

THE CHINTHE

Army Air Corps
DIAMOND JUBILEE YEAR



656 Squadron

75th ANNIVERSARY



656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL

SPRING 2017

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President's Report Spring 2017

It is 2017 and therefore the 75th Anniversary of the formation of 656 Air OP Squadron RAF, which is now the renowned 656 Squadron AAC. Over the intervening years it has seen a rich and distinguished history which brings great credit to all who have served in the squadron. I therefore extend a hearty congratulations to all current and former squadron members on this significant milestone.

This year is also the 60th Anniversary of the Army Air Corps which has come of age over the past few years, and is now centre stage in military operations. 2017 represents a pivotal year for all who serve or have served in military aviation.

It is with great sadness that I record the passing of a number of our members.

Sylvia Heyes BEM was a quite outstanding Honorary Secretary with the additional responsibility for membership. She also transformed our Chinthe Newsletter into the widely acclaimed Journal we have grown accustomed to. She was readily accessible on the phone and email, and consequently became a reliable friend to many of us. The fact that she married John long after his own military service made her contributions all the more noteworthy. It is therefore most fitting that her achievements were recognised by the award of a British Empire Medal in 2014. My own tribute to Sylvia is on page 6.

We also lost Arthur Maycroft, who was a Burma veteran, and a loyal Association member. Gunner Arthur Maycroft RA served with 'A' Flight, 656 Squadron as a signaller, and he saw action with them from 1943 to 1946, going via India to Burma, where he served throughout that campaign with Ted Maslen-Jones, Jack Jones, Jack Hallam and Vic Foster.

In mid-September 1944 Arthur was one of eleven soldiers who volunteered to be trained locally by the Flight as observers. Immediately after the end of the war in the Far East he went to Malaya with part of the Squadron, and then on to Java & Sumatra. Arthur was an active member of the Association from very early on, and in February 1950 was mentioned in our first ever newsletter as having attended that year's reunion. At the Squadron's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 2003 he was invited to address the Officers and Soldiers of the modern 656 Squadron Army Air Corps, speaking of his experiences during the war.

Given the significance of this year we have been granted permission to hold our Reunion with the Squadron on Friday 2nd June. This is great news as it is always a privilege to visit the Squadron Lines and be briefed on the latest news. Such access is not afforded to many veterans. I hope we can achieve a good turnout and take the opportunity to socialise alongside the current generation. You will find all the necessary details later in the Journal.

Our new website, www.656squadron.org, is now up and running, and provides a new infrastructure that is easier for us to maintain and expand, as well as formatting correctly for modern devices such as tablets and phones. If you haven't already taken a look, why not do so now?

Here's hoping to see as many of you as possible on Friday 2nd June at Wattisham, on what promises to be a memorable 75th Anniversary reunion.

Andrew Simkins



OC's Report February 2017

Maj Alex Harris, OC 656 Sqn AAC

My third OC's report for The Chinthe comes right in the middle of a very busy period for 656 Squadron. When I cast my mind back to the last account from July 2016, the summer seems just a distant memory. In the last 6 months, we have operated as a Squadron all across the globe; in the desert, the arctic and on the sea. It has all been done with the usual, no fuss, style expected from the soldiers of this Squadron. Last time I wrote, we had just relinquished the Very High Readiness (VHR) role to 662 Squadron AAC and expected to have a year dedicated to training. However, a shift around within the Attack Helicopter Force (AHF) has meant that we are already back at VHR to support the Maritime Component and will shortly resume our support to the Special Forces. Although these changes came with disruption and demands on our time, the selection of 656 Squadron as *The VHR Apache Squadron* is testament to the reputation of our soldiers and good name of our Squadron.

After a well-deserved summer leave, we deployed to California for Exercise BLACK ALLIGATOR to work with 40 Commando Royal Marines. The image that is usually conjured up when thinking about California is one of Pacific waves crashing on to golden beaches or palm lined boulevards; the reality for us was quite different. Our 6 week stay was not in Coastal California, but in the middle of the desert in Twenty-nine Palms, with temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius and coyotes, scorpions and camel spiders as bed mates. The accommodation was nothing more than a wriggly tin lid over a sandy floor but the range complex was enormous and allowed us to fire the full range of our weapons.



Alongside providing aviation support to the Royal Marines, we also grasped the opportunity to refresh our dust landing techniques as well as firing the RF Hellfire missile and 30mm cannon in the challenging, mountainous terrain. Our soldiering skills got tested too as all of the soldiers were put through a live firing package with rifles and pistols. The aircrew even got to spend some quality time out in the desert over two days on a survival exercise. It wasn't all work though; the range complex was unexpectedly closed over the Labour Day Weekend which resulted in the soldiers and officers breaking out from the "Desert Prison" and heading for the delights of San Diego and Las Vegas. Now the saying usually goes that "what goes on in Vegas, stays in Vegas", however, with the demise of the flying suit and the fear that the Squadron badge might become but a memory, some members of the Squadron took it upon themselves to ensure that that the

Chinthe will live on. Buoyed by courage, peer pressure and complimentary cocktails, the OC, 2IC and GSF Commander led the charge by getting matching Chinthe tattoos from a parlour on the Vegas Strip. A display of the new artwork to some of the soldiers later in a bar encouraged a flurry of visits to the same place to ensure that we built strength in numbers; the final tally was 10 new Chinthes! On the long drive back along Route 66 through the desert, we discovered another sign that the Squadron spirit would live on, happening upon a large stone Chinthe-like creature miles from nowhere!



Having spent much of its life working in the desert and on ships, there is a desire in the future to send the Apache to the Arctic to work with 3 Commando Brigade. In order to develop our cold weather warfare skills, we sent a group of Squadron members out to Norway just after Christmas to complete the Cold Weather Survival Course. After the excesses of Christmas leave, happy in the knowledge that you can burn up to 6,000 calories a day when operating in the Arctic, the team deployed to Bardufoss on the RAF's new A400M tactical transporter. On arrival to the overhead at Bardufoss, an engine anti-ice problem prevented us from landing the first time so we had return to the UK and endure a couple of days at Brize Norton before we flew out again and actually set foot on Norwegian soil (snow). Due to the delay in our arrival, we had to begin the lessons immediately after landing which set the scene for little sleep over the following days. The course was delivered by Royal Marine Mountain Leaders and aimed to teach us everything we needed to know in order to survive in the Arctic. The kit list is pretty extensive and seemed to involve having most of the items in one of the pockets on your smock! Any transgression from this incurred a "rewarming" penalty which usually involved burpees, squats or sprints. After a snowshoe insertion into the mountains, the course took us through operating from 10 man tents, to 4 man tents and also from snow holes. All of these accommodation options seemed to require some hours of snow digging beforehand to build up the cover from fire and the elements. The average amount of sleep was about 1 hour a night which meant that people had some strange hallucinations, especially during the live chicken killing, cooking and eating demo. We never did see any more chickens at the top of the mountain! In all seriousness, the course was reasonably demanding and I am happy to say that our soldiers acquitted themselves in an exemplary manner. On a mixed course of Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, our Squadron members were equally distributed across the teams and made up all of the team commanders. In addition to looking after themselves in the snow, they found the capacity to lend a hand and some valuable Bergen packing advice to their less soldier-like course mates. The course finished with infamous ice-breaking drills which saw a variety of reactions to the cold water and some rather snappy drill in the snow from our SQMS! This served as the first step on the way to operating in the Arctic for the Squadron, the performance of our soldiers bodes well for the future and adds another string to the 656 bow.

On returning to the UK, after a quick repacking of our bergens, we found ourselves out of camp once more and this time aboard RFA ARGUS in the English Channel and the North Sea. ARGUS is a casualty reception and aviation training ship and offered the opportunity to practice our deck operations on a different platform. The ground-crew and REME embarked on the weekend, before setting sail in order to receive the aircraft on the Monday morning. Unfortunately, she spent two days sailing in a fog bank before a conversation

between the Ship's Captain and (Army) Captain Barry Briggs led to the ship being spun around and headed for the East Coast of Suffolk.

Apaches had not previously embarked on RFA ARGUS before, but within 3 days of the very first Apache deck landing, we had achieved 198 deck landings and qualified or refreshed all of the crews within the Squadron. This was down to some good teamwork and some long days on the open deck for the ground-crew and REME.



The Ship's company were very hospitable and helpful, and the foundations of a great working relationship were formed. Life aboard an RFA ship was a new experience for most who found conditions to be far more comfortable to the warships that they were used to; the food was plentiful, the cabins had en-suite showers and many of them even had portholes! Luxury!

Another busy period for 656 Squadron will be followed by an equally eventful one. We are now to be held at VHR to support the Maritime component and Special Forces for the foreseeable future, which brings with it many challenges but also many opportunities for the soldiers to travel the world and learn new skills.

Maj Alex Harris
OC 656 Sqn AAC

Sylvia Heyes BEM - A Tribute

Some 10 years ago John Heyes volunteered to be our Honorary Secretary with the added bonus that he knew South East Asia intimately, and had a great desire to return there as regularly as possible.

