



THE CHINTHE



656 Squadron Association Newsletter

Autumn 2000

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Newsletter editor: Situation Vacant.....Please volunteer!

Secretary's report

The Association Luncheon and AGM was again held at the Langport Arms, and was attended by 12 members and their ladies. This gathering of the stalwarts is always an enjoyable meeting. The day commences with a wreath laying at the Huish Episcopi War Memorial. Arthur Windscheffel once more did us the honour of placing the wreath, whilst Ted Maslen-Jones recited the Kohima Epitaph. During this short memorial there was a flypast by an Auster 3 of Burma vintage, flown by a new Associate member, #515, James Stock. This aircraft was also the mode of transport that carried Ted M-J to and from the meeting, and made him a very happy chappie!

The AGM was chaired by Capt. Ben Whitehead, 2i/c the Squadron, in the absence of Maj Alec Tucker who was on duty with the Squadron in Bosnia. He read out a report of the Squadrons activities over the last 12 months, culminating in the detachment to Bosnia. He told of the then current situation on the 'Burma Challenge', details of which had been sent to all members.

The main item of the AGM was the resignation due to ill health of our President, Frank McMath. In his letter he also proposed that Ted Maslen-Jones be offered the post. The proposition was carried and Ted accept the position. In accepting it he counter-proposed that Frank be approached to see if he would accept being 'Honorary President'. (Frank later accepted by post)

Nobby Clark read out the statement of Accounts, showing a healthy balance, and I was accepted by the members. It was proposed and accepted that new membership applications would have a 'joining fee' of £3.00 to cover admin costs, in addition to the normal first year subscription.

It was proposed that a belated vote of thanks be sent to Derek Walker, the last Secretary, for the effort he had put in on behalf of the Association. A donation of £100 to Len Edgecock for his work alongside Les Rogers in compiling the Chronicles, was approved. At the close of the meeting we sat down to a hearty luncheon, before departing to our homes.

To help the Squadron cause, and also to raise funds towards our proposed flag, I obtained a gambling licence. With this I was able to conduct a draw, and many sincere thanks must be extended to David, of Peter Hicks Associates, for his generous donation of a Silver Chintze as the first prize. The Association donated a Pewter Auster model, and the book 'Fire by Order'. I submitted a bottle of malt to make 4 prizes. I regret to say the draw was not quite as well supported as I had wished, mainly I think because of the short time tickets were on sale, and the prizes being very much Squadron oriented. Never the less, during the Wallop Air Show, we sold £201 more tickets, and after expenses were able to donate £500 to the squadron appeal.

I have received for our records a copy of a French magazine called "39 45 Magazine" (issue 171, September 2000) in which is a detailed article, with photographs, running into some 10 pages, about 656 in Burma. This was contributed by Alain Henry de Frahan, (who is still looking for volunteers to travel through Burma on an expedition next year.)

The Wallop air day again saw a gathering of our members, not only to enjoy the show, but also to get together again with old comrades, and long may it go on. The draw was made on the Sunday, by Nick Payne, secretary AACA. The results are published

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later (page 8) in the newsletter.

On the back cover is an advert from one of our members, please support him. If you would like your business published, call me!

John Bennett

Treasurers Report

As we come towards the end of this the first year in the new millennium, I am pleased to be able to report, that our finances are in a very healthy condition and that membership has continued to grow, with 37 joining our ranks so far during the year, bringing a total to 517 since the Association was re-formed in 1989. Regrettably; as is to be expected; we have lost many old comrades during that period, and we currently have 431 members on the books.

The Burma Luncheon and AGM at the Langport Arms Hotel, preceded by the Wreath Laying at Huish Episcopi War Memorial in early June was reasonably well supported. Capt Ben Whitehead presided at the AGM on behalf of the Squadron CO, Major Alex Tucker.

Major Frank McMath, who had previously indicated his wish to relinquish the Office of President due to health problems; had also proposed that Capt E W Maslen-Jones be elected to take his place, this was unanimously accepted by all present. I thank him for all his efforts on our behalf during his tenure in that Office, and trust his health will continue to improve.

