Oct 20. As the Serving Sqn is located in Scotland, they would be unable to attend; Ady Hargreaves confirmed his attendance and willingness to carry the Assn Standard at this event.  **Action 1:** Dep Secretary to publish 14 Oct 21 deadline on Social Media and Assn Website.  **Action 2:** Secretary to inform Membership requesting potential attendees contact by 14 Oct 21.  **Action 3:** Chairman to inform potential attendees of arrangements by 30 Oct 21.  28. Cenotaph 2021 ProjO, Assn Secretary Dean Wood, informed the meeting that he had applied to the Royal British Legion for 35 places and that 32 Assn members had volunteered to participate in the Cenotaph March on 13 Nov but the RBL reserves the right to restrict numbers pending COVID restrictions. As is traditional, members are selected to march on a first come, first served basis in response to the ProjO’s calling notice email and social media posts, deemed to be the fairest way of selection.    29. The Secretary is to request a member, local to the NMA, to lay the wreath at the Sqn Memorial at the NMA on or around Remembrance Sunday.  **Action:** Secretary to email local member to request wreath laying duties.  **Post meeting update:** Request emailed 1 Jun 21 and positive response received immediately.  **Item 7 – Tirpitz Dinner 2021 at the Petwood Hotel**  30. Planning for the 2021 Dinner continues and it will be held on Sat 13 Nov 21 at the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa. The Function Room at the hotel is sizeable and the expectation is that the largest Assn in the RAF family will equally rival that of the Junior Sqn hosts; numbers are not expected to be an issue. The Vice Chairman remains the ProjO and stated there is no expectation for the Assn to subsidise the cost of the Dinner. Those interested in attending are requested to inform the Vice Chairman and to book their accommodation as soon as possible. Informing the Petwood Hotel that members are a dinner guest for this function should result in favourable rates being offered.  **Action:** Interested Members to inform Vice Chairman of intent to attend.  31. The Charities Commission Advisor informed the AGM of the intent to also hold a joint Tirpitz event hosted by the Sqn at RAF Lossiemouth.  **Item 8 – Historian Update**  32. The Historian took the opportunity to remind the AGM that the two objects of the Assn are exclusively charitable and informed those present that when requests for research and information are received, many days and hours are spent researching, so much so that the Trustees previously agreed we should suggest that requestees either join the Association or make a small donation to the Association, in return for the time and provided information.    33. **THE BAZIN 14**​. Caryl carr was invited by the Historian to inform the AGM about the Bazin 14: ​  a. In August 2020, we received a letter from Michael & Fenella Bazin asking for recommendations of anyone who could expand their knowledge of Wg Cdr Jim Bazin’s time as the Squadron Commander from June 1944 to May 1945. The Historian replied to the Bazins and hundreds of emails have now been exchanged.  b. The Historian was already in contact with the offspring of 8 other airmen who served under Wg Cdr Bazin. Assn members: Caryl Carr, Malcolm Grant, John Harris, Phil Hartshorn, Allyson Macintosh, Jono Prettejohns, Steve Shutler & John Tweddle.  ​ ​ c. Out of the blue in November 2020, emails were received from two Australian ladies, whose fathers also served on the Squadron under Jim Bazin – Gillian Lidsey & Maria Wiley. ​ ​ d. Mr Jono Prettejohns also put the Historian in touch with Keith Harvey and Alison Keen whose fathers flew with Jono’s dad in Sqn Ldr Bill Williams's crew in 1944 & 1945. ​  e. In May 21 the group were joined by Larry Riches, whose father FS Bob Riches was an Air Gunner on the Sqn in 1944 & 1945. ​ ​  f. All of the group are in daily contact, swapping stories, photos, facts & fugures. Many of the group are now writing books about their fathers.   1. Further details of the outstanding contribution being made by the Historian were presented to the AGM:    1. Working closely with the “Official 617 Sqn Historian” – Dr Rob Owen, mostly on Tirpitz related research.  With Rob's help, he has re-written the complete story of the 3 Tirpitz raids – Ops Paravane, Obviate & Catechism. Rob thinks "*They are a clear, succinct and easily accessible summary of the operations that records the facts as they are known, without being judgemental.”*   ​   * 1. The Historian has also continued research into the story of Lancaster LM448 which diverted to Sweden on 12 Nov 1944, during Op Catechism. We have located the 6 flight instruments from the blind flying panel of LM448 and following discussion with Trustees, have submitted a bid to the Swedish enthusiasts whose families have stored these items for the past 76 years. We await a reply from Northern Sweden.​   2. The Historian has researched and written a 50-page account of every Tirpitz Bulkhead 'movement' since 1950.   ​   * 1. He has also researched Ex Sunray - April 1948 on behalf of our benefactor – Harry Brittlebank and un-earthed several interesting documents about the Exercise from The National Archives, which have been forwarded to Harry.