

# **THE CHINTHE**



# **SUMMER 2017**

**656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION  
JOURNAL**

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## **PRESIDENT's FAREWELL REPORT**

By Andrew Simkins

When I look back, the first thing that comes to mind is meeting Nobby Clark in Netheravon when I was the Squadron's Officer Commanding in 1989. As I have recalled a number of times, he turned up in his Dinner Jacket mid morning after attending a Burma Star Dinner! From that initial meeting the present Association was formed.

At our subsequent Squadron Open Day, Nobby came with his wife Claire, and Bill Peers. Bill had hand-crafted a model steam train and track, which he set up on dispersal. The train was called the Burma Star with number 656 on the side. I had the pleasure of driving it with my young family on board. I wonder where that amazing train is now?

Nobby and Claire did all the initial work, including establishing the membership scheme, from their home in Langport. Thanks to them and the Burma generation the Association had a firm footing.

It was mainly thanks to John Bennett that I kept in touch with the Association while we were away on postings abroad. Derek Walker also kept me in the picture, and Jane and I attended reunions whenever possible.

We established the principle of attending the Squadron lines every other year. So we have been to Netheravon, Dishforth and Wattisham, and, who knows what future basing plans hold; we may be going nearly full circle in a few years time. Each of these places conjures up happy memories and images. At Dishforth we were able to fly in the Gazelle helicopter, and I recall Arthur Windscheffel being squeezed into the front seat. Talking of Arthur, I recall his lovely 100th Birthday Lunch in the Wattisham Mess, one cold December day, when he and Margaret were interviewed by the BBC and there was a four-ship Auster flypast.

At Netheravon we held the first of our Fly Ins, supported by the International Auster Club (IAC). This helped forge a close relationship with the IAC which remains to this day. We are delighted that they see the mutual benefit of combined events, where we can share our common heritage. Not all our Fly Ins have been a resounding success. At Popham, one year, the sun shone brightly but the wind was too strong. You can't win 'em all. But we did achieve a post war record when over seventy Austers flew into Middle Wallop on our 70th Anniversary.

When John Heyes came on the scene, he brought all his South East Asia knowledge and experience. He not only volunteered to be Honorary Secretary but also organised "airfield tours" of Malaysia, Borneo and Singapore. I had the

privilege of going on two (or was it three?) of these tours where I learnt so much about the Squadron's history. We paid our respect at the various cemeteries and retraced the Squadron's steps from Singapore up to Penang, taking in Borneo. We got two for the price of one with the Heyes, as Sylvia proved an outstanding administrator and communicator. Her BEM is testament to her abilities. She single-handedly developed and edited *The Chinthe*, which we all look forward to receiving. Such a supportive and generous couple are greatly missed.

Perhaps it was these trips abroad that sparked the idea of having our history recorded in a book, while at about the same time, along with John Bennett, I had organised a Middle Wallop Mess lunch for our Burma veterans. This helped me appreciate that we had a rich and unique history which needed recording while we had access to the whole span of personal memories. Our 70th Anniversary was approaching and I knew Guy Warner, the military author, from other book projects. The crafting of the book was to prove an amazing experience, as the memories of former officers commanding and members was collated. While Guy drafted and ordered the mass of paperwork, Mark Meaton assembled our archives, along with Derek Walker, while Ron Ward sorted through our treasure trove of photographs. From Auster to Apache is a remarkable book and a significant achievement for Guy Warner and the Association. I cannot recommend it highly enough. Copies are available from our shop!

At about the same time we started the tradition of marching at the National Act of Remembrance. It is a particular honour to be on parade at the Cenotaph in the presence of Her Majesty, The Queen. Although we are a small contingent, supplemented by members of the Squadron, we have great success with the BBC. When I queried why we had not been mentioned on our 70th Anniversary, I was politely informed that it was their aim to mention each contingent once every 7 to 10 years and we were achieving a mention at least every three years! Long may it continue!

We also have a close link with the National Memorial Arboretum. I have a personal link, as I was born close to Alrewas and my father used to volunteer there in its early days. Over the years we have dedicated trees in the RAF section, Burma section and most recently within the Army Air Corps enclave. We also have had a number of excellent reunions there, where the volunteer guides have helped explain the story of the memorials, and their relevance to our Association. The Arboretum is well worth a visit, as - wait for it - it continues to grow!

We have not stood still with getting our message out. John Bennett wrote, designed and managed our first website, with input from Ron Ward when John and Joyce moved to France. This was a very popular site which was used

extensively by researchers and members. We decided to upgrade the site, [www.656squadron.org](http://www.656squadron.org), last year. With significant effort by Mark Meaton we now have a shiny new site which reflects our efforts and vision as an Association. I am pleased that Bob Thorpe has now taken over responsibility for the site along with our Facebook page. Social Media is a growing area and not necessarily one that we all fully understand and use. I am therefore delighted that Bob has grabbed this and can develop it, in light of fast moving developments.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Ted Maslen-Jones MC DFC in my farewell report. Ted asked me to take over the role of President some 17 years ago. He was and remains, at 98 years old, a wise and thoughtful counsellor. Over the past 30 years, he has helped steer the Association through shrewd observations and advice.

I would also like to mention Ken Mattocks who was our treasurer until he moved to Australia, then there is Maurice Haynes and Will Harrell, for their significant contributions. While I realise that I may be guilty of forgetting someone's contribution, for which I will be forever repentant. Suffice it to say that it has been everyone's effort, in making the Association a success, that will remain with me. It is the loyalty of our members, and their wives and partners, that makes us unique. And the friendship and comradeship.

I am delighted that I have handed over my role to Piers Lewis. Piers was a most supportive and understanding Officer Commanding during the Association's 70th Anniversary and when we were finalising the book. He is just the man to take over the reins and bring fresh ideas to the table. I am also delighted that Terry Betchley is now our Honorary Secretary, as he has just the right skills to bring order to our affairs, while recognising the continued sterling efforts of Mark, Derek, Bob and John.

At the recent Wattisham Reunion Dinner, Jane and I were humbled by the generosity of the members. The silver Chintre is amazing. I love it. Thank you so much and especially to whoever organised the whole thing. Jane also really appreciated the bouquet of flowers which accompanied her in her car to Norfolk, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and eventually back to Norfolk! The "Alice rose" is now established in our Somerset garden and will be a constant reminder of times past. We thank you all most sincerely for your kindness, loyalty and friendship, and we look forward to seeing you at future events.

**OC's Report.**  
Maj Alex Harris AAC

I cannot believe that I am writing my fourth OC's report, which also sadly means that if my non-graduate mathematics is correct, that I am about to complete my time as OC 656 Sqn. It has been an absolute privilege to command a Squadron with such a strong ethos and so much history. My intention when I took over was that we would work and play as a Squadron Group; one in which we all felt valued members of the team whether we be ground crew, REME or aircrew. This may sound an obvious concept to some of you, but after a few structural changes during recent times, we lost this approach. I spoke with many of you at the Association reunion about the Chinthe link. The concept of being a Chinthe is very much alive with the current serving members and it not only reminds us of the history and service that went before us but also a banner under which we all go forward into the future. I am proud to be a Chinthe, as I know many of you are, and it is something that will stay with me long into the future (not least because I have a 6 inch one tattooed onto me!). It has struck me of late that the equipment and locations may change and the people move on but the ethos of 656 Squadron continues to thrive. The current Squadron members are stewards of the good name and reputation that you all fought to build and this is not something that we take lightly. I was heartened on my first meeting with Rear Admiral Jonathan Pentreath OBE (the new Commander of the Joint Helicopter Command (JHC)) to learn that he had been told that 656 Squadron had the highest morale of any unit within the Attack Helicopter Force; long may it continue.