It was a pleasure for Claire and me to meet so many of you once again during the IAS at Middle Wallop in early September and in particular our principal Vice Presidents; Lt Colonels Andrew Simkins and David Joyce, also Capt Nigel Banks, all of whom have contributed much to the furtherance of the Association. About 60 signed the attendance register over the two days, many of whom availed themselves of the opportunity and purchased goods to the value of £181 from our stock of ties, badges and other items on display. A full price list of what we have to offer is available on request.

Regrettably, the SGM was not well attended, however the design of the proposed Flag was finalised thus enabling us to make representation to the Regimental Committee for consideration. We await their detailed reply. The Flag Presentation fund including interest, currently stands at £650.34. My thanks to all who have contributed, however; we still have a long way to go to reach our target, so if you would like to contribute, please send your donations as soon as you can.

Claire joins me in wishing you all a very happy and enjoyable Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year, and we look forward to meeting many of you again at the various events.

Yours truly, Nobby.

656 SQN – OP PALATINE 17 APR – 18 OCT 00

Some 86 members of the Squadron deployed to Bosnia on Op PALATINE as the UK Aviation Squadron between April and October this year. There we supported Multi National Division (South West) which has its Headquarters in Banja Luka. The Squadron initially deployed to Gornji Vakuf in the Vrbas Valley, which was our Main Operating Base for the first three months of the tour. We also manned two Forward Operating Bases at Banja Luka and Sarajevo as well as a logistic detachment in Split.

Our mission was to provide one Lynx in support of the Deputy Commander Operations of the Stabilisation force (Major General Philip Trousedell), one Lynx for the GOC of the Multi National Division (South West) (Major General Brimms) and one Gazelle doing observation tasks for the National Liaison Team. All aircraft were at an hour notice to move day and night. This was achieved on all but a few days when the weather or unserviceable aircraft beat us.

At the end of June we moved our Main Operating Base from Gornji Vakuf to Split. To say goodbye to Gornji Vakuf we organised an international heli-meet (any excuse for a party!). On the day we were joined by Americans, Canadians, Dutch, Czechs and of course the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. The evening started with a memorial service for the crew of the Lynx that crashed at Gornji Vakuf just before Christmas in 1998. With the help of a band and a disco the festivities then went on well into the night. Not even the weather was able to stop us – as the first rain in three weeks started to fall we moved into the hangar and carried on the motion!

The Burma Challenge was the Sqn's charity fund raising effort during the tour. This took the form of a sponsored run/row from Burry St Edmonds to Burma (the 1st operational deployment of the Sqn in 1943). All Sqn personnel logged their running and rowing mileage to gain the grand total of 6719 miles; which was reached on 1 September, the Corps' Birthday. At the last count we have raised just under £6,000 towards books for two Bosnian schools and Action Against Breast Cancer. Much of this money has come from members of the association, so a big thank you to all who were able to contribute.

During the tour Springfield HLS at Banja Luka was rebuilt (complete with hangar) and handed over just in time for the new independent Gazelle Detachment to move in. As we left the new Lynx Detachment was looking forward to moving into Sarajevo airport by the end of November. In summary, the Squadron had a very successful tour. We managed to fly 826.7 hours Lynx and 525.1 hours Gazelle whilst closing down the base at Gornji Vakuf and drawing down the aviation commitment from a squadron to two independent detachments of two Lynx and two Gazelle.

More information (and photos) can be found on the Sqn's Bosnian web site :
- Carl-evans.clara.net

On Operations with 656.

By Bernard **'Dusty'** Redshaw

As a subaltern in RNZSigs, I was seconded to 1NZRegt (infantry) as a Regimental Signals Officer and posted to Malaya in November 1957. After our Jungle Warfare Training at FTC Kota Tinggi, the battalion moved up-country to Taiping to commence anti-terrorist operations in January 1958 as part of 28 Commonwealth Brigade Group.

We located a company each at Tannah Hitam and Tanjong Rambutan and two more at Sungei Siput. We also established a Tac HQ in the Police Station at Ipoh.

As RSO, I spent most of my time at in the Ops Centre working shifts with our IO. In due course, since my 2ic and two sergeants could cover all the signals requirements, I became a peripatetic second IO. It was during this phase that I was a regular passenger of both 2 Recce Flight in Ipoh and 7 Recce Flight in Taiping.

