

BULLETIN ISSUE NO. 6 – NOVEMBER 2023



**First Officer
Robert "Bobby" Serge Loewenstein**

Welcome

Ladies & Gents,

Welcome to this November edition of the *HistoryFare Bulletin* and I hope you enjoyed reading the last issue, sent a couple of few weeks ago.

As mentioned in previous editions, if you come across anything that has a military connection to Melton and you think it will be of interest to other readers, then please send it in to me and I will endeavour to include it hopefully in the next edition.

It will also include details of any future events such as talks, tours etc. Let's promote our local military history so it is kept alive for future generations.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our next meeting.

Brian

Next Monthly Meeting

Our next monthly meeting will be on **Thursday 7th December November 2023** at the Melton Mowbray Royal Air Forces Association Tornado Club, Asfordby Road, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0HR at 20:00Hrs.

Admission Cost £3 Seats are to be reserved by email: meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com

There will be no talk at this meeting, but instead it will be a social giving us all time to have a chat and a drink. We will also have the monthly raffle and maybe a short quiz.

We will also be holding a 'Show and Tell' during the night where you can bring along anything with a militaria interest to show to everyone else and tell all about it.



Raffle



At our monthly meetings, I will now be introducing an interval to our talks where I will be holding a raffle prize draw. Tickets will be £1/strip.

If you would like to support this raffle by donating prizes for use in either this draw or future draws, then they will be gratefully appreciated.

Biscuits, chocolates, wine, beer etc are all acceptable proving they are in date! Books and partwork etc will also be accepted.

Social Media

Keep up To Date by following HistoryFare on the following social media sites:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MeltonHistoryFare>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/farebrian/>

Twitter: HistoryFare @FareBrian

Website: <https://historyfare.co.uk/>

Email: meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com



First Officer Robert “Bobby” Serge Loewenstein



The Pinfold, Thorpe Satchville

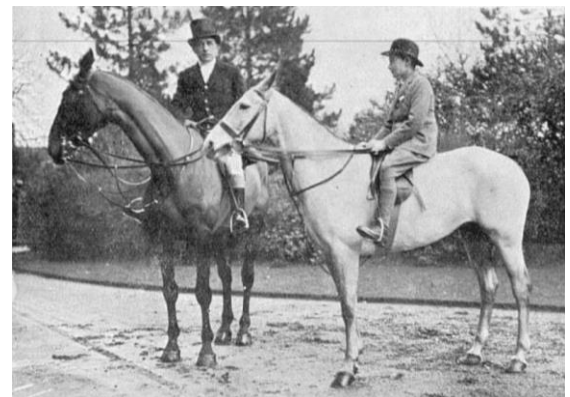
Melton Mowbray became home to many rich and famous during the height of the hunting sporting seasons and the surrounding villages were not exempt.

In the village of Thorpe Satchville which lies 5 miles from Melton along the B6047, there is a hunting lodge by the name of “Pinfold” which was purchased during World War One by the Belgian millionaire financier, Captain Alfred Loewenstein who had set up his Belgian Breeding Stock Company at the premises.

In 1926, Captain Loewenstein, who was said to be the 3rd richest man in the world, and his business and

Pinfold were at the centre of a tax claim where £10,000 for both 1924 and 1925 when tax assessments had not been completed. Loewenstein appealed against the decision but his case was dismissed.

In November 1926, the same year as he had transferred his Headquarters from Biarritz in France to Thorpe Satchville, Loewenstein, who was known for his flying, brought across his fleet of aircraft known as “Loewensteins Flying Circus” for the hunting season. The aircraft would operate from Croxton Park where he had set up an aerodrome on the grounds of the old Croxton Park racecourse which he had leased from Belvoir Estates Ltd to train his racehorses.