After an extremely busy period away from home, moving from desert to arctic to the ocean, we found ourselves in a period of reasonable calm. The major exercise that we deployed on in the last phase was Exercise WESSEX STORM,



supporting 40Cdo Royal Marines. After spending a number of years flying to support the Special Forces and embarked on ships, this traditional land based exercise came at a good time. If you believed the banter heard from our sister 664 Squadron, you would think that 656 had forgotten how to deploy and operate in a land environment as we were too used to the bunk beds on HMS OCEAN! Nonsense! We deployed by land and air to Chivenor airfield in Devon where we established ourselves as part of the Joint Helicopter Force 2 (JHF-2) under the Commando Helicopter Force. We spent the first week and a half living under canvas in a semi-austere posture, simulating that we had just arrived ashore from shipping. It was during this phase that we trained and developed with Chinook, Wildcat and Merlin against a high threat provided by live SA6, SA8 and ZSU23/4. It was back to basics, flying at low level across



Bodmin Moor, hiding behind trees and trying to destroy our targets before they did the same to us. We relearnt the lessons that good map study and sound field-craft keep you safe. We conducted some large, mixed formation missions by day and then by night and I am pleased to say that Apache did not feature in the list of aircraft that the Spadeadam\* operators shot down. In true military fashion, the only day that it really rained was the day that we decided to take the obligatory JHF-2 photo although the only casualties were some shrunken berets.

After this period of collective training, we moved the whole Forward Operating Base (FOB) forward by land and air to Keevil airfield, North of Salisbury Plain, to conduct the next

phase. It was here that the warfighting started. The challenge of operating complex aircraft and equipment from under bashas was reinforced as we supported 40Cdo RM in their bid to liberate the people of Imber Village! In

contrast to recent operations, we had to fight our way in low level, against the same ADUs in order to deliver the Royal Marines to their target. It was here that the Apaches came into their own and quickly became a go/no-go requirement for every mission. Our Signallers proved too how well trained they are, coming to the aid of the RM signallers on more than one occasion to help them establish communications with Brigade HQ and the aircraft. They even managed to get a live feed of the Army vs Navy Rugby match onto the briefing screen in our Squadron HQ! The ground crew and REME also got a special mention from the FOB Commander for Best in Show; they were deemed to have the best camouflaged harbour area and the most effective layout. When the FOB came under attack from multiple gunmen, the soldiers of 656 demonstrated that they were soldiers first to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel, leading a counter attack and successfully repelling the attackers. Even the aircrew in rest managed to get off a couple of magazines of 5.56mm each although not until after they reoriented themselves to the right direction! All in all, it was a very successful exercise with a high tempo and a good deal of flying. 656 once again proved that they excel at everything they do.

The Squadron also hosted the biennial visit from the 656 Squadron Association. Held at Wattisham in the Squadron lines, the guests enjoyed an update on unit activity, aircraft capability briefs, a BBQ, and a visit to the simulator before closing with a four course dinner in the Officers' Mess. The current members were very proud to host our guests and were excited to show off our hardware. There was a real buzz around the hangar as young and old traded stories and we were even lucky enough to receive two Austers, which got more attention than the Apaches. The day was a great success and largely down to Captain Terry Musgrove's meticulous organisation. It was also an honour to host the President's last event before stepping down. Andrew, we thank you for your commitment to maintaining the link and all your hard work in organising such events.

\* Spadeadam - air range in Cumbria that specialises in Electronic Warfare. They have working Russian air defence vehicles that we can go up against.

Photo information:

*The bivis are fantastic. They actually fold down as small as the poncho and some poles. The aircrew have small individual ones and the ground crew have 2 man ones.*

*The stove is issued and new but is just a slight variation on the old one. The fuel is now a solid jelly petroleum and burns really hot. The pot is my own and is really just two saucepans that fit together to make a lid. It still fits in a webbing pouch and can do two boil in the bags at once!*

## **ANNUAL REUNION FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup> JUNE**

It is always a privilege and pleasure to return to the Squadron lines, and so it was on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> June for our Annual Reunion. We all gathered in the Squadron hangar (had they moved since our last visit two years ago? Yes, they had moved into an older hangar with less facilities. Army thinking defies logic!) and waited for the final members to make their way past the Guard Room. Given the heightened security state the guard staff did sterling work to ensure we were processed as quickly as possible. When we were all assembled the Officer Commanding, Major Alex Harris, gave us a fascinating insight to what the Squadron had been doing. It seems they had been everywhere ('ubique' in Gunner speak). They retain their unique shipborne capability, having flown their Apaches to Scandinavia to join HMS Ocean on one occasion. They have also trained in the heat of California and undertaken winter warfare training in Norway. This is while being on constant standby for operations, which must be very draining on the squadron personnel and their families. However, when we spoke to the soldiers they were all very welcoming and cheery. Alex also gave details of how squadron personnel have embraced the Chinthe as their symbol, some more intimately than others. Apparently a Las Vegas tattoo parlour did a raring trade!

We then had a chance to chat before lining up for the reunion photograph. This is a special occasion as we had a backdrop of a Apache and two Austers. It was then time for the barbecue in genuine field cooking conditions.

Apache aircrew then gave us a very detailed and impressive walk through of the aircraft.



It is a measure of their professionalism and briefing skills that everyone was gripped by the talks.



Most members retired back to the Premier Inn before the coach arrived to take them back to the Officers' Mess for dinner. Dining in a Mess is always a great privilege and this evening was no exception. The setting looked magnificent with the tables laid out and adorned with silver.

We were joined by Margaret Windscheffel and her daughter, Angela Ruthven, which maintains the link with our 'Burma Boys' of 1943 - 45.



The food was quite outstanding, and was commented on by many members. We were also very well looked after by all the Mess staff.

After the meal our outgoing President, Andrew Simkins, gave his final speech before he was surprised with a presentation of a silver Chinthe, similar to the 50th Anniversary Chinthe. His wife, Jane was presented with a bouquet of flowers and a "Alice Faye" rose bush. Derek Walker then gave a speech about Andrew's time as President before we all retired to the Bar.

The coach arrived far too soon but there was a small consolation as Andrew handed over three unused bottles of wine, which were consumed back at the hotel.



This was another excellent reunion thanks to the hospitality of the Squadron members, and the smooth administration. We thank everyone who helped to make it a success.

Photos from:

Jane Simkins

Moira Stuart-Bennett



## A BIG THANK YOU

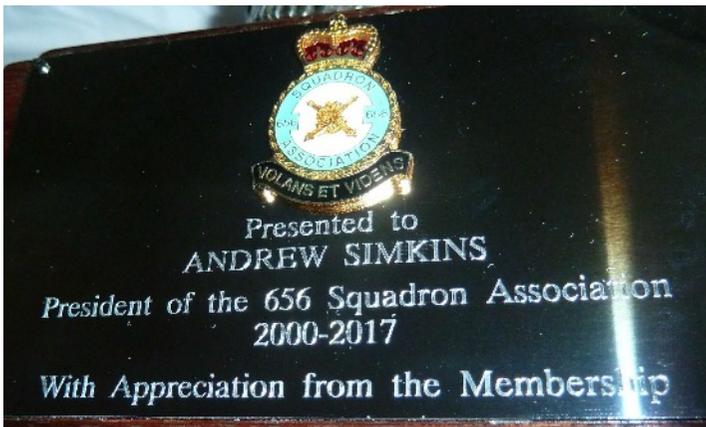


On behalf of the Committee, I wish to extend a very BIG thank you to our members for all the generous donations you made towards the presentation for Andrew. This enabled us not only to purchase the wonderful silver Chinthe for Andrew but also provide a hamper for the draw.

We think that the gift is very fitting for all the hard work behind the scenes that he has done during the last 16 years.

The annual Remembrance Day Parade may not have taken place without his organising it; The begging of donations from the Lottery Fund and AAC Funds; liaison with the Squadron to enable visits to be made, etc, the list just goes on.

We also thank and welcome Piers Lewis as our new President and Terry Betchley as the General Secretary for stepping in to fulfil these essential positions



## THANKS

From Andrew Simkins:

Jane and I were very humbled by the kindness and generosity of Association members at our Annual Reunion Officers' Mess Dinner at Wattisham on Friday 2nd June. It came as a complete surprise to receive the fabulous Chinthe to mark my time as President. I had only been discussing, some minutes earlier, the 50th Anniversary Chinthe which was on proud display. I said that I had always admired the centrepiece, not realising that I was about to receive a near exact replica! This was extraordinarily thoughtful of our members, and I thank whoever went to the hard effort (although I have my suspicions!) of organising the whole affair. It will be much cherished as a reminder of very happy times - and times to come. I sincerely thank all who were involved.

