

## 656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

### TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT - MAY 1998

My input to this News Letter will of necessity be brief on this occasion. So far this year I have had the pleasure of welcoming 21 new members into the Association. An update along with changes of address is enclosed. It is however, with much sadness that I have to report the death of the following members, the families to which letter of condolences have been sent:-

- |    |     |                                |                    |
|----|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| a. | 30  | Major Lionel J Wheeler MBE DFC | Served 50-53 58-58 |
| b. | 223 | Capt Humphrey S Beech RA       | Served 46-47       |

### **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

#### **Sat/Sun 13/14 June. IAS Middle Wallop**

The Association table will as usual be situated inside the Marquee within the AACA enclosure and manned on both days, so please sign the attendance sheet and peruse the Assn Photo albums, Chronicles and other items which will be on display. A supply of ties, badges, and copies of Fire by Order will also be available for purchase. We look forward to meeting you.

The Association AGM will be held in the Museum at 11am on Sunday 14th. Your attendance would be appreciated.

#### **Sun 26th July. Annual Association Luncheon. Langport Arms Hotel. Langport. Somerset.**

In response to last years popular request another luncheon has been organised at the above venue, price £7.50. This will be preceded by an informal wreath laying at the local War Memorial at 12 noon. Lunch 1pm. For further details write or phone me on 01458-250009.

#### **Sat 29th August. 9 Regt Open Day and 656 Squadron Families Day. Dishforth Airfield.**

The Association Photo albums, Chronicles and other items will be on display, along with a supply of Lapel Badges and signed copies of Fire by Order in the 656 Squadron/Association Marquee. Important details regarding this event are to be found elsewhere.

I look forward to meeting many of you at these events.

Regards,

Nobby Clark  
Hon Assn Treas/Membership Sec.

## **ASSOCIATION DINNER, MIDDLE WALLOP - 4 APRIL 1998**

After numerous requests, polls and discussion, the Squadron Dinner was eventually held at the Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop, on the evening of the fourth of April last.

Some 123 members and their ladies attended for what turned out to be a most sumptuous occasion. With the surroundings adding to the nostalgia for many whom had not returned to Middle Wallop since their early service days. Certainly all those in attendance were in high spirits and many happy memories of old squadron days were relived during the reception.

The dinner was presided over by Lt Col Andy Simkin, who welcomed everyone to the event and introduced the speakers who were to follow. Maj Frank McMath, original squadron 2IC, spoke of the early formation days of the squadron and of Burma, then raised the loyal toast. Then Col Mike Hickey, spoke covering the Malaysian and Borneo campaigns, and later when deferring at one point to a book he was researching on Slim, a loud round of applause and cheering was heard. 'Slim' Burns (2 Flt/Sqn Wksp) we all thought? No! Field Marshall Slim of Burma was the person Mike has in mind. Pity! He then raised a toast to the Association. Finally Captain Jeremy Cook, the present squadron 2IC, spoke of the present day squadron, their commitments, challenges ahead and the camaraderie that still exists within the squadron today, founded on the bedrock of so long ago, many of whom he had the privilege to be dining with here this evening at Middle Wallop. He then raised a toast to absent friends.

On retiring from the tables a further period of frenzied reminiscing, catching up on war stores and family occurrences ensued until soon it was 'carriages' and someone switched the light on the Association until another equally engaging, enjoyable and simply rejuvenating dinner night occurs again.

Should this be an annual event I here you cry! Nice to think so. Plenty of work through without a committee! You never know though, should even greater numbers be interested it might be possible.

Thank you to all those that attended and made it the night it was. My wife and I enjoyed it. Hon Sec.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1998**

It is intended to hold The 656 Squadron Association, Annual General Meeting at 1100 hrs on Sunday the 14th June 1998, in The Museum of army flying. All those attending the IAS may wish to spare a few moments to attend.