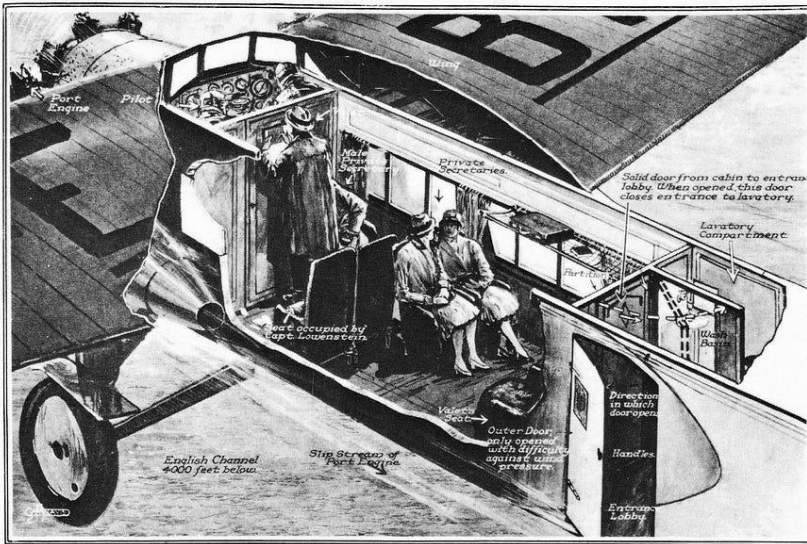


Captain Alfred Loewenstein of Pinfold, Thorpe Satchville, Melton Mowbray, the Belgian millionaire banker and his young son “Bobby” before going off to a recent meet of the Quorn.

In 1927, Alfred sold off 700 pedigree dairy cattle and sheep from the business due to the inclement weather that had affected Leicestershire farmers recently. His farm at Thorpe Satchville had also been let.



On the 4th July 1928, Alfred was flying from Croydon to Brussels on a business trip in his 3-engine Fokker plane. The aircraft was flown by the pilot, Captain R Drew, assisted by the Engineer/mechanic Mr Robert Little.



CAPTAIN LOEWENSTEIN'S PRIVATE AEROPLANE, FROM WHICH HE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE FALLEN ON JULY 4. A DIAGRAMATIC VIEW SHOWING THE OUTER DOOR, THE LAVATORY DOOR, THE SEAT OCCUPIED BY CAPTAIN LOEWENSTEIN, AND THE POSITIONS OF PILOT, MECHANIC, SECRETARY, TYPIST, AND VALET.

Also on the aircraft were Mr Arthur Hodgson, his secretary; Mr Baxter, his valet; and his typists Miss Ellen Clarke & Mlle Paule.

Not long after take-off, Alfred left his seat and went to use the lavatory that was in a separate compartment towards the rear of the aircraft.

A short while later, at some point over the channel, his valet, Mr Baxter, noticed that Alfred had not returned to his seat and knowing that Alfred had not been well recently, Mr Baxter went to see of all was OK.

To Mr Baxter's surprise, Alfred Loewenstein was nowhere to be seen and it was assumed that he had used the wrong door either going to or leaving the toilet and had fallen from the aircraft at a height of 4,000ft over the English Channel.

The valet immediately informed the pilot who landed on the beach at Mardyck near Dunkirk where the authorities were informed. His decaying body was found in the sea a few weeks later by a Boulogne fishing boat who brought it ashore at Calais. The body was naked with the exception of pants and socks marked "AL" and a wrist watch with his name on.

The death of Alfred is one of the worlds unsolved mysteries, was it a freak accident, was it suicide, was he murdered? There are lots of theories, but we won't delve into these now. But feel free to look up on Google and YouTube as there are lots of articles, books and videos about this mystery.



Following his death, The Pinfold was inherited by his son Robert "Bobby" Serge Loewenstein who was familiar with the property from his earlier hunting trips.

When World War Two broke out, Bobby was in America on business and immediately returned to Europe via a Clipper and on returning to Belgium, he joined the Belgian Army.