Jane was similarly delighted to receive such a wonderful bouquet of beautiful roses and the 'Alice Faye' rose. The 'Alice rose' will adorn our Somerset garden as a permanent memory of very special times.

I am delighted that Piers Lewis has agreed to replace me as President. Piers was the Officer Commanding during the Squadron's 70th Anniversary and at the publication of our book, *From Auster to Apache*. He brings new energy and ideas to the Association. I am also thrilled that we have been able to fill nearly all our committee appointments, including Terry Betchley MBE as our Honorary Secretary. To ensure a smooth transition the date of transfer is Saturday 17th June.

Once again thank you to everyone for extending such warmth to Jane and me. We very much look forward to meeting up again at many future events.

*'THE CHINTHE LINK'.  
ANDREW & JANE*

## INTRODUCING OUR NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

### PRESIDENT PIERS LEWIS



It is hard to believe that 75 years ago, our Squadron was formed. To spend time and ponder all that the Squadron has gone through over that period, the amount of operational theatres it has had an effect in, and the amount of lives it has impacted is quite awe inspiring. Likewise, it is always a fascinating read to pick up the journal from time to time and compare the juxtapositions of the current and the historical reflections. Such depth is rare in modern day organisations.

Of recent history, the Association itself has benefitted significantly from the leadership and guidance of one notable individual, Andrew Simkins. Although there have been many accolades of his significant achievements of late, I would like to briefly reflect on a couple of less known anecdotes, provided to me by an anonymous source!

Firstly, I would suggest that Andrew's attempts to try and draw consensus to keep everyone happy has been a hallmark of his tenure. This admirable and constructive trait would appear to have established itself during his time as OC. A sterling example of this ability in action was demonstrated when he managed to ensure both the Crown Prince of Denmark, and also an influential Brigadier, were accommodated for their very particular needs, by the skin of his teeth. Much to the disgruntlement of the Brigadier, Andrew arranged for the Prince to fly in, via a very swiftly prepared Lynx, whilst attending and paying homage at the Brigadier's reception!

Secondly, I have always been impressed by Andrew's enthusiasm for new ideas and gumption to embrace the modern and innovative. This was recently demonstrated in his drive for a full Squadron history publication and also a new Association website. Such forward and future thinking was only usurped by his unique departure from Command of the great Attack Squadron, Richard Branson style, in nothing more than a flimsy hot air balloon, without an ejector seat or any canon!

This brings me nicely onto a swift introduction. As a previous OC of the Squadron, a previous Squadron Liaison Officer, and also leading the book project, so ably completed by Guy Warner from my then role in the MoD, I have always been very attune to the importance, benefit and warmth (not to mention a fair amount of banter too!) of the Association. To arrive at those key junctures,

I embarked on my Army Air Corps career at interview in Sandhurst in 2000 where the first comment to me by the lead of the interview panel was “Ah, Lewis, you’re the old & \*%\$£@£”. I held back from the obvious retort to the not-quite-so-young-himself full Colonel on the other side of the table.

Following the pilot’s course, I was posted direct to 656 Squadron, then with Maj Neil Dalton in command. During the 1st AH conversion course, Maj Andy Cash asked (directed!) me to take on the role of Liaison Officer, which I undertook for a couple of years. With the team having achieved Initial Operating Capability (IOC) for embarked operations (something I would hold as a passion for years to come), after 3 tours of Afghanistan, and multiple exercises, I was posted from 656 Squadron (where I was, by then, Operations Officer for Maj David Amlot) to the Air Manoeuvre Training and Advisory Team. It was only months before I was duly promoted to Major on my first look and sent to Staff College.

On completion of serving my time at Shrivenham, I took on a role in the MoD Main Building under Commodore Russ Harding as his Apache, Lynx and Wildcat desk officer. It was here where I was not only ‘volunteered’ to lead the book project from the MoD scrutiny side, but I was also informed (over a coffee from a fellow Major) that I had been selected to command 656 Squadron. I was clearly ecstatic, and took on the reigns from Mike Neville in Winter 2011, shortly after the Squadron had returned from Op ELLAMY. I count myself very lucky to have been supported throughout my tenure by a few notable characters. Firstly, my Sergeant Major, Andy Eardley. The ability for him and I to see eye-to-eye on the development of the Squadron across all functions, was a blessing for me, as was my relationship with my Ops Officer, Rich Bennett (later replaced by Tom Brunwin, who I must congratulate for his recent ride for charity across the USA).

My time as OC was personally both frustrating and rewarding. On departure from the Squadron in 2014 I was very proud to be handing over a Squadron with a clear mission, high morale, and a great team spirit. However, during my time there it was well known that, despite the resounding success of Op ELLAMY, 656 Squadron was still the lowest priority of the Force whilst HERRICK was still happening. I handed the Squadron over to Jules Pannett in spring 2014, but still fought for them from my new role as the Force Operations Officer.

Since then, I have elected to resign my commission and try my hand in the real world, but, despite my frustrations whilst in Command, I always look back at my time in the honourable position as leader of such amazing servicemen, with great fondness.

As for my nearest and dearest, my wife Kate has stood alongside me through thick and thin, and we have two enthusiastic and energetic children, Elodie (5, who has previously appeared in The Chinthe), and Hugo (nearly 2), and also

one spaniel, Wilson, who all 656 members from my time as OC, will know well! He's still spritely at the grand old age of 15.



I am enthusiastic about settling into this new role, seeing how I can assist and most importantly meeting as many of you as possible at the annual events.

This, for me, will begin with the most important of them all, at the Cenotaph in November. I much look forward to marching side-by-side, with many of you, in this our 75<sup>th</sup> year, and the Army Air Corps 60<sup>th</sup> year.

Volans et Videns

*Piers Lewis*



**GENERAL SECRETARY** Terry M Betchley MBE

When John asked me to pen a few lines about myself, I thought no problem, however isn't it funny when you go to put pen to paper your mind goes completely blank and you struggle find anything to say about yourself and you also struggle to justify your existence.

Well here goes! A Cambridgeshire lad through and through I joined the Army in 1975 as a Junior Leader RAC, as I am sure many of you out there will remember. Who remembers the days of KF shirts with ties in that summer of 1976?

I was posted to 651 Squadron AAC in 1977 at Verden and moved with the Squadron to Hildeshiem when 1 Regiment centralised. My next posting was to 656 Squadron AAC in 1979, when it was based at Farnborough and I then moved with the Squadron to Netheravon taking part in Op Corporate.

Further tours in Germany with HQ 1 (BR) Corps, 4 Regiment and 3 Regiment followed and I moved with this Regiment back to Wattisham in 1993.

I was awarded the MBE in 1997 (I must have done something right) the icing on the top of the career cake. I left the Army in 1999 as a member of the AGC(SPS) but still serving with the Army Air Corps. 24 Years man and boy.

Single but with two grown up kids, Terry Junior and Samantha I live in Needham Market in Suffolk and work at the Imperial War Museum Duxford as the Airfield Operations Officer.

I will never be able to emulate the excellent work that Sylvia achieved, but I sincerely hope I can serve the association well during my term as your Secretary.

Terry



## **ASSOCIATION NOTICES**

### **NEW MEMBERS**

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

Col (Retd)	O T	Hall	OBE	RCT
Mrs	B	Connor		Associate
Lt.Col	J G	Pannett		AAC
Maj	A	Harris		AAC
Mr	R	Fearnehough		REME
Maj (retd)	H	Elston		Associate

### **DEATHS**

Sadly, we announce the deaths of the following Members and offer our sincere condolences to their families and friends

W. Alletson	April
J.W. Reading	April
J.B. Dicksee	May

## **OBITUARY for JIM 'PADDY' CONNORS.**

By Derek Walker.

