

The Story of T.V.A.R. (so far)

Tempsford Veterans & Relatives (TVAR) came into being under a different name in 2000, based originally on relatives of the crew of Hudson FK790, shot down over Holland in July 1944. Following the discovery of the remains of the pilot, J W Menzies, those that were relatives of that crew first met in 1997/8 and kept in touch with each other up to the time of Menzies' funeral, and afterwards.

The "official" Tempsford Squadrons reunions had finished in 1997 – much to the dismay, it was later discovered, of many of the veterans, so when it was suggested to Bob Body (nephew of Flt/Lt J. W. Menzies of 161 Squadron) that it would be good to reinstate some sort of summer meeting, he started with the few people he knew and worked from there. The November Remembrance Day services at the Barn, organised at that time by W/Cdr Tony Smith, had always been well attended and many of the attendees at these services became early members of what was to become TVAR. There had been an informal summer meeting in 1999, organised by the then farm manager, John Button, which took place with quite a small number attending a picnic & barbeque in one of the hangers on the airfield. This was a purely social event; a chance for relatives and veterans to meet, visit the museum and the barn. At this first unofficial meeting it became clear that many wanted to make this 'Summer Gathering' an annual event, so Bob decided to organize something on a slightly more formal basis. The November Remembrance Day services continued of course, but these were (and still are) open to the general public, rather than being exclusively for the veterans and relatives/friends of those who had served at Tempsford. It was also suggested that the summer gatherings should incorporate a church service, as this had been a much appreciated part of the earlier "official" squadron meetings.

Quite early on, Bob had been in contact with Steve Harris, who lives near the airfield, and whose website (www.tempsford.20m.com) shows his keen interest in the activities of the squadrons from a local perspective. Being involved with the local church, Steve was enlisted to arrange for St. Peter's Church, Tempsford to be made available and for clergy, choir and organist to be requested for what, at this time was known as "Friends of Tempsford". Steve was happy to oblige and has continued making these arrangements, but now also arranges other local aspects, such as booking the "Wheatsheaf", Tempsford for lunch afterwards and the "Crown", Wyboston for the evening before.

Since 2000, the activities of the group have only been possible thanks to the goodwill of Lady Erroll, the owner of the land on which Tempsford Airfield stands. In recent years, the numbers attending the summer gathering have grown considerably, as more and more relatives and veterans have found out about these summer events, either by word of mouth, or after visiting the websites of either Steve or Bob Body (www.tempsford-squadrons.info) and have then contacted us. Many of these enquiries come from relatives who wish to find out what their father/grandfather/uncle/cousin did during their wartime service. Several have managed to make contact with the relatives of other crew members, thus continuing the tradition begun by the founder members of the group. In order to maintain the excellent relationship with Lady Erroll, it has been necessary to keep the numbers manageable, so TVAR has to restrict membership and attendance at the summer gatherings to veterans and those who have a genuine link and family interest in the Tempsford Squadrons 1942 - 1945. Tempsford Veterans and Relatives is what it says - members may, of course, bring guests, but no-one who is not a veteran or the relative of a member of one of the squadrons has an automatic right to attend.

When Bob Body decided to emigrate to Crete, we needed a safe pair of hands to take over the organisational tasks for both the summer gathering and the November Remembrance Service. A natural candidate was Edwin Bryce, whose own uncle had been lost flying from Tempsford with 138 Squadron. His brief in 2006 was simple – "All you have to do is get a load of people to an old disused airfield, twice a year...". Edwin has both successfully managed a growing membership and continues to build on the foundations, maintaining regular contact with veterans and relatives, including newsletters.

Since 2006, when the main responsibility of organisation was passed to Steve and Edwin, TVAR has gone from strength to strength. In 2005/2006, there were about 40 names on the "books" - today that number is close to 110.

Anyone wishing to research the part played by their relative in the work of the Tempsford "moon" squadrons should contact Bob Body directly via his website at www.tempsford-squadrons.info . Bob has copies of over 25,000 records concerning the operations of the Tempsford squadrons, so can be an invaluable help in finding information. Veterans, relatives and those with a personal link to the Tempsford Squadrons 1942-45 are invited to apply to join TVAR, to keep abreast with events, to make contact with others they may have known and to get the regular newsletters. We are sometimes asked how much it costs to join TVAR. The answer is always the same.

We consider that any costs today (if anything) were fully paid for, over 60 years ago. There is no charge.