

CONTENTS

THE CHINTHE



656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL
SUMMER 2008

CONTENTS

President's Report	2
OC's Report	3
Secretary's Report	5
AGM	6
Letters	7
Reunion	11
Members' Contributions	13
Cryptic Crossword	38
Association Shop	39
Notices	42
Committee Members	44

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It is now the middle of Summer, with the inevitable sunshine and showers. However, in the tradition of our Reunion weekends, we were blessed with fine weather and a warm welcome when we renewed our relationship with the Squadron, now based in Wattisham, Suffolk.

At last year's Reunion Dinner we were honoured with the attendance of a number of the medal winners (DFC and MC) from Squadron operations in Afghanistan. It was therefore a privilege, at this year's Reunion, to receive a presentation from the Officer Commanding, Major David Amlôt with photographs and video coverage of the Jugroom Fort operation. A truly inspirational presentation.

Having recently returned from Afghanistan, I can vouch that Helmand Province, particularly at the height of the Summer, is harsh and unrelenting. This is before one adds the operational realities. We can, therefore, be proud of the continued success of the Squadron in the most testing of environments. They continue to display great fortitude and tenacity.

Meanwhile, the Association has had a highly successful year. Our tour of Borneo and Brunei was well attended, although it tested the Travel Agent's patience, as we all had individual itineraries. Our party, of all ages, greatly enjoyed the experience and look forward to another opportunity to visit the region.

We now look to the future. We are keen to expand our membership, so if you know of a Squadron veteran, who is not a member, let us know. We are, also, about to submit a Lottery application to bring order to our extensive archives. This is a major task, but one of great importance. So if you have any material which you are happy to have copied, please contact John and Sylvia Heyes.

We are now planning our Reunion event for 2009. Our aim is to hold an Auster Fly In, similar to the highly successful events in 2004 and 2006. Full details will be in the January 2009 Journal.

The continued progress of the Association and the day to day administration would only be possible with a dedicated Committee team. I thank the committee members for their unstinting efforts on behalf of us all.

Andrew Simkins

OC'S REPORT

2008 to date has been a period of bedding in for the new Squadron with a fairly hectic training period. In January, Conversion to Role 8 (CTR) began for the Squadron; first with the ground crew who were allowed a week to get on top of their FARP training; then the aircrew who were occupying the FARPs within days of arriving. For the first time in several months the offices were full.

The start of CTR was also the start of life in the field Army for many with a large percentage of the ground crew and pilots having spent most, if not all of their careers to date in the training system. For some of the officers this accounts to 3½ years, a function of the complexity and resource constrained environment that is modern aviation. This was not the case for all, with 4 QHIs on the course with a wealth of experience and a number of us who have remained in the Squadron with previous CTR and Operational experience.

In Feb some of us took the opportunity to brush up on our mountain survival in the form of Ex VOLKERS PLOUGH, 4 Regt AAC's annual skiing trip. While it would be unfair to class this as arduous, it is important that our soldiers take every opportunity there is to conduct adventurous training, opportunities that are becoming less frequent due to the ongoing Operational commitments. Not to mention the self development that can be had finding out you can hurl yourself down a mountain with the only damage being to your wallet in the bar afterwards.

Back to flying and a little bit of history was made early in CTR when on 1st February one of our crews flew the first Apache ab initio pilot mutual sortie. The significance being that neither pilot is an aircraft commander and the Apache is their first type. We are also covering new ground with 2Lt Helliose Goodley the first AAC DE ground crew officer, as the Ground Support Flight Commander she is responsible for almost 70 members of the Squadron. The first Exercise for CTR came in the form of Ex FIRST FORAY which took us to Woodbridge Airfield for the night. Not the most exotic of locations but it allowed the Sqn to deploy for the first time and shake out. Numerous lessons were learnt and even the flying was testing due to freezing fog, which made just finding your basha from the CP a challenge. Despite only being away for 24 hours all involved agreed it was a valuable use of time. Ex FIRST FORAY led straight into the Mission Commanders Course which is a two week Squadron minus deployment to Middle Wallop. The aim was to test our planning cycle and subsequent command in the mission execution. All of this was conducted in the Aircraft Command and Tactics Trainer. This is a bank of computers which simulates 8 aircraft.

The 10th May 2008 was the day 4 Regt AAC took over command of Joint Helicopter Command (Afghanistan). For the Sqn though May was dominated by Ex LIGHTNING FORCE the last big deployment before we go to Arizona in August. 131 personnel deployed to Albemarle Barracks Newcastle, formerly RAF Ouston home to Austers from 657 and 664 Sqns as far back as 1943. Sadly the runways are now disused. The facilities however were sufficient to operate 8 Apache (a rare sight indeed) plus visitors from 9 and 7 Regts. All of

this within 15 minutes flying time to the RAF Spadeadam Electronic Warfare Range. Here our crews trained with live chaff and flare, the first time most had flown with live munitions. They also learnt the art of fighting modern anti-aircraft systems, or at least had an introduction to it. The ground crew benefited from valuable training loading live munitions day and night, another first for many. In all the Sqn flew 200 hours in 2 weeks, more than the 2 months previous put together.

We were also to say goodbye to two of our most experienced pilots, WO1 Macmillian and WO2 Armitage MC. Jamie MacMillian is leaving the Army after a long and distinguished career. WO2 Armitage MC is moving onto pastures new. Both will be missed and have contributed in a large way to bringing the current Sqn to where it is today.

On to sporting success. Capt Davis, SSgt White, ATrps Griffiths and Williams were part of the Regimental team who won the David Hicks Memorial Trophy for orienteering last Nov. LCpl Turnock, ATrps Griffiths (a different one) and Parsons competed at the Divisional Swimming Championships. Two of whom qualified for the Tri-Service Championship.

It was an absolute pleasure to see many of you at the Association Reunion at the end of June. Having missed the last one personally due to another commitment in Afghanistan I really enjoyed meeting so many of you and hearing about your time spent in 656 Squadron. Those soldiers who talked you through the equipment that we operate today did so having volunteered to work on yet another weekend, a good indication of how important they view your contribution to the Squadron. I would personally like to thank all of you who were involved in organising the day but particularly at our end Captains Piers Lewis and Ben Shillito for their work with the Association and our SSM, WO2 Hartnett for his organisation at of what turned out to be a most enjoyable evening. As this document goes to print the Sqn has departed for summer leave and as you read this some may already be in Arizona with the advance party air testing and preparing for Ex CRIMSON EAGLE. Two months of live firing, Survive, Evade, Resist and Extract (SERE) training and our CTR final Exercise await. On return elements of the Sqn deploy to Afghanistan to back fill 654 with the main body continuing to train in the UK. This will include a Battle Camp, work up training for air and ground crews as well as some well earned adventurous training in Newquay, Cornwall. All of this prior to taking over the Afghanistan commitment from 654 Squadron in Jan 2009.

In summary I've used the word first many times in this report, and not without justification. We are once again a new squadron, with this thought in mind, 656 Sqn is continuing to take a lead in the AAC, doing new things, with a new aircraft in an ever changing world.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

One year into being Secretary of the Association, I'm pleased to say that my report is generally positive. Once again I must thank Sylvia, my wife for all the work that she does for me and the Association. Without her hard work this Journal and the association in general would be poorer.

Membership is steadily growing, sixteen new members since the last issue of the Journal in January. On the subject of membership, the question was raised regarding the eligibility of the 75 Aircraft Workshop personnel to be members of our Association. The unanimous agreement of your committee was that, since 75 Workshops started life as 656 Light Aircraft Squadron Workshops and after the change of name continued to solely support the Squadron, they should be eligible to join us. Mick Little has notified all of his members of this decision and, hopefully, we should be recruiting some more new members.

The tour to Borneo went well, twenty people taking part. Ron Ward will be writing a full report on the tour for the January edition of the Journal. A tour to Peninsular Malaysia is planned for around March 2010. Two people have already signed up for it. More details will appear in later Journals but if you are interested please let me know.

The Annual reunion held at Wattisham went well. We were very well cared for by the Squadron and particular thanks for their help must go to Paul Hartnett, the Sqn Sgt Major, Ben Shillito, the Sqn Association Representative, and last but not least to David Amlôt, Sqn OC, without who's blessing, the whole event would have had to be held elsewhere. It was very pleasing to see so many new faces at the reunion. Sadly quite a few of the 'regulars' were not able attend but their names have been noted as they didn't have 'Excused chits'. Planning for the next reunion is underway and a number of venues are being considered. Netheravon or Middle Wallop are top contenders as we could also have an Auster fly In, the International Auster Club are keen to join us again.

I remind members that there are special free postal arrangements for the troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. Packages addressed to 'A Soldier' will be sent post free and distributed in theatre by the services. There are limitations on the size and weight of the package, please check with the Post Office for details.

We currently send out notices by email when information to members is thought to be too urgent to wait for the next edition of the Journal. I know that a large number of our members do not have email and consequently miss these notices. Unfortunately, the cost of postage precludes a mail shot to all members. If you do not have email, but have a relative or friend who would be willing to receive emails on your behalf, please let us have their email address and we will ensure that you get any urgent notices. We will not inundate your friend or relative with unwanted emails.

Sadly, we have to report the death of Bob Begbie. He was a vice presidents of our Association. He championed the cause of Army Flying and had a stellar career in the army. I'm sure that he will be well remembered and sadly missed by many of our members. His obituary will be found in the next edition of the Army Air Corps Journal.

John Heyes

AGM

Welcome by the President Andrew Simkins.

One minutes silence to remember lost colleagues.

Apologies: R. Goodwin. M. Haynes. G. Dempster.

Minutes of last AGM Prop. D. Walker Sec. M. Meaton

Secretary's Report:

John Heyes

Treasurer's Report:

Mark Meaton. Finances are in good order.

Acceptance of financial report. Prop. D. Walker. Sec. W. Dick.

Grants:

Andrew Simkins in discussion with AAC to clarify our relations with them re funding etc. We are also applying for Lottery funding to enable us to put our Archives in proper order. On the point of Archives, Les Rogers says we should dip into public records re 656 Sqn History.

Programme 2009:

The reunion will probably be 25th/26th July 2009, to be confirmed in the Spring Journal. Possible venues are: Netheravon, Middle Wallop or the National Arboretum. All these venues to be looked at and confirmed in the Spring Journal. Hopefully there will also be an Auster Fly In.

Subscriptions:

To remain at £7.50 per annum.

Remembrance Sunday 9th November 2008:

Flyers to go into Summer Journal. Andrew Simkins to co-ordinate.

AOB:

John Bennett proposed a vote of thanks to John & Sylvia Heyes for their efforts re. the reunion. Derek Walker proposed a vote of thanks to John Heyes for his efforts in organising the Borneo tour. Both proposals were seconded by all those present.

Jeremy Smith expressed his disappointment at our tree in the National Arboretum and asked that someone would make regular checks on it. Andrew Simkins will monitor it with interest.