I was recently informed by Mrs. Connors, that her husband Jim Connors, or Paddy as I knew him, had passed away in a care-home near Milford Haven. He apparently had been ill for some time and had died in March 2017. He served with the squadron between 1959 and 1962, on 16 Flight at Noble-field and 14 Flight temporarily in Seremban. I got on well with Paddy, during his and my time at Noble-field, 1959 -60, and often found ourselves together in a vehicle delivering to the Temerloh detachment, or resupply runs up to Taiping, in North Malaya. He was a quiet, humorous colleague, who was very mature and thoughtful, but had an impishness about him and an Irish sense of fun. I believe he completed his service as a L/Bdr. I used to meet him later, at Middle Wallop Air Day's, and association reunions. He informed me he was still HGV driving and living in the Swindon area and we relived some of our old times together. I found Paddy very respectful.

Later I learned that they had moved to Milford Haven, due to his poor health, and therefore unable to attend any further association reunions, though we were still in his thoughts. His wife Beryl, kept me up to date with occasional phone calls until his final passing. It is Beryl, I feel we should pass our sincere condolences and best wishes too for the future, and it is with pride that Beryl, has joined the association, and so will receive 'The Chinthe', which she finds interesting and informative, keeping her up to date with the association.

**'Sleep well young man, you will be remembered'.**

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## **OBITUARY for GEORGE BOSTOCK.**

By Derek Walker

It is with regret that I announce the death of Mr. George Bostock, on the 21st May 2017, at the Mansfield, General Hospital, after a long period of hospitalization with dementia. He was 79 years old. His burial took place on the 28th May 2017, at the Mansfield crematorium, followed by refreshments at the United Services Club, Worksop.

George was born in Wars Dale, Nottinghamshire, and was employed as a coal miner after his schooling, prior to enlistment for National Service in the Army in 1957. His recruit training was at Oswestry, followed by driver and signaller training at Rhyl, passing out as a Driver Operator.

He spent his service in Malaya, which is where I met him at Noble-field, where we were billeted together for a period of time. We also played in the squadron

soccer and rugby teams together, and he represented the squadron at cricket and hockey too. We next met at Harry Berrisford's funeral in Derbyshire, and then at various association reunions with his wife, who unfortunately preceded his demise by some ten years or so, and relived many old times together which he and wife enjoyed immensely.

After his service, George was employed as a Civil Servant, with the Department of Employment, Job Centre's, re-employing redundant coal miners, something he found fulfilling, but illogical, given his background.

I must thank Bob Roberts for bringing George's passing to my notice. He too was with the squadron in Malaya and worked daily with him. We shall both mourn, but remember George and his cheerful, forthright character for a long time. Rest well old pal!.

(George's article is in the Summer 2012 issue of the Chinthe, pages 19-30.)

### **FALKLANDS MEMORIAL**



A photo from the wreath laying in the Falklands on 6 June for

SSgt Griffin and LCpl Cockton .

We provided the Squadron wreath, at the right directly in front of the cross.

If you were unaware of the donations appeal it was because of time restrictions, we could only notify members with email. If you have now joined the electronic age and have email, or for whatever reason did not get the notice, then please contact me with your updated details. (656assn@orange.fr)

Wrong details! Would the following members please contact me with the correct details of their telephone number & E-mail address as we cannot contact you.

Matt ROBERTS  
Gary CONNELL

George MACINTOSH  
Peter DAUGHTERS

Dave GREAVES  
Philip HORSTED

It appears that a lot of Members have moved house over the years and not told us! If you know the whereabouts of any of the below please ask them to contact me at [journal@656squadron.org](mailto:journal@656squadron.org).

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

## **MINUTES OF 656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION**

AGM held at The Premier Inn, Ipswich North

At 09.00 hrs on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2017

Number In Attendance: 18

Apologies: Mark Meaton, John Bennett, Peter Gill, D Hingley, L Barber, M Worthington, Will Harrell, Val Powley, M O'Rourke, W Dick.

The President, Andrew Simkins, welcomed everyone to the AGM and asked that we paused for a minute's silence to remember lost colleagues.

1. Minutes of the last AGM: The President read out the 2016 AGM Minutes, but as they were not generally available there was no vote.
2. President's Report: Andrew Simkins updated the AGM on the Association's activities. He highlighted the new website (656squadron.org) and commended everyone to scan through the various sections. He also explained that our new Facebook page is now being managed by Bob Thorpe and is becoming a very useful communication outlet. He informed the meeting that his replacement was Piers Lewis, who commanded the Squadron during the 70th Anniversary, and at the time that From Auster to Apache was published. He was delighted that Piers would take over and believed that, along with the revised committee, the Association was very well placed for the future challenges.
3. Treasurer's Report: Andrew explained that the Association has cash assets of around £5,000+ thanks to the diligence of our Treasurer, Mark Meaton. The new website had, however, cost more to set up than anticipated, despite a Lottery Grant. He stated that we should retain the the £7.50 annual subscription as any change would be disruptive and the Association can continue to support its members on that level of income.
4. Re-election and election of committee members: The following appointments were confirmed.
  - a. Honorary Secretary. Andrew was delighted that Terry Betchley MBE had volunteered to be the new Honorary Secretary.
  - b. Membership Secretary. John Bennett continues to manage the Membership List, but wishes to hand over this responsibility soon. Andrew asked whether anyone could assist with this important function.

- c. Honorary Treasurer. Mark Meaton volunteered to continue in this vital role.
- d. Deputy Treasurer. Derek Walker volunteered to continue in this role.
- e. Journal Editor. John Bennett has volunteered to continue in this role.
- f. Archivist. Mark Meaton has volunteered to continue in this role.
- g. Webmaster and Social Media. Bob Thorpe has volunteered to manage these communication outlets.
- h. Events coordinator. It was decided not to fill this appointment.

Andrew concluded by saying that he was delighted that the Association had an excellent committee now in place, and this boded well for the future. (Afternote: The transfer of responsibilities between Andrew and Piers would take place on Saturday 17 June. This would enable Andrew to complete letters and final transactions. This would also be the date when Terry commenced his Honorary Secretary duties).

- 5. 2017 Programme: Andrew highlighted:
  - a. The Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph Parade on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November. The Summer 2017 Chinthe may not be published in time for nominations so we were using Facebook and emails to advertise the event.
  - b. The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Guidon Parade at Salisbury Cathedral is being held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July, and that it was still possible to obtain tickets.
  - c. The Church Farm Fly In on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June. This is a lovely, relaxed event organised by George Butler.
- 6. Programme for 2018. Possible locations for the 2018 reunion were discussed. Andrew mentioned the National Memorial Arboretum, while the possibility of visiting the Imperial War Museum, Duxford was considered. The details would need to be confirmed in time for the publication of the Spring 2018 Chinthe.
- 7. AOB: There being no further business the meeting closed at 9:47 hrs.

**656 Squadron Association.**  
**Balance sheet for the year ended 31 December 2016**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash	5,215.06	6,253.69
Stock	686.73	797.68
Debtors	0.00	11.20
Assets	27.98	0.00
	<b>5,929.77</b>	<b>7,062.57</b>
 Current liabilities		
Shop stock	0.00	0.00
Unpresented cheques & transfers	0.00	0.58
 Net current assets	<b>5,929.77</b>	<b>7,061.99</b>
 (Represented by)		
Funds B/F	7,051.37	5,869.32
General surplus	(-1,120.63)	1,109.09
Shop profits	(-28.95)	72.96
Plus Debtors - current year	0.00	11.20
Minus Creditors - current year	0.00	(-0.58)
Assets	27.98	0.00
	<b>5,929.77</b>	<b>7,061.99</b>
 Reserve account		
Opening balance 1 January	2,003.29	2,002.30
Transfers in	0.00	0.00
Transfers out	0.00	0.00
Interest received	0.87	0.99
 Closing balance 31 December	<b>2,004.16</b>	<b>2,003.29</b>

**M.Meaton**  
Treasurer

**D.Walker**  
Deputy Treasurer

## 656 Squadron Association

### Statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2016

#### Income

#### Expenditure

##### General account

Subs	2,675.00	Journal costs	1,001.47
New member subs	80.00	Printing & Stationary	53.88
Reunion income	830.00 <sup>1</sup>	Reunion costs	928.27
History Book income	0.00	Misc costs	0.00
Archives income	0.00	Archives costs	98.59
Event income	0.00	Events costs	112.92
Donations in	688.46 <sup>4</sup>	Donations out	181.16
Postage paid income	41.95	Postage costs	74.24
Adverts income	0.00	Committee costs	22.55
Misc income	0.00	Web & PC costs	2,961.32
Interest on reserve account	0.87	PayPal fees	13.13
Payments from debtors	11.20	Payments to Creditors	0.58