We were to quickly learn that the 'power behind the throne' lay with Sylvia. With her immaculate clerical skills she brought timely order and discipline to our administrative processes, and helped John with every aspect of our daily administration. When John conceived an Association tour of Singapore and Malaysia, it was Sylvia who tied in all the details. She also accompanied John and helped with the mass of organisation, yet always with a cheery smile. When we needed to revise our Newsletter, Sylvia brought vision and skill to the task and transformed The Chinthe into the excellent Journal that we have all grown accustomed to.

What is all the more remarkable is that Sylvia never served with or alongside the Squadron, and met John many years after the end of his own service. Yet she fully embraced the ethos and camaraderie that goes with military service.

Sadly John died in October 2011 and we all lost a true gentleman, friend and a trusted Honorary Secretary. It was not long afterwards that Sylvia volunteered to fully take over the duties, which was most generous at a difficult time for her and her family. What I believe is most significant about her tenure as Honorary Secretary, which included maintaining our Membership list, was not just that she was highly efficient, but that she was readily accessible to all and everyone. She seemed to know every member, including their details of service and family. This was probably because she was in regular contact with many of us, and soon became our friend. She really helped to make our Association a big family.

At our reunions she would set up our shop and undertake the unseen tasks, not seeking reward or recognition.

I was always impressed and often humbled when I asked her for some detail or to undertake a particular task. Sylvia would often have anticipated the request or would set to immediately to complete the task, and always with great charm and humour. She exemplified service over self.

Sadly Sylvia was diagnosed with Mesothelioma in January 2014. Yet throughout the debilitating treatment she continued her duties, even when very tired and unwell. There was never any self pity, but her humour and duty shone through.

It was therefore such a joy to learn that Sylvia had been awarded the British Empire Medal for services to 656 Squadron Association in June 2014. She was awarded her medal by the Lord Lieutenant of Clwyd in Bodelwyddan Castle in



March 2015, and in May 2015 she attended a Buckingham Palace Garden Party with her son, Brett. Even though she was not that well at the time she was still able to thoroughly enjoy and embrace the occasion. Her Chinthe article about the occasion brings out her joy and mischievous sense of humour.

She continued to undertake her duties until her last few weeks, working from her home, alongside her lovely dog, Pepper. She maintained her sense of duty, often fielding phone calls and email requests.

She was a quite remarkable and lovely lady, and we were blessed to know her as a friend. She will be missed by not just her family but by all who had the privilege to have known her.

Andrew Simkins

ANNUAL REUNION - WATTISHAM AIRFIELD
Friday 2nd June

The Squadron have invited us to join them on Friday 2 June. Judging from previous years this promises to be splendid day out, the unit laying on various visits and entertainment.

The day will commence at 11:00 with a welcome, followed by a range of planned activities (similar to our 2015 visit), including:

- Tour of Apache and current equipment
- Visit to Apache Simulator
- Barbecue
- Briefing (unclassified) on current operations
- Visit to Airfield Museum
- Flying display
- Visiting Austers
- Group photographs

In the evening there will be a formal dinner in the Officers' Mess at a charge of £30 per head, (this includes the day visit) and you may bring guests.

For the dinner only the charge is £25 pp. Donations to a raffle welcome !

Members attending the day only but not the dinner will be charged £5 pp to cover the buffet / BarBQ. Any profits will be donated to 656 Squadron PRI fund.

A coach will be available to take members and guests from the hotel* and back at a cost of £6 per head. Coach timings are depart at 18:30 hr return 23:00 hr.

Do come along and support the Association and the Squadron celebrating 75 glorious years of service.

Most important:

ALL members and guests must carry some form of photo identity at all times.

There will be an AGM on the Saturday morning and details will be given during the visit.

***Hotel:** Members may wish to book a room at the **Premier Inn, Ipswich North** (IP6 0BE) for Friday 2nd June.
Call: 0871 527 8550, or go online: www.premierinn.com
Booking on line is cheaper, a phone call is at premium rates. (13p per minute)

* * * * *



YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU

All good Associations such as ours need a strong Committee to ensure smooth running. As you have read we have sadly lost Sylvia who was a dedicated member. She will be a hard act to follow but, do you have the enthusiasm she had to take on her duties? We need volunteers to fill 3 essential positions:

- 1) General Secretary. This will involve replying to correspondence (very little), writing condolence letters, writing to various enterprises to arrange visits. Drafting of AGM agenda and recording minutes. Attend Committee meetings and the annual reunion and AGM. Send out any essential 'round robin' emails to members. Needless to say you must have a PC. Checking Emails daily for committee correspondence etc.
- 2) Membership Secretary. This involved keeping our Excel database up to date when new members join, leave or die. Dispatching the welcome pack of stationary and items to new members. Chasing up delinquent subs! Attend any committee meetings. Check Email daily for new members or committee correspondence.
- 3) Webmaster. A good knowledge of the Internet. Must be proficient in using WordPress and associated plug-ins. Initially to create a new archives section and a passworded 'Members Only' area. Keeping the website up to date with any amendments needed. Attend any committee meetings.

Committee meetings are usually in the MW area and a travel allowance can be payable. There are only a couple a year, the main one to discuss the AGM agenda. The General and the Membership Secretary positions could be combined.

If you need more information Email me (Journal@656squadron.org) first so we can fix a suitable time for me to phone you.

Please don't sit back and hope the other fellow will step forward, show them you have what it takes and make our team strong again.

A.W.O.L. MEMBERS

Do you know where any of these members are? They have either moved or changed their Email addresses, and so lost contact. We need to keep our Membership records fully up to date. If you are in contact with any of them ask them to contact any committee member please.

The Association abides strictly by the Data Protection Act and will never pass your details on to any third party. Should you wish to contact another Member and you do not know their address, contact the Membership secretary who will pass on your request.

Angell K.G. Flt. Lt	Leadbeater F.J. Mr
Angus B.A. Mr	Lock A. Cpl
Askey V Mr	Lord M Mr
Baldwin G.L. Mr	Lunn S Capt
Banks N.A. Maj	Mason A.E. L/Cpl
Bickerstaff S.G. S/Sgt.	McDaniel M.D. Mr
Birkenhead A Mr	McDonald G. Mr
Broom S.H. Mr	McIntyre S.S. Mr
Brown M.J. Capt	Meek G Mr
Budden D.A. Mr	Mockford M.R. Mr
Chester A Mr	O'Connor F.M. Lt.Col.
Clarke K Mr	O'Malley D WO1
Cook C.M. Mr	Pagel D. Mr
Cooper W.V Sgt	Paton R S/Sgt
Corbett K. Mr	Perry S.M. Mr
Crosby R.J. WO2	Pettyfer P.H. Maj
Cuppage P.F.B. Mr	Refoy G.C. Maj
Deacon P.V. Mrs	Robinson C.A. Mr
Doyle E. WO1	Samways P.G. Mr
Durrant C. Maj	Scrowston S.A. Airptr
Essom J Mr	Sheahan W.A. Mr
Fleming D.P. WO1	Sheppard B.H. Mr
George H.L. Mr	Smith J. Mr
Gillan R.M WO2	Smyth M.P. Sgt
Hainey K Capt	Stokes R.J. Capt
Hall G.J. Mr	Tickle P.A. WO1 (RSM)
Hanscombe C.A. Airptr	Tucker A.V. Col
Hayhurst P.M. Maj	Walker R WO1
Hester R.C. Mr	Wall A. Mr
Hives-Wood S.C. Mr	Walter S.C. Mr
Holloway E.J. Mr	Waring W.M. Mr
Holyoak S. Mr	White J. Mr
Hudson J.M. Mr	Whitehead B Maj
Hughes K. Mr	Wight D WO1
Hull W.R. Mr	Williams S. Mr
Jones G. Mr	Willman A.H. Maj
	Wood D.J. Airptr

CONTACT DETAILS

Have you recently joined the Internet and now have 'email' or indeed have changed your original address to some other? To help us to keep our list up to date, and also keep you informed of news, would you kindly confirm any changes to your email addresses to the Membership secretary.

NEW MEMBERS

We give a very warm welcome to new members and look forward to meeting them at a future reunion

Mr	B	Challinor	AAC
Mr	P.C.	Haworth	AAC
Mr	D.	Downie	AAC
WO1	K	Tearney	AAC
Capt	S.M.	Pearce	AAC
Mr	J.W.	Hutchings DFM	KRRC/GPL
L/Cpl	C.	Lockwood	AAC

DEATHS

Sadly, we announce the deaths of the following members and offer our sincere condolences to their relatives and friends.

Major (retd)	H.G.	Crutchley	AAC	died January '16
Capt (retd)	M.J.S.	Cubbage	RA	died May '16
Mr	C.	Warrillow	REME	died October '16
Lt Col (retd)	F.	Penfold	REME	died December '16
Mrs	S.	Heyes	Associate	died January '17
Mr	R.	Corbett	RA	died January '17
Mr	A.	Maycroft	RA	died January '17
Mr	N.G.	Stubblings	RAF	died January 17

Editor's Bit !