He came to the UK when King Leopold surrendered and joined the Air Transport Auxilliary in the summer of 1940 with a rank of Second Officer. On joining the ATA, he gave his Next of Kin as Mr Jack Misonne, Villa Begonia, Biarritz, France and Mrs Burnaby, Thorpe Satchville.

Following his initial interview, he wrote to Group Captain G. d'Erlanger of the ATA at White Waltham airport at Maidenhead *"Dear Sir, I appreciate very much your giving me an interview and a test. At this critical stage it would seem that everyone who can contribute in any way should do so. I am told that I have an opportunity of joining the Fleet Air Arm, but as I have offered my services to you and I have two friends, Leo Partridge and Rupert Belville, in the Air Transport Auxilliary, I would naturally prefer to join your organisation. I understand that the delay in my nomination is due to the Air Ministry. If it would expedite my appointment, I would be willing to give up my salary until such a time as you get their agreement."* His appointment was confirmed on the 6th July 1940.

On the 1st August 1940, he was promoted to First Officer 'C' Class then again to First Officer 'B' Class on 12th January 1941. His ATA paperwork confirms that he had previously flown the following aircraft types, Moth, Stinson, Beechcraft and Spartan and was the owner of a Stinson. He was also experienced at flying in England, Ireland, France, Belgium and the USA.

On 21st September, Bobby wrote again to Gp Capt d'Erlanger *"Dear d'Erlanger, This is to confirm our conversation of the other day. It is my opinion that anyone who is in a position to undertake such war work without remuneration should do so. Therefore I suggest my salary be paid towards the start of a charity fund for the pilots of the Air Transport Auxiliary or for any better cause we mutually agree on."*

As a result of his wealth, Bobby also paid for a presentation Spitfire MkVb W3239 which was built at Eastleigh and entered service with No 609 (West Riding) Squadron as PR-N on 27th May 1941 at RAF Biggin Hill.



Winston Churchill in front of Bobby's aircraft W3239 PR-N during his visit to RAF Biggin Hill on 7 July 1941

During his career with the ATA, Bobby flew numerous different types of aircraft including the Anson, Audax, Battle, Blenheim, Courier, Curtiss Hawk, Fairchild, Harvard, Hurricane, Lysander, Magister, Master, Oxford, Puss Moth, Spitfire, and Tomahawk.

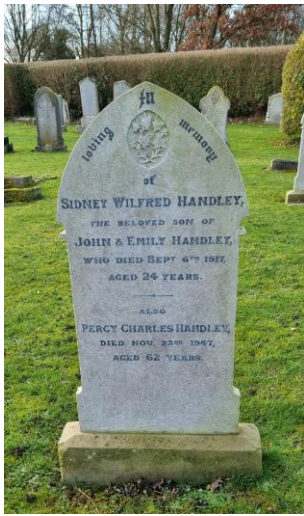
Tragically, Bobby never got to see his Spitfire as he was killed on 29th March 1941 flying Blenheim Mk V V6263 on a ferry flight from RAF Speke to RAF Lyneham. During the flight an engine failure occurred and the aircraft crashed near White Waltham. According to his records, the evidence suggests the aircraft stalled during a turn on approaching to land at too low a height to effect recovery possibly caused by sluggish pick-up on one engine. There is probability that the circumstances were aggravated by the fact that the airscrews appear to have been in coarse pitch. This accident as caused by an error of judgment on the part of the pilot.

Following his death, his body was initially taken to Maidenhead mortuary before being brought to St John's Catholic Church here in Melton Mowbray on Wednesday 31 March 1941 where he laid at rest overnight. The following morning, a requiem Mass was held followed by the funeral service in the afternoon which was conducted by Father A E Berington. After the funeral service, his body was taken to Twyford for internment there.

