

Greetings, on behalf of Major Steven Marshall, the Office Commanding and all currently serving 656 Squadron Army Air Corps members. After the completion of an extremely successful tour in Bosnia, the Squadron has settled back in to the routine of garrison life here in Dishforth, if there is such a thing as routine. During this year alone, there has been and are, Squadron members and detachments supporting Army training and operations in Belize, Bosnia, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Kenya, Northern Ireland and others have been warned for operations in Zaire. This all in addition to the ongoing support that is provided to the Army in the UK. It is difficult to find a time when a significant number of Squadron personnel are actually here at home rather than abroad. This is however, an indication of the quality of personnel that serve with 656 Squadron Army Air Corps and the esteem in which they are held within the greater Army community, that they are so often chosen to augment and support training and operations of outside agencies.

The reputation for 656 Squadron being the premiere Squadron within the Army Air Corps, is as intact today as it has been throughout its illustrious history. In spite of aircraft shortages and personnel being deployed around the world, 656 Squadron leads the Army Air Corps in every endeavor it undertakes. This leadership is also evident in the manner with which the Squadron Association has conducted itself.

The leadership is to be commended for the professionalism with which they have set up and run the 656 Squadron Association. This Squadron has been approached on several occasions by other units for guidance on how to go about setting up an association that will be as successful as that of 656 Squadron. For their dedication to creating an organisation that current members are proud to be part of and an Association that is the envy of the Army Air Corps, the current serving members of 656 Squadron Army Air Corps thank you.

This is the last piece of correspondence that you will see my name on it, as I am returning to Canada in June of this year. My successor will be Captain Iain Smith AAC, a brilliant career Officer that you will all meet in person and through correspondence. You are all, also cordially invited to the Squadron Open day which will be held Sat 23 August of this year, in conjunction with the Regimental open day here in Dishforth. I wish you all the best in your future endeavours and personally congratulate you for running an excellent Association.

Signed:- S T Braithwaite, Captain, Canadian Forces, 2IC 656 Squadron AAC.

#### TREASURER/ MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT APRIL 97

1996 was a quite year in comparison to 1995 when the whole nation celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the ending of the war, with several Association members taking part in the Veteran's Parade in London. Ray Pett and myself also had the pleasure of attending the Service of Thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral. Middle Wallop was the focal point for a large gathering of Association members to witness the 'Wallop Challenge' and attend the AGM, the minutes of which, along with those for 1996, have already been circulated. On Sun 1 June, some 35 members who had served with the Squadron during the Burma campaign, accompanied by their wives, enjoyed an excellent luncheon here in Langport to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Squadron leaving Rangoon for Madras to prepare for 'Zipper Operation'. Earlier, a wreath of Poppies was laid at the local War Memorial. VJ day. 15 Aug was again celebrated, this time at the Little Malvern Hotel, where the proceedings could well have been marred by the entrance of a group of Japanese tourists, who thankfully withdrew on seeing the management notice, "Welcome 656 Squadron -The Burma Boys". 656 Squadron hosted the Families Day at Dishforth on Sat 22 July, a glorious sunny day that was much enjoyed. We all would like to express our thanks to the Squadron for the kind invitation and congratulate Capt Banks on organising the event and for looking after us so well. All in all, it was a year to be remembered.

1996 commenced with the deployment of the Squadron to Bosnia on a 6 month tour as part of the Peace implementation Force (IFOR). As a sad consequence, the Annual Families Day we have enjoyed over the years became a non-starter and regrettably we missed meeting up with our members from the North. We were pleased and relieved however, to hear of the successful accomplishment of the mission and the safe return of the Squadron. In connection with this conflict, members who attended the Jubilee Celebrations at Netheravon in March 93, will have had no difficulty in recognizing an ex-Squadron Commander, Lt Col Gary Coward, who provided daily briefings on TV from Sarajevo during that tense situation. The Association congratulates him on having the OBE (Military) conferred upon him by Her Majesty the Queen.