As you will have found, included separately with this Journal, is a copy of the Squadron Report for 1957. This makes very interesting reading as it comments on the problems that arose with the transfer of responsibility from the R.A.F. to the Army. I don't know how the Flying and Servicing statistics compare with the current state, perhaps someone in the Squadron would like to come back to us with a comparison? It would make interesting material for a future 'Chinthe'.

Many thanks to our contributors for the articles submitted. I am always seeking more articles and personal memories. Please try to keep them about two A4 sheets, but if it needs more then so be it! Always include any photos you wish to have in the text as a separate .jpg as well, but indicate where you would like them inserted.

I look forward to meeting Members at the reunion and AGM, which promises to be a very good day.

FALKLANDS REUNION

Sunday 21st May 2017

FALKLAND ISLANDS REUNION 3 BAS & CDO AIR TPS.

A national reunion has been arranged for all Falklands veterans. This will be held at Pangbourne Collage commencing at 10:00. Full details can be found on our website.

Those who were with 656 in 1982 and wish to attend please contact Major Peter Cameron (OC 3 BAS in 1982) at petercameron@btopenworld.com.

FALKLANDS 35

Sunday 18th June 2017.

35th Anniversary Parade of PARA Regt & Airborne Forces Falklands veterans
1000 at Aldershot Military Cemetery, full itinerary on the website.

Arthur Maycroft

Died 2017

Gunner Arthur Maycroft RA served with 'A' Flight, 656 Squadron as a signaller, and he saw action with them from 1943 to 1946, going via India to Burma, where he served throughout that campaign with Ted Maslen-Jones, Jack Jones, Jack Hallam and Vic Foster.

In mid-September 1944 Arthur was one of eleven soldiers who volunteered to be trained locally by the Flight as observers.

Immediately after the end of the war in the Far East he went to Malaya with part of the Squadron, and then on to Java & Sumatra.

Arthur was an active member of the Association from very early on, and in February 1950 was mentioned in our first ever newsletter as having attended that year's reunion.

At the Squadron's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 2003 he was invited to address the Officers and soldiers of the modern 656 Squadron Army Air Corps, speaking of his experiences during the war.

He will be sadly missed by his contemporaries and all Association members who have met him.

58 Years on - the wreckage of WZ696 is discovered (again)

By Mark Meaton

(With thanks to Laurence Bean, ex-RAF, resident in Penang, Malaysia)

In early November 2016, workmen were clearing an area of jungle roughly twenty miles North-West of Kota Tinggi, Malaysia, in preparation for crop planting, when they discovered the rusting remains of a light aircraft.

A local Malay with an interest in aviation history took some photographs of the wreckage, and sent them to his friend Laurence Bean in Penang, who carried out some initial research online, and provisionally identified the remains as those of an Auster flown by 12 Independent Liaison Flight, 656 Squadron AAC, and lost in the area in 1958.



Oil cooler

Laurence then contacted the Association, and from our records it was soon clear that only one aircraft had come down in that area, and that the photographs were indeed of an Auster.

Some of the photos showed the identification plates attached to the engine block and fuselage, which helped confirm the aircraft's identity.



Engine ID plates



Other ID plates

Auster Mark 9 WZ696 had been written off on Thursday 4th September 1958 in that area, thankfully without serious injury to either of the crew, Captain Richard Colin ("Dickie") Jones WORC R/GPR, 38 (pilot) and Singapore-born Lt Mike Gibson, 24, 1/10 Gurkhas.

The crew were rescued after spending two nights in the jungle, but the aircraft was left there, where it remained hidden for almost 30 years until a patrol of New Zealand Infantry chanced upon it while on exercise in 1987. Once they had moved on, WZ696 was left once again for almost another 30 years until the recent rediscovery.



A good view of the upside-down engine, showing the engine ID plates



Another view of the engine



339140 Capt "Dickie" Jones is pictured here in April 1955, having just completed his flying training with 106 Light Liaison Course at Middle Wallop.

He had previously served with E, B and A Squadrons GPR from early 1945 onwards, flying the Horsa, Hadrian and Hamilcar.

Five other GPR pilots passed out with Capt Jones on his LL course, including the late Col Mike Badger DFC (then also a Captain), a past member of the Association.

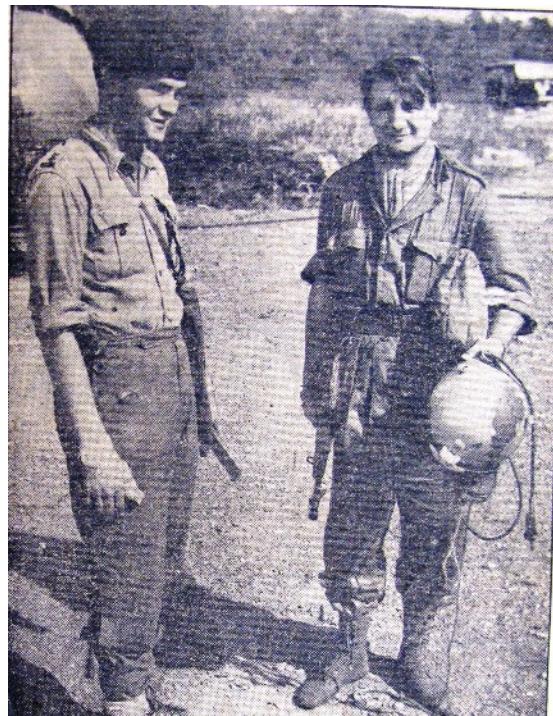
The following account of the accident comes from the crew's own words, as reported in the Flight scrapbook, and an article in the Singapore Sunday Times on Sunday 7th September 1958.

The aircraft had taken off on Thursday 4th September from Noble Field, Kuala Lumpur to carry out a supply drop to a 1/10 Gurkha patrol. At 1530 they were some 22 miles North-West of Kota Tinggi, having successfully dropped their first load.

The air was turbulent, and as they tried to climb out after the drop the aircraft was instead dragged downwards into the trees - one wing was torn off, and Capt Jones reported that:

"Something dealt me an enormous clout on the back of the head. My helmet saved me."

The safety helmet was completely ruined, and probably saved his life.



Ironically, he was reported to have said some time before the accident that he declined to wear the newly-issued Mark 1 helmets, as "they were for sissies".

The crew are pictured here on Saturday 6th September, with Capt Jones (right) showing the damage to his helmet.

(Apologies for the poor quality of this picture as it has been scanned from an old newspaper cutting)

As soon as the aircraft came to rest on the jungle floor they could smell fuel, and then heard it pouring out of the tank. They scrambled to haul themselves through the shattered perspex of the canopy, and ran from the wreck, amazed to discover they had only suffered cuts and bruises, and that the aircraft had not caught fire.

They were equally surprised to stumble into an old terrorist camp, only ten yards from the crash. They estimated it was about six months old, and was deserted. It contained a natural pool of water, so they were able to wash, then light a fire, put up smoke and send up a couple of Verey lights (*it was the smoke from their fire that alarmed the pilot of the search plane which had arrived over the crash area - he thought it was the wreck of the Auster burning, and feared that the crew were still inside*).



Cabin heater intake pipes

When they looked in the second supply pack that they had not been able to drop, they discovered clothing, cigarettes and rum, so they helped themselves to all three, then recovered a survival pack from the wreck and a seat cushion.

They were then concerned to find that their only protection from terrorists was the Verey light pistol, because the barrels on both their rifles had been hopelessly bent in the crash.

They realised that they would have to spend the night in the jungle, as there was no hope of getting anyone to them that night, so they settled down, having made a basha.

The following morning, Friday 5th September, a helicopter appeared overhead, and four men from the RAF jungle rescue team parachuted down into the jungle, and were soon with them. The doctor in the team, Sqn/Ldr W Glen-Thomson, dressed their injuries.

Meanwhile, the poor Gurkha patrol, who had no doubt been looking forward to enjoying the fruits of their supply drop, had instead been forced to hack their way through the jungle to the accident site, arriving later on the Friday. They set about clearing a helicopter landing zone on a nearby hill, assisted by the RAF team, who were equipped with power saws.



The Propeller, still attached

By the Friday evening the landing zone was nearly ready, and an RAF helicopter pilot, Flt/Lt T.A. Bennett, decided to risk a landing. However, the zone was too small, and as he descended his rotor blades sliced through the upper branches of a tree. He withdrew, and the ground party carried on enlarging the clearing. They spent a second night in the jungle.

A second attempt was then made the following day, which was successful, and the aircrew and the rescue team were lifted out (plus a tortoise, which Capt Jones collected from the crash area as a present for his children).

After an egg & bacon breakfast at a Gurkha camp Capt Jones and Lt Gibson were taken to the British Military Hospital Alexandra for a medical examination, where they were found to be in good shape.

Capt Jones continued to fly, serving with 12 and 20 Flights, until he retired in August 1959.

We have no record of his life after this point; if anybody can help supply further information, please contact the Archivist.



WZ696 in Malaya in the late 1950's.

The pilot is the late Capt M.P.E. Legg DFC RA, of 1911 Flight, Singapore.

