

Minutes of BMS meeting 5.4.18

1. Welcome. Our new President Roger Bragger thanked all for attending and welcomed new member Jim Carver and a guest Ray Sheppard.
2. Apologies. Danny Rees and Roy Painter.
3. Numbers. Meal 11, drink only 7 and 1 overnight stay.
4. New Members. Jim Carver.
5. Library requests. Request for a listing of our current reference books if possible to be available via the website – John Scott to action.
6. Functions and visits. Weekend of medals at Banbury 4-5 November 2018. Warwick Museum at St John's House – last Saturday of each month 2-4pm – list of events will become available. Philip Wilson reports Territorial battery [RFA] archives of photos and paperwork will be coming permanently to Warwick Museum. John Scott reports that at Hereford Town Hall there are military displays and that Hereford Cathedral is displaying some of the Remembrance Day poppy display previously at the Tower of London.
7. Committee points. To be discussed : this year's schedule of events [topic suggestion list circulated during AGM, the miniconvention in June 2018, consideration of a society credit card and society bank account for discussion.
8. Surf radio interview. Recently retired BMS secretary and now expat [in Thailand] committee member Martin Harrison's interview with 'Surf radio' was played to members prior to tonight's main meeting. Received favourably!
9. Next meeting 3rd May 2018 - Zeebrugge and Ostend raids 1918 by Philip Wilson.

Main topic: 100th Anniversary of the RAF by John Scott

President Roger Bragger welcomed John Scott to deliver this evening's talk.

Why the RAF?

Balloons

Military interest in aviation dated from the 1860's and 1870's. Five balloons were in use by 1879. By 1883, a balloon school and depot were established. In 1884-5, first usage recorded in Bechuanaland, also in Suakin and Tofrek. They were used to direct artillery fire, for observation and communications [using semaphore]. In 1892, the school of ballooning moved to Aldershot [two sections] and by 1899, there were six sections.

No 1 section – John presented a QSA/KSA pair to L Corp Golding – Named to Royal Engineers. They had to cease ballooning when their transport oxen were requisitioned by the Royal Artillery!

No 2 section – Present at Ladysmith.

No 4 section - sent to China after the fighting had ended so were entitled to a no clasp China medal.

In 1911, the balloon sections became 'Air battalions' in the Royal Engineers.

Royal Navy

They were 'late to aviation' – 1908 – suggested airships as the aeroplane considered 'gimmicky'. In 1911, Francis Mclean offered the Navy the loan of two Short aircraft so they could learn to fly.

By 1912, the Government was under pressure and needed to invest more in aviation – a Royal warrant was issued for the formation of the Royal Flying Corps ['RFC'] with a military wing, naval wing, central flying school and royal aircraft factory. This was part of the British Army but control was split between the War Office and the Admiralty. There was friction between the two. Airship operations were transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service ['RNAS'] as the naval wing RFC ceased. The RNAS in 1914 was based at Dunkirk [separate from the Army]. Field Marshal Haig required control of all planes over France – the RNAS resisted this to the extent of repositioning their planes near Luxemil and Nancy [to help France's strategic bombing..].

There were also supply and engine problems with the separate services.

Smuts report.

South African General [later Field marshal in 1941] Jan Smuts produced a report advising a separate flying service – this was introduced to Parliament in November 1917 as the 'Air Force Bill' - subsequently enacted as the 'Air Force Act' joining the RFC and RNAS together as the Royal Air Force [RAF] on 1st April, 1918.

Numbering styles on the medals

RFC – from number 1 upwards

RNAS as per RFC but with the prefix 'F' - if originally in the Navy, they would retain the Royal Navy number.

With RAF, prefix 'F' was lost and a six figure number was issued.

Note medal group namings can show mixed attachments.

RNAS – would be connected with a ship [not necessarily afloat] so there can be some RNAS BWM singles [as eligible for the BWM but may never have left the UK – not the same for the Army].

Roger Bragger presented two superb groups.

The first to Allan Lanman MBE [for ballooning] 1920, AFC 1919, QSA [for balloon section] Trio and Naval LSGC. Numbered No '13' in RFC, transferred to RNAS where he is 'F660' – Medals to three services in this group.



Roger showed pictures of balloon and airship, pictures of a T-class balloon being filled - technically this required 5000 cu feet of hydrogen gas [raw materials needed being a large quantity of iron filings and concentrated sulphuric acid!] The balloons were given various names eg 'Tugela', 'Tamar' and 'Thrush'. Pictures of various airships shown - Beta I and Beta II.