If you look at his casualty record on the CWGC website, it shows his body as being buried in the Belgian Airmen's Field of Remembrance within the Brussels Town Cemetery. This is due to a Belgium lady campaigning to get all the bodies of Belgium airmen recovered to Belgium and Bobby was amongst those who were repatriated in 1948.

CWGC Non-Commemoration Update

For those of you who have attended my CWGC tours at Sysonby Churchyard, you may recall me telling you about a couple of non-commemoration requests that I have submitted to the CWGC.



The first, which I submitted back in 2021 was in relation to Private Sydney Wilfred Handley, 10458 who served with the 19th (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars and died 6th September 1917.

I am pleased to update that I have just received the following from the CWGC Commemorations Team: *"We are pleased to confirm that Private Handley was accepted at adjudication and has been added to our database. A 'Grave Found' case was logged and our Operational Team were able to confirm that he is buried in Sysonby Churchyard and a private memorial marks his grave."*

The CWGC database will be updated in due course, and he will be listed against Sysonby Churchyard instead of the UK Book of Remembrance, making the number of CWGC war graves up to 10.

That just leaves Lt Col William Dixon Mann-Thomson of Scaford hall who served with the Royal Horse Guards under investigation, which if accepted will take the number of war graves up to 11.

Vice Admiral Sir William Gonson



William Gonson

Did you know that a Meltonian was one of the most important civil servants in Tudor England?

William Gonson was born in 1482 in Melton Mowbray. His parents were Christopher Gonson and his wife, Elizabeth (nee Trussell). William's brother, Bartholomew, became the Vicar of Melton Mowbray.

Not a lot is known about his early life, but William became a ship owner and merchant who sailed in government service and later directed shipping movements becoming one of the most remarkable civil servants in the Tudor period.

He was certainly a clerk in the navy storehouse at Deptford, Kent, receiving ropes and artillery pieces (1513) and armorial banners (1514) for ships.

He had already made his fortune through his merchant shipping before he began a naval career. It was as a public servant for the navy that he rose to prominence. He nearly single-handedly managed the Royal Navy for over twenty years.

In 1509, William married his wife, Bennett Benedicta Walter in Deptford, Kent. Together they had six sons: Richard, David, Christopher, Arthur, Benjamin and Anthony as well as three daughters Elizabeth, Avis, and Thomasine. They resided in Thames Street, London, in the parish of St Dunstan-in-the-East.

Gonson was well paid, both from his naval appointments and as one of Henry VIII's squires of the body, though his great wealth probably came through his commercial activities. In 1525 he was a warden of the Grocers' Company, and he may by then have owned the 'great Mary Grace', which

traded to the Greek islands. Thus, in 1530, he was one of twenty-two merchants trading with Candia (Crete); and in circa 1534 his ship Matthew Gonson (300 tons), with his son Richard as captain, sailed with a consort to Chios (where Richard died) and Candia (Crete).

William was finally made an officer of the Navy in 1536 and became the English Vice-Admiral of Norfolk and Suffolk.

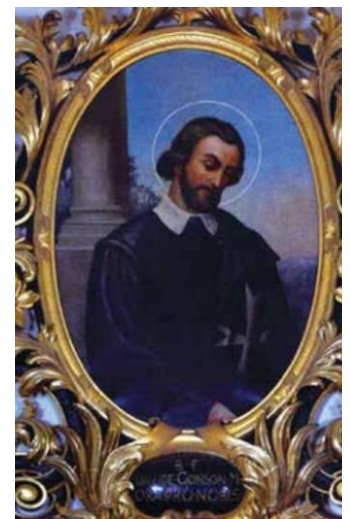
The priory, what we know today as the Anne of Cleves pub, was owned by the Lewes Priory and in 1532 they leased the property to William Gonson, brother of the vicar, for 55 years. However, following the dissolution of the Lewes Priory in 1537, the rectory of Melton Mowbray with its tithes from Welby went to Thomas Cromwell and after his execution in 1540 the rectory reverted to the Crown and given to Anne of Cleves as part of the divorce settlement.