In 1959 the focus of our operations moved northwards the Thai border and I moved up to Grik to establish a forward Tac HQ in the Police Station there. 656 Squadron established a forward presence with two Auster 9's on the local airstrip at Grik. Very soon after, one of the Squadron's pilots (as I recall a Staff Sergeant with the nick name of "Hawk Eye" - I can't remember his name, but I'm sure that he does!) sighted a very large deep jungle CT camp in the Betong Salient (Thailand). The camp was so large that it was considered almost certain to be that of the Secretary General of the MCP, Chin Peng. And so an operation was immediately set up to take it. Not permitted to cross into Thailand, the operation provided for a combined Malay and Thai Police Field Force company to attack the camp, whilst 28 Brigade forces maintained a large network of ambushes on the border. I moved up to Kroh to set up a further forward Tac HQ and the 656 Squadron detachment moved up with me. Also on the strip at Kroh, the RAF positioned a Whirlwind helicopter, which it later replaced with a smaller Sycamore.

The tension and excitement mounted as Police, Special Branch, Army and RAF personnel converged on Kroh to confer, plan and monitor the operation. A high level contingent of Police, Army and other officials came in from Thailand. And from Alor Star came John Davis, who, as one of Freddy Spencer Chapman's Force 136 colleagues during WW2, had known Chin Peng personally when he was fighting for our side against the Japanese. Davis's knowledge of Chin Peng's make-up and likely actions was to play an important part in the operation.

During this time I made a number of discreet observation flights (as a passenger of 656 Squadron) over 28 Brigade positions. The Auster 9 that we flew in most frequently was suffering a number of minor problems, which should possibly have warned me of what was to come. On one occasion, as we were coming in to land,

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the pall securing the sprocket for the HF antenna came adrift, the antenna unwound violently and we lost it. On another, just as we were taking off (on half flap) the hydraulic flap actuating pump failed and we lost our flaps, losing height and narrowly avoiding the tin-mining lake at the end of the strip. On yet another flight, whilst returning in failing light, I noticed that my right side was getting wet with what seemed to be oil. (we flew with the doors off) On landing we discovered that it was indeed oil - coming from a leaking engine gasket.

Two days before the attack was due to go in, a CT courier, travelling north towards the camp, was ambushed and killed by a patrol of 3RAR. The body was carried back in relays to a 1 NZ Regt position that was considered to be sufficiently far enough away from the CT camp area so as not to compromise the operation. The patrol cleared an LZ for an RAF helicopter to bring out the body. However, at this particular moment the Sycamores were grounded and the one remaining Whirlwind unserviceable. It was decided to parachute in a camera and fingerprinting equipment by the 656 Squadron detachment. The same Auster 9 was tasked, with Captain Nigel Budd, 10th Hussars as pilot, and myself as dispatcher. We were to drop the equipment into the same DZ that had been prepared for the helicopter, which was sited on a ridge. We swooped in and, on Nigel's signal, I dispatched our load. As we circled, the parachute developed and started to descend perfectly into the clearing. Then an up-draft from the ridge lifted the parachute upwards and sideways, depositing it into the top of a tall tree on the edge of the DZ. It soon became obvious that the patrol could not recover the parachute and it was very likely that another parachute would also suffer the same fate. We returned to Kroh to collect another set of equipment prepared for a free drop on a streamer. So back we went, and into the clearing we dived. As I threw the bundle out, Nigel pulled the Auster tightly up and out. Whilst I was looking downwards and backwards, focussing on the streamer, I felt a bump and heard a loud thumping, ripping noise on Nigel's side of the aircraft. I then saw that we were now flying very low, almost skimming the jungle canopy. "Oh Christ!" came Nigel's voice over the intercom, "I've never done that before." When I looked out to his side, I saw that we had lost a sizeable piece of our port wing, loose canvas was flapping and that we were carrying about six feet of branch. We had clipped the same tree that had claimed the parachute! But we were still flying. As we recovered and gained height, Nigel turned to me and said that he had to do a stall check to be certain of his ASI before we could land. Today, with more knowledge about flying than I had then, I have often wondered whether or not this was really necessary, given our circumstances. He explained everything to me, and after gaining more height, we did a stall check. This frightened me much more than hitting the tree!