It was agreed that we would continue with email updates to those of our members who have email. *If members do not have email of their own, but have friends or relatives who could take messages for them, please let Sylvia Heyes know and you will be added to the email list, or if you do have email but have not received updates, let us have you email address so you may be included.*

Meeting closed @ 1200 hrs.

LETTERS

Sir,

Many thanks for your co-operation before Christmas. I got in touch with Russell Matthews and he was the one I knew! I really surprised him and his wife Jill, as the last time I had seen them was in Kuala Lumpur, in October 1948, before he left for England.

Jill was the daughter of a rubber estate manager, just on the outskirts of KL. I was a Bombardier at the time and as it was a pretty bad Communist area, I used to go to the estate and pick her up some mornings, with a full armed escort and in our chat, we relived those times of long ago and it brought back many happy memories.

On the 2nd June 1948, the Emergency was declared in Malaya. I was in the Royal School of Artillery at the time, in 124 Regiment, in charge of Troop Signals. I was given orders that I was going to Malaya. After handing over all the Signals etc, I was sent to Woolwich, then two weeks embarkation leave, then back to Depot.

There we were given inoculations, taken to the photographers, then taken to a place where we received civilian clothes and then to a passport office somewhere in London. We were then told we were flying out to Malaya with some ex Palestine Police as civvies, so we had to hand in all of our Army equipment so people wouldn't think we were soldiers.

We had suits, collars and ties. I think the suits came from the workhouse! What a bunch of misfits, we didn't even have our hair cut. I still have my passport with the long hair. We were then taken, more or less in secret, to London Airport, which was under construction at the time, so not many facilities.

We travelled in a converted York 4 engine Transport. All the seats were removed and webbing had been put in to lighten the plane. There were over three hundred of us, the seats had about four strands of webbing to sit on, about six seats to a row and if you sat down hard in the middle, the two end men would go up in the air as the webbing was only fixed at the ends.

We left London at about 2pm and it felt as if we were never going to get airborne. From there we were going to Luqua Airport in Malta. It took eight and a half hours, you couldn't walk about on the plane. We were so congested and you can imagine how our legs felt when we got out. We stayed there for a few hours while they checked the engines and fuel.

The next step was to Basra, a long way round, flying over Beirut . We then went down to Karachi with all the usual hold ups, this is why we had to have civvies. We stayed that night in an hotel away from the airport, we were so tired I think everyone just collapsed.

From there we went to Calcutta. While flying across India, one engine stopped and for those who hadn't been in a 'plane before it was nerve wracking but we made it to Calcutta with an extra bumpy landing. We were stuck there for a long time and they gave us a meal in one of the buildings. We had a chance of a walk which was great it being the first we'd had in a long while.

From there we went to Bangkok. We landed in a monsoon, the pilot did an excellent job as the visibility was practically nil. We were put in the Lounge,

sleeping where ever we could get our head down. When the rain stopped and the sun came out they found a big shell hole that had been filled in after the war, on the runway. We had missed it by about six feet on landing. We all went out to have a look at it, and all had our eyes tightly closed on take off!

From there we went to the RAF aerodrome at Tengah, Singapore, our final destination. I think everyone kissed the ground when we finally got out of the 'plane. We arrived there on the Wednesday night, so the journey was from Saturday lunch time until Wednesday night. They can get to the moon quicker these days!

From there we went to Sembawang, a Naval Air Station, where we formed up 1903, 1904, 1907 and 1911 Flights. The Flights were then sent to different parts of Malaya where they were soon on operations. I went to KL with 1907 Flight where Captain Russell Matthews handed over to Captain Alistair Noble after whom the air strip was named.

This was my first contact with the AOP in which I am proud to have served.

Mick Geoghegan

Sir,

What a superb professional job done on the latest 'Chinthe'.

While reading the articles, I turned the last few pages with your belated congratulations to Russell Matthews and his wife Jill neé Beith, who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on the 6th December 2007. The wedding was held at St. Mary's Church, Kuala Lumpur and the reception was held later at the Lake Club, Kuala Lumpur.

I cried "*Eureka! I was there!*"

At the time I was RAF aircraftsman technician with 1914 Flight. We had flown down to Kuala Lumpur in an Auster with heaps of bags for the wedding on the morning of the big day. It soon transpired we were over loaded and required the whole of the airstrip to take off! With good fortune we missed the trees.

I had my copy Japanese Carl Ziess Ikon camera as usual and was able to take a small number of photographs of the wedding. I have enclosed a few photographs, (*the one shown, taken after the wedding, the new Mrs Matthews thanking us for representing the 656 Squadron*)



I have a great deal to be thankful for to Captain Russell Matthews, he recommended that I should give up reading cowboy and comic books and try healthier books such as 'Brave New World', he changed the whole direction of

I was a poor kid and left school at fourteen, and the degree was a huge achievement for me.

Tom Sutcliffe

(See page 42. An announcement regarding Jill Matthews)

Sir,

I have had a good read of the Spring Journal and found it really enjoyable. Having been 2i/c of 656 Sqn Workshops in Kluang - albeit before the "Daisy" incident occurred - I found myself full of sympathy with the dilemma facing Workshop Officer. Was he to regard this as something prejudicial to good order and military discipline? Or was it a morale-boosting prank that also showed up a weakness in his personal security system that could be rectified before it gave rise to more serious consequences? Anyway, I'm glad that the security of the State of Malaysia was in no way compromised, and I trust that the perpetrators of this refreshing bit of mischief were duly awarded with PJM's like the rest of us!

Tim Longley

The next letter is in response to the sad news of the death of Bill Peers.

Sir,

I knew Bill from my first day in command of 656 in 1989 when he and Nobby Clarke came to meet me an hour after I had started taking over from Andrew Simkins. The Association was 46 strong that day!

He was a delightful man, a great friend and supporter to Nobby in those early days of getting the Association going, and I am sorry to hear of his passing. My sincere condolences to his family. *David Joyce OC 656 Sqn, '89 - '91*

Sir,

Through a chance encounter between your Assn President and a fellow branch committee member, (I am Chairman of the local RBL Branch) I have had the pleasure of reading the Spring '08 Journal, which I found most interesting.

I served on 656 Sqn, prior to and during the early period of absorption into the AAC in '57, whilst serving with the RAF in Malaya. At that time, whilst the AAC were providing newly trained fixed-wing aircraft pilots, the servicing continued to be covered by the RAF.

From the initial comforts of the large major servicing base at KL, I was posted 'up country' to 1907 Light Liaison Flight, 656 Sqn at Taiping, where a small team of 14 groundcrew maintained five Auster AOP Mk.9 aircraft. The OC at the time was Major F C Russell DFC RA, one of six pilots on the Flight.

The Flight was located in a well guarded compound in a corner of the Malayan Airways Taiping grass aerodrome. Our domestic quarters were some distance away at Trincomalee Camp, where we lived as comfortably as attap bashas would allow.

On most days at least three aircraft were deployed north to the border where there was at that time a concentration of terrorists, and on quite a number of occasions every available aircraft was operational. I recall many

detachments, when we travelled many miles in the back of a 3-ton Bedford, surrounded by tents, stores, aircraft spares and gallons of aviation fuel, to operational bases at Alor Star, Kroh and Sungi Siput.. Also for a short period I transferred across to 1902 Flt at Ipoh to provide temporary cover.

This was for me quite an adventurous time, I enjoyed the feeling of being 'on active service', where no two days were the same. Working alongside the Army, on a two shift system, was an enjoyable experience, particularly as being in a minority we RAF appeared to have the better deal. This was a very good unit and the comradeship excellent. Always a little banter between the services, but it was always in good fun.

David Green

Since receiving this letter, David has joined the Assn/ Ed.

Sir,

I was especially pleased to find, in the Spring edition this year, the full version of Reg Bailey's experiences in the 7th Division Box in Arakan.

What Reg wrote has provided a most valuable account of what it was really like at that time. More particularly, how individuals had to face up to such a dramatic change of circumstances, without any information about what was going on! The fact that the Japanese were overrunning our position at the moment of our arrival, was something that we simply had to find out the hard way. 'C' Flight who were East of the Mayu range of hills, had no alternative but to join the Defended perimeter created by The 7th Indian Division. An entirely new strategy that helped 15 Corps, eventually, to regain the initiative. Less than forty eight hours later, Squadron HQ, together with 'A' Flight, had also just arrived, on the west side of the Mayu hills only to find themselves in a Defended perimeter which was being formed by the 5th Indian Division. However, the coastal strip made it easier to evacuated our aircraft, and to move to a relatively safe position. Reg Bailey's account, for me, is a simple and sensitive story of what he had to go through, with little knowledge at any time of when it was going to end.

Towards the end, Reg refers to a second pilot being shot down. I am able to report that it was not I. There were other light aircraft deployed at that time, and it is possible that it was one of the American L5's, used for evacuating wounded, that he had heard of .

Ted Maslen-Jones

Reunion 27th/28th June Wattisham Airfield, Ipswich, Suffolk



*Taken outside the 656 Sqn. crew room at Wattisham Airfield on Saturday lunch time after a briefing by David Amlôt.
Photo courtesy of J. Bennett.*

What a splendid day it turned out to be. Ben Shillito, the Squadron Association Liaison Officer, told me that he had had a word on high about the weather and the result seems to be that he has good connections.

We had an excellent turn out for the visit to the squadron lines. David Amlôt's briefing and film of the Jugram Fort operation really opened our eyes as to the bravery and professionalism of the Squadron.

The dinner in the WOs' and Sgts' mess was well attended. The venue proved excellent, the meal delicious, the company splendid and the lamps swung with some vigour. It was good to see so many new faces at both the lunch and dinner; hopefully they will become regulars at our reunions.

On behalf of the Association I must thank Ben Shillito, Paul Hartnett and all the Air Troopers who gave up, not only their weekend, but also a considerable amount of additional time, at a very busy period in the Squadron, in facilitating the reunion. Last but not least, our thanks go to David Amlôt for hosting the event.

John Heyes



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MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

656 SQN WORKSHOPS, KUALA LUMPUR, 1960/61

by Tim Longley, ex-2/ic Wksp.

This contribution is prompted by John Heyes' excellent article in "Hawkeye", which brought back many happy memories of 656 Sqn and life in Malaya generally. (*This article was sent to me ten years ago and was buried in my 'Filing system' until today. Sorry Tim! Ed.*) Looking at the photograph I recognise many of the faces, but sadly can't put many names to them. I am the young "sprog" next to the OC, Maj Bill Storey. I must have been very fresh out of Blighty, as my uniform hasn't had time to fade and my beret hasn't yet got the right "set" in it. (*See photograph on page 15*)

I am glad to say that I do remember Cpl Heyes, and his pal, Cpl Keith Corbett. Together with Capt Freddie Legg, the Squadron QFI, I seem to remember that we had something to do with an unruly bunch of British school kids somewhere in KL. Also, if I remember right, you had a dog, Puddin'. Freddie was a superb pilot, and is the only one I ever saw barrel-roll an Auster 9 at very low level over Noble Field.

