



WING COMMANDER GUY GIBSON
WITH NIGGER AND CREWS

The ghost dog of RAF Scampton

The first sighting of the dog, a medium black Labrador, was in February 1952 at Royal Air Force Scampton, near Lincoln. The weather was very cold with sharp frost night and morning. This was the first reported sighting and Leading Aircraftman Yeomans who was a Mess waiter saw the black Labrador.

Words: Bruce Barrymore Halpenny

It was about 4pm and Yeomans was sitting alone in the downstairs staff room, the windows of which looked out on to a small yard which led into the rear entrance of the Officers' Mess. It was becoming dark but the visibility was still good and Yeomans saw the Labrador, sitting close to a large heap of coal, which was used in the Officers' Mess.

"The dog sat motionless," recalls Yeomans, "it sat looking up towards the upper windows at the rear of the building." On this floor, being the top floor of the Officers' Mess, were the private rooms of commissioned ranks, officers' sleeping accommodation. The dining room, kitchens and Mess bar being all on the ground floor.

LAC Yeomans said that he watched the dog through

the window for about two minutes as he sat at the large staff room table. Throughout that time the animal did not move, but continued to gaze up at the top floor windows.

Yeomans curiosity became aroused by the manner in which the Labrador was staring upwards, with no sound or movement at all. He rose and went out along the rear passage to the rear door. Yeomans opened the rear door to call out to the animal; but the Labrador was gone. Yeomans was puzzled for it had only taken him about fifteen seconds to reach the yard door and in that time it had vanished. He crossed the yard to try and see if he could find the dog, going through the rear gate which

opened out on to a very large tract of open field, situated between the Officers' Mess and airmen's billets and barrack



NIGGER'S GRAVE AT RAF SCAMPTON

blocks. One of the main camp roads lies adjacent to the field and a row of huts. Yeomans had a clear view all round, yet could see no sign of the dog. It could not have crossed the wide field within the few seconds between Yeomans leaving the staff room and arriving at the field. He thought it very odd that he had not sighted the dog and he worked his way around to the front of the Mess. But still he saw no sign of the Labrador. Yeomans then went back into the Mess and forgot about the puzzling incident.

Two days later Yeomans had just come on duty at around 4.30pm, at the Officers' Mess. He was just taking off his battledress jacket when Corporal Dwane snapped: "Go and get that bloody dog out of the corridor, next to the dining hall!" Yeomans quickly slipped his white Mess jacket on and hurried out to obey the NCO's order. On entering the dining hall corridor Yeomans saw the same black Labrador sitting close to the dining hall doors. By this time there were several other RAF Mess staff in the building.

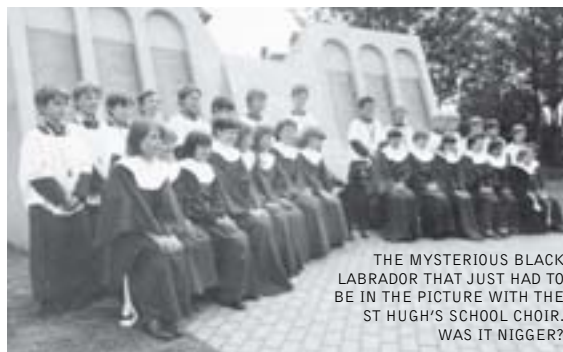
Yeomans moved towards the dog and as he did so it immediately rose from its haunches. "As it moved it seemed to blur," said Yeomans. The dog headed for the stairs leading up to the officers' sleeping quarters. And Yeomans dashed after it, going up the stairs two at a time. On reaching the top he could see no sign of the animal. Yeomans was very annoyed about losing the dog and he searched the entire upper floor, but there was no sign of the mysterious black Labrador dog.

It was a mystery for all the doors were closed, and the only way down was via the stairs that Yeomans had just ascended, or the back entrance stairs, the door to which was closed. To be on the safe side Yeomans checked all over the upper floor for a second time, but there was no sign of the mysterious dog. He was puzzled, but attached no importance to this latest incident.

On reporting back to Corporal Dwane that the dog was nowhere to be seen, after darting for the stairs, Yeomans was told by the NCO: "If that bloody black animal makes a mess – I'll stick you on a fizzer" (RAF slang for charging an airman on Form

252). "It's been loping around here looking for food, or something. Boot it out if you see it Yeomans – that's an order." That was LAC Yeomans' last sighting of the silent black Labrador. But he was to hear more about it.