​   2. Research for Mr Neil Taylor, a writer/historian based in Edmonton, Canada, about Walter Chorny, a navigator on Keeley's crew in late 1944. ​   3. Research for Mr Ethan Siou about Sgt Whittle, and Wellington N2942.   4. Research for Cllr Waddington about the 2 crashes at Bardney on 1 Jan 1945. Bardney Parish Council will build a memorial for the crew who died.​   5. Assistance given to Mr John Nichol for his new book – Tornado.   6. Research for Mr John Vickerman about his Father Lawson, who was a IX Sqn Lincoln navigator.​   7. Research for Mr Dom Howard about Sgt Rowland Williams who FTR 23 Sep 43 bombing Mannheim in Lancaster ED399.   8. Research for Dutch Historian Mr Wout Deckers about Lancaster W4159  WS-Y, which FTR on 8 Jan 43.​  1. The AGM was informed there will be a joint lecture (IX(B) and 617 Sqn Assns) at the RAF Museum Hendon on 12 Nov 21, about the sinking of the Tirpitz. 2. The Chairman thanked the Historian for his continued efforts to both promote the Assn and to assist others, especially family members, in researching the exploits of our predecessors.   **Item 9 – Governance**  37. At the close of the last AGM the final Committee changes took place. The Board, effective from 30 Sep 20 is:  Trustees:   * President – Air Mshl Stu Evans * Vice President – Air Cdre Nick Hay * Chairman – Gp Capt Ian ‘Rocksy’ Sharrocks * Vice Chairman – Gp Capt Jon ‘Lenny’ Nixon * Treasurers – Mike and Eve Pritchard * Secretary – WO (Ret’d) Dean Wood   Advisory Members:   * OC IX(B) Sqn – Wg Cdr Simon Batt * SNCO IX(B) Sqn – Chf Tech Mark Couling * Dep Secretary – Chf Tech Rob ‘Swanny’ Swanson * Charity Advisor – Wg Cdr (Ret’d) Paul Lenihan   Era Secretaries:   * Lancaster – Vacant * Lincoln – Harry Brittlebank * Canberra – Air Cdre (Ret’d) Spike Milligan * Vulcan – Gp Capt (Ret’d) Alfie Ferguson * Tornado – Sqn Ldr (Ret’d) Dicky James * Typhoon – Wg Cdr Simon Batt * Assn Historian – Sqn Ldr (Ret’d) Dicky James   **Item 10 – Proposed Assn Calendar**  38. The Chairman proposed the Assn annual calendar be revised to enable a greater spread of opportunities to hold functions across the year. We have proved over the last two years that the AGM can be separated from the Reunion Weekend by holding it virtually, with adequate attendance. Currently everything is focussed in the Autumn and spreading the events would maximise the possibility of all members making it to at least one of them every year. Suggestions included:   1. May – AGM, held closer to end of Financial Year and can be done digitally.  Move the Reunion Weekend to May​. 2. November – Remembrance Parades 7 Events​. 3. November – Annual Senior Bomber Sqn Junior Sqn & ‘Tirpitz’ Event​. 4. This leaves the Summer available for bespoke charitable dinners, for example, the Hendon Museum Dinner held under the wings of the Lancaster and a potential Assn 50th Anniversary dinner in two year’s time.   39. The Chairman invited comments at the AGM and offered opportunity for members to email their thoughts on the Proposal. Alfie Ferguson stated his belief that there is merit in considering the changes and it was decided the Committee will research further to take the suggestion forward.  **Item 11 – AOB**  40. No items of AOB were notified to the Secretary however the Charities Commission Adviser did inform the AGM that seven out of eight aircrew who flew with the Sqn in the First Gulf War would be present at the NMA in June for a RAFA event and he offered to lay a wreath at the Sqn Memorial; an offer received with appreciation by all present.  **Item 12 – Date for next meeting**  41. The date for the next AGM will be promulgated in due.  **Item 13. Closing Remarks**  42. The Chairman thanked the Secretary and Deputy Secretary for once again finding a way to maintain governance by holding the AGM virtually and he looks forward to seeing as many members as possible at the Reunion Dinner in October.  43. The President took the virtual floor and thanked all those who had managed to join the virtual meeting. He reiterated the Chairman’s points around what a difficult year it had been for all and reminisced about how much we had all missed out on. He reminded those present of the huge amount of work going on by the Committee to keep planning events in the face of the unknown; Alfie Ferguson and the Reunion Weekend, Paul Lenihan on Charities advice, Dicky James on keeping the wider church together through his research and the Trustees for their governance and oversight.    44. Highlighting the strategic outlook for the Assn, the President covered the importance of linking into the serving squadron and encouraging membership from its ranks. How crucial it is to those enduring links that the Assn Reunion Weekend and Dinner are held in Scotland and how essential collective communication is; all Assn members have a responsibility to promote the Assn and encourage new members. The President concluded by reminding all members that they are welcome to assist or join the Committee, everyone is welcome and the Trustees do not stand on ceremony.  There being no other business, the Meeting was closed at 2125 hrs. | | Dep Secretary  Secretary  Chairman  Secretary  All Members |

***Dean Wood***

D A Wood

WO (Ret’d)

Assn Secretary