

Newsletter of the
656 Squadron Association

Winter 1999

MESSAGE FROM OC 656

SQUADRON AAC

Major Alex Tucker

Dear members,

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As you will all be aware, this is a time of transition for 656 Squadron and indeed all Battlefield Helicopter Units as we come under the command of the Joint Helicopter Command at Wilton. We are now a sub unit of 16 Air Assault Brigade and have conducted our first Brigade exercise as a part of the Lead Aviation Battle Group which 9 Regiment provided. It was a useful learning process which has assisted us in making the transition from anti - tank operations to the more fluid and flexible Air Manoeuvre Operations. The major drawback is that we do not yet have the tools to do the job properly. We look forward to the introduction of the WAH-64 Apache helicopter in 2001 with great relish!

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Chinthe

It appears from listening to various members at meeting that the legend of the Chinthe is unknown to a lot of members, so here it is, courtesy Burma Castrol (UK)

The Chinthe

The Chinthe (pronounced 'chin-thay'), the mythical Ieo-gryph of Burma, guardian of the temples, goes far back into Buddhist and Burmese mythology. The Mahavamsa, the Great Pall Chronicle of Ceylon (c 500 AD), tells the story somewhat like this.

A princess had a son through her marriage to a lion, but forsook the lion who then became the terror of the land. The son set out to slay the lion. When he found the lion he shot an arrow at him, but so great was the lion's unshaken love for his son that the arrow rebounded from the lion's brow and fell to earth at the youth's feet. Three times this happened. But then the lion grew wrathful; and when the youth let fly the fourth arrow, it pierced the lion's body and killed him. Thus the lion lost his life because he had lost his self-possession and allowed wrath to pervade his heart.

Legend goes on to say that the son later erected a statue of the lion as guardian of the temple, to atone for this murder. Certainly, the Chinthe (sometimes portrayed as half lion and half human) is revered and loved throughout Burma.

It is also a protector, which can pounce on the enemies of religion (ie the State), from nine different directions. Due to this superiority it was used symbolically on the royal thrones of Burma.

Dear Members

The last year of an eventful millennium is drawing to its close, and we all look forward to an exciting future. As you read this you are probably looking forward to the ways in which you will celebrate it. Personally, Joyce and I plan the same as we have always done; a quiet night with the 'box', then letting in the New Year as my father did so many years ago. Entering by the front door on the stroke of Midnight, carrying a brandy, mince pie and a lump of coal. Moving in silence through the house and out of the back door pushing the old year in front of me, to return indoors by the front to wish the world a Happy New Year.

1999 has been quite an eventful year for the Association, starting with the annual Burma luncheon at Langport. This meeting has now been nominated as the venue for the AGM and will be held next year on June 11. I hope to see all the old faces and many new ones making the effort to attend to give support, and also to enjoy a splendid luncheon. This was reported on in the last newsletter.

In September the Squadron hosted our annual reunion at Dishforth, and 44 members attended, when you include their kith and kin who joined them, it was a very good attendance. We were welcomed by our hosts in the crew-room with coffee and biscuits. The Japanese flag is now displayed in a prominent position, along with other Squadron items. PRI shop was at hand to relieve us of a few pennies (or pounds!!) The Mess silver Chintre was brought along for members to see, and I can confirm that 1903 Flight IS named upon the plaque. After a short update from Tim Sharp we departed for the sports field where the afternoons entertainment was laid on. The sun shone all day, and the program laid on by the Squadron was excellent. Many members took the opportunity to take a short trip in a Gazelle, whilst another one was 'Powered up' with ground power so one could see the gunsight in operation. The local constabulary thrilled the children (from 9 to 90) with a display of a high-speed chase along the runway, and the brave passengers who went along for the ride had mixed feelings about it! Nostalgia was in the form of a 1939 Scammel recovery vehicle. Microlite instruction was available to any takers with 30 minute 'hands on' air experience for the brave (or fool hardy) amongst us. David Jason was scheduled to appear to accept a cheque from the Squadron.