**Totals** **4,327.48** **5,448.11**

**Surplus (overspend) (-1,120.63)**

##### Sales account

##### Sales

Shop sales	206.88
Shop profits	(-28.95)
	<b>235.83</b>

##### Cost of sales

Opening shop stock	797.68
New stock added	124.88
	<b>922.56</b>
Less closing stock	686.73
Cost of sales	<b>235.83</b>
(Includes write-offs)	52.53

**Total income** **4,534.36**

**Total expenditure** **5,683.94**

**Overall surplus  
(overspend)** **-1,149.58**

**M.Meaton**  
Treasurer

**D.Walker**  
Deputy Treasurer

### **(Notes)**

1. The reunion weekend only cost the Association £100.
2. Remembrance Sunday.
3. AOP 75th anniversary event at Old Sarum, etc.
4. Includes an Army Air Corps Fund donation of £600 for the website redevelopment.
5. New website development.
6. Raffle prizes, gifts, lapel badges for new members, etc.

The Association is in good shape financially - we started the year with a little over £6,000 cash reserves, and finished with a little over £5,000.

The overspend was a result of the expenditure on the new website, which was partly financed in advance by a grant of £1,300 that arrived in the previous financial year, 2015. We spent roughly £1,000 on the website redevelopment from our cash reserves (the total cost was £3,000).

The costs for the reunion were easily covered, and our subscriptions income covered our core expenditure on the journal, postage, archives, other events, etc. The shop holds minimal stock, and shows minimal activity.

*Mark Meaton*

Mark Meaton

## **FALKLANDS REMEMBERED**

The Falklands Service of Remembrance was held on 21 May 17 at the Falklands Memorial Chapel, Pangbourne which was organised by the Royal Marines Brigade Air Squadron Commander 1982 - Major Peter Cameron. We had Falkland veterans and family attending, including relatives of Sgt Chris Griffin and LCpl Cockton who were killed during the operation.

### **MY MEMORIES** by Colin Badgery

The 35 Year Falklands conflict reunion was fantastic, 656 Squadron had been invited to join the 3 Commando Air Sqns reunion at Pangbourne. John Greenhalgh did the organising and suggested that we meet up the night before at a nearby hotel. This was a great idea of John's who unfortunately was unable to attend and was very much missed, we understood due to him being admitted to hospital. Air crew, techs and groundies all mixed and chatted until the small hours catching up on a few missing years gossip.

The next day we attended the Commando Air Squadron church service and lunch which again was just the right tempo. We kept John G updated via social media posts throughout the day. It was great to see the Modern AAC represented by a Wildcat flying in but for me it was the old scout that was great to see flying in.



*A few of the Veterans on parade, Front Left the legend Sam Drennan DFC.*

Squadron Members all mixed and mingled and shared recollections after the service and had a look around the visiting aircraft. For me personally it was the opportunity to finally meet up with Dick Kalinski Para Regt (pilot) Jay Rigg (crewman) Dave Ward (HQ sigs SSGT) at the reunion, as on the 8th June 82 along with Robbie Braithwaite we all shared a bit of a bumpy ride on the way to Fitzroy.



Dave Ward, Colin Badgery, Dick Kalinski

We had been living in a greenhouse in Darwin for a few days but were put on notice to move forward that morning due to the fast moving advance to Fitzroy by the battle group, in between tasks our own aircraft were trying to move the Sqn forward to Fitzroy so it was all at a rush.

A Scout suddenly landed at Darwin to collect squadron members to move forward, Dave Ward was going to set up the SHQ CP and Robbie Braithwaite and myself with our LMG gun were protection for the SHQ, as a young Airtrooper my tech knowledge was limited but the memory of that day has shaped the rest of my life.

The scout on that day, 35 years ago was well loaded with three passengers in the back, we were the 'gun group'. Our bergans were horrendously heavy, we had an LMG with 24 mags, plus Dave and myself had our own SLR's and I had a little 66 antitank missile too. Dave also had a clansman radio and spare batteries. The Scout had a casevac pod fitted on the pilot side. Dave loaded first from the crewman's side rear door into the far side of the scout behind Dick, then Robbie. They sat on their bergens and webbing whilst more kit was loaded on top of them. Finally I was last in and was literally pushed in, with my back against the roof and my rear against the door, we set off towards Fitzroy.

On route Robbie saw some Argentineans fast jets flying level with us on the far side of the valley heading towards Fitzroy, as we had no comms in the back I tapped Jays flying helmet and pointed towards the jets, Dick then pulled up into a low hover over the MacPhee pond whilst a contact report was sent out over the net.

The pond had very steep sides so gave good cover whilst the crew sorted out their next move, Dick decided to return us to Darwin as it was a safer option. As we pulled away from the bank side we suffered an engine failure which also caused a universal joint to the tail rotor to fail so with no tail rotor

control, we did three 360 degree spins in the air, and more as he hit the surface of the water, I remember watching Dick working the controls and it was a bit surreal; I could hear audible warnings coming from the instrument panel and I thought we were about to start cartwheeling across the pond out of control if the rotors touched the bank or the water. During these spins as we hit the water the rotors hit the gunners sight in the roof above Jay showering us with Plexiglas. Luckily the pond actually levelled out and the scout landed level in about 3 foot of water. We jettisoned the rear door and debussed towards the bank, there we set up the gun and Dave started to establish comms. We could see dark smoke appearing over the skyline (which turned out to be the LSL ships having been attacked), we then saw Sea Harriers intercept some of the fast jets and had a front row seat. We were treated to an excellent display of sidewinder being used effectively; three from three was the tally. Shortly, helicopter traffic over our location increased, we later established this was due to the casevac from the LSL attack. One Wessex landed near us briefly, Dick went and reported that we had no casualties to the crew so it departed. We were finally picked up in a less than serviceable scout piloted by John Greenhalgh and moved to Fitzroy.



*Techs salvaging parts and removing rotors prior to an airlift*

During the reunion Dick explained that the cause of the crash was a little unit on the engine that had an intermittent fault so when he went to pull full power it didn't deliver the fuel required. It only came to light when the engine was salvaged and fitted to another aircraft overnight ( I am sure a few tech's will know the full story) and another pilot Rich Walker was pulling off of a ships deck and went to pull power and had nothing. He had a very near miss with the sea before being able to recover control.

Dick never received any formal recognition for his fantastic airmanship that day, which in my opinion saved 5 lives, but every year on the 8th June I raise a glass to one top pilot, ex Red Fred, sky diving pensioner who I owe my life to . . . . .

Cheers Dick Kalinski.