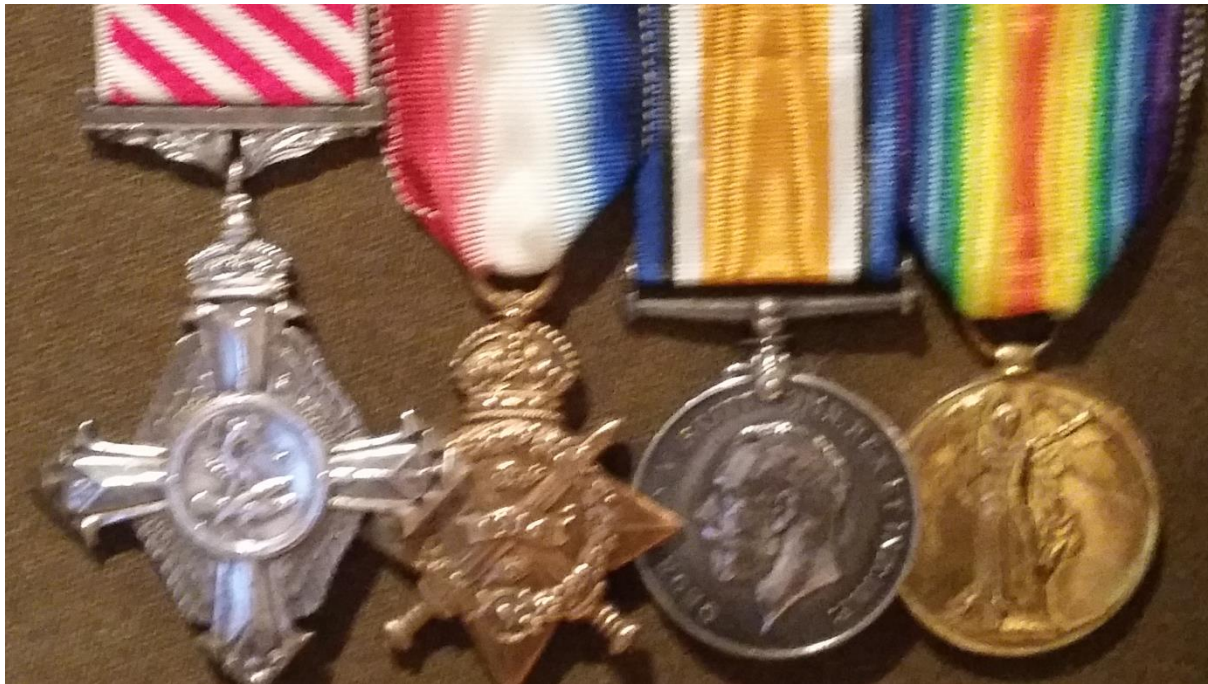
There were two photos of Lanman: One in 1913 wearing his pilot's wings and the other was Lanman pictured with Laurence of Arabia [services in Hejaz].

The second group presented was to Sgt William Stafford –MC, DCM, China [for balloon section – no clasp], Trio, Army LSGS and the Order of Al-Hahda 4th class [in 1924 from the King of Hejaz].



Paul Handford presented three fascinating groups.

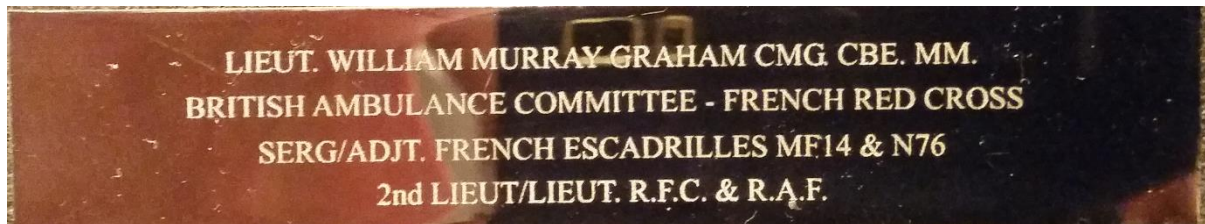
'Driver to Flyer' concerned the career of Volunteer Ambulance Driver['VAD'] Archie Mansell Lewis AFC and trio – He had been a British Red Cross ['BRC'] chauffeur in 1914, joined the RGA 1915, then the RFC in 1917 when after he'd logged 270 hours flying time, he was declared 'medically unfit' to fly. Also, had a son who, as a pilot, was sadly killed in a Blenheim crash in 1941 [buried in Singapore].



The next was a trio to Wreford Chivers a BRC orderly till 1915 who then became a driver with Section Sanitaire Anglaise ['SSA'] 16 – this was a British unit with the French army. In April, 1917, he is gazetted into the RFC. It transpires Chivers was an RFC casualty – is listed on the Oxford war memorial – more research revealed he was reported as MIA [missing in action] 17.8.1917 – was never seen again and therefore KIA.



Paul's final group was to William Murray Graham including a CMG, CBE and [unnamed] MM. He was initially a civilian volunteer ambulance driver, served in SSA no1 in the Vosges/Alsace Lorraine area in 1915, then takes his French pilot's exam and joins the French Air Force 1916-1917 [Croix de Guerre for the battle of the Aisne]. He joined the RFC in 1917. His post-war career finds him working in the Judiciary in Egypt where, in 1926, he can be found in an official list of Egyptian government officials.



Finally, Mick Atkinson presented two excellent groups in his collection theme 'medals of British pilots shot down by Blue Max winners'. First up was RFC Orlando Balaan – a felon in 1912 for the motorcycle offence of 'no carbide'...! Balaan initially joins the 5th Suffolks before moving to 16 Squadron RFC in 1917 – this was a photo reconnaissance unit flying RE8s. His observer is no less than a three times Le Mans winner named Wolf Bartono – They did not return from their flying operation 24.10.17 and had been shot down by Blue Max winner Julius Buckler.

The final group discussed was to Second Lt W. Hartley RAF aged 18 years. Hartley shot down three EA [enemy aircraft] but was himself shot down in the battle of the Aisne by Blue Max winner Luther von Richthofen, the brother of the Red baron Manfred...[the RAF losses were heavy that month April 1917- 245 aircraft] Mick also showed photos of Hartley, Luther von Richthofen and movie footage of 25lb and 112lb bombs being loaded onto planes.

Meeting closed at 21.45hrs.

C Davies

BMS secretary 16.4.18