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Anyone wishing to have articles, suggestions or comments published please submit them to me before May 2000 for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Please send any proposals for submission to the AGM to me before the end of May for inclusion. Its your Association and your opinions and views count.

John Bennett

For members who do not have access to the Internet and World Wide Web, the following comment is on our website, which I publish for your interest.:

Date: 17 Nov 1999

Time: 19:38:54

I found your website while searching for information on the Auster AOP Mk6 and enjoyed reading it very much. I'm currently restoring a ex-RCAF Auster AOP Mk6 to flying condition so was very pleased to find the 656 Squadron Association site. Reading the information on the AOP in operation gave me new insight to what the Auster AOPs did and seeing the Roll of Honour gave a face to those who flew the Austers. Thanks for posting the site and the 656 Squadron can consider the restoration of my Auster AOP dedicated to them as well as all other AOP squadrons and crews around the world.

Brian Rempel - Canada
email: fulcrum@direct.ca

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REMINDER

For those members who pay their subscription themselves, please remember they are due in January. It gives your Association unnecessary expense chasing late subs. If you wish to change to a standing order, which is better all round, then write/phone me and I will send the necessary paperwork to you.

Nobbies Corner

Friends. 2003 is the 60th birthday of our Squadron and I have been in discussion with Col. Andy Simkin, Maj Tim Sharp, and some Burma veterans, and all agree that we should try to mark this milestone with a suitable presentation to the Serving Unit.

At the AGM I suggested that it should take the form of an official Standard. However, whilst I would like to have had a full Colours made, the implications of Royal consent, time to make it and the extreme cost put it out of the ball park. However there is no reason why we should not present a 'flag', (similar to the GPA flag). The flag would bear the squadron crest, with a list of all the areas where they have served.

The cost would appear to be about £5000.00 and we need to make a start very soon. It means that I must come with my begging bowl to all members, seeking a donation of about £10 each. (Any extra that one could afford would be most welcome to help meet the target.) This will give us about £4000, and we will seek sponsorship from the AACA, and private firms to complete the total.

The presentation would be at a suitable date in early 2003, the most likely venue being Dishforth. This will be decided by the OC and your committee and notified. We would expect to have a good attendance of members, and some guests of honour. The day could conclude with some form of buffet or even a dinner.

Please support me in this venture and forward your cheques to me, or John Bennett, made out to "656 Sqn Assn, presentation fund"

Thanking you all for your past support for the Association, without which we would not have survived.

PHOTOGRAPHS.

Many thanks go out to Esther Beech for the large bundle of photographs (about 180!!) she has donated. They were taken by her late husband Humphrey. They should keep me off the streets for a while, sorting, cataloguing and mounting them! Thanks also to Mrs Carter for the album of her husbands photos that she has donated.

Claire and I wish you all a happy Christmas and the Very Best for the Millennium.

Nobby Clark

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The cheapest time to go would be in September and all the details below are based on the following.

A Air travel would be by Singapore Airlines, departing from Heathrow.

B Where possible, all hotels will be Hilton Hotels group.

C All hotels are on a bed and breakfast basis.

D The trip would start in early September 2000. Dates to be confirmed.

E Bookings will have to be made by 1st of February 2000.

Itinerary.

Arrive Singapore, transfer to hotel.

Day 1.

Meet and greet service at the airport by staff in uniform. Transfer in deluxe air-conditioned coaches. Brief orientation upon arrival en-route to hotel. Welcome kit for all members (map, brief itinerary, brochure etc.) Separate luggage van transfer for baggage. Assistance of qualified English speaking guide.

Day 2.

Breakfast in the hotel.

Sightseeing tour: –

Option 1 – 7hrs.

Round Island Tour

The Pasir Panjang Wholesale Market.

Ming Village – producing hand crafted replicas of antique Chinese porcelain.

Kranji War Memorial – overlooking the Straits of Jahore.

Bright Hill Temple.

Changi Village – boat ride of vicinity.

Option 2 – 5hrs.

Colonial Connection.

National Museum.

A trip down memory lane?

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