In March 1539 foreign merchants' goods in an unidentified ship of Gonson's were valued at 50,000 marks sterling (over £33,000), and in 1541 he was assessed for subsidy on £1000. In 1524 he became keeper of the storehouses at Deptford and Erith, Kent, and an usher of the King's chamber, and for part of the period 1532–7 he handled sums of money totalling more than £15,589. Hence he was concerned with rigging warships, paying money for wages and victualling, purchasing masts, repairing Thames forts, building ships (for example, the Galley Subtile).

In 1539 he was responsible for sending a fleet to bring Anne of Cleves from Calais to Dover for her marriage to Henry VIII. He was vice-admiral—the first in England—of Norfolk and Suffolk from 1536 until 1543, and held courts at Kings Lynn and elsewhere.

Williams son, David Gunson, was admitted to the prestigious Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in 1533 and became a Knight of Rhodes, as the Knights of Malta were still known. His spirited career in that Order is documented in *The Book of Deliberations of the Venerable Tongue of England 1523-1567...* published in Malta in 1949 by Hannibal P. Scicluna.

His *bête noir* in the Order was his fellow knight Sir Philip Babington with whom he quarrelled in 1535, and suffered imprisonment as a result. On a visit to England in 1540 it was Babington who informed on him, declaring that Gunson denied that Henry VIII was the Supreme Head of the Church of England and that the King and his supporters were in effect heretics. Gunson was confined to the Tower, had no trial, and was condemned to death under a bill of attainder. He was removed to the King's Bench prison, Southwark, and on 12 July 1541 he was dragged on a hurdle to St Thomas Waterings, the second milestone from the city, where he suffered a traitor's death.



Sir David Gunson

The event was chronicled by Charles Wriothesley as follows: *"1541. The 12th daie of Julie, one of Mr. Gunston's Sonnes which was a Knight of Rodes, was drawn from the Kinges Bench to Saint Thomas Wateringes and there hanged and quartered for treason."*

Following his death, David was posthumously dubbed "The Good Knight". He was beatified in 1929 as Blessed David Gonson, a martyr for religious principles. He was hanged, drawn and quartered at Southwark (London) on 12 July 1541 under the English Act of Supremacy.

William died in 1544, after falling from grace, leaving the Navy disorganised. It took two years for Henry VIII to reorganise control. William Gonson's son, Benjamin Gonson, became the Treasurer of the Navy and helped Henry regain control.

Benjamin became one of the founding members of the 'Navy Board,' responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Navy, which ran from 1546 to 1832. Benjamin Gonson was Treasurer of the Navy when Queen Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558 and held the post until his death in 1577

Plainly, William Gonson's responsibilities imposed great strain, particularly with the Anglo-French war (1543–6), and in 1544 (before 5 August, when Benjamin was accounting) he 'feloniously killed himself' (LP Henry VIII 20/1, no. 125/7). A suicide's body had, by law, to be buried, with a stake through the heart, near local crossroads: Gonson was interred in his parish church, which suggests that matters were hushed up. No will or administration has been found. Gonson's value to his country was recognized, after his death, by the creation of a 'navy board' to replace him.

Talks & Walking Tours

As some of you know, I delivered my "Lest We Forget – War Memorials of Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire & Rutland" talk at the Melton Mowbray Carnegie Library on Wednesday 1st November 2023.

I delivered my first Airborne and Commando General Tour on Saturday 4th November. The tour looked at the story of the Paras that were based in town during 1944 and also Major General Sir Robert Laycock KCMG, CB, DSO, KStJ who commanded the Layforce and was known as Commando General (see Issue 3 August 23 Edition for more info on the Laycocks).

The next walking tour will take place on Saturday 16th December, and this will be the General History tour.