Freddie Legg's deputy, SSgt Wright, was equally accomplished, and not long after I arrived in KL I went on an air test with him. Whilst recovering from a spin somewhere over the jungle beyond Batu Caves there was a loud "crack!". We looked up behind us to make sure the wings were still attached, and then stared at each other with furrowed brows. Eventually Staff shrugged his shoulders and completed the rest of the air-test.

While we were taxiing back to the workshops, the crew whose Auster it was came out to greet us. Then, one by one, they began pointing at something on the aircraft. As soon as we had stopped, a head appeared through an open space behind us and shouted "Oi!, where' s your door?" It transpired that this was not the first time such an incident had occurred. Due to lack of torsional stiffness of the Auster's welded-tube fuselage, the rear door was prone to springing from its hinges. I would like to think that that door was found by some dumbfounded aborigine and put to good use. It could be quite a status symbol to have an "orang puteh's" aeroplane door as the front door of your "basha"!

This story does not, however, end there. A few days later I was summoned to the adjutant's office and asked to sign a piece of paper charging SSgt Wright with the loss of one rear door whilst in command of Auster serial no. WZ whatever-it-was. I protested at the injustice of charging someone for something which was in no way any fault of his, and in any case it wasn't my idea that he should be charged. The adjutant assured me that no amount of logic would ever change the Army's way of doing things and that at the end of the day Staff Wright wouldn't be penalised anyway! When I told Staff Wright I felt bad about the whole business he replied that he had been in the Army long enough for that sort of thing not to bother him any more. I felt a lot better after that. Should I ever be ordered to march over the edge of a cliff, I would now do so without question!

Another flying anecdote which was circulating at about that time was of a certain pilot who was a cavalry officer, with an abysmal understanding of all things technical. One day when the weather looked a bit too dodgy for comfort he taxied his Auster down to the Workshops, complaining of an excessive mag-drop. Within an hour the aircraft was returned to him with a terse entry in the log-book: "Bled brakes, mag-drop checked OK".

When I wasn't doing exciting things like air-tests, much of my time was spent in the AFG1098 stores, known to the chief storeman as "The Black Hole of Calcutta". He was Cpl Jock (the Noo) Barrett. Jock is the one second from my left in the photograph, and he and I became great friends. We had frequent laughs at the absurd Army nomenclature for some of the items held in the stores, and also at Jock's love-hate relationship with the little Malay fellow who appears between him and me in the picture. This character, whose name I forget, was a sort of general dogsbody, and I think he felt safe from being molested if he stayed between Cpl Barrett and myself. He was treated pretty abominably by some of the British Other Ranks on the camp, but Jock would have him literally eating out of his hand. Occasionally even the long-suffering Jock would get fed up with him and shout "Oot, oot!", followed by what to my untrained ear sounded like "Piggy kampong!" I eventually twigged that this was the Glaswegian rendering of "pergi kampong", or, "go back to your village!".

Another Scot of whom I have fond memories was Cpl Fraser. In spite of his considerable bulk he was an enthusiastic and energetic leader of outdoor activities. I went with him once on a jungle-bashing expedition into the "ulu", and, on another occasion, into Batu Caves, regaled by gruesome tales of giant rock-pythons and of some soldiers who had ventured in, never to be seen again. Cpl Fraser very generously gave me a wedding present when, on two weeks leave, I returned home on an indulgence flight to get married. The gift, an Indian-style brass gong, still adorns our living room. It is known, somewhat formally, as "Corporal Fraser's Gong", as I am ashamed to say that I can no longer remember his Christian name. I've a feeling it could have been Alastair, but such were the irksome formalities of rank that one had to be off camp and off duty to be on first-name terms - and that didn't happen very often.

What I have just written reminds me of another gift that came my way in the course of Christmas celebrations. Knowing my preference for Coca Cola when all around me were drowning their sorrows in more potent stuff, I was ceremoniously presented with a bottle of Coke, all nicely done up with tinsel and bearing a label with: "To Tim, Merry Xmas from the Lads." Someone produced a glass, and I poured out the contents of the bottle. Cautiously I raised the glass to my mouth, but before I could even take a sip, the fumes hit me. Whatever it was, it must have been more than 100 % proof! I took the opportunity to thank everybody for their good wishes, but, seeing as this was the season of goodwill, there must be others less fortunate and more deserving than me. No-one accepted my offer, and I never discovered what that bottle was laced with. Even the OC, who by this time was Capt Ian Ledger, remained tight-lipped. He would



Tim Longley is next the the OC Maj Bill Storey' John Heyes, Back Row, 8th from left. Keith Corbett, Back Row, 5th from left. Jock Barrett, Front Row, 7th from Right. Cpl. Fraser, Front Row, 3rd from Right. ASM O,Brien, Front Row, Far Right. ASM Frank Penfold, Back Row, Far Left.

confide most things with me, but in this instance he remained totally loyal to the men under his command.

Coinciding with Captain Ledger's arrival, and replacing ASM Penfold, was ASM O'Brien. Another new arrival was Cfn Collins. He and Mr O'Brien were on a permanent collision course, and it was enough to just mention the name Collins for the ASM's blood pressure to rise above danger level. His moustache bristled and his eyes filled with fire. Craftsman Collins was a skillful operator. If there was trouble anywhere he would suss it out, and then land himself in it right up to the neck. I sometimes wonder what became of him in later life. Mr Collins is either languishing in Wormwood Scrubs, or he could now be a successful businessman. I trust it is the latter.

Apart from dealing with suspect Craftsmen, Mr O'Brien had an unfailing way of dealing with suspect aircraft parts. The secret of his success was the "Super Shuftiscope", which resided in the top pocket of his KD jacket. Upon being shown the suspect item by an anxious-looking technician, the ASM would slowly undo the button of his pocket, and then, with a flourish, produce a small foldable magnifying glass. After a close examination of the part, he would solemnly declare his verdict: It was either serviceable and could be put back on the aircraft, or it was u/s and should be scrapped. Mr O'Brien and his Shuftiscope somehow managed to succeed where gallons of "Ardrox" had failed to show up a crack, and it was thanks to this seemingly infallible combination that the Squadron's aircraft were not continually dropping like flies from the skies. I could go rambling on, and think of other anecdotes and mention other names that come to mind. However, seeing as you have been bold enough to give a brief history of your life since leaving the Army, I will now do the same.

While still with the Squadron in Kluang I began working for a Commercial Pilot Licence, and most weekends and leave periods were spent at the Royal Singapore Flying Club at Paya Lebar Airport. When I had served my three years short-service commission with REME, I managed to get local discharge from the Army and stayed on in Singapore for six months to complete the CPL course. I then moved to Australia, where I spent a year flying for a bush charter outfit in Queensland, and also working for aircraft maintenance engineer's licences. There then followed three years in Africa, doing "Flying . Doctor" type work with the Mission Aviation Fellowship. Most of that time was spent operating a Cessna 185 amphibian and a Cessna 206 landplane on and around Lake Chad - an inland sea about the size of Wales. My colleague was John Ducker, an ex-Army pilot from the Air OP days, before the AAC was formed.

Operating an amphibian on the shallow, muddy waters of Lake Chad was always a potentially hazardous business, and there was always the risk that a hippo might raise its ugly head right in line with your take-off or landing path. Though we never had any serious accidents, it occurred to me that the then newfangled contraptions called Hovercraft might be a safer and more cost-effective way of getting around Lake Chad. To cut a long story short, these beasts have consumed all my time and energy ever since - or at any rate up to 4 years ago, when ill-health forced me into retirement.

Because we could find nothing on the commercial market which suited our requirements for Chad, I ended up designing and building our own hovercraft. Using aircraft design experience I had gained as a result of seven years deferment from National Service, and with expert advice from a few willing and able individuals within the hovercraft industry, our first attempt proved very successful. I moved with my wife and young children to Gosport, where further development and sea trials were carried out as guests of the Royal Naval Aircraft Yard, Fleetlands. Once all the bugs had been sorted out we moved the hovercraft to Lee-on-Solent where we enjoyed the hospitality of what was then the Joint Services Hovercraft Trials Unit. It was from there that we completed our programme of sea trials, culminating with the circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight in 2 hours, 14 minutes - starting and finishing on the mainland at Lee-on-Solent. That was in 1975, and since then there have been a number of attempts by small to medium sized hovercraft to better our time. To the best of my knowledge our record still stands.

In spite of a successful first attempt, there was still plenty of room for improvement - particularly in the field of controllability. The result was the first of a series of craft which became known as the "River Rover". Early marks of this design were used with varying degrees of success on two Joint Services Expeditions: the first to Nepal, on a wild, rapid strewn Himalayan river, and the second to Peru, on the Rio Apurimac - one of the fast-flowing tributaries of the Amazon. Both expeditions had REME personnel amongst their number, including an aircraft technician, Sgt Rick Elliott. The latest River Rover, the Mk4, is a 6/8 seater powered by a 110 hp Volkswagen turbo-diesel, and a number are in service in several under-developed countries.

Now that I live, or "stay" as they say, north of the Border, I sometimes wonder where my two good Scots friends, Messrs Barrett and Fraser are staying now. It would give me great pleasure to meet up with them again, and any word of their whereabouts would be greatly appreciated.

"You know that your landing gear is up and locked when it takes full power to taxi to the terminal." Anon



A VM Cruising into 656

by Mick Smith

January 21st 1958 was cold wet and miserable as the Troopship “Empire Fowey”, eased out of her berth, to the sound of brass bands on the quay side. I was on board and managed to get myself a “cushy little number ” in military parlance. I was given the job of steward in the Sergeants mess, this ensured that there were no guard duties, no greasy pans to wash up on cookhouse duties and when, ‘In Port’, I was always allowed off to go sight-seeing.

The journey to Singapore was like a dream come true, it was a three-week cruise, which many people pay thousands of pounds to experience once in a lifetime and here I was at only 18 years old, actually being paid to do it.

As the journey progressed it became increasingly warmer and arriving in Gibraltar for a day’s shore leave the weather was absolutely glorious the sun was shining and it was a really spring like day, very much in contrast to the cold wet miserable weather of Southampton on the day of our departure from England. The next port of call was Malta, the ship however was too big to enter the port of Valetta so all the mail and passenger transfers were done by motor launch The Empire Fowey having dropped anchor some miles out to sea. Malta, I recall looked quite stunning in the sunshine and eventually, even though over four decades have passed, I still have aspirations to visit the Island for a holiday.

The same thing happened at the next stop, Cyprus. It was not the size of the ship that prevented the troops from going ashore here, but the terrorism that was plaguing the Island at that time. Port Said was the next port of call and the ship was forced to wait in a queue as is normal, for a convoy to accumulate to go through the Suez Canal. Remember this was shortly after the Suez crisis. There were ships funnels, bows and half sections of ships sticking up out of the water everywhere, the statue of Ferdinand de Lesseps was broken and most of it was in the canal.

The Empire Fowey was the first troopship to go through the canal since the problems in the area. Previous troopships had taken the long route via Durban, South Africa. I thought at the time, that was a great pity, it would have meant another week being added to this most interesting cruise.