A summary history of WZ696

- 28.4.1955 Awaiting collection
- 6.5.1955 Delivered to 19 MU St Athan
- 25.7.1955 Transferred to 47 MU Sealand for Far East Air Force
- 9.10.1955 Arrived at MBFK Seletar
- 14.3.1956 Prepared for issue: to 656 Sqn for 1902 Flt
- 24.4.1956 Forced landing in Cameron Highlands golf course due to weather suddenly deteriorating. Pilot Capt W.T. Monaghan RA.
Aircraft dismantled & taken back to IPOH by road and repaired in unit.
- 4.1957 WZ696 and 717 were both involved in incidents. In both cases the port outer wheel bearings collapsed.
- 5.1957 On 17 May all ac were grounded for inspection of the tailplane main spar at the elevator centre hinge bracket.
WZ717, WZ674 and WZ696 were found to have cracked spars.
New tailplanes were fitted on 27 May.
- 7.1957 Major service
- 4.9.1958 Flying accident : ac lost height during supply drop in turbulent air and crashed in gully 20m NW of Kota Tinggi.
- 9.9.1958 Aircraft struck off charge.



I MET AN OLD FRIEND!

by Barry Challinor (S/Sgt Air Gunner-ret'd)

I used to crew the Lynx when I was an Air Gunner and Helicopter weapons instructor in the Army Air Corps in the 1980's and I was the senior Air Gunner in 656 Squadron at Netheravon in 1987. I left the Army in September of that year after 22 years service.

I settled down into civilian life and put the military life, enjoyable that it was, behind me. That was until I read a bit in Hawkeye that a Lynx was featured in a holiday park as 42nd in the Sunday Times list of 50 best holiday cottages in Britain. This got my attention and so I looked up the details on the internet. At the time I did not know the tail number of the aircraft until I enlarged a photograph on the campsite website – XZ676. I thought the number rang a bell inside the old brainbox.

Finding my old logbooks and blowing off the dust, I scanned the pages until I found what I was looking for..... one of my last flights was on 12th June 1987 in XZ 676. I was the crewman for my OC at that time, Major Simkins. We completed just over an hours flight training around Salisbury Plain. Soon after this, due to a pre-release course, I only completed a further three Lynx training flights before retiring in the September after 22 years undetected crime!



My daughter was visiting at the time I found this information, I showed both my wife and daughter the details from the website and details from my logbooks, then forgot all about it.

Maybe a couple of weeks later, again my daughter was visiting and I mentioned XZ 676 again and that it would be great to see the old girl again. At this both my daughter and wife told me the news. They, along with my son, had already booked XZ 676 for a Fathers Day present. Wow what a big surprise that was!

The day arrived to book into the campsite on ‘Fathers Day’. At this the heavens opened and didn’t stop until we booked out the next day. As you can see from the attached photographs even though it was raining it was good to see XZ 676 again.

When I last flew in her she didn’t have a microwave oven, a fridge, sink and a double bed fitted. Mind you that would have been a great way on exercise and detachments.

Due to the concentrated rainfall we did have a couple of water leaks during our time. It wouldn’t be a Lynx without them. But we still had a reunion that we won’t forget for a long time. By the way my wife loved the experience, saying this is what it must have been like when you were away on all those exercises. Err! I don’t think so.

The aircraft has been retired like me, and converted to a very high standard into overnight accommodation on a touring caravan site outside of Blackpool.

As to the interior of the ‘hotel’ I have attached three photos that were taken by ‘her who should be obeyed’.

A big thank you to Clare and Kevin for organising an awesome Fathers Day gift.

Photographs

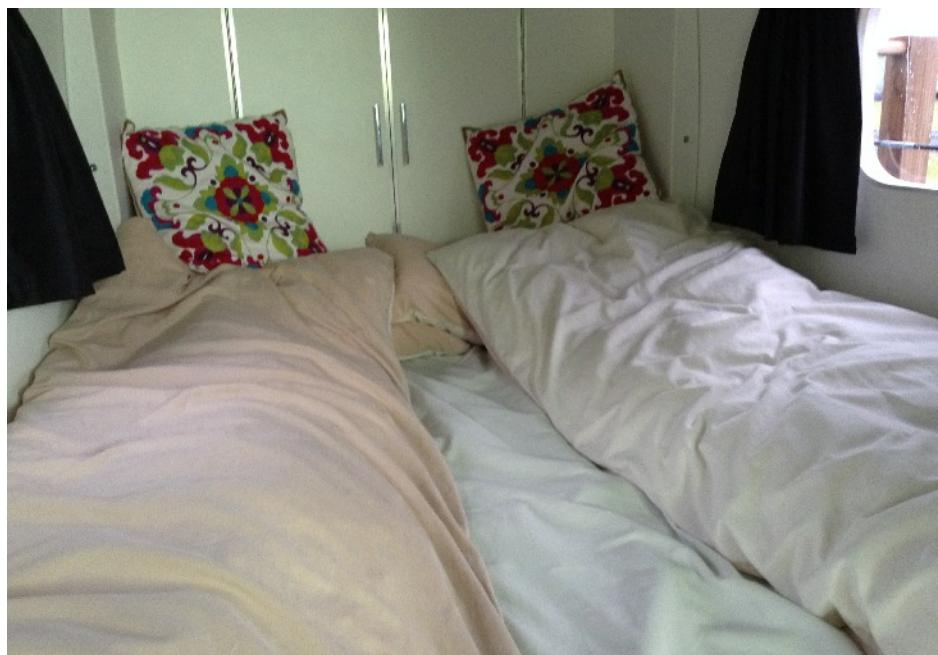
- 1) Rear cabin space; old original cargo/pax area, with our bed made up, very comfortable. A small wardrobe to the rear (used to store the very wet/smelly search dogs and infantry here when in Northern Ireland)
- 2) Looking out through the portside cargo door, onto the attached patio, although we did not use the patio, owing to the monsoon weather outside at the time. To the left of the door can be seen the sink (with running hot and cold water), not shown here, to the left of the sink was the small kitchen cooker with storage underneath. COMMENT: do not touch yellow and black handles unless in an emergency – 1 Para officer in his haste to get out in Northern Ireland did this, luckily low level. Managed to recover the door without damage to door or aircraft - grrrrr.
- 3) Yours truly studying my navel, not sleeping as it looks. You may be able to just see a cabin door bite on my head!!! This was owing to the outside patio being the same level as the inside of the floor area. Not used to this, I always climbed up in the past. Eventually had three cabin door bites within 24 hours. In the photo I was in fact reading the aircraft details/history and campsite rules (No night flying allowed - No ground runs after 2200 hrs. – Bottle to throttle rules.) There was a Microwave to the left and the TV behind me. The bottle of wine and chocolates were a gift from our son and daughter to greet us on arrival. Below that and behind me is a small fridge. To my right was a cupboard for kitchen utensils and extra storage space (24 hour ration packs etc.)
- 4) Number four is the comfortable sofa, opposite the portside cargo door (photo two) behind this was the starboard cargo door, only used in an emergency or as a fire exit.

Further information on XZ 676 as follows:

Built of course by Westland Helicopters in 1982 construction/serial number 241 (the same year I completed my Lynx conversion from the bombproof Scout) Built as a Mk 1 Lynx AH 1 (Army Helicopter 1) Served with 656 Squadron AAC part of 7 Regiment Army Air Corps, based at Netheravon. Sometime later XZ 676 was converted to a Mk 7 (after my time) with more powerful engines, gearbox/transmission and tail rotor

that turned in the opposite direction making it more efficient. It later became part of 671 Squadron Army Air Corps at the School of Aviation at Middle Wallop.

I believe (someone may correct me on this) XZ 676 then went on to serve with 653 Squadron AAC (3 Regiment Army Air Corps at RAF Wattisham) Eventually/sadly ended up for sale, believe it or not, on Ebay in February 2015 at a knock down price of £24,000. She was bought by the present owners of Ream Hills Caravan Park, as well as a number of other Lynx for future conversion. Hopefully to the same standard as XZ 676 which was converted by a local company in Blackpool.



1) The bed made up



2) Looking out port side



3) Microwave and cooker



4) Comfortable sofa opposite port door



MY MEMORIES OF XZ676

By Andrew Simkins

Barry Challinor's fascinating article about re-visiting Lynx, XZ 676 (pity it wasn't 656!) prompted me to check my Flying Log Book.

Log books are excellent reference material as they record the date, place, crew and passengers, aircraft and sortie details. They are about as accurate as you would wish, but never totally fallible. My one regret is that I didn't write in more detail, like when I had an engine failure at night over the English Channel! My entries, with the passage of time, can seem rather bland.

So I turned to my Log Book and looked up XZ 676, and found a treasure trove. The aircraft was the first aircraft I flew on taking over command of 656 Squadron AAC and was also my last sortie; quite an achievement. My first sortie was with the Squadron QHI, Richard Gilderson, when we undertook an Area Familiarisation on 3rd March 1987. I had previously served in Northern Ireland and Germany, so Salisbury Plain was relatively new to me. It was to become my backyard. Later that day I flew the aircraft again on a night training sortie; the squadron obviously wanted to test the new OC!