## NEW MEMBERS

411. O'Connor F M. Lt Col RE. 1911 LL Flt RNAS Sembawang 56-58  
75 Coxmoor Close, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants. GU13 0ET 01252-627248
412. Smith AC. WO1 AAC  
Serving Member, address available on request.
413. Bond LR. RA 1903 Flt, Malaya, Hong Kong, Korea 53-55  
134 Sidwell Street, Exeter, Devon. EX4 6RY. 01392-278345
414. Proost PG. RA 16 Flt, Temerloh, Alor Star, Kota Bahru. 58-60  
19 Brendon Road, Peak Lane, Fareham, Hants. PO14 1SB. 01329-235418
415. Smith Iain. Capt AAC Canada, Bosnia, Dishforth 95-98  
Serving Member address available on request.
416. Bickerstaff SG. Sgt AAC 656 Dishforth 97-  
Serving Member address available on request.
417. Abusin AJ. AAC 656 Dishforth 97-  
Serving Member address available on request.
418. Sibun CS. AAC OC 656 Sqn, Netheravon 82-84  
Serving Member address available on request.
419. Babb E. RA Java, Sumatra, Malaya, Singapore 46-48  
62 Churchill Road, Bideford, North Devon. Ex39 4HQ. 01237-478495
420. Wilson DGM. REME Kluang 63-66  
19 Kenilworth Drive, Laurieston, by Falkirk, Stirlingshire. FK2 0LE 01324-627167
421. Newcourt A. Capt AAC 92  
30 Birch Green, nr Hertford, Herts. SG14 2LU. 01992-503923
422. Goodman CWH. GPA 1914 Flt Benta, Seremban, 54. 07 Flt Taiping 54-56  
2 Mary McArthur House, Picardy Street, Belvedere, Kent. DA17 5QA  
0181-311-6602
423. Kirby PD. GPR Noble Field K L 52-53  
63 Drift Road, Stamford, Lincs. PE9 1XA. 01780-756109
424. Marshall SW. Lt Col AAC OC 656. Bosnia, UK 95-97  
Serving Member address available on request.
425. Lock CRE. RA Taiping, Seremban 53-59  
15 Hadres Street, Ramsgate, Kent. CT11 8QD 01843-850583
426. Denton JH. REME Seremban 58-61. Kluang, Borneo, Singapore 64-67  
Kluang, Singapore 69-71  
26 Parkview Close, Andover, Hants. SP10 3TR 01264 354607
427. Hall GJ. RA Malaya, Brunei 63-64. Sembawang, Kluang 68-70  
Pilsdon Manor, Broughton, Stockbridge, Hants. SO20 8AX.



### CHANGES OF ADDRESS

37. Heath WH. RA Singapore, Sembawang, Changi. 48-49  
47 Cynfran Road, Llysfael, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd, N/Wales. LL29 8SU.
68. Dick WC. REME Malaya, 57-60 62-65  
10 Boscombe Way, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne. BH21 3QS 01202-696100
73. Thomas GO. RAF India, Burma, Malaya, Java. 43-46  
104 Richard Heights, Fflint, Flintshire, North Wales. CH6 5BS 01352-735894
118. Birch DJ. RAF SHQ, Noble Field. 55-57  
'Y Ddol' Denbigh Road, Afonwen, Flintshire, North Wales. CH7 5UB  
01352-720417
237. Beresford H. REME 02 Flt. 58-61. 11 Flt 63-67  
4 Spencer Close, Ashbourne, Derbyshire. DE6 1BU. 01335-42765
240. Aungiers RG. AAC Netheravon 86-87  
7 Admirals Meade, Butliegh, Glastonbury, Somerset. BA6 8UE 01458-850343
248. Styles DA. AAC Netheravon 92-  
11 Wheatears Drive, West Wellow, Nr Romsey, Hampshire. SO151 6RA  
01794-322995
275. Badger MG. Col DFC. AAC 07-11-14 Flts, Taiping, Sereban, Singapore 55-58  
Tumble Cottage, Lagness Road, Runcton, Chichester, W/Sussex. PO20 6LD.  
01243-539039
379. Moles R. RA Sereban, Kuala Lipis, HMS Simbang. 53-55  
Forge Croft, Simpson Cross, Haverford West, Dyffed. SA62 6EP