One can imagine, therefore, the state of alert that prevailed amongst the more senior military people on board. There was, however, one lighthearted piece of entertainment when the ‘Guli Guli’ man was allowed on board. The ‘Guli Guli man was an Egyptian magician, who entertained all on board, before the ship set sail during the night under escort starting its slow journey through the Suez Canal and on to the port of Aden.

My memory of Aden is quite vague but I do recall that it was a dirty and very smelly part of the world. Unlike Malta, it was definitely not worth a return visit for a holiday. A day’s shore leave in Aden was not a very pleasant experience. Next stop on the ‘cruise’ itinerary was a day ashore in Colombo. Colombo appealed to me and I spent almost all day on the beach with friends I’d had made on the ‘cruise’. This was not a good thing to do, it was nice and

sunny and of course extremely hot, but there was a breeze, so one didn't feel the sun burning. Sunburn in the Army is a self inflicted injury and therefore a chargeable offence.

The following morning, back on board ship, I awoke from a very restless night to find that both of my shoulders were extremely sore and on each one was a blister the size of a small orange; I went to the medical bay and was expecting the worst. The medical orderly was quite sympathetic, lanced the two enormous blisters administered some calomine lotion and said nothing about the chargeable nature of the offence. However, I still had to report for work with very painful shoulders and as steward was required to wear a very heavily starched thick white jacket. Not a comfortable experience by any means.

The ship sailed on. Every day there was a competition to see who could guess how many miles had been covered in the preceding twenty-four hours. Then there were the shooting competitions, where they would tow a target behind the ship for the soldiers to shoot at or they would throw large balloons half filled with water over the stern and shoot at those.

It was an interesting experience altogether, there were dolphins that followed the ship for miles and flying fish the like of which I had never seen before, some of them even landing on the deck, which was a tremendous height from the water. The ship was 22 thousand tons, so was quite a large vessel and it can only be estimated that the water must have been at least 20 even 30 feet below the level of the deck where I was working in the Sergeants mess.

The Empire Fowey steamed into Singapore harbour in the early hours of the morning, it was hot and very humid as the ship tied up alongside, it was fascinating to see the hustle and bustle of this very busy Far Eastern harbour. There was also a most unusual smell which I discovered later was rubber, raw rubber waiting to be loaded on to the ships that were laying alongside the busy harbour.

Ayer Raja Road barracks Singapore, was to be home for the foreseeable future, or so I thought. Shortly after arriving and after only a very short spell of working at the Military staff car headquarters, which I enjoyed, I was posted to 6, Company Royal Army Service Corps. This was located at the Royal Naval Air Station at Nee Soon; I was to stay here for almost a year

At the Royal Naval Air Station a Flight of the Army Air Corps was based also, in which I took a very keen interest, along with a couple of my pals. Harry Brewster was from Yorkshire and Hughie Green was an ex boy - soldier from somewhere in Kent.

In February 1959, I clearly remember the death of Buddy Holly; it was at about the same time that The Army Air Corps, AAC, were asking for volunteers to train as aircraft mechanics. It is common knowledge in the Army that you **never** volunteer for anything; however, the three pals Harry, Hughie and I broke the golden rule and volunteered. The Army Air Corps only wanted three people. We immediately smelt a rat when out of all the military personnel in the Far East, all three of us had been chosen and our worst fears were soon to be realized. As mentioned earlier one Flight of the AAC was based at Nee Soon, but the main Headquarters for Malaya were based in Kuala Lumpur. The transport for the journey, a whole day by train, was to be undertaken by, of course the AAC. I clearly remember saying cheerio to Harry and Hughie, as it

was me who went first. I reported to the airfield with all of my kit only to be told off, for being late in a very unpleasant manner by the pilot who was sitting in the single engine aeroplane with the engine running.

I climbed aboard and was struggling to close the door, which I couldn't find. I couldn't find it because there wasn't one. By this time the pilot was getting very cross and quickly showed me how to use the intercom and how to fasten my seatbelt, I had never flown before, let alone seen or even worn a seatbelt!

In next to no time the Auster Mk 9, 'cloth bombers' as they were known to the RAF and AAC personnel, was careering down the runway and suddenly my stomach felt as though it was in my boots. All I could see was the tops of the trees and then the sea, as we headed north towards Malaya.

They were known as 'cloth Bombers' because of their very flimsy construction, I found out later that the air frame was made from tubular steel which was then covered with fabric and painted with 'dope'. The 'dope' had the effect of sealing and tightening the fabric, in very much the same way as a model aeroplane when it is covered in tissue paper and painted with 'dope'.

Flying over the green canopy of the jungle was a new experience, particularly when flying for the first time and at an angle of forty - five degrees. This, it was explained later, was in order to observe if there was any Communist Terrorist activity. Looking straight down into the jungle one could only see the tops of the trees, but if the aircraft were flown with the right or left wing tipped over at an angle it was then possible to see if there was any activity on the ground more easily. I didn't know that there were any terrorists and hadn't really heard about communists. How naive!

The landing at Noble Field, the headquarters of 656 Squadron Army Air Corps, was quite a bumpy affair as the runway was only made of from shale, or laterite.

Shortly after I met up with Hughie and Harry and as it was late afternoon the three of us were keen to get to our accommodation and get our kit unpacked then off to the cookhouse for supper. The three of us paraded as was normal first thing next morning for roll call, I took an instant dislike to the Battery Sergeant Major (BSM), 'fishy' Whale, the feeling, it seemed, was mutual. Most of the personnel were either REME or Royal Artillery, 'fishy' Whale coming into the second category. We were then sent off to RAF Kuala Lumpur where we learnt that in the not too distant future there were going to be big changes to the structure of the newly formed Army Air Corps. The AAC was at this time in its infancy and although REME personnel were doing the repairs to aircraft and the servicing, it was done under the supervision of the RAF and a few Fleet Air Arm people.

The REME Officer Commanding the Light Aircraft Squadron Workshops, known as LASW, had no idea that these three extra bodies were arriving and really had no idea what to do with them. It was, as we thought, a typical Army 'cock - up'. Harry, Hughie and I were all trained Army vehicle mechanics; the workshops here were repairing **Aeroplanes**. It was explained that to become qualified aircraft technicians the three would have to undergo an intensive training course and this could only be done in the UK.



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The Army, of course, were not in the business of sending people back to the UK to train as aircraft mechanics, and it was explained that if we still wanted to train when we had finished our three year tour of the Far East, then each of us could go to the AAC training headquarters at Middle Wallop. In the meantime we would be put to work on various tasks in the workshops.

Much to Harry's dismay he was sent to work in the hydraulic bay, where he spent every day stripping down and refurbishing Oleo's, the little hydraulic damper like a shock absorber on a car, that supported the tiny little rear wheel on the aircraft. These had to be taken off and overhauled after so many landings. Meanwhile Hughie felt he had been dealt a bad card when he was given the job of



cleaning spark plugs, neither of them were allowed to test their work as a fully qualified Aircraft Technician could only do this and had to be signed for. The two of them were very fed up and wished that they hadn't volunteered.

I fared better than my two friends, I was sent to work in the Transport Department under the supervision of Corporal Freddie Cardosa. The powers to be had also decided that I should go on a course to upgrade my technical grading, I think Freddie had something to do with the decision, so within a few weeks I was sent back to Ayer Raja Road, Singapore again. The major REME workshops were located here as was the technical training school.

Never had I seen such interesting equipment and workshop facilities before. It was absolutely amazing what was being done in these workshops, whole vehicles were being stripped to their bare chassis and even the rivets on the spring hangers were being replaced. I stayed there for about eight weeks and passed the exams without too much difficulty then reported back to Kuala Lumpur and Corporal Cardosa. Freddie, who had a very unusual pedigree, was to become a very close friend for many years. He was born in Kuala Lumpur of a Japanese mother and Italian father. During the Japanese occupation of Singapore he and his mother were interred in India for their own safety and he eventually became one of the small band of people known as Indowarra, the group was formed from people like himself who had survived the occupation and who had been sent to India.

Freddie eventually returned to Malaya and when he was old enough he joined the British Army in September 1947 as an MOR (Malaysian Other Rank), he was de-mobbed in September 1950 and joined the Malayan Police Field Force. At the time of his de mob from the police force in April 1953 he had reached the rank of Sergeant after which he traveled to England and in August of that year he joined the British Army. He joined the 17/21st Lancers and transferred to REME in December 1953. Freddie was multilingual so was obviously a great asset and it was in March 1954 that he was sent back to the

Far East as were his wishes, without any trouble at all. Freddie was to serve in the British Army for a total of 31 years and 44 days, so if one were to add this to his MOR and Police Field Force record it adds up to over 37 years. He was a super friend and I have many happy memories of him, sadly he suffered a fatal heart attack many years later, doing what he enjoyed most, having a glass of brandy at a party in Japan. He took me under his wing and between us we organized the movement off all the equipment from RAF Kuala Lumpur to Noble Field, which became the headquarters of the AAC and of course the aircraft workshops. The AAC were at this time severing their links with the old AOP squadrons of the RAF. The AAC was actually formed on September 1st 1957, but had been running in tandem with the RAF for some time in order to acclimatize so to speak.

Freddie and I were moving equipment as well as servicing our very small fleet of vehicles, in fact we turned our hand to any jobs that needed doing. We had a Bedford 3 ton truck a Land Rover and a couple of trailers. When the Commanding Officer's (CO's) driver was on leave, or not available for some reason or other, I would also cover as his driver. The CO was Major Ronald Bunting, who I was to discover many years later was a great ally of the Rev Ian Paisley, of Northern Ireland.

After my return from Singapore having passed my exams, I was now recognized as a VM II, (Vehicle Mechanic class II). Freddie decided that he was due some leave and tried to persuade me to go with him to Japan, with hindsight I wish I had gone. However, it was not to be, and when he eventually returned from leave, I recall he was about two weeks overdue, he said that he had been ill. The C O didn't believe him and poor old Fred had to write to Japan to get a doctors note to prove that he had been unable to travel, due to illness.

One can imagine that letters to and from Japan took quite a time and when the letter eventually arrived, it was of course in Japanese characters and totally indecipherable, much to the C O's embarrassment he had to take Freddie's word for it as he was the only one who could translate it any way.

We all new that it was a load of codswallop because when he got back from Japan he had told us that his Aunt had fixed for him to meet and marry this girl, (Japanese of course). So he had obviously stayed later to see her and to make arrangements for her journey to Kuala Lumpur, so that the two of them could be married.

Collecting aircraft parts and other bits and pieces of ground equipment from Singapore was also my responsibility. Often Harry or Hughie came with me for company. It was a very long journey and there was also the threat of a Communist attack, so of course I needed a fully armed escort!

The three of us had been invited along with a lot of others to Freddie and Shizue's wedding reception. Just before the wedding Freddie said that it would be helpful if I could go to Singapore in the truck to collect some spares, the true story is that Saké (Japanese rice wine) was a lot cheaper in Singapore, especially when purchased from one of his very good friends. Freddie had friends everywhere, they owned restaurants, bars, clubs, shops all sorts of things, all wealthy and all with lots of 'clout'.