A small stock of ties, cloth badges and plaques have been taken over from the Squadron as well as the design and manufacture of metal/enamel 656 Squadron Association lapel badges. Most of these items are available from the Squadron or myself - see the price list for details of available items. The sale of these items has increased the Association revenue which has left the accounts in a healthy condition as you can see from the Balance Sheet. I record my thanks to Mr Ray Pett for auditing the accts also to those of you who have made donations to the funds. It is much appreciated.

### ASSOCIATION AGM

The Association AGM was held on Sun 16 June 96 during the International Air Show weekend with 14 members in attendance. Minutes and copies of the 95 Accounts, along with the membership update have been circulated. Since the beginning of 96 and up to the end of March 97, we have enrolled 51 new members. Regrettably, 2 members have decided to resign and it is with sadness that I have to report the death of the following members, the families to which letters of condolences have been sent:

(a)	5?	Maj P A Kingston	MC RA
(b)	8?	Mr Graham Gerry	RAF
(c)	94	Mr Jack Atkinson	RAF
(d)	311	Mr John Davies	RAF
(e)	335	Mr John (Paddy) O'shea	RA/AAC

The 97 AGM will again be held in the Museum of Army Flying, at 11am on Sunday 27 July, during the Middle Wallop Challenge weekend. As usual, the Association table will be situated within the AACA Marquee where we hope you will 'sign in' and give us the opportunity to greet you, as well as pausing to view the albums etc of 656 Squadron's past. Another Burma Luncheon has been arranged for Sun 22 June in Langport, Somerset. Details regarding the Families Day at Dishforth this year, which will be held on SAT 23 AUG 97 are in this Newsletter and I should point out that we will have a table set up there as well, which will serve as a focal point for all Association members who attend. We look forward to being able to meet you all.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Capt E V Maslen—Jones MC DFG RA on the publication of his book, 'FIRE BY ORDER' due out on 18 Apr 97. At long last, the contribution made by 656 AIR OP SQUADRON during the Burma Campaign is recorded in book form. It will, of no doubt, be of great interest to all Association members and current Squadron members to read of one of the great exploits of 656 Squadron. Les Rogers reports steady progress with the Squadron Chronicle, the first 5 years section (The War Years and beyond) being almost ready for proof reading. Well done Les.

Regards and good wishes, lobby Clark.

Hon Association Treas/Membership Sec.

## REGIMENTAL OPEN DAY — SATURDAY 23 AUGUST 1997

Sat 23 Aug 1997 is a date to mark in your calendar as an excellent opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. 9 Regiment Army Air Corps and with it 656 Squadron AAC are hosting an Open Day that will be the showcase not only of the Air Corps, but other Army units as well. 656 Squadron is happy to extend a personal Invitation to all association members and hopes to meet as many of them as possible at the 656 Squadron and Association Marquee tent as well as in the Squadron lines. The general outline for the day is as follows :-

(a) 10.30. A coffee reception will be held In the 656 Squadron crewroom, the directions to which will be posted from the Regimental Main Gate. This would be an excellent opportunity to view the many Items of Squadron memorabilia, which will be on display.

(b) 11.00 - Throughout The Day: The Regimental Open Day commences with various static and dynamic displays of various pieces of Armed Forces equipment. Various demonstrations will take place throughout the day highlighting the skills and equipment of several branches of the Armed Forces

All Association members, their families and friends are welcome to attend this open day, we would ask however, that If you intend to visit that you let the Squadron know as soon as possible in order to facilitate proper planning. This can be done by post or by phoning the Squadron at the following numbers

### ARMY SWORD

Captain Iain Smith is looking to purchase an Army sword and would much prefer to find one that has a certain amount of history behind it. if any Asen member has, or is aware of an Army sword that might be for sale, he would be interested in hearing from you. He can be contacted through the Squadron by the numbers shown above.