In between I flew 676 on various sorties including two trips to Scotland. One of these trips was a large exercise where we provided the umpire support. It involved flying around the Western Isles and across the sea at low level, to avoid the fast jets and other exercise rotary traffic.

676 was also my aircraft on the annual Brigade exercise to Denmark. One memory was when the Crown Prince of Denmark visited the exercise and I allocated the Squadron QHI to fly him and his entourage. I was waiting at the Squadron location to meet the Prince half way round his tour when I received a radio message from the Brigade Commander to say that I was to be at the main reception "now". I stripped the aircraft of its camouflage, started it up and flew it at maximum thrust for the 20 mile transit, arriving just in time as the Royal party arrived to meet the receiving party. I even remembered my Light Blue Beret and broad smile!

My last sortie was exactly 2 years later when I flew the aircraft on an exercise called "Ex Burmese Bridge". Amazing, but sadly I have no further knowledge. It is a shame as I would now love to know more details of an exercise that was a 'bridge' to our historic roots. Perhaps someone can enlighten me?

* * * * *

Flying Log Book Memories

by John Bennett

Following from what Andrew said in the previous item brought to mind my experiences. My first posting after trade training at Wallop in 1958, was to 654 in Hildesheim. As a technician we were informed we could be called upon to fly on air tests or exercises. They told us we 'may' qualify for flying pay and issued with an Aircrew Flying Log book!! I maintained it for all my service and afterwards, recording all my airtime regardless of military or civilian.

On 21 August 1999 I flew out of Heathrow aboard Concorde G-BOAA bound for New York. I had the trusty log book with me and asked the stewardess if she would pass it to the Captain and have him sign it for me please. When she returned it I found all the crew had signed it!

The return flight was in cattle class on a 747, G-BBPU. I again asked for the Captain to sign the logbook and was very surprised and pleased when the stewardess returned. She told me the Captain had invited me to join him in the cockpit. This was the icing on the cake for my trip, as I sat in the jump seat right through until we landed back at Heathrow.

It was because the Captain saw the Concorde's crew signatures that was the key to this very memorable experience. So my log book as well as bringing back memorable times with 656 could also open (cabin) doors !

(I never did get flying pay!!)

Mission Aviation Fellowship

by Roger Mitchell

Freight trains did not exist until the 1950's and 60's until Rock and Roll and the Americans started singing about them. Before then they were just goods trains!

Do you remember Esso Blue Paraffin? Paraffin was a by-product of the oil industry and it was so cheap they almost gave it away, until the advent of the gas turbine engine for aircraft use, when it became Avtur and the price went up.

Balsa wood was also very cheap and was generally available for model aircraft, until it was used as an insulating material for tankers! We live in a world that is changing all the time, but some things do not change, they just develop.

Whilst serving with 656 in Malaya I was sent on a Church House Course. If there were any courses going I seemed to be the one that was sent on them, whether they thought I needed a holiday or to keep me out of the away for a time I have no way of knowing.

This course was not a life changing experience as I do not remember most of it. What I do remember is that a lady came to talk to us from the Mission Aviation Fellowship. This is a Christian Charity that fly humanitarian aid to far flung parts of the earth, operating from jungle airstrips, beaches and roads on a sort of make do and mend basis.

I thought to myself this is exactly what we were doing in the Army Air Corps, and thought I might join them when I left the services, but it was not to be.

50 years on it still requires aircrew and ground crew but has of course moved on with its technical operations. It still operates from jungle airstrips and roads and continues to take humanitarian aid to parts of the third world. If you feel you would like to help please call them and they will be glad to talk to you.

Mission Aviation Fellowship, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone CT20 2TN
Phone: 0845-8509505 or see the web page: <https://www.maf.org/>

Helicopter and Auster flying in the Shetland Islands.

By Peter Cole.

(Peter transferred from the RAMC to carry out his flying training at Middle Wallop in the 1970's, flew Sioux with the Army, and then switched to helicopters servicing the North Sea oil rigs in the 1980's. He currently owns and flies two Austers, the Mark 5 G-AJUE described here, and an ex-military Mark 1 LB367, both based near Melksham.)



The most northerly point in the United Kingdom is a small rocky outcrop in the North Sea called the 'Out Stack', situated half a mile to the north of the Muckle Flugga lighthouse on the Shetland Island of Unst. A few miles to the south east of Muckle Flugga is the anchorage and community of Baltasound, on the south side of which is an airfield with a single, sealed 2000ft runway aligned 12/30.

It was here that I found myself based during the 1980's flying the Sikorsky S.61N helicopter (the civilian version of a Sea King) for Bristow Helicopters, supporting the Chevron operated Ninian Oil Field located in the East Shetland Basin, some 80 nautical miles north east of Unst.

The airfield, built by the Royal Engineers in 1968, was home to three S.61s, hangars, engineering facilities, transportation and crew accommodation. Passengers for the three Ninian platforms were flown north from Aberdeen to Unst by Brymon Airways in two de-Havilland Canada Dash 7 aircraft, then transferred to the S.61s for transit offshore.



At latitude 60 degrees 45 minutes North the Island of Unst is only 345 nautical miles below the arctic circle, but due to the effect of the gulf-stream is the warmest place in the world for its latitude. This is a relative term, as it can be pretty chilly and windy in Shetland, even in summer.



UNST - Apron

The S.61N, with a maximum all up weight of 20,500 lbs was a superb aircraft, and ideally suited to North Sea offshore operations. It had full IFR capability and could carry up to 24 passengers plus a crew of 3, and in winter, with engine ice shields fitted it could fly in moderate icing conditions.

It had generous operating limits, and flights offshore only normally stopped when the wind exceeded 60 knots, or the sea state reached a significant wave height of 7 metres, although we could, if necessary, operate in wind speeds of 75 knots or greater, subject to being able to safely engage the rotors. The average wind speed at Unst was about 17 knots, however during one winter we did experience a low pressure system of 916 millibars and winds in excess of 150 knots. During the passage of this 'low' the anemometer at the Muckle Flugga lighthouse failed at its maximum reading, the geodetic radar domes at RAF Saxa Vord were demolished, and two bird watchers sleeping in the RSPB hut on the Hermaness Nature Reserve lost their lives when the hut collapsed and they were blown over cliffs at Burra Firth.

Bristow pilots and engineers were in the main British ex service personnel, but with many overseas operations the Bristow workforce was correspondingly diverse. In the early days of northern North Sea operations the Sumburgh base had a large fleet of S.61N and Puma 330J helicopters, and pilots from 14 different nationalities could be found in the crew room at times. There were also three Bell 212 helicopters based offshore in the Brent Field, and one summer they

were relocated to Unst, the crews occupying the local Baltasound Hotel (known to all as 'Balty Towers').

It was here during an evening's get-together in the bar that the 212 Chief Pilot, Paul Gliddon asked "Does anybody want to buy an Auster?"

Paul already owned a Tiger Moth and a Hornet Moth, and had discovered an Auster 5 J1 Autocrat languishing in a hangar at Ripe near Lewes, so had bought it. He concluded that two aircraft were really enough, and decided to sell the non de-Havilland type.

Three of us present in the bar expressed a vague interest, but by the cold light of dawn the other two had started back-peddling furiously. The price was agreeable, so without seeing the aircraft or knowing anything about Austers I suddenly now owned one.



G-AJUE keeping cool with Big Brother!

Over the next two months Paul and his wife Elisabeth prepared the Auster and flew it via Yorkshire, Aberdeenshire and Sutherland to Orkney, then across the 80 nm of North Sea up to Unst. Paul had access to life jackets, a dinghy and survival equipment and also immersion suits, and there was the added comfort of a Company operated S.61N Search & Rescue coastguard unit based at Sumburgh being aware of his transit from Orkney.

All of this activity had happened during my time off in Wiltshire, so on arriving back at Unst in July, the first thing I saw on disembarking from the Dash 7 was a yellow Auster nestling between two large red, white & blue helicopters.

G-AJUE C/N 2616 had been built in 1947 and from its documentation I discovered amongst its owners had been Channel Airways, and the Mayor & Aldermen of the County Borough of Southend-on-Sea, and it was one of a number of J1s operated by the Southend-on-Sea municipal flying school. With 9,500 airframe hours in its logbook it was probably one of the highest timed Austers in the world.

In the winter months the daylight hours at Unst were very short, and a considerable amount of night and IFR flying was required. But during the high summer months the Shetland days are correspondingly very long indeed. It gets light at 3am and dark at 11pm so when our work days were over there was ample time to carry out my conversion on to the Auster.



Take off - Eastings Beach, Unst

The only fixed wing aircraft that I had previously flown had been the Chipmunk during military flying training, and subsequently the Tiger Moth and Thruxton Jackaroo for glider towing. I found the Auster very enjoyable to fly - apart from the landings, which can be a challenge when your conversion is being conducted on an airfield with a single tarmac runway with constant cross winds, and not being helped by an instructor in fits of laughter during the attempted landings,

which often attracted an audience of my colleagues who congregated at the threshold with placards to score the arrival.