Harry and I set off for Singapore and delivered our cargo of aircraft components for repair at RAF Seletar and collected the repaired components to take back. We then headed off to one of the addresses we had been given to collect the Saké. We didn't purposely hide the Saké behind the driver's seat in the truck; we actually put it there, several bottles of course, so that it wouldn't get broken. At \$22.00 a bottle it was expensive stuff, in those days we were getting \$10.00 to the pound.

We started our long journey back to K L, knowing we had got to make good time, as we were due at the wedding reception that night. We stopped at the border crossing at Johore Bharu in the knowledge that customs officers never searched military vehicles, they were always waved through. Today was an exception to the rule, for some unknown reason the customs officer decided to tear us apart.

Harry and I had a sinking feeling when we were asked to stop at the Customs Post. Of course we were trying to evade paying duty on the already expensive Saké. We couldn't give the customs officer a satisfactory explanation as to why it came to be behind the driver's seat, so we had to pay the duty on it, which amounted to \$11.00 per bottle. We were extremely lucky that the Customs people didn't confiscate the vehicle, as was their right, we would then have been right up the creek so to speak,

By now Harry and I were a bit fed up and also a bit late to get back in time for the wedding. In those days the villages that we drove through to get to KL from Singapore were under curfew, which meant that the gates were closed and you couldn't drive any further. A little bit like driving up the A1, and arriving at Doncaster at 7 pm and someone closing the gate across the main road, you would then have to wait until 6am the next day before being allowed to continue your journey. We made it through the villages before curfew and arrived a little late, we had a super meal and drank several toast's to the bride and groom with the, by now, very expensive sake.

There was to be a massive modification programme on all of the Auster Mk9's, it seems that they had found some cracks in the shock truss, the work was too complicated to be carried out in Malaya which meant that all of them had to go to Hong Kong. This was too great a distance for them to fly, so they were all stripped down to just the basic airframe, no wings no engine nothing. They then had to be shipped to RAF KL where they were loaded into a big transport aeroplane for onward shipment to Hong Kong.

There were two ways we could take them to RAF KL, one method was to put the aeroplane frame, minus its undercarriage (in place of which a dummy undercarriage was bolted, which was a lot narrower than the real one). By doing this it would then fit comfortably into the back of the truck, the original undercarriage being much wider than the truck itself of course, we had a little cradle made which fitted on to the bren gun mountings on top of the cab and the tiny little rear wheel of the aircraft was bolted to this and made everything nice and secure.

The second way we transported them to KL was to tow them behind the Land Rover, another bracket was made into which the little rear aircraft wheel was clamped which in turn was fixed to the tow ball. This method needed the

original undercarriage to be left on the aircraft to give more stability. It was of course being towed tail first.

The system worked extremely well until the clutch gave out on the Bedford, we had a very tight schedule and the last aircraft was due to go to Hong Kong immediately, unfortunately it only had the narrow dummy undercarriage fixed to it. The Warrant Officer in charge of the workshops called me over and insisted that I tow the aircraft to KL using the Land Rover, I explained that as far as I could see it was not stable enough to do that without the proper undercarriage. Words were exchanged between us and although it was clear that I was right he was the boss and what the boss says goes!

He insisted that if I were to drive slowly no harm would come to it, he also said that he would come with me to ensure that I didn't drive too fast. Well the inevitable happened of course, as I drove at a snails pace out of the workshop gates, I turned right onto the main road and so did the aircraft. It turned all right, right over onto it's side with such a clatter.

Stop, stop, stop screamed the ASM (Artificer Sergeant Major) as he leapt out of his office and shouted to me in the Land Rover, but of course the damage was done. The Aircraft eventually went to Hong Kong, twisted airframe and all and when it came back with a spiral weld on the rear of the frame, where a new piece had been put in to repair the twist everyone was marveling at the workmanship and the ingenuity. Poor Frank, (Penfold), (ASM) I think he must have seen all of his lives flash before him on that day. My widowed mum had remarried on 12th March 1955. She married Frank Smith at Allesley Parish church, a suburb of Coventry. I was still working at Dunlop at the time and aged 15.

During my time in the Army when writing letters home I took a lot of sarcastic comments and a lot of ribbing due to the fact that I was writing letters home to my Mother, who's name was Smith and my name was Bunker. As a result of this I decided to see if it were possible to change my name. This I was told was a relatively simple procedure and so the wheels were put in motion to do so. Eventually I was sent for and told that I would have to travel to Singapore to see an Army solicitor.

I duly reported to the office of Major Roger, Bacon-Anderson on the 23rd January 1960, I hadn't been given any information about what was going to happen, so consequently I was quite surprised when he asked me to sign my new name. He was equally as surprised to find that I had never practiced the new signature and he gave me a few minutes in which to do so.

I traveled back to Kuala Lumpur the next day and on my first roll call when 'Fishy' Whale, the Sergeant Major did his roll call (you'll remember he and I had a mutual dislike of each other) and called out "Craftsman Bunker", I remained silent he called my name three or four times, silence. There were a few sniggers and chuckles from my pals who new the score and then he spotted me in the back row of the parade.

Fishy was absolutely beside himself with rage, why had I totally ignored him he demanded, because I replied stifling an acute attack of the giggles, "my name is Smith Sir not Bunker". He was absolutely furious "report to my office and explain yourself immediately after parade" he roared.

After the muster parade I went to Fishy's office, who new nothing at all about the fact that I had changed my name, only that I had been to Singapore for a couple of days. I had to explain all to him. He read the riot act to me and said that no one would recognize me by the name Smith until it had been published on part two orders and if I as much as stepped out of line for the smallest of things he would make sure that I was on a charge.

Shortly before Easter, there it was on part two orders, Craftsman Bunker was hereafter to be known as Craftsman **Smith**. The next morning on parade the same thing happened again. Poor old Fishy, he kept on calling out my name which again I totally ignored, then he saw me again, "I told you " he said "you do not assume your name of Smith until it is published on part two orders", "Sir" I replied "you should read part two orders then, it was on there last night". That was it, Fishy saw red and two men were fell in to march me off to the guard room, where I was locked up until sent for by the CO who meted out 5 days CB. Although I was punished I still had a great feeling of having 'got one over' on Fishy Whale. There was a huge amount of rivalry between the REME and Royal Artillery, a bit like Rangers and Celtic or Arsenal and Chelsea. Fishy of course was one of the 'other side'; so to humiliate him in this way was definitely one up-man ship.

Most of the work with regards the movement of aircraft and equipment was now winding down and there was not quite so much to do so it was decided that I should go to a couple of the 'out stations as they were called to service the vehicles. The first trip was to Temerloh a small jungle clearing with a grass runway some miles to the north of KL.

On the journey to Temerloh, I decided the easiest way to go was by motorcycle, I witnessed a rather strange looking character with a rifle or shotgun. Having been brainwashed by all and sundry about the possibility of there still being communist terrorist activity about and in particular in the area to which I was traveling, I called in to the nearest police station and reported the incident, they didn't seem too bothered and said he was probably out shooting wild boar.

On arrival at the Temerloh Airstrip I recounted what I had seen and done and the guys who manned the station appeared to be quite concerned, they decided that we should all take it in turns to do guard duty and as I had had a long day I was to have first watch in order to get a good nights rest, they said. I turned in some time after midnight and was rudely awakened in the middle of the night to sound of tremendous gunfire. Having locked my sten gun up in the armory for the night I was totally unarmed, in my panic I leapt out of bed and dived underneath it, banging my head in the process. This is it I thought, I've been hit.

The lights came on to the sound of hysterical laughter from all the guys who had well and truly wound me up. They had discharged a simulator right outside the room where I had been sleeping, I never forgave them from that day to this, in fact I met up with one of them a few years ago at a re-union dinner and remember him telling my wife the story of the night that I was 'shot'. Yes Pete Proost you know who it was!!!!

Memories of Sarawak 1963-1964

by Bill Morgan

When Indonesia invaded Borneo in mid 1963 two Auster 9s of 7 (Commonwealth Bde) Flight were quickly sent across to Kuching to support 3 Commando Bde based in Kuching town.

They were flown directly from Singapore to Kuching Airport, being equipped with ferry tanks and given an RAF Shackleton escort. The aircraft were flown by Capt Chris Brown of the New Zealand AAC and Capt Mike Monroe.

The trip was at the endurance limit of the Auster, if the net headwind had exceeded 5 knots the Austers would not have made it! *(At the time, no one had realised that the oil tank only just held enough oil for this duration. Ed)*

Later on aircraft were flown on to HMS Albion, a Commando Carrier, in Singapore. The carrier then steamed across to just off of Kuching and the Austers flew off and headed for the Airport. Landing and taking off were both fairly hairy; the problem on landing was to judge the correct approach height. Too low and the aircraft would crash into what was called the 'round down' and too high and one would run out of deck to stop in.

The Navy thought the whole exercise was a great joke. Their aim was to catch the aircraft on its final bounce, in my case, and immediately position it upon, and then drop, the forward lift. Quite a fright for the poor old pilot, who had no idea that he was suddenly going to fall through the deck.

The aircrew were well entertained during the crossing and the Navy made sure we never saw daylight until it was time to launch. This normally took place first thing in the morning, with a decidedly hung over feeling, Auster crew were ordered to 'mount their aircraft' and after much waving of flags the Auster trundled along the deck.

Initially the carrier did not steam along and this caused panic, as the Auster hardly gained sufficient flying speed before it ran out of deck, stalled. Flying speed was then gained as one lurched toward the ocean! Later the Navy relented and gave us 17 knots net over the deck.

In Kuching we were accommodated with 42 Commando RM in Semengo (Malay for crocodile) camp and lived in locally made rattan shelters, all was primitive but reasonably comfortable.

Flying duties were many and varied. Liaison trips to Sibul and Simangang were regulars, plus mail drops to ground units in the jungle. Target Registration was carried out on border crossing points in the 1st Division, as well as reces for Bde and Commando staff. Forward air controlling was tried using marker flares dropped from the Auster bomb rack. Jim Dawson had a hang up when the flare initiating cord failed to snap. He spent a perilous 30 minutes or so trying to hook the flare up on a wire tied between two upright poles. Ultimately the flare was hooked off. Jim seemed to lose his enthusiasm for this method of marking reference points for FGA aircraft after this episode.

The major problem was that the mapping of Sarawak was extremely poor. The maps were just black and white, showing the coastline, the rivers up to about 50 miles inland, with just some of the major features and the border

area. Each pilot had to make up the detail on his own map as he went along. Most of the navigation was carried out by familiarisation and swapping information amongst the aircrew.

