

ELSHAM WOLDS

Reunion Weekend

THE FORMER BOMBER Command airfield of Elsham Wolds in north east Lincolnshire received some national media exposure following its August Reunion Weekend. Held over August 24/25, it was the 38th consecutive annual reunion organised by the RAF Elsham Wolds Association. This year's event got under way with a dinner in Elsham village hall when the Association President, former WWII WAAF, Margaret Bailey, lit the special memorial candles. For the first time, the Memorial Table inside the hall featured commemorative photographs of airmen being remembered by their families or veterans who had passed away this year. Entertainment was provided by Marina Mae, who sang a selection of traditional 1940s numbers, before several from the 1960s. On Sunday, members and guests enjoyed an informal buffet lunch, after the business

of the Association Annual General Meeting and prior to a service at the memorial garden at the former airfield. This was conducted by Canon Peter Hall, assisted by local Lay Minister, Dawn Enser. Cadets from 866 (Immingham) Squadron, Air Training Corps, paraded and formed the guard of honour. Unfortunately, the BBMF Lancaster was delayed by sea fog at the Rhyll Air Show and the fly-past scheduled to coincide with the end of the memorial service was cancelled. Being on the site of the highest airfield in Bomber Command, the memorial garden setting would have given wonderful views of the 'Queen of the Skies', as the Lancaster is referred to by some veterans. The event ended on Sunday evening with a carvery supper back in the village hall. Two special books were also on sale over the weekend, one by David Crawford concerning the wartime exploits of former

Elsham Wolds Association President, Jack Spark. The second, *A Daughter's Choice*, written by 92-year-old Margaret Ford includes the poignant and personal story of her love for a young wireless operator with 576 Squadron, who failed to return to Elsham from a raid on Stuttgart in 1944. The Reunion Weekend was judged as a success, particularly with numbers well up on last year: 52 sitting down at the annual dinner (Saturday), with 47 enjoying the lunchtime buffet and 33 attending the Sunday supper. There was also a very positive feeling about the Association's future and collaboration with other like-minded groups or people, such as the most successful 576 Squadron Facebook Group, who were represented throughout the weekend. One of them was David Goodes, from Melbourne, Australia, whose father served as a wireless operator, with the squadron. ▶



Cadets from 866 (Immingham) Squadron, Air Training Corps formed the guard of honour alongside the Elsham Wolds Association president, Margaret Bailey, and vice president, Fred Spencer. Both had served as ground crew at Elsham Wolds in World War Two. (All images copyright of the Elsham Wolds Association)