To keep up to date with future tour dates, keep an eye out on social media and my web page <https://historyfare.co.uk/historyfare-tours/>

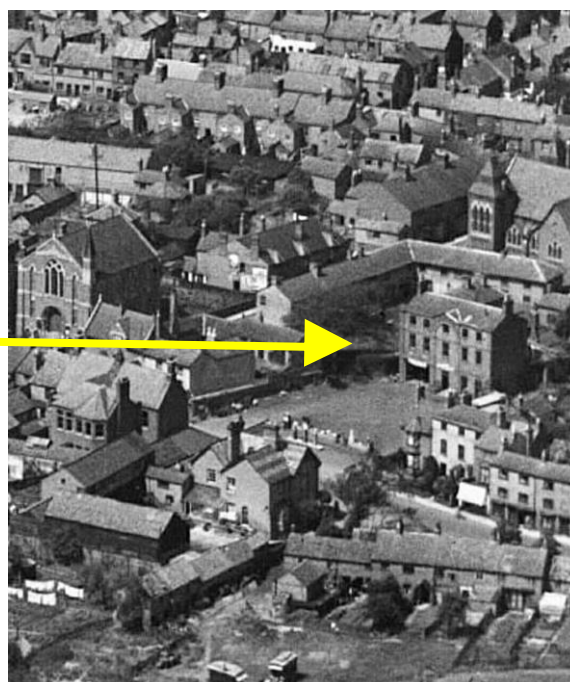
Tours are £5 per person and last approximately 2 hours. To book a place on one, just email meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com

Parke House

Parke House which used to be situated on the North side of Thorpe End, roughly opposite the Royal British Legion, near the junction with Sage Cross Street.

It was named after a local solicitor whose family used to live there on the late 18th/early 19th Century.

When the business of Caldecotte and Parke was dissolved in 1794, Mr. James Parke devoted much of his time to Commanding and training the Melton Loyal Volunteers.





In 1794, the menace of a French invasion had sparked the creation of a Volunteer corps in Leicestershire, but the fear of the French was not necessarily uppermost in the thoughts of those who first subscribed their money and their time to the Volunteers.

Many believed that an insurrection would be simultaneous with an invasion – which was in fact what the invaders intended - and saw the Volunteers primarily as an ‘internal defence force’.

Not surprisingly, it was the ‘respectable inhabitants’ in Leicester, Melton Mowbray and elsewhere who came forward to support the new Volunteers.

The Yeomanry in particular attracted the County elite, both noble and gentry and where substitutes were taken in place of Gentlemen and Yeomen, they were to have an interest in Land, or be substantial householders, whether farmers, graziers or tradesmen.

The very first of Leicestershire’s volunteers to receive official acceptance by the Government was the Melton Mowbray Volunteer Infantry, but they were also the first to gain notoriety when they were disbanded in June 1804 for gross misconduct.

The ‘humiliated’ residents of Melton Mowbray very quickly re-established their volunteers, but by 1806, enthusiasm had waned to the point that they were disbanded again in Autumn 1806.

Following the death of James Parke in 1841, the property changed hands several times. It was at this house that Mr. Adrian and Mrs. Ida Hope entertained HRH Prince Edward, Prince of Wales to dinner.

Parke House was also home to two of Prime Minister William Gladstones Cabinet Ministers, James Leveson Gower, 2nd Earl of Granville, and George Grenfell Glyn, 2nd Baron Wolverton. The Wolverton name is associated with several houses in Melton Mowbray, but it was mostly during their residence at Parke House, that Lady Wolverton did so much work for the working people of the town, particularly those engaged on building the Great Northern Railway Line.

After the Second World War, the house and surrounding buildings were demolished to make way for the Parke House Garage which was subsequently demolished to make way for the building of the Safeway (now Morrisons) supermarket.

Till next time!

Please feel free to share this bulletin with whoever you think may be interested.

For any enquiries or to submit articles, please email Brian at meltonhistoryfare@gmail.com