A sad accident took place when Sgt Dave Thackery was shot down by an Indonesian AA gun just inside the border and his passenger, the Senior RAF Chaplain, was killed. Dave's upper left arm was shattered and he did extremely well to crash land the Auster in the jungle. *(He landed it in a helicopter clearing with no injury, from the crash, to himself or his passenger. Ed)*



The Austers came under operational command of the RAF Station Commander and were tasked by the G3(Air) at Bde HQ on a daily basis. I was also detached for some time at Simangang, in support of 1/10 Ghurkas, carrying out reces and aerial photography in the border area. I recall taking some 'near vertical' photos of an Indonesian Army Camp at Badau just across the border and discovering the odd hole in the tail plane of the Auster upon my return to base. The CO and I decided that it was better to call these drainage holes rather than admit our proximity to the border!

Merdeka day took place whilst I was on detachment. This day was to celebrate the formation of the federation of Malaya, Sarawak Labuan and Sabah into Malaysia. My contribution was to provide a one aircraft flying display along the river in Simangang Town. Along the river spear fishing was taking place from long boats, the fish having been stunned with pulverised baluba root extract. This was normally banned, but allowed on this special day.

In my humble opinion the major risk with this detachment was being driven to the airstrip each day by a Ghurkha driver having had chicken curry on the bone for breakfast!

Back in Kuching the relationship between the flying elements of all three services was superb. We of course were known as TWA, standing for Teeny Weeny Airways. The RAF had Hasting, Vikings, Whirlwind 10s, a Beverly, the dreaded Belvedere twin rotor helicopter, a couple of Hunters and a Javelin which tended to eject a mass of flame from its rear end. The Navy initially had piston engined Whirlwind 7s of 846 Sqn, which really were very short of power and always flew in pairs.

On one occasion I acted as the escort to a Navy Whirlwind 7 on an emergency casevac mission as there were no other aircraft available. I also remember taking a 5 gallon drum of AVPIN – isopropyl nitrate – nasty stuff, used to start Navy Wessexes, for 845 Sqn RN at Sib. An off duty RAF pilot, who was

coming for a jolly on his day off, asked me what was in the AVPIN drum. When I told him that it was indeed AVPIN, he decided he didn't need a jolly that much and declined the flight!

All in all, the Austers did well, but were grossly short of power and there were very few places they could land, so it was decided to replace them with the newly in-service Scout.

The Air Corps had two options, either to bring out trained helicopter pilots who would not know the terrain, as the maps were poor, or send some fixed wing pilots back to UK, to be converted on to helicopters. In the event they chose the latter option and Roger Cemm and I went back to Wallop in mid 1964 to be retrained, leaving our families back in Kluang.

Six months later I returned and was posted to 14 Flight under Jim Dawson, with CPO Saxton, a Navy Air Mechanic as our Senior Engineer. Again we were based in Kuching and 7 and 14 Flights rotated, leaving all the equipment in place and just moving personnel.

The Scout was a disaster from day one, the 'fracto' Nimbus 102 engine was unreliable and we had two Rolls Royce Engineers attached on site to keep things going. They were carrying out major engine rebuilds in the field. Whilst in UK on training we were not allowed to fly over woods, yet here in Sarawak it was 99.5% woods in the shape of solid jungle. We never got anywhere near the target 150 hours engine life out the Nimbus and, to add insult to injury, one arrived flown in from UK, marked 'temperate climates' only.

The later Nimbus 105 post Mod 664 engine was hardly any better. We also had a problem called lateral shake, whereby the helicopter's tail boom twitched. Damper units were fitted, but this made little or no practical difference. We spent many hours doing flight idle descents from about 10,000 feet to try and adjust the dampers. Much later it was discovered that there was a design fault in the free turbine which caused the vibration. We lost Sgt Doc Waghorn in the area of Lundu about this time and his aircraft was not found until some years later.

Scouts were deployed at forward locations with units near the border, crewed by a pilot and a Mechanic. The crew stayed forward until the aircraft needed a 30 hour service when they were flown back to Kuching. There were not enough tools to cover these deployments, so we had to go to Kuching Town and buy extra spanners etc out of the PRI funds. Shortages are not new to Afghanistan!

Often when all the Scouts were grounded I flew in the second seat in the Hastings. The RAF need two pilots when they flew within range of the Indonesian AA guns on the border. They only came out with one pilot per aircraft, so they offered to basically train any AAC ex fixed wing pilot to bring the Hastings back to Kuching and land it in an emergency. For a couple of months I had more Hastings hours than helicopter ones.

These were the days of the integrated Air Platoons and six Sioux were attached to the Flight for Flying Standards and maintenance purposes. One day a slightly white faced Chief Saxton came in to the ops room and asked if I had a

plastic bag. When questioned he said needed it for his three fingers, which he then produced. He explained that they had just been chopped off, when he caught them is a Sioux engine cooling fan, whilst adjusting the rotor control linkage. He later rejoined the flight, a few fingers less, after hospitalisation.

Again we were based in Semengo Camp, but this time with the Scots Guards. Life was not fun, as the Guards saved up and banked their cash dollar Messing allowance to have a blow out when they got back to Malaya. Those of us that were attached were not in a position to be able to take advantage of the second part of their plan. I recall being lined up before the acting CO, Major McGregor of McGregor, who apparently owned half of Scotland, and received a rocket because I had taken an extra potato at lunch time, against 'advice' of the Mess Sgt. It made no difference that in my defence Jim Dawson said he didn't want his authorised spud. In the Scots Guards orders is orders!

Later on 2 Para replaced the Guards and life was much better. For relaxation we were able to get into town and take advantage of the bars and market stalls selling all kinds of food, cooked before your very own eyes. On Saturday nights there was a dance at the Aurora Hotel which was well attended by the locals and we were all made very welcome. Those of us that were there from the old 7 Flight days were also well looked after by the ex pats living across the river. There was a great demand for aerial photos of their houses and gardens, taken with the brick-like F95.

I spent some time in support of D Sqn of the SAS, carrying out recces with them in preparation for their raiding parties across the border. They had their favourite bar in town and Flight members were always welcome there. The SAS Sqn was based just outside town in an old house. The routine was totally foreign to anything I ever experienced in a normal unit. Discipline seemed non existent and rank carried no weight, though they did respect pilots a bit!

14 Flight had a RAOC photo detachment attached to it and we developed and printed all the airborne F95 camera and SAS stuff for Bde HQ, by this time 99 (Ghurkha) Bde. Some of the SAS stuff was a touch gory to say the least.

I left 14 Flight in late 1965 and was sent to Netheravon to form a new 2 Flight, coming under 2 Wing AAC, run by Brigadier Desmond Leach and in support of 19 Bde in Colchester. I picked up six shiny new Scouts from Westlands and got all the vehicles and G1098 ready to hand over to John Elliot. During my final days as a Scout driver, I was asked by Capt Mike Little if there was anything that bothered me about flying it. I said that the one thing I had always been scared of was turning the HP cock off, instead of the cabin heater. Both were in the same area and worked in a similar sense. The difference being, that once you turned the HP cock off, the only way was down! Mike said yes, he had never thought of this conflict and promptly did just that whilst doing a practice casevac out of the Square at Colchester. The Scout was a write off, Mike has a bad back to this day I hear, and the poor guy acting as the practice casualty on the stretcher wasn't too impressed either. So I went out of the Air Corps and back to Royal Signals with a bang, albeit indirectly.

FAREWELL MEDAN
'A' Flights move back to Malaya
a Flight Commander's memory
by Russell Matthews

Allied troops had been in Java and Sumatra since the Japanese surrender in late 1945, and now in late 1946 with the steady build up of the Dutch East Indies Army, in these islands, it was time to hand over and depart. But where to? And would the Indonesians allow us to go peacefully or hinder our departure? Rumours and counter rumours were rife and the move of 'A' Flight was just as uncertain. Would it be back to Malaya with Kuala Lumpur the best bet and where Squadron HQ and the other Flights were re-deploying or would it be India where 26 Indian Division, who we were supporting, were destined?

Doubts eased a little when I was instructed by Warby to get an Officer and Captain Jock Killern (my white bull terrier) to KL as advance party. They were hurriedly despatched cramped in the rear seat of an RAF Harvard. Then a validatory letter from the Divisional G.O.C. thanking the Flight for its work in Sumatra, saying goodbye and wishing us luck, seemed to confirm that we were indeed bound for Malaya.

At last, in November, came orders to pack aircraft en porté, and assemble in Balawan docks for loading in a Dutch liner. Dismantling the aircraft and winching them on to the TCV's; packing a suitcase, a tin box and a valise each did not take very long. Then handing over the accommodation, paying out respects to the RAF Station Commander and with the road picqueted we set off for the docks. On arrival we were not the only passengers, we were with the 2nd Rajputs – again the old worry – were we for India?

Once safely aboard, with the vehicles and aircraft snug in the hold, I went to report our presence to the ship's Captain. He assured me that his destination was India, he was not going back to Singapore, but that Penang could be a possibility. It was clear that there was a lot of talking and persuading to be done and a lot of DeKeyper's gin to be consumed.

Our two days aboard passed only too quickly with mountains of rich Dutch food on the menu, a plentiful supply of Amstel beer in the canteen and a variety of spicy curries from the Indian troops specially adapted kitchens on board.

On the third morning we woke to find that we were anchored in Penang roads with Penang Island on one side and the low lying Malayan mainland with Butterworth on the other. The Captain confirmed that he was not due to dock, so our only hope of getting ashore was by lighters. There did not appear to be any effective communication between the ship and the harbour master. The odd tenders passing by pulling lighters were out of hailing distance or were simply occupied with their own affairs. The Captain was totally unconcerned repeating – "I am an honest man, I promise to get you here" and then, having another gin.

It was obvious that we were not getting very far, so it was imperative that we got an Officer ashore to seek assistance. We managed to hail a small

fishing sampan propelled by a half naked Chinese. Mike Webb volunteered to brave the journey.

After a lot more shouting with a megaphone at passing tugs and a lot more consumption of gin, we at last managed to get an Indian tug master with two very large lighters to answer our shouts and to come alongside. He agreed to assist. Now whether he had come on his own volition or had been organised by some authority ashore we were unable to discover because of the language difficulty – he had no ‘chitty’

The Captain was keen that we should go, so straight away the ships crew set about winching our vehicles out of the hold over the side and on to the lighters, our own fitters and gunners securing the loads. Thank goodness it was calm as a ships rail gallery of grinning Indian troops was watching us.

Just before mid-day we were ready to go – a quick farewell to the Captain, still with a glass of gin in his hand. He wished us well with the words – “I am an honest man, you promise to send the lighters back to me” As we set off towards the Butterworth shore I wondered if we would ever see Mike again. I felt guilty for allowing him to go. Had I committed him to become a modern day Flying Dutchman to perpetually wander over the face of the Indian Ocean in an open sampan never to find a safe haven?