## **656 GOES TO THE FALKLANDS**

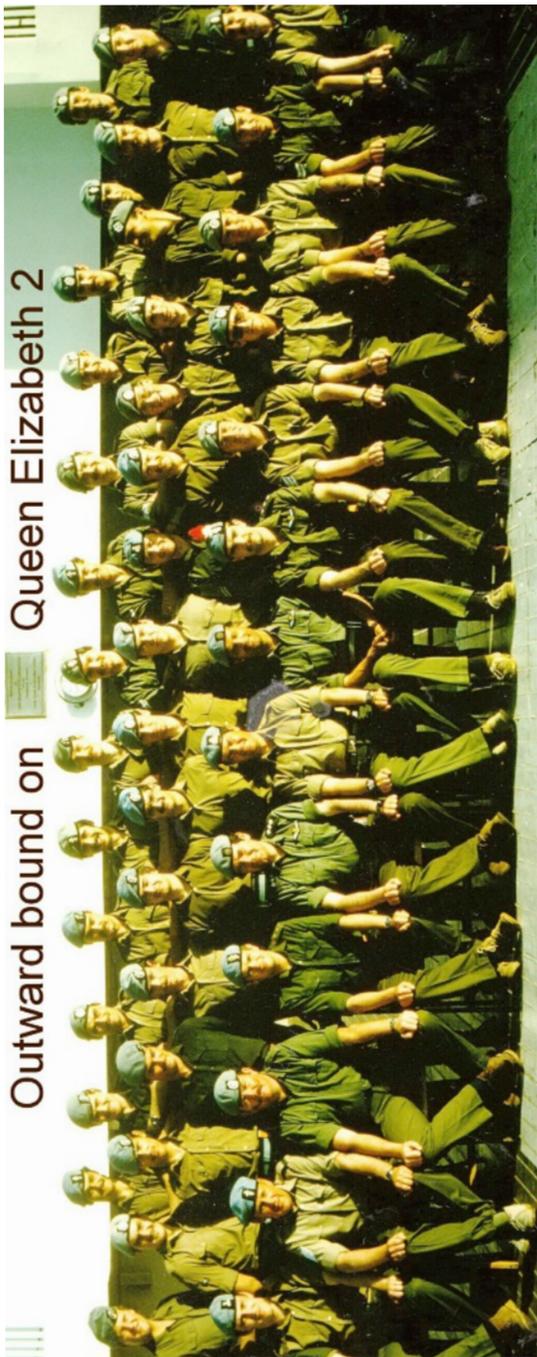
by Tim Lynch

News of the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands reached 656 Squadron on the 2nd April 1982 as we returned to the UK from an exercise in Germany. It was too late to be an April Fool's Day joke surely? Bleary eyed after a rough sea crossing, a corporal asked what many of us were thinking – "What the F\_\_\_ are the Argies doing in Scotland?". "Sorry lads, but it's pukka gen" replied the Sergeant-Major, "those of you lined up for Belize this summer, don't hold your breath".

It was indeed true. As we left to go on Easter leave, signs began appearing at London train stations ordering troops to return to barracks and by 9th April, 3rd Commando Brigade, the Royal Marines Amphibious Landing Group with the addition of 3 Para was steaming south aboard the liner 'Canberra' and a variety of naval and Merchant Navy vessels. Preparing for a war over 8,000 miles away was a headache for all concerned. For Captain John Greenhalgh, leading the advance party of Scout Flight it was compounded by orders that his helicopters would be stored in the hold of the 'Europic', a ferry currently at Southampton whilst the crews would be aboard the 'Norland', a North Sea ferry based in Hull and tasked to transport the Parachute Regiment. After repeated telephone conversations, it was finally agreed that it made sense for the aircraft and crews to travel together and directions were given to the pilots – 'head for the big orange car ferry parked in Southampton docks'. When intelligence reports suggested there were around 10,000 Argentinian troops already on the islands, 2 Para also received orders to deploy. Recent reorganization within the army had created a new formation, 5th Infantry Brigade, to replace the old 6 Field Force based at Aldershot and comprising 1st Battalion of the 7th Gurkha Rifles, 2 and 3 Para. That reorganization had moved 656 Squadron to a new role with 1st Infantry Brigade but, when the paras deployed, they specifically requested that it be 656 who accompanied them because of the strong working relationship that had grown up between the units. So it was that 656 found itself temporarily attached to the fledgling 5th Infantry Brigade, a formation only four months old and about to go to war.

On the early morning of 12 May, the main body of the squadron boarded buses at Netheravon and set out for Southampton to embark on the QE2. The other units had also been up early, drawn weapons and line the road through camp, presenting arms as we passed. It was a very touching gesture but also brought home that this was serious business. We sailed later that day to a tumultuous send off with boats accompanying the ship, crowds lining the quays and cars parked on headlands along the Solent flashing their lights as we passed. In true 656 style, we had blagged some of the best cabins and settled down three to an en-suite room. Cunard standards did not slip throughout the journey although as we got further south mess stewards appeared wearing helmets but every night coffee and cakes were laid out for us in a small kitchen

## Outward bound on Queen Elizabeth 2



near the cabins and when a spotlight bulb burned out, someone came round to replace it so that we would not have to squint to fully appreciate the painting in the room. Training went on during the voyage where we frequently encountered Gurkhas undergoing emergency evacuation drills by crawling along corridors to reach the lifeboats. Crawling would help them keep below the smoke and they would be able to quickly find their way to a place of safety. We immediately developed our own emergency drill. In the event of attack, sit on a Gurkha.

It was decided that the QE2 was too much of a target to risk and so we were to RV with the Canberra at Grytviken on South Georgia to cross-deck for the remainder of the journey. By now, the British Forces Post Office had allocated a BFPO number to the Falklands – mail addressed to BFPO 666 would reach us. Somehow, being given the number of the beast in the Bible's *Revelation* wasn't that reassuring. Then someone spotted that the French prophet Nostradamus had, centuries before, foretold that the world would end with the death of a great white whale. Aboard Canberra, affectionately nicknamed 'the Great White Whale' by its crew, troops would greet each other by throwing their hands in the air and crying "we're

doomed, doomed!". Sailors became even more worried by their landlubber passengers' habit of using seabirds for target practice until a hurried order was given to stop just as a very tempting flock of albatrosses hove into view. One day the BBC announced that the aircraft carrier Invincible had been hit and a message arrived from the very healthy looking casualty alongside asking if that meant they could go home. It was all a big joke until a frigate drew alongside, a tarpaulin covering the hole in its side and its wounded came aboard.

On 2 June, we gathered again, this time fully laden with kit and were looking forward to a John Wayne style landing craft beach style assault on the Falklands but instead we were shuttled ashore by a bright orange and white lifeboat taking a gentle turn around the bay before reaching a jetty at San Carlos settlement where two local kids were playing football. We were beginning to suspect a wind up. The squadron main party headed for Clam Valley at the southern end of San



Carlos Water and dug in. A few days later we got the news that Chris Griffin and Simon Cockton had been killed. It came as a shock as we had not yet heard a shot and even more when it became clear it had been a blue on blue, the missile coming from a British ship.

Moving via Darwin and Goose Green to the settlement of Fitzroy, the squadron were in the process of moving forward when the Landing Ships Sir Tristram and Sir Galahad, riding at anchor waiting to unload the Welsh Guards, were attacked by Argentine Skyhawks and set ablaze. To the west, Trooper Mark 'Ozzy' Price was aboard a Landing Craft when it too was hit by an air attack Skyhawks and he was temporarily blinded but later regained his sight. Elsewhere, Dick Kalinski's Scout attempted evasive action to avoid the low flying jets and went down into McPherson's pond.

For the next few days, the squadron supported operations in the mountains around Stanley. From the barn in Fitzroy we could see tracer fire

around Mount Kent as the Marines went in and, on the night of 13th June, a number of troopers were asked if they would be prepared to go forward to act as stretcher bearers for the Scots Guards attack on Tumbledown. They had all willingly volunteered. Fortunately, they were not needed but at day break I was asked to act as a rebroadcast for the casevac's from that area with Trooper Lee Beets and the Squadron Commander, Major Sibun, working nearby. It was a mark of the squadron spirit that as I got ready, several people came to me to make sure I had everything I needed and to give me spare chocolate bars, ammo or just to wish me luck, a very human and caring gesture that stuck with me.

I was flown to the Scots Guards RAP at Goat Ridge and dropped off but I found I could not get a signal so climbed up onto the ridge. From the top I could make out the Argentine hospital ship in Stanley harbour and a few of the houses on the outskirts. I settled down in the rocks and got to work as Captain Sam Drennan and Corporal Jay Rigg flew to and from Tumbledown with Captain Drennan's radio stuck on send, allowing me to eavesdrop on his comments as he went in to what was a very dangerous situation.

After picking up the wounded, he would then scoot around Goat Ridge and fly low along the valley floor just below me. It was humbling to hear the determination with which he kept promising the guardsmen he would come back. Himself an ex-Scots Guard, it was clear he would do everything he could



for them.

I recall hearing the voice of the squadron commander telling him he was under fire - again - in what sounded like an exasperated tone as though he was talking to a wayward kid. Then I got word to make my way back down the hill and found the RAP very cheerful; somebody told me it was Endex and they'd

surrendered. When I climbed aboard the Scout to go back to Fitzroy I could see a long line of prisoners coming down off Tumbledown and back towards the ridge.