The dog was seen again running across the field towards the Officers' Mess. It was about 8.30pm and it was seen by at least five people, including the Mess waiters. They said that the dog went past them soundlessly, without even looking in their direction. There had been a light fall of snow yet the dog left no marks. They watched the dog sneak out of sight heading for the front of the Officers' Mess. The WRAF aircraftwoman said that she had felt no fear on seeing the phantom dog and she later mentioned it to two



WRAF companions. By chance she also told LAC Yeomans the following day. The fact that her story was confirmed by her male escort of the previous evening, brought the mystery dog into prominence amongst RAF Mess staff and the possibility of Guy Gibson's dog, Nigger, having appeared in ghostly form, came into much of the conversation amongst the Officers' Mess staff.

Was this the famous black Labrador dog of Wing Commander Guy Gibson, who had been sent to RAF Scampton to form No. 617 Squadron? This was a special squadron formed in March 1943 for a special highly secret operation – to bomb the great dams of the German Ruhr. The dog was always at the side of Gibson; it was the squadron's mascot and a firm favourite with everyone. At all the parties the dog would knock back a few cans of beer, then zigzag down the corridor and fall asleep.

Gibson would take long walks with it around the airfield. He always did that to think things over and the dog would catch rabbits. Gibson had to whip

into shape twenty-one hand-picked Lancaster crews and there were many problems, so it was great to relax with the dog.

After extensive training the raid on the Möhne, Eder and Sorpe Dams was launched on 16 May 1943. However, only hours before the raid Gibson was informed that Nigger had been run over by a car outside the camp and he was killed instantaneously. But this would not have been possible as the camp was sealed, and especially before such an important operation, so the gates would have been shut. Gibson went back to his room and sat alone looking at the scratch marks on the door that the dog used to make when he wanted to go out. He felt very depressed, but the mission was on. He realised that the death of his dog was a very bad omen and he ordered his death to be kept secret, for I am certain that Wing Commander Gibson suspected that his dog, which was the crew's mascot, had been deliberately killed ... murdered ... in order to deliberately unnerve the crew before the mission. By a traitor? Or more likely by an enemy agent, which Bomber Command knew

existed in the service? As we had our agents, tossing spanners in the works of the enemy, over there, so too did they have theirs over here.

Just before take-off Gibson gave instructions to Chiefly Powell to bury the dog outside his office at midnight, that night, when they would be crossing the enemy coast. Gibson rightly hoped that his friendly little soul would give uplift with the task ahead.

The Möhne and Eder Dams were attacked and breached, but it was a very costly operation with nine aircraft lost and fifty-three brave young men. Gibson returned and was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross. A total of thirty-four decorations were won on this highly daring operation. Sadly Wing Commander Guy Gibson was later killed on a raid against Rheydt, in Germany on the night of 19/20 September 1944, when his Mosquito crashed in Holland killing both himself and his navigator. This incident in itself was not as clear-cut as it seems, but that is another story.

Now, almost ten years after the raid,



15 KELLY GREIG AND BEN SMITH



14 MATTHIAS CHARLTON, STEPHEN TOWNSEND, DANIEL ALLWOOD, LEE CHARLES DOBNEY



16 VICKIE GODFREY, STACEY MARSH, KATHLEEN CURTIN, HARRIET SINDEN



12 CHARLOTTE WILLIAMS-THOMPSON, LIZZIE PROFFITT-WHITE, LIZZIE COTTEN, REBECCA SLATCHER



3 ASHLEY BOYLES AND AMY CHAPMAN



24 SOPHIE WILLIAMS, LEAH WILLIAMSON, CHARLOTTE BRITT, AMY WILLIAMSON, SOPHIE WILSON



19 LOUISE CLARK, GEORGINA GRAINGER, SOPHIE MCLAREN



11 DANIEL ALLWOOD AND LIZZIE PROFFITT-WHITE



7 PHOEBE JACKSON AND JOHN JAQUES

It's a Masquerade

Photographs: Tim Pritchard

Corringham Young Farmers held their annual ball at The White Heather, Caenby Corner. The theme this year was Masquerade and

the partygoers thoroughly enjoyed the evening. The event included a three-course meal and disco and was bustling with excited youngsters.

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