Our next problem was how to get our vehicles off the lighters and ashore with no harbour facilities at Butterworth. However, with lots of hand waving and a mixture of schoolboy Hindustani and Pidgin English the tug master assured me that he knew of a place for disembarkation. Eventually, after a couple of passes at the shore, he found a space of open beach with enough water to get the lighters near enough to unload. I was amazed at his skill and the dexterity of his two men crew in handling the tricky operation. Finally, with the tug amidships pushing and with our airmen and gunners having waded ashore under the command of Billy Wolfe with his mild Scottish voice, manning drag ropes fore and aft, we managed to keep the lighters inshore and with heavy planks of timber we gingerly edged the vehicles off one at a time into the water and up the beach. This operation took all afternoon. We were wet, sweaty, tired and very thirsty. We thanked the tug master profusely and pointed back to the ship. No whether they returned there or not is a matter of conjecture. To me he seemed more keen to get back to Penang.

At this moment Mike suddenly appeared wearing a huge Chinese straw hat. He had spent the whole day bobbing about in his sampan without being able to get anyone in the slightest bit interested in our plight. Returning to the ship he was informed by the Captain that we had departed, pointing to the shore with the words - “They have gone. I am an honest man, they promise to send back lighters” ...

Mike was weather beaten and dehydrated having wisely refused to chance the liquid in the fisherman's evil looking goat's skin chargal. We thanked Mr. Fong for his services with half a box of compo rations. Looking back over the years I have often wondered what his wife made of our tinned goodies? Fried rice topped with slices of rich fruit cake; bully beef sweet and

sour with crispy noodles; hard tack biscuits and the twenty eight sheets of Army Form blank? he answer could make an interesting TV programme on 'Ready, Steady Cook'.

While we gathered and dried ourselves on the beach after our wet shod, semi assault landing, I sent Sgt. Roberts (name uncertain) our RAF Flight Sergeant, to make contact with RAF Butterworth asking for a secure parking area for the night. To my surprise he soon returned to say that Squadron had warned them that we might appear suddenly out of the blue. A hot meal was no problem, overhead cover for the vehicles in an unused hangar but little sleeping accommodation. The meal and shower were much welcomed and we decided to spend the night bedded down with the vehicles. Before turning in there was the guard rosta to organise and get a phone call to KL. The latter to the station duty office to pass on the message that we were all safely in Malaya; intending to drive down tomorrow and to expect us sometime in the late afternoon. We were tired, and slept like logs.

My dilemma had been – should we stay an extra day in Butterworth, unload and re-assemble the aircraft, air test them then fly them down to KL later, or to stay loaded and move straight away by road. I decided on the latter as there was no urgent, operational need to get the aircraft airworthy quickly and in any case it would have meant leaving our aircraft with it's section behind, to be collected at a later date as we had only four pilots – David Greaves having gone ahead as advance party.

We were up bright and early but a little stiff; a cat lick wash and shave, hot tea and a bacon bango, quick thank you to Butterworth and off on the main road. A mid journey halt at Gopeng. At Kepong on the outskirts of KL I went on ahead in my jeep to contact Squadron HQ. Once passed the guardroom there on the left was the familiar red and blue signboard with the white letters – "656 (Air O.P.) Sqn. RAF" I dismounted, saluted Warby who had appeared at the doorway of the low wooded hut, with the words – "Doctor Livingstone I presume, Sir" What a greeting I was to receive from my Jock!

We were back in the bosom of the family – the last of Warby's chickens had come home to roost.

Queins Sabé

"The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire." Anon



Australian Holiday

by Derek Walker

During the early 1970's I was with 3Cdo Bde Air Sqn RM in Singapore, supporting 3Cdo Bde RM at the Naval Air Station, Sembawang. Late in the year 1970 Brunei Flight was due to carry out our final exercise in Perth, Australia along with the HQ and 40 Cdo RM. Being the Chief Artificer Aircraft I was determined to get on this one.

Having all been jabbed and documented the troops were ready to go! Then news reached FARELF HQ that East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was suffering from a severe hurricane which had created a twenty foot tidal wave which moved up the Ganges Delta, having formed in the Bay of Bengal, with an indication of some two million lives being lost in the area. FARELF had been requested to mount a rescue operation as soon as possible from forces within the Theatre, ie 3 Cdo Bde RM.

So guess what? The force stood by for exercise in Australia got diverted to East Pakistan on what was to be known as Op BURLAP. Overcoming the sheer disappointment of missing our southern holiday we prepared for deployment to Dacca, East Pakistan.

Brunei Flt split into two, Advance Party, consisting of about ten personnel and Main Body, the OC plus another fifteen personnel. The AP moved by Hercules from Changi with two Sioux. The MP moved by sea on HMS Fearless with two scout helicopters. We were unable to take any transport at all.

I went with the AP which involved moving the aircraft to Changi the previous evening and prepared them for air porting. It also meant manhandling all support stores and equipment in 'Thomas Bins' etc. Having completed this by 0200 hrs the next morning, we returned to the base to get some kip. The next day we were transported over to Changi Airfield and flew out on two Hercules for Dacca a flight of some six or seven hours as I recollect, arriving around mid afternoon local time.

On arrival, the aircraft were removed from the Hercules and assembled along with all the bins and ground equipment, while I supervised the technical work the SM Pilot went searching around for transport and the location of those supposedly controlling this 'outing'.

Well the day moved on and dusk fell quickly. We were all sitting on a quiet area of the airfield listening to the eerie calls of the Jackals in the dark when around 2200 hrs a vehicle arrived to take us to a hotel in the city centre where we were going to overnight. We arrived after an unforgettable 'drive' and piled into our allotted rooms, turned the taps on out poured brown water, we quickly turned off the taps and downstairs for a meal.

The meal was cut short by the need to get to a quay on the outskirts of Dacca by the Ganges, to depart at 0200 hrs the next morning. Technicians were left to deal with the helicopters later in the day, and we returned to the airport to load all the kit onto the wagon to take with us. Off we went into the dark night, around either sides of any roundabouts at speed and very erratically, white knuckle ride wasn't in it!

At 0130 hrs we hit the quay area and awaiting us was what appeared to be an old British 'tug boat' low in the water. We were detailed to stow all the kit and bins on board and then get on ourselves. You can imagine the thoughts going through our minds. There had been a twenty foot tidal wave in the delta area we were going to where the highest point ASL was 6ft!! Equally we could see nothing around us, just dark water and so we set off into the night, chug, chug, chug to god knows where!

The trip took two days supplemented by brews and ten man ration packs. The days were bright and clear and hot. We passed very many islands, river beds with palm trees and factories earlier on, then mud banks and flat grass land. The nights were cold. At 2200hrs on the second day we arrived at a place called Patuakhali in extreme darkness. Initially we came alongside a pier and when the boats spotlight went on hundreds of pair of eyes reflected the light back and shouting started up. It was frightening and you could hear weapons being cocked. However, before we touched dock the boat reversed out as it was the wrong landing place!!

Finally, coming alongside we unloaded all our kit and set up base in the local court building used periodically for the dispersing of justice in the area. Early on day four we arose and organised ourselves, ready for the Sioux's arrival and Bde HQ with the Scouts on board Fearless and Intrepid. Comms was established with Dacca and Brunei Flt detachment, also Chittagong and Ships. They were due to arrive in two days time and sit forty miles off the delta utilising the E-Craft to unload troops and stores required for the Operation. Also on board the Rusty 'B' (HMS Bulwark) was 848 NA Sqn with Wessex 5 helicopters.

Later that day the two Sioux's arrived and we set up a helipad in the grounds of the court house along with our Maintenance Tent. Various recces were carried out over the next two days to determine the 'needs' of the area, burial, community assistance, relief stores etc. Not much was left south of Patuakhali, which in itself was a hovel of a village, populated by bright eyed children and very young looking people as I recollect.

Bde HQ came in on days five and six and took over the court house. The helicopters were too noisy for them so we had to relocate Ops a mile north of the Court House, which later was off the edge of what became a DZ and HLP for 848 NAS helicopters. They actually created their own canvas camp alongside the DZ. Our meals and sleeping accommodation was provided at the Court House but under canvas in the compound, provided by 3 Cdo Bde Sig Sqn, after they eventually disembarked.

I say eventually, because no one had mapped or carried out a census of this vast area for over twenty years, so the number of people who should be there was unknown, other than who was left, and the constant tidal changes altered the delta islands and sand banks frequently. This became a problem when the 'Fleet' arrived and they dispatched a recce craft to move in and locate us at Patuakhali. It took over two days to navigate the 60 miles from the ships standing off, because the charts were out of date and so many 'blind alleys' were turned into. However, once located and route marked the boats were operating a twenty four hour turn around and stores came ashore quickly.

Three forward bases were set up and groups of Cdo operated from these on a two day turnaround shift system. 848 lifted in quick time, and blankets food etc were necessary and the marines with 59 Cdo Sqn RE dug pits and recovered bodies, human and animal for burial. It was not nice work and the heat of the day on bloated bodies didn't help. This was aggravated by the extremely cold nights.

During the period there were a number of incidents which I recall. The ripping open and eating of the underslung load of a Wessex helicopter supplying one of the forward bases by the locals, unfortunately this load was 'quick lime'. The delivery of palletised 200 litre drums of fuel in fours, for the helicopters by Hercules was exciting. Obviously the locals saw the parachutes opening, thought of the material, and dashed onto the DZ. There was a bit of a flap on by the perimeter guard who were unable to contain them all. The sight was comical if not so dangerous. Fortunately no one got hurt. The drums stayed intact on landing, but the parachutes got ripped to shreds by the eager locals who ran off with little pieces each.

Early on, just after the Scouts helicopter arrived I had to go on a recce with the OC, South. We set off locating various areas of need and relayed the destinations to base. Towards the end we saw an E craft close into one of the river banks. The OC landed stopped the rotors and left the engine running, because we have been experiencing starting problems with this particular helicopter. Some fifteen minutes later he returned and I pointed out to him that the low level fuel warning light had come on in his absence (fifteen minutes fuel left). He gave me the 'thumbs up' and off we went on a twenty minute journey back to the Court House compound!! Luckily we landed in the compound and shut down quickly. My pants were feeling somewhat uncomfortable by that time. After that we introduced a thirty minute flight limit for returning.

During one evening in the compound we were all assembled prior to watching an old movie which had been brought in off one of the ships, when the MO, Doc Jolly, got in front of us and lectured us on the evils of going with local women and the ghastly results which would ensue therefrom. We looked at each other in amusement. We were freezing, worn out, the village was a hovel and not even a maiden has been since we had arrived there! But I suppose he had to be seen to be doing his job.

One of our gunners got carried away when he nearly created an international incident by electrocuting a group of local children who had

gathered by the wire fence by our HLP area and were holding onto the fence watching some of our helicopter operating. He sneaked out the High Voltage Tester and attached it to the fence. He had wound it up and was just about to press the discharge button when I stopped him. I could just see the headlines.

News at Ten visited us and the Bde Comdr was kind enough to let them stay in a tent in the compound. Until, that is, he found out that their reports back home were showing the lads in a bad light and he 'booted' them out. I don't know where they stayed after that because there were no hotels or guest houses about in the area, but we never heard from them again!