During one of our upper airwork sessions following some stalls and spins Paul said "how about some aerobatics?". I expressed reservations but he assured me that the aircraft was cleared for loops, barrel rolls and stall turns. It was fitted with aerobatic seats with full harness and also had an accelerometer, so we spent the next 30 minutes rolling and looping over Baltasound. I found the Auster a delightful aircraft to spin, with predictable handling on entry and recovery.

There was a never ending queue of people from Bristow, Brymon or Airwork wanting to go for a ride, and it was amusing to now be able to sit and watch highly experienced ex-C130 Hercules - now Dash 7 drivers - go bouncing down the runway during their attempts at a landing.

On the east coast of Unst there was a nice beach of firm sand aligned north/south giving a reasonable landing area and this surface was rather more forgiving than the Baltasound runway, so we often operated from here at weekends.

The beach was bisected by a rocky outcrop at its midpoint and therefore required care when landing in a southerly direction. The best result could be achieved by flying a curving approach over the ancient remains of a church and graveyard touching down on an X marked in the sand, which then gave an adequate stopping distance before the rocks.

As summer drew to a close the climatic conditions began to change and on days when the wind speed exceeded 30 knots and was aligned with runway 30 we would, on occasion, carry out an exercise that exploited the Auster's excellent low speed flying capability. After take-off the aircraft was climbed on runway heading then on passing the upwind end of the runway full flap would be lowered and the aircraft's heading maintained into wind.

By carefully reducing the airspeed to a safe margin above its 28mph stall speed it was possible to achieve a zero ground speed, or in effect, a hover. Then by further reducing the power the aircraft could be made to gently drift backwards down the runway centre line, arriving at a position on finals where a landing could be executed back to the threshold. Flying backwards is a regular handling exercise practiced in helicopters, and thanks to its very low stalling speed the Auster is one of the few light aircraft capable of this interesting manoeuvre, given suitable wind conditions.

It eventually came time to move the aircraft South, near to my home in Wiltshire, where the aircraft remains to this day on a farm strip near Melksham. In the years that followed I have spent many happy hours flying JUE but out of respect to its age no longer turn it upside down, although I still enjoy the occasional spin.

My Auster flying has declined in recent years as I have been working in Australia and the Solomon Islands, but I am now approaching my 'sell by date' and can soon look forward to a less intensive form of aviation. Paul Gliddon, the original owner, has also semi-retired and I hope to be able to re-introduce him to JUE following completion of the transfer process to an LAA permit to fly.



('Red' Meaton & Peter Cole flying G-BBHL on Red's last offshore flight prior to returning to fixed wing instruction at Middle Wallop).

Editor's note: 'Red' Meaton was a well known pilot and QFI in 656 in his service days. He was one of Peter's Bristow Helicopter colleagues who enjoyed flying G-AJUE in Unst, and now more than 30 years on, our archivist, Mark Meaton has also accumulated a grand total of two hours 'flying time' in it.

656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REUNION 2017 - FRIDAY 2 JUNE

Name, in full. _____

Address: _____

Tel: _____ Email: _____

ASSOCIATION OPEN DAY, WATTISHAM AIRFIELD 11:00 - 16:00 hrs

I wish to attend only the Visit to the Open Day at a cost of £5.00 per person

Names of additional guests: _____

PHOTO ID will be required for all attendees at all times

ASSOCIATION REUNION DINNER - 19.00 Hrs

I wish to attend only the Officers' Mess Dinner at a cost of £25.00 per person

OR both Open Day visit + dinner combined cost of £30.00 per person

Raffle donations welcome

Names of additional guests: _____

I/we will have the following dietary requirements:

COACH - PREMIER INN TO WATTISHAM AND RETURN. (18.00 - 23.00 hr)

I wish to use the Coach service to Wattisham and return. Cost £6 per person

Names of additional guests: _____

AGM - SATURDAY 3rd JUNE (09.00 - 10.00) at Premier Inn, Ipswich North

Names of attendees _____
(All welcome, visitors may not vote!!)

Complete the form overleaf, detach and post with your payment

656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REUNION 2017
VISIT TO SQUADRON BASE, WATTISHAM
FRIDAY 2nd JUNE

EVENT	Numbers attending	COST pp	TOTAL
Open Day Only		£5.00	
Dinner only		£25.00	
Open Day + Dinner		£30.00	
Coach		£6.00	
Grand Total	XXXXXX	XXXXXX	

Cheques should be made payable to: '**656 Squadron Association**'

Or by Bank online payment to:

NatWest, Account: '656 Squadron Association'
Sort Code: 60-12-34 Account Number: 51137135.
Payment reference: Your Surname.

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17 Somerset Drive
WESTBURY
Wiltshire BA13 3XA

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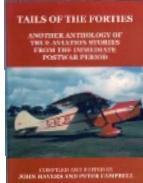
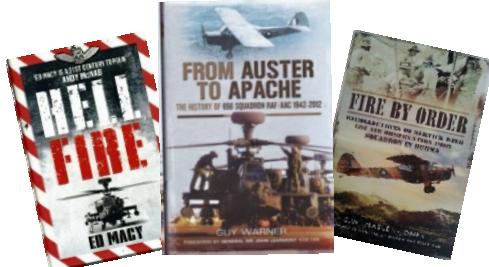
Webmaster: **Position vacant**

Can you fill any of the vacant committee seats?
See page 9 in the Journal

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 Prices quoted do not include postage.***

656 Lt Ac Squadron Newsletter

June - December 1957

Submitted by Donald Smith

This is a transcript of the original Squadron Newsletter, signed off by Lt.Col BB Storey RA. Commanding Officer

It was typed on foolscap paper with a mechanical typewriter, and converted into printable text.

Editor's note:

During the war and for many years afterwards, Commanding Officers of all Regiments and units were required to produce a sitrep of the units' activities. Originally this was done on a monthly basis and later downgraded to bi-annual. Unfortunately this reporting was phased out completely so a great deal of history is now lost.

It seems appropriate that in the Diamond Jubilee year of the Army Air Corps we are publishing the sitrep for July - December 1957 which shows the work involved in moving control from R.A.F. To Army. The Squadron at that time was spread over Malaya engaged in the removal of Chinese Communist Terrorists (CTs)

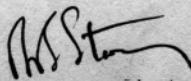
656 LIGHT AIRCRAFT SQUADRON, ARMY AIR CORPS

NEWSLETTER

for the

period

JULY - DECEMBER, 1957


(BB Storey)
Lieutenant Colonel RA
Commanding 656 Lt Ac Squadron, Army Air Corps

Typed on footscap.
Contributed
by
Donald Smith,

Copyright 656 Squadron Association and individual authors © 2014

OPERATIONS

General

The advent of Merdeka (Independence of Malaya) on 31st Aug and the Tengku's Merdeka Day Surrender Offer has resulted in a higher proportion of surrenders to kills and captured than before.

This has entailed intensification of the propaganda war by the dropping of leaflets. Since Merdeka 28½ M leaflets have been dropped. However this still only represents 4% of the total flying.

An all out effort to finish the emergency by 31st Aug 59, the date set by the Tengku, has also resulted in an intensification of effort in Visual Recce, Contact Recce and supply dropping for the Infantry and Police, the marking of Air Strikes and LZs for the Royal Air Force and DZs for 22 SAS Regt, Air Observation for 48 Fd Regt, 1st Singapore Regt RA and for the Royal Commonwealth Navies and the carrying of a few essential passengers.

Thus despite the fact that the emergency is coming to an end, the Sqn effort and contribution to operations is as high as ever it has been and it is still necessary to economise flying hours to keep pilots down to the obligatory 50 hours per month.

A synopsis of some of the more interesting operations are detailed below:

2 Recce/Liaison Flt

The greatest successes of the flt were achieved in special operations details of which cannot be released. Security restrictions account for many blanks in this newsletter.

In Oct tpts were marked for Lincolns and Venoms and tpts observed for 95Bty in the Chikus F.R. area as a part as Op Chieftain. LZs were also reced for the lifting in of the follow-up troops.

The fire plan was successful but the results were disappointing due to the flooded state of the ground.

The DCM of the Langkap Awr is reported to have said, as a result of this operation, that he disliked Auster aircraft continually searching his area.

The flt was hard hit by aircraft unserviceability due to fuel aeration and we wish to record their appreciation of the staunch manner in which officers of the Brigade continued to patronise them.

7 Recce/Liaison Flt

Two CT camps were found near the Thai-border which were sequently reported to contain 80 and 60 CTs respectively. They were attacked by the Police Field Force.

Op 'Eagle Swoop also near the Thai border, Esetong salient area, entailed a detachment at Kroh for a fortnight. Exellent co-operation was achieved with 2 RAR.

In Op Seagull Wax the CTs had 3ft of overhead cover and withstood a Lincoln attack and an arty Concentration of 2 Fd Btys, 48 Fd Regt. Unfortunately the arty fire was put down at last light so it could not be corrected.

In Op Greenland 2 pilots dropped 900,000 leaflets in one day.