It was time for some fun. The Argentines were in mortal fear of the Gurkhas who they regarded as a band of savages. In one case, we had flown a wounded Argentinean back to our field hospital only to find him clutching a grenade with the pin taken out, terrified that he would be tortured and eaten by the 'apes'. Gently, the grenade was made safe and taken from him before he passed out. He awoke in a hospital bed with two Gurkha soldiers sat either side of him - holding knives and forks and grinning. One Argentinian, angry at his nation's humiliation, declared loudly and in excellent English that their defeat was because they had only old weapons and equipment to fight with. Just as it looked as though someone might take the debate to a physical level, he stopped. He looked around and smiled "best of three?" he asked.

Squadron HQ moved in to what had once been the community school and more recently a hospital. The toilets were broken and overflowing and we ate our meals in a hall whose wall was decorated with blackening blood spatter in an arc eight feet from the floor. We acquired a souvenir Huey helicopter used



it to ferry us to and from the ships now crowding Stanley harbour so we could get a hot shower and change our clothes for the first time in weeks. We spent time exploring the Argentine positions and souvenir hunting - finding quite a few badly laid booby traps as we did.

Minefields were everywhere and Corporal Neil Maher managed to lay a landline halfway across one before he decided to take the longer route around it.

Then one day it was over. In small groups we were driven out to the shattered terminal of Port Stanley's airfield and climbed aboard Hercules transports for the long flight home. For the next 18 hours we would stare at the

massive internal fuel tanks, the boredom relieved by swinging trapeze-like to the toilet on the rear cargo door or by touching down at Ascension and in Senegal where the sight of troops in camouflage on the runway made the tourists on incoming charter flights sit up and take notice.

We arrived home to face the same question: "What was it like?"  
All we could say was that it wasn't quite what we expected.

## San Carlos jetty where main party landed



Article and photos by Tim Lynch

## Mount Kent Memorial

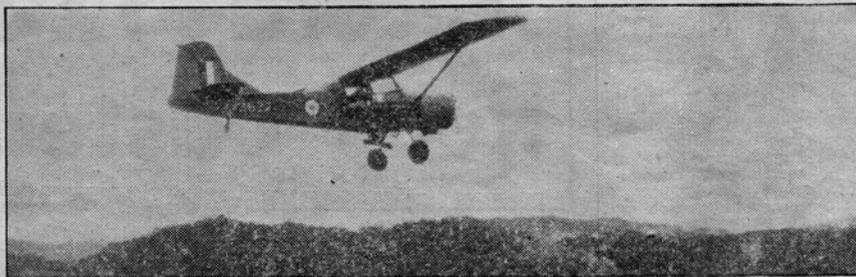


# 150,000 hours of flying

Donald Smit

...IT'S EQUAL TO 498 TIMES ROUND THE EARTH

# No. 656 sets a



An Auster aircraft of the 656 Light Aircraft Squadron AAC, carrying a special marker bomb, flies over the jungle covered mountains of Central Malaya.

**By Harry Miller**

**Y**ESTERDAY, No. 656 Light Aircraft Squadron of the Army Air Corps ceremonially celebrated a world record—the completion of 150,000 hours of flying on operations in the Emergency since 1948.

This impressive figure is the equivalent of 17 years non-stop flying by one Auster of the Corps, or 498 times round the world.

The word "operations" — of the war when pilots Terrorists go to great

# world record

*The Sunday Times. March 1, 1959*

**Y**ESTERDAY, No. 656 Light Aircraft Squadron of the Army Air Corps ceremonially celebrated a world record — the completion of 150,000 hours of flying on operations in the Emergency since 1948.

This impressive figure is the equivalent of 17 years non-stop flying by one Auster of the Corps, or 498 times round the world !

The word "operations" in the Emergency covers a variety of tasks beyond the premier one of air reconnaissance for camps and traces of terrorists.

In Malaya, the Austers have been and are being used as ordinary passenger transport, evacuating wounded troops or captured or surrendered terrorists, dropping leaflets over terrorist country, reconnaissance of helicopter grounds and supply-dropping zones, marking targets for attack by bombers and fighters, guiding helicopters, dropping supplies, spotting for guns as they shell enemy territory, taking air photographs, looking for terrorist camps, broadcasting messages to terrorists, searching for illegal

samsu stills in the northern swamps of Singapore, searching for yachts in distress off the coasts of Malaya, and even anti-piracy patrols.

### **River raft**

This, however, is a brief story of how the sighting of camps by Auster pilots is important to successful ground operations.

One of the most unusual experiences was that of Squadron Sergeant Major G. D. Jenkins after the killing in October 1956, of the assistant manager of the Sungei Kruda Estate in Perak.

Sergeant Major Jenkins was sent up to fly low over an area into which the terrorists had escaped hotly pursued by men of the 2nd Royal Australian Regiment. Flying over the northern boundary of the estate, Jenkins saw eight terrorists crossing a river on a raft. He dived his aircraft and at the same time tried to unstrap his rifle from his seat. (A rifle is part of the Auster pilot's jungle escape equipment should he crash. He is not expected to use it while flying.)

### **Frustration**

Jenkins went so low that the terrorists frantically jumped into the river. Jenkins kept on diving and kept on trying to release his rifle. The terrorists realised after a while that he was unarmed and began to climb back on to the raft. In mortification, frustration and anger, Jenkins used his Verey pistol instead. He dived once again towards the raft and, as he flew low by it, he fired. This unorthodox approach shattered the terrorists who took to the water again. But they capsized their raft and upset all their packs and equipment into the river. Jenkins realised he was short of fuel and he returned to the airstrip at Sungei Siput where he reported his encounter.

### **From dawn**

The scene was not far from the town. That night security forces ambushed the terrorists who were attempting a further river crossing after dark. There were no casualties unfortunately, but the next day the troops recovered packs of clothes and equipment from the bottom of the river.

This was an example of where a tactical denial by an Auster paid off a bigger dividend than expected.

Austers are called for when ground forces want an air reconnaissance for various reasons. The pilot, provided the conditions are right, might see the smoke of a fire, or if he is lucky enough, glimpse through the trees the corner of a brown basha. His radio report will put the troops in the right direction and so save hours of work for the troops.

Visual reconnaissance can last from dawn to dusk and be spread over a fortnight. Austers will fly over a selected area at different times of the day to take advantage of the different light conditions as the sun moves over the sky.

Late one Sunday afternoon in October, 1958, Captain M. P. E, Legg went up over the Penggerang area of Johore at the request of a patrol of the 2/7th Gurkha Rifles.

### **Directive**

They were tracking important members of the South Johore Regional Committee.

At 6.45 p.m. just as he was about to return to base after two hours' flying, Capt. Legg from 4,500 feet spied a plume of smoke.

He plotted its position. The terrorists seemed to have crept into a 'white' area and appeared to have made the mistake of thinking that because they had done this, they were safe.

They were making more smoke than they should have done. Indeed Communist High Command instructions are that fires should only be made under cover.

Many terrorist units dig small holes in the ground in which to light fires for cooking or for warmth.

### **Little food**

The Gurkhas switched their direction, soon found a camp for 25 men, followed the tracks leading away from it, and four days later caught up and had a brief engagement. The terrorists left behind all their packs and cooking utensils.

Special Branch knew that this group had little or no food. The reports were that the group was held together only by the Regional Committee Member, Ah Ann, and his dominating wife.

However, the group swung back on its tracks and returned to its own area of activity where it had food dumps.

Capt. Legg went up on reconnaissance early another morning at 6.45 and spotted smoke although there was some ground mist. The chase was on again.

### **Third flight**

A third flight early on a third morning produced more smoke signs again — which confirmed that the terrorists were moving towards their food dumps, the sites of which were known to Special Branch by this time.

An ambush on one dump killed one terrorist and wounded two others.

The intensive pressure that followed led to the breaking up of the party. Some surrendered. Others were killed.

In November, Ah Ann, his wife, Chai Swee Sang, and another comrade, Yoke Foong, who had hoped to slip out of the area, were cornered. They were killed by three bullets fired at point-blank range on the edge of jungle north of Kulai. They had \$30,000 in party funds to help them to establish themselves in civilian life.