656 Sqn, 9 Regt AAC, Dishforth

### IT'S A SONG AND DANCE

On 19 February of this year a detachment from 656 Sqn, Gazelle Flight and attached personnel, left a cold and wet Brize Norton on Ex TRUMPET DANCE 2/98, in support of 1 Royal Scots BG. The exercise was taking place in Washington State NW USA and conducted out of Fort Lewis, home of 1 US Corps and Yakima Training Centre which was a further 3 hours drive away.

The detachment consisted of 21 personnel, comprising of aircrew, groundcrew, aircraft REME and one chef on loan from Topcliffe. The Gazelles that we were to fly were already in theatre, left there from Trumpet Dance 1. Our roles on exercise were primarily casevac, special to arms training (involving AOP, FAC, ARP, Recce tasks and liaison) and support to the battlegroup.

The Flight operated out of hangars situated at Grays Army Airfield, a 15 minute drive from North Fort Lewis, where the BG were located. The facilities that were at North Fort included a small PX, a well established gymnasium and a Country and Western Club! It was with luck that the Detachment Admin Sgt managed to obtain a small recreation room, with a pool tables, TV and video as well as the mandatory coke machine. The facilities on the Main Fort were of course a little more substantial and included a large PX, swimming pool, skating rink, cinema, Burger King, bowling alley and large gymnasium.

The first few days were taken up with admin, an area famil and map marking. We also started undertaking initial taskings from the BG which concerned recce and liaison tasks. The BG split and had Coys training at Fort Lewis and the Yakima Training centre. As a result one of the Gazelles was deployed to support the Coys at Yakima where its main role was casevac, however it was also involved in close recce and range clearance. The training centre itself was sparse, treeless, hilly and desert like, which was in complete contrast to the training area at Fort Lewis which was wooded and very green. The facilities to be found at Yakima were just as sparse with a very small PX, a small NAAFI type complex and a gymnasium.

Fort Lewis and Yakima are divided by a large mountain range which includes Mt St Helens and Mt Rainer which stands over 14000ft. If the weather and cloud base allowed it, the Flight would fly through the mountains from Fort Lewis to Yakima, taking an hour and a half. If the weather was not suitable to cross the mountains, it meant that we have to fly south along the Columbia River and through the Gorge. Although the scenery was just as spectacular as the one found through the mountains, it did take twice as long!

The Flight operated a crew system where by each crew did 10 days at Yakima and then 10 at Fort Lewis, followed by a few days as the standby crew. This system was only operated for the aircrew and REME support; for the groundcrew, they worked a day on/day off roster. The R & R was taken by everybody, although because of this crew system, not all at the same time. The activities undertaken during the R & R varied from a few days in Las Vegas, San Francisco or Los Angeles to skiing and snowboarding.

The BG itself, spent the majority of the exercise dry and live firing in preparation for the final weeks FTX. As the Flight were limited on the amount of fuel and flying hours that were available, most of the tasking occurred during the time Yakima and the final FTX. The FTX was the busiest time for us, receiving tasking both during the day and at night and ranged from massive casualty evacuation, recces, day AOPs and night AOPs using night vision goggles.

Once the FTX was over, all the aircraft and equipment had to be cleaned and packed away in readiness for the trip back. The Gazelles need to be stripped and ready to be loaded on to the hercules along with the freight. The flight back took two days with overnight stops a Goose Bay and Lyneham before making our way back to Dishforth via Teesside Airport.

Ex TRUMPET DANCE was a success for us due to the fact that the whole detachment worked hard, with high standards throughout and certainly was an experience enjoyed by all that took part.