11 Recce/Liaison Flt

On a report of smoke seen by a pilot an air strike of 12 Venoms was laid on. A patrol of the 2/7 GR, following up, reported 2 CT camps recently vacated.

Within 55 mins of an attempt on the life of an estate manager in Pengerang, a tgt was marked for an air strike by 12 Venoms. Later fire from HMNZS Royalist was directed onto the same area.

In search and rescue operations a Venom, from which the pilot had bailed out, was found in 30 mins from take off. The Canberras which crashed tragically near Pontian Kochil were also found. The find of a S.Y.C. yacht completes the record of these operations.

At one stage of the operations in Sep a large number of patrols were supplied with 4775 lbs of stores involving 47 sorties.

Op Huckster started the flt on some extensive night operational flying. An area was illuminated for the whole of 3 consecutive nights by dropping a flare every 20 mins. On another occasion 2 kills by a S.W.B. ambush resulted from CTs being driven by Austers low flying by day and dropping flares by night over a period of four days. Battle simulators which have now come into use, would probably be still more effective. Illumination was also provided for the voice aircraft.

Two illicit brandy stills were found in Op Man Hunt, mounted as a result of a kidnapping.

14 Recce/Liaison Flt

An ambush selected from an air photo taken by the flt resulted in 5 kills by 2/10 GR.

Two kills and a surrender by 5 Malay in ambush positions resulted from the location of a CT party was eliminated. A large portion of Negri was therefore declared white.

A detachment at Segamat was maintained from October onwards in support of 26 Bde with excellent results. A considerable number of LZs were recced and Photographed for 5 Malay.

One of the main efforts in Nov and Dec was devoted to an attempt to locate CT ptys in the R. Rompin area which, through ill luck was largely unsuccessful.

The Flt being located with Div HQ has a heavier passenger commitment than the others

SHQ Flight

Most of the flying was in support of 22 SAS Regt, 6 and 7 Malay Regts and the Police in the area of Sekinchang in visual recce, supply dropping and air observation for 48 Fd Regt and in the marking of tgts for air strikes. Search and rescue operations achieved a success in finding a Veltetta which crashed in a bowl of the hills 200 ft below cloud base.

Much effort was devoted to the development, training and operation of special equipment, details of which cannot be released and the flt provided the aircraft and most of the personnel for the Borneo detachment.

The Borneo Detachment - Ex Tiger Leg

The object of the detachment of two aircraft at Sandakan, N Borneo 10 Nov to 4 Dec was to support two Coys of SWBs and Police in showing the flag, in anti-smuggling and anti-pirate patrols and in jungle training. The det was commanded by the Sqn 2nd in Comd.

The a/c were transported by Bristol Freighters of the RNZAF from Changi; wings off and olio legs tied in and held by a stout jury strut. Two vehicles and stores went by LST.

No startling operational successes were achieved which was to be expected but the high intensity of flying and splendid liaison merited the praise of all.

The aircraft behaved admirably, as did the troops, who, like the officers, were generously entertained by the local residents. All left Borneo with a fervent wish to return.

FORMATION OF THE ARMY AIR CORPS

This was regrettably preceded by the disbandment of the Glider Pilot Regt for which a parade had been carefully planned. This had to be cancelled at the last minute because of an unfortunate accident to a Veltetta aircraft

which required an all out effort in search and rescue by Sqn HQ, and 2 Flt. The crashed Valetta was found by the Sqn.

The transference from RAF to Army command on 1st Sept went very smoothly. The Royal Air Force as usual helped enormously with their advice, and practical assistance. We can see no insuperable difficulties, either, in the change over from RAF to REME servicing. There is an ample hand-over period for each man and the REME artizans who have arrived have impressed all with their enthusiasm, skill and friendly co-operation.

The Adjutant is extending his tour to complete the run down of the RAF personnel. Being at the end of the pipe-line the first REME personnel did not arrive until Nov. It is anticipated that the hand over will take place about 1st June. It is hoped and expected that the senior RAF Technicians will however remain in an advisory capacity until some considerable time after this date.

Apart from sign painting the main onus of the changeover has fallen on the aircraft equipment accounting staff. We have taken over the RAF method of accounting for aircraft stores as was done in the equipment section at RAF Kuala Lumpur. A staff of gunners, ordnance and RAF are still working on the new ledgers. The Ordnance staff was most willingly provided by MP2, GHQ in advance of the new establishment.

There has been a certain amount of reluctance on the part of Comd Secretaries to settle debts which were strange to them but this has been ironed out in an amicable fashion.

There is only one serious disadvantage in the changeover. That is the establishment of REME aircraft mechanics in Sqn Lt Ac Workshops which is 4 compared to 16 on our old establishment. There is no need to stress the effect this reduction would have on our flying hours. The matter is at present in the hands of the War Office. It is assumed however that the establishment as received does not apply directly to this Sqn in so far as these key men are concerned whose strength is related, in direct proportion, to the number of aircraft and hours Flown.

On the operational side there has been very little real difference. We have requested a few minor alterations in flying training and the carrying of parachutes, through the RAF as before. Requests for authority to dispatch controversial objects from Auster a/c are being forwarded. through Army channels with the approval and backing of the RAF. Sqn HQ staff are now getting used to the new, inevitably complicated, channels for correspondence.

EQUIPMENT

Fuel Aeration

The question of fuel aeration in the Blackburn Bombardier engine is not wholly solved. There have been 9 failures resulting in forced landings (all successful) due to this cause in the 6 month period.

The booster pump modification which increased the pressure in the fuel inlet system by 5 lbs/sq in was introduced in Sept and was only partially successful. Subsequent experiments with transparent fuel pipes showed that there was a very high degree of aeration present which the booster pump reduced to nil less for inexplicable pockets of air which were occasionally released. At the same time the temp of the fuel filter was found to be over 60° under normal conditions. An additional modification has been produced by HQ 224 Gp and RAF Kuala Lumpur consisting of a heat barrier plate between the fuel filter and engine casing with an air cooler duct, which has reduced the temp of the fuel filter to around 33°. All aircraft are being modified in this way. So far there have been no cases of failure due to fuel aeration with this modification fitted.

Aircraft Shelters

In addition temporary wooden shelters are being constructed to keep the sun and rain off the aircraft, which have been kept outside. These shelters will also protect the fabric, perspex and airframe generally and thus increase the overall life of the aircraft. An ingenious but simple design on the anti-lever principle has cut out the necessity for a strengthened roof span. Each aircraft has its allotted bay like a stables.

Airframe

Five aircraft have been found to have developed cracks in the elevator droop mechanism in the mainplane and one aircraft had a failure of the elevator control linkage in the rear of the fuselage. These may have been due to the control locks being inadvertently left off, but they indicate that the Auster 9 requires more careful treatment than the 6 or 7.

Land/Air Warfare Progress deport

We welcome very much the progress Report from L/AW, and would like to 'stress the importance of a close liaison between L/AW War Office, AACC and Sqns/Flts throughout the world. The trend of development of future aircraft appears to revert to the lighter, less powerful types. In the Far East and the Middle East (compare 10

Indep IAA's newsletter) we need powerful, robust machines with plenty of endurance because of the climatic conditions, hard usage and greater distances involved. We feel that the Auster 9, excepting for the snags in the engine and airframe noted above, is more the type of aircraft we need than its less powerful, shorter range predecessor.

If we can overcome the snags in the Auster 9, and progress in this respect is not inconsiderable, we feel that it would be hard to beat it. Regarding the Skeeter XII, we have asked for two for trial purposes and in the mean time are keeping an open mind on the subject. It does however appear definite that its use for carrying a passenger/ observer in Malaya is very limited because of its short range.

Tgt etc Marking

The method we use for marking tgts, DZs and LZs does not appear to be generally known.

It consists of a light bomb rack mounted on the underside of the fuselage. It carries four flares coloured yellow. The release mechanism is worked by four switches electrically operated. A delay mechanism can be incorporated in the flare. The bomb rack and flares weigh 113 lbs but can easily be detached.

These are wholly effective. In addition to marking we carry them on night cross countries to facilitate forced landing. A method has also been evolved for lighting up an ambush area after contact.

Cable laying

Extensive trials were carried out with cable laying equipment from aircraft. The cable insulation became tacky due to climatic conditions and despite many attempts to remedy this fault the trials were unsuccessful. Since there is no real demand for this in Malaya the trials have been dropped.

Accidents and Incidents

(the result of fuel aeration)

There have been two cases of defective SU injector pumps and one case of a defective fuel injector nozzle. Leading-up of sparking plugs has been excessive and plug life is now fixed at 100 hrs.

There was a mysterious case of a failure of controls which resulted in a forced landing on a road. A very thorough Board of Enquiry failed to come to a definite conclusion. It can only be assumed that a bird hit the tailplane, jamming the elevators and subsequently fell free.

There have been no cases of pilot error accidents. The system of training new pilots in Malayan conditions, reported in previous newsletters, is bearing fruit.