An accolade for the little Austers came when the Malayan Communist Party described them as "a dangerous weapon" in the Government armoury. They had never connected the Austers with ground forces in the early years of the war when pilots spotted camps, security forces found the terrorists still in them two or three days afterwards.

Today, if an Auster circles over an area and the terrorists below do not actually see it, they do not feel it necessary to move immediately but they do move within 12 hours. If, however, they can see it through the trees, they may break camp at once.

An experienced pilot describes the successful sighting of even a corner of a terrorist hut as something requiring the aircraft being at the right height with the right light below and "an element of good fortune."

Flights of up to 2½ hours spent searching an area of jungle for terrorists's camps and cultivations require great skill, vigilance and perseverance.

Terrorists go to great lengths to camouflage their camps. For instance, one Auster pilot sighted a parade ground — which seemed to have disappeared when a check was made later the same day.

A ground follow-up, however, confirmed the existence of the camp—and revealed that the parade-ground had been covered with fresh green attap. After pilots fly low over a certain area for days on a concentrated reconnaissance, they begin to notice slight tell-tale features...

### **A hook**

Such as the pole with a hook in it which one pilot glimpsed as he skirted over trees in the Kivang district.

When ground forces entered the site they found the post. It was one of two which stood at the centre of a marked-out centre of a marseuoub basketball court, but the court itself had been "concealed" with saplings stuck all over the ground.

No wonder that in this war, the 656 Light Aircraft Squadron of the Army Air Corps is known as the most valuable air eye of the ground forces.

And in Singapore, the police have found the Austers most useful for spotting illegal samsu stills, the locations of which they radio to police ground units.

To fill up time, as it were, the light aircraft have also helped the Navy and the Air Force to search for yachts in distress off the coasts of Malaya—and over 1,100 sorties of this nature have been flown.

*Copy of the Sunday Times  
Submitted by Don Smith.*

## WARTIME WALLOP 2017

all pictures by AWD Photography



RECORD breaking numbers attended a fun family day at The Museum of Army Flying's flagship annual event, Wartime Wallop 2017.

May Bank Holiday Monday saw nearly 1,000 people in the Museum, its grounds and neighbouring airfield with a lunchtime downpour failing to dampen the spirits of the attendees which were up by nearly 20 per cent on last year.

Aircraft, both contemporary and historic, military vehicles, flying displays, 1940s music and dancing, WW2 re-enactment groups and children's entertainment came together for the family fun day in Middle Wallop on Monday 29 May.

The event featured an opportunity to get up close to current military helicopters, as well as the more veteran aircraft including a Sioux, Beaver and Scout.

Other attractions on the day included model flying, bomb disposal demonstrations, a crowd pleasing fly-out from the HAF (Historic Aircraft Flight) team, as well as 1940s style dancing by the Andover Lindyhoppers, and wartime era music and dancing from the Decibelles.





Attendees included the 4<sup>th</sup> Dorset's field office display and K2 lorry, Allied Assortment, WW2 US Army Air Force display, Heartland Express USAAF, the Army Air Corps, Aldhurst Military Vehicles, The Joystick Club, SAM1066 and the Wiltshire Home Guard.

Event organiser, Joe Faretra, said: "This event has been running for a few years now, and it was my first one as organiser, so the pressure was on to get it right. "Being a dad, and regular attendee of these kinds of days, I found it imperative to offer something for all the members of the family, especially the youngsters. "The attendance figures were well above what I was expecting, but I won't rest on my laurels as I look ahead to next year already and seek to expand all the offerings, including more aircraft, exhibitors and entertainment."



by AWD Photography

## ASSOCIATION SHOP



Blazer Badges, Gold wire :

656 Squadron £10.00

Association £10.00

Blazer badge, woven

Association £5.00



Bone China Mugs: Association, Chinthe Crest, Squadron Badge. £6.00 each



Earthenware mug , RAF badge

£6.00

Set of the 4 mugs

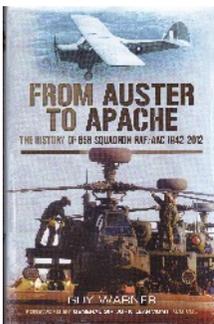
£20.00



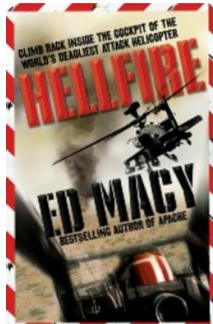
Lapel Badge, metal and

Enamel

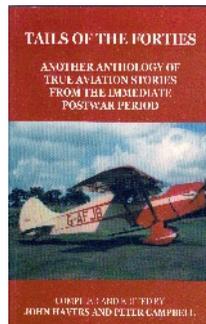
£3.00



£10.00



£10.00 HB  
£4.50 PB



£8.00



£10.00

Postage not included. Order on line or direct to a committee member

## MALAYA 1957

from Don Smith

The War Goes On.

The war is over, so they say  
But we fight on in a different way,  
We see no tanks, no planes or guns,  
No enemy WEAPONS, or pushing HUNS  
We never see the ones we fight,  
Their evil deeds are done by night,  
But came the day when we shall see,  
These Bandits go down on bended knee,  
And pray to God that they may live,  
For what they've done we can't forgive,  
An ambush here, a bomb thrown there,  
A burst of bullets in the air,  
Another COMRADE goes to rest,  
BRITAIN'S sons, the very best,  
See you in Blighty far away,  
These last few words are hard to say,  
To you at home the war is won,  
But to you TOMMIE'S out here, it's just begun.

## ANAGRAMS

PRESBYTERIAN: . . . . . BEST IN PRAYER  
ASTRONOMER: . . . . . MOON STARER  
DESPERATION: . . . . . A ROPE ENDS IT  
THE EYES: . . . . . THEY SEE  
GEORGE BUSH: . . . . . BUGS GORE  
THE MORSE CODE: . . . . . HERE COME DOTS  
DORMITORY: . . . . . DIRTY ROOM  
SLOT MACHINES: . . . . . CASH LOST IN ME  
ANIMOSITY: . . . . . IS NO AMITY  
ELECTION RESULTS: . . . . . LIES - LET'S RECOUNT  
SNOOZE ALARMS: . . . . . ALAS! NO MORE Z 'S  
A DECIMAL POINT: . . . . . I'M A DOT IN PLACE  
THE EARTHQUAKES: . . . . . THAT QUEER SHAKE  
ELEVEN PLUS TWO: . . . . . TWELVE PLUS ONE

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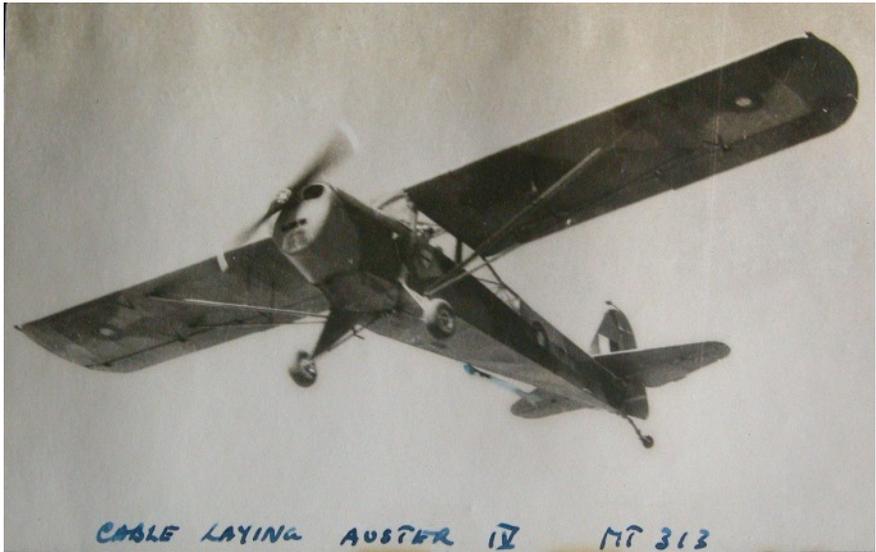
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TO



**75 GLORIOUS YEARS**

Photos: Top: Tommis, Burma 1945. Bottom: Bennett, Wattisham 2013.