On our way back home to Kroh, we were surprised to be joined firstly by the "grounded" Sycamore, then by the "unserviceable" Whirlwind and finally by an Otter that had been in the vicinity. Apparently the 1 NZ Regt patrol on the ground were

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sure that we had gone in and had put up a Mayday. And so this mixed convoy slowly made its way above the ocean of the jungle canopy - rather like the final procession in Peter and the Wolf.

We eventually made a perfect landing on Kroh strip with a large audience of worried looking military personnel looking on. When the aircraft was duly inspected, it was discovered that we had lost about 30 inches of our port wing and that the fuselage was twisted out of alignment. As a result, the airframe was written off.

The attack on the CT camp duly went in two days later, with Captain John Chandler, Royal Irish Fusiliers, flying the other Auster. The CT's sophisticated warning system allowed the occupants of the camp to escape before the PFF company fought their way in, and some 7 PFF personnel were badly wounded in the action. Evidence recovered from the camp showed that it was not that of Chin Peng, it was still a substantial HQ of the MCP, and taking it out was a major step forward in the Malayan Operation.

(Bernard has been enrolled as an Associate member)

(Apologies to Bernard as I have had to slightly abridge the article for space. JB)

DRAW RESULTS.

Congratulations to the winners, commiserations to the losers, and thanks to all who took part.

	Item	Ticket No	Winner
1	Silver Chinthe	3432	J. Connor (64)
2	Auster model	2756	E. Babb (419)
3	Fire by Order	0433	R. Warden (369)
4	Whisky	3749	J.E.T. Hoare (400)

In our 'shop' we now have blazer badges, on a black background, and can also get silver/gold wire blazer badges made. Both have '656 Squadron Association' motif. Cloth badges are £6.00 and wire ones £15.00

Orders to Nobby, **with your payment**.

Wire badges are only made to order so delivery is about 6 weeks. We can also get an Association or Squadron crest in Gold/Silver wire, 10" x 6" suitable for framing, at £25.00 each

NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST NEWSLETTER			
491	Capt B Whitehead.	Cheshire	1998-2000
492	Mr D.W. Davies	RAF	KL '54 MSS
493	Dr C Pemberton	RA	HK Oct71
494	Mr I.M. Wood	REME	N'Avon/Falklands. '86
495	Mr M. Kelly	AAC	N'Avon/Dishforth '93-'98
496	Maj (Retd) P Beacon	RCT	Malaya 59 - 62
497	Mr T Lynch	AAC	Farnborough, Netheravon. 80-83
498	Mr R Wright.	RA	Malaya/S'pore '48 - '51
499	Mr M Lord	AAC	78 Farnbro, Rhodesia, Falk-lands.'91 Netheravon
500	Capt A Williams	RLC	Dishforth 2000
501	Mr B Redshaw	Associate	Served 1NZ Regt Malaya 57-59
502	S/Sgt J.M. Challis	AAC	95-97 Dishforth
503	Mr M Galston	AAC	86-89 N'avon 94-97 Dishforth
504	Mr R Watson	AAC	N'avon,Canada, Kenya
505	Mr R. Ward	AAC	82-85 Falklands, Kenya
506	Col G Simpson	REME	Seremban=EME to Mike Hickey
507	Capt S Bennion	AAC	86-88
508	Mr B.R. Davies	REME	60-63 KL, 63 Kluang 14 Flt
509	Col (Retd) F.F. Mallam OBE	AAC	14 Flt Kluang 64-56
510	Maj (Retd) R.J. Philips MBE	AAC	86-88 N'avon
511	WO1 G Fraser QCBA	AAC	84-88 N'avon, 92-94 Dishforth
512	WOII K Hainey	AAC	95-96
513	Mr R Skingley	AAC	76-80
514	Mr R.I. Dodd	RAF	1903 Flt Korea 53
515	Mr J. Stock	Associate	Burma Auster owner
516	Lt.Col.(Retd) J.M.R. Fleming	RHF	59-62 - 2 Flt Ipoh, 7 Flt Taiping, Kluang
517	Mr M.R. Little	REME	68-69 75 a/c wksp Kluang

Invitation to Join a Reunion in Kluang.