VISITS AND INSPECTIONS

T.R.H. The Duchess of Gloucester and Prince William visited Sqn HQ for a brief interlude during Their tour of Malaya at the time of the Merdeka celebrations.

Lt General Sir A James H Cassels KBE CB DSO the Director of Operations visited Sqn HQ on 3 Oct 57.

Maj General RN Anderson CB CBE DSO., GOC 17 Gurkha Div/OCLF visited Sqn HC on 5 Nov 57.

Brig D Welsh DSO BRA. FARELF toured the Sqn in October.

Brig GE Peck DSO Deputy Comd 17 Gurkha Div/OCLF toured the Sqn during September.

The Annual Administrative Inspection of Sqn HQ was done by Col RJH Harding-Newman OBE Comd CMSD on 10 Dec.

Annual Administrative Inspections of the Flights were carried out by the Sqn Comdr and Sqn HQ staff between 5 Nov and 3 Dec. Thorough preparation was rewarded with good results.

PERSONNEL

The strength of officers and pilots as at 31 Dec 57 is shown in Appx 'B',

We have said goodbye to the following pilots:

Capt MA Kerrigan RA	Capt JMW Love RA
Capt IT Monaghan RA	Capt RK Burnand RA
Capt GCR Barefoot RIF	S/Sgt AA Mead RE
Capt PFG Allardyce RA	Flt Lt KG Angell RAF

We welcome the following pilots:

Capt JH Aylward RA	Lt M Somerton-Raynor RPC
Capt DG Martin RA	Sgt WA Patrick PARA
Capt KE Bush RA	

Inter flt transfers and changes of comd have taken place as follows:
Lt Col Storey took over comd from Major Wheeler in June. This was not reported in our last newsletter.

Maj Wheeler deserves special mention. He has served in the Sqn for 5½ years and commanded it twice; July 52 a year and again in Jan 56 for 18 months. Before that he commanded 14 Flt. He continues to soldier on as second in command.

Capt Badger ex 7 and 14 Flts, took over command of 11 Flt from Capt Taylor in Nov

The Adjutant, Flt.Lt Bance, took over all remaining administrative duties from Capt Oldershaw who could thus devote his attention to Q and Ord (aircraft spares).

Capt Southall became Sqn qFI vice Flt.Lt Angell in Nov; and IO vice Capt Simmons in Dec.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

The following are to be truly congratulated on their awards which have been gazetted since publication of our last newsletter.

Distinguished Flying Cross: Captain J.E. Nunn RA formerly HQ Flt.

Mentioned in Dispatches

Captain P.K. Myers RAC 11 Recce/Liaison Flt

Sgt A Mills-Brown RAF 2 Recce/Liaison Flt

Sgt F Inman RA 7 Recce/Liaison Flt

Sgt B.A Horsey RA 11 Recce/Liaison Fit

SPORT

The outstanding sportsman in the past six months has been Sgt Budden who has been running consistently well. He won the SELANGOR open mile for the second year in succession in the record time of 4 mins 28.6 secs. He also distinguished himself in the MERDEKA Games when he ran second in the mile, finishing in 4 mins 26.0 secs which broke the previous record by 1.2 secs.

In DECEMBER various stalwarts were most disappointed on being knocked out of the 17 Gurkha Div/OCLF Inter Unit hockey championship. A carrot in the shape of a trip to HONG KONG for the finals had been dangled in front of our noses, but unfortunately the KDG ate our carrot in the first ten minutes of the semi-final.

We have been unable to get together a Squadron cricket or rugby team but several members of the Squadron, notably from 2 Flight have been playing for States.

The "WASP" ran second once. It has run several times since then, but not very fast and has now been posted to 48 Fd Regt.

All the flights run their own sports teams and compete in the local leagues and competitions. The greatest success in this field was probably experienced by 14 Fit's soccer team, which won the Squadron competition and went on to win 17 Gurkha Div six a side soccer Shield.

Appendix 'A' to 656 Squadron Newsletter

Total Flying Hours by Types July - Dec 57

Flight	SHQ	2	7	11	14	Total
Visual Recce	280.50	646.25	1068.40	799.20	438.25	3233.40
Air Search				14.50		14.50
Photo Recce	1.40	5.20	4.00	37.50	22.55	71.45
Communications	310.30	143.50	275.55	406.10	303.30	1439.55
Ferry	206.40	242.55	137.00	238.30	472.45	1297.50
Training	319.05	274.45	128.20	304.15	209.50	1236.15
AOP Shoots		42.45	34.05	32.05	3.40	112.35
Air Strikes	24.10	11.10	17.35	29.00	11.30	123.25
Supply Drops	22.35	102.35	50.25	111.25	42.50	329.50
Leaflets	58.10	67.00	69.00	70.30	109.30	374.10
Air Test	29.20	17.40	8.50	8.00	6.30	82.10
Total	1263.00	1554.25	1793.50	2081.55	1621.25	8309.05

Appendix 'B'
Pilots Flying Hours July - Dec

Sqn HQ		Period	Total
Lt.Col BB	Storey MC	125.00	1097
Maj LJ	Wheeler DFC	146.15	2560
Capt DF	Oldershaw	77.45	1110
Capt GH	Southall	150.30	2690
Capt LJ	Palmer	227.05	1054
Capt JI	Turner	201.45	678
Capt JP	Simmons	227.10	1298
2 Flight			
Capt HG	Crutchley	210.30	1565
Capt J	West	149.25	528
Capt J	Chandler	177.15	390
Capt AE	Bush	11.40	
Lt M	Somerton-Rayner	156.55	325
S/Sgt RW	Bowles	209.10	3790
Sgt WA	Patrick	136.25	347
7 Flight			
Maj FC	Russell	285.05	2346
Capt PJL	Dalley	313.30	727
Capt JS	Riggall	190.50	718
Capt DL	Emery	203.20	939
SSM GD	Jenkins DFM	262.35	5500
Sgt D	Howes	286.00	1277
11 Flight			
Capt WG	Badger	262.40	1832
Capt PK	Myers	273.40	1797
Capt WPE	Legg	289.55	1006
Capt JP	Ballenden	212.35	720
Capt DC	Crouch	226.10	780
Capt JA	Coles	274.10	1024
Capt PM	O'Conner	240.00	970
Sgt B	Horsey	300.00	1314
14 Flight			
Maj RC	Corfield	233.30	1640
Capt HW	Rissik	289.35	1298
Capt DS	Bell	303.10	1084
Capt DG	Martin	25.00	228
Capt JS	Aylward	70.00	272
Sgt A	Rolling	296.40	1210

Appendix 'C'
Serviceability Rate July - Dec '57

Month	SHQ	2	7	11	14	Average
July	75.9%	57.1%	83.3%	84.6%	80.7%	76.3%
August	67.5%	73.0%	71.5%	95.5%	87.5%	79.0%
September	81.6%	88.3%	80.8%	78.4%	56.5%	77.1%
October	76.8%	75.2%	88.8%	70.8%	64.0%	75.1%
November	78.5%	31.8%	88.6%	80.9%	92.6%	74.4%
December	83.4%	79.1%	73.9%	76.9%	85.2%	79.7%
Average	77.2%	64.4%*	81.1%	81.2%	77.7%	76.8%

* Low average due to high local climatic temperatures resulting in excessive number of failures due to fuel aeration.

Technical.

During the period the Lt Ac Workshops completed:-
 Minor = 26 Major = 6 Engine change = 16

Appendix 'D'
Miscellaneous Operational Data.

Total Air Strikes Marked
 Venoms = 54 Lincoln = 16

C.T. Camps Found

Month	SHQ	2	7	11	14
July	-	4	1	1	-
August	-	-	-	-	-
September	-	1	-	1	-
October	-	1	1	1	-
November	-	-	-	-	-
December	-	2	6	-	-
Total	-	8	6	3	-

Supply and Leaflet Drops

Leaflets 28,421,500 leaflets dropped during the period
Supplies 24,670 lbs of supplies were also dropped

656 LIGHT AIRCRAFT SQUADRON ARMY AIR CORPS

DISTRIBUTION LIST -

SQUADRON NEWSLETTER JULY - DEC 57

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General Headquarters FAR EAST LAND FORCES (RA BRANCH)

General Headquarters FAR EAST LAND FORCES (G Air)

17 Gurkha Div/OCLF

HQ 224 Gp RAF

Commandant Army Air Corps Centre. (2)

RAF Kuala Lumpur

651 Light Aircraft Squadron, AAC, middle wallop, Nr Stockbridge,
HANTS

652 Light Aircraft Squadron, AAC, BAOR 15

20 Indep Recce Flight, AAC. BAPO No. 1

3 Recce Flight, AAC., Datling, KENT

8 Indep Recce Flight, AAC., Idris BEPO No. 57

10 Indep Recce Flight, AAC., c/o CYPRUS District, CYPRUS

12 Liaison Flight, AAC., B.A.O.R. 34

13 Liaison Flight, AAC., Middle Wallop, HANTS

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G II Liaison, HQ Home Command R.A.F., white Waltham, Maidenhead, BERKS

DMT (Trg 6), Army HQ, Ottawa, ONTARIO, CANADA

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