I am proposing to invite any interested old 75 Aircraft Workshop / 11 Flight boys (say 1967 to 1970) to a reunion to be held at some time in the future, in Kluang. I envisage that a suitable time frame would be in around 18 months to 2 years time, thus allowing plenty of time for individuals to plan for the event. The first stage of this endeavor will be to contact as many of our old colleagues as possible and then determine the level of interest. Please Email me at: emarel@pop.jaring.my or snail-mail to my home address: 128 Jalan Wira 5, Taman Perwira 2, 68000 Ampang, Selangor, Malaysia

I look forward to your call! (member # 517) Mick Little

Deaths

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

Lt Gen Sir David. T. Young	KBE (203)	Died Jan 2000
Mr H.F.J. Brown	(259)	Died 18th May
Lt. Col Martin	(209)	Died 25th June
Mr J.E. Fenlon	(97)	Died September

At the recent funeral of Gen. Farndale the Squadron was represented by the attendance of Messrs Begbie, Cabbage, Dicksee and Maslen-Jones.
(As reported in the 'Times' newspaper.)

Diary Dates

A.G.M. & Burma Luncheon.

Langport 12:00 hrs 10th June 2001

Reunion—Dishforth (provisional) 8th Sept 2001

Dinner(s) See addendum

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY

The Association wishes to compile a photographic history of our Squadron. We appreciate that photos are personal and very treasured memories, but feel sure that you would like to share them with future generations of 656 people. The intention is to re-photograph the pictures, and store them digitally on CD's, which we can archive. This will compliment the excellent work that Les Rogers is doing compiling the Journals.

ALL photos submitted will be returned after being copied, unless you state otherwise, ie donate them to the Association. A note as to who people are, or what the scene is, and when it was, will be most helpful.

Send your pictures to the Secretary, (address on page 2) and feel free to phone me if you wish to discuss anything , on 01249-652922. John Bennett

Do You Know Where These Members Are Now??

The following list is of members who have moved or left the service. They are still paying their dues, but the newsletter is being returned. If you can help please do.

No	Name	Last known address
14	Cook C.M.	Shipston on Stour, Warks
394	Corbett K.	Amesbury, Wilts
167	Durrant M.C.	5 Regt, BFPO 608
284	Everett W.S.	Darlington, Co. Durham
238	Gibbs P.J. (Maj)	Marlborough, Wilts
308	Gillan R.R. (WO2)	3 Regt Wattisham
427	Hall G.J.	Bridport, Dorset
359	Hughes K.	Didcot, Oxon
360	Hughes P.G.	Bedale, N.Yorks
461	Needham B.	West Brom, West Midlands
428	Pooley R.	Stockbridge, Hants
412	Smith A.C. (WO1)	5 Regt, BFPO 608
415	Smith I. (Capt)	Harrogate N.Yorks
115	Walker S.C.	Woolwich, London
178	Warner R. (Maj ret'd)	Ross on Wye, Herefordshire

Please remember to

notify the membership secretary of any change of address, or phone numbers. The members using **Email**, remember, when you change your ISP you lose your old address. The ability to send you these newsletters by Email saves quite a cost to the Association in postage, stationery and labour! Not to mention full colour pages!

I know we don't like to talk about it, but please, leave clear instructions for your next of kin to contact membership records, so firstly, if possible, we can get a representative to attend the funeral, and then to also avoid sending distressing correspondence. As Membership is open to any relatives of persons connected to 656, they may wish to continue with the Association in their own rights.

Strategy
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Limited edition prints, **signed by David Shepherd**.
Print only £80 each. Framed £140 each



656 Squadron, Auster in N. Malaya 1962
by David Shepherd oee



Falklands Casavac, by David Shepherd oee

If you would like a copy of these fine pictures, or to find out what other paintings are in stock, please call Dave Whiteley direct. (David is a member of the Association)

This is a paid advert. To promote your business in the newsletter, call John Bennett