Finally it was time to pull out after four weeks and not before time when I started to see creepy crawlies I'd never seen the likes of before, coming out of the ground. The OC and I were the last to depart the base at Patuakhali after 848 NAS had re-embarked and our other helicopters had flown on the previous evening. We took off in a Scout, the same one that we had the fuel scare in, and headed out South over the delta area and over the dirty brown water of the Bay of Bengal on a compass bearing 40 miles out to find HMS Fearless. As the time moved on and nothing appeared on the horizon I was in two minds if this was a good choice. However, she eventually came into sight and we landed on. A shower, food, beer and a sleep never felt so good.

During the four day return we cleaned off all the helicopters and equipment, repacked and prepared for arrival and fly off to Sembawang, the day before my birthday. It was great to see the wife and children again. Found the wife had spent all my LOA already. On the Sunday I took them all back to the Naval Dockyard to be guests of the Chiefs Mess on board HMS Fearless we had a great day rum and all.

So endeth my one and only holiday to Australia.

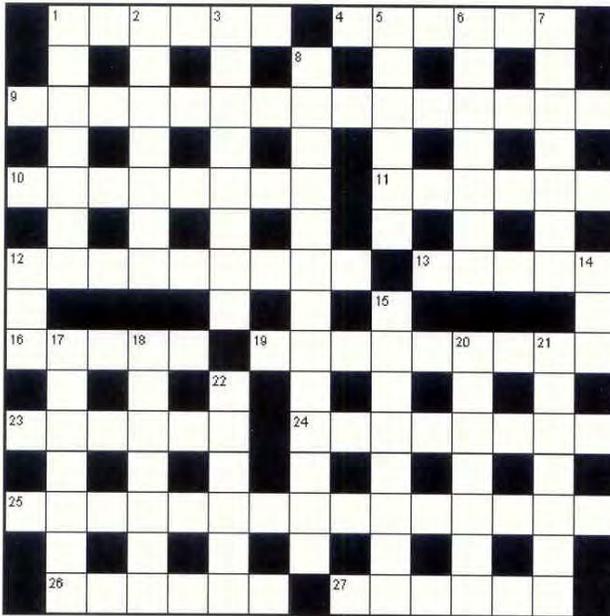
"It is generally inadvisable to eject directly over the area you just bombed." - U.S. Air Force Manual

Cryptic Crossword

Set by Cerasus

Source:

www.freecrosswords.net



ACROSS

- 1 Dress supporter in a flurry (6)
- 4 Heartless Rabbi contributes to account of Semitic language (6)
- 9 Comely union sure to be broken informally (15)
- 10 Completely remake tiny reel (8)
- 11 Bring about what is said to be unlawful (6)
- 12 Avoids being photographed despite easy charm perhaps (6,3)
- 13 Restore rates of lacrimal secretion (5)
- 16 In Malta, choose a counter for revolution (5)
- 19 Lose one's smile - act opposite to 9 across (9)
- 23 Badly mauls you first in refuge (6)
- 24 Became complex when moved forward (8)
- 25 Poorness is a life restored when you make it pay (15)
- 26 In some offices exists a discriminatory individual (6)
- 27 My son has one remodelled to produce muscle protein (6)

DOWN

- 1 Very good Aussie has an easy windfall (7)
- 2 Lacks microorganisms which can't reproduce (7)
- 3 The French enigma confused faithful follower (8)
- 5 Ark is lost when attacked by one of these? (6)
- 6 Gold cross found in small portion of ore (7)
- 7 Miner needs a dog, right? (7)
- 8 Comply to a rich mixture of many colours (13)
- 12 Approximately in position by family pet (3)
- 14 She is to seek redress (3)
- 15 Ian who kept getting Nev up found it enchanting (8)
- 17 One reverts emphasis but states boldly (7)
- 18 Message follows bad hail in capital of Nova Scotia (7)
- 20 Utterly perplex with "no" to new addition (3-4)
- 21 Walks over spouse's offspring (7)

ASSOCIATION SHOP



Fine Bone China Mugs @ £ 6.00 *

Blazer badges

Gold Wire /656 Sqn Assn @ £10.00 *
Gold Wire/656 Sqn @ £10.00 *
Woven/656 Sqn @ £ 5.00 *



Enamel Lapel Badges @ £ 3.00 *

Association Tie @ £10.00 *



Boxed Paperweights depicting various aviation subjects @ £ 5.00 *
List available upon request

BOOKS

'Fire by Order'

by Ted Maslen-Jones

@ £ 19.95*

'Tails of the Forties'

Compiled by John Havers & Peter Campbell

@ £10.00*

DVD

Historical films covering the period 1948 - 1960 during the Emergency in Malaya. First shown on Malaysian TV3 in 2006, it runs to eight episodes. It begins with the background of the start of the MCP before WW2, and runs through until the victory parade in 1960 in Kuala Lumpur. There are many historical and recent interviews with people in government, military and in civilian life. There is newsreel film showing the life and struggles of the time, relocation of squatters, action in the jungle, etc. It is naturally biased mainly towards the Malaysian Military and the Malay Police, but nevertheless it covers the Commonwealth forces as well and is very informative. @ £8.00*



PICTURES



Apache AH Mk 1 ZJ233

656 Squadron AAC, 9 Regiment AAC
Dishforth

Unframed. Size: 17 ¼ " x 11 ½ "

@ £5.00*



656 Squadron AAC

HMS Ocean

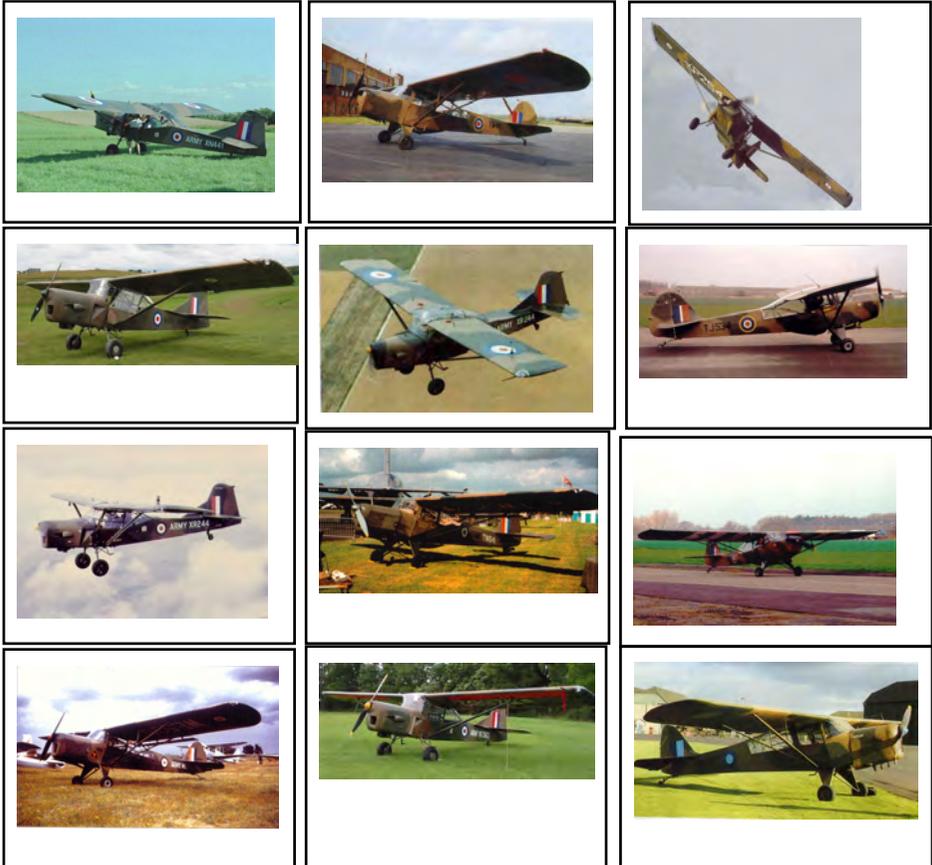
Unframed. Size: 8" x 12"

@ £1.00*

* Postage on all items at cost.

Contact: John or Sylvia Heyes *details on back page*

Association Calendars 2009



656 Squadron Association Calendar

“Austers in Colour”

To place an order for this Calendar, please contact:
John or Sylvia Heyes, *Contact details on back page.*

Calendars cost £8.00 each plus postage at cost.

Do not send any money when ordering the calendars, an invoice will be enclosed with the calendars giving exact costs and instructions on how to pay directly to the Association Treasurer.

**If required, Calendars with last years pictures,
ie the David Shepherd paintings and the Black and White Austers,
are also available in 2009 Calendar format.**

NOTICES

Jill neé Beith died peacefully on 14th May 2008 after a long illness borne with great courage and dignity. She was the beloved wife of Major Russell Matthews. Our sincere condolences go to Russell and his family at this very sad time.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

For those of you with Internet facilities, you may be interested in the following web site: <http://www.twgpp.org>

APOLOGIES

My apologies go to Brian Hill, author of the 'Daisy' article in the Spring Journal, for my misspelling of his name. It should of course have read Brian, not Brain!

Sylvia Heyes

Where are you Bill?

One of our members, Jim Rickman, REME, in Ipoh 1958 to 1963, is trying to find 'Bill' the cook in Ipoh 1958 to 1961. *See photo*

Jim cannot remember Bill's surname, but hopes someone will recognise him from the photo. If you do know who it is, please let Jim, who now lives in America, know. You will find his address on your membership list. Alternatively, you can let John Heyes know and he will pass on your information to Jim.



Thank you.

..... And Terry

Another of our members, Bill Sanders, is trying to find T.C. (Terry) Pickhaver. Does anyone know where he might be? If so, please let us know and we'll pass it on to Bill.

Thank you.



Crossword solution

Army Air Corps Association Return

The Association is applying for affiliation to the Army Air Corps Association. The affiliation, if approved, will benefit our Association both financially and socially.

In order to progress the application, we need to ascertain how many of our members are also members of the Army Air Corps Association. ***If you are a member of the Army Air Corps Association please let me know by email, post or telephone by 30 August. This is a matter of great importance if we are to proceed with the application***

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

John Heyes Contact details on back page.

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. T. Edwards	REME	Joined Feb 2008
Mr. T.J.R. Longley	REME	Joined Feb 2008
Mr. A. Radford	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Mr. D. Moore	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Col. E.J. Everett-Heath	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Capt. B. Shillito	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Capt. C. Lenaghan	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Mr. K. Clarke	AAC	Joined Feb 2008
Mr. P.R. Daughters	REME	Joined Mar 2008
Mr. C. Hitchens	AAC	Joined Mar 2008
Mr. M. Roberts	RA	Joined Mar 2008
S/Sgt. A. Broadhurst	AAC	Joined Mar 2008
Capt. G. Ward	AAC	Joined Mar 2008
Mr. D. Green	RAF	Joined May 2008
Mr. G. Stott	RA	Joined May 2008
Sgt. M. Brownlee	REME/AAC	Joined Jun 2008

DEATHS

Sadly , we announce the death of the following members and offer our sincere condolences to their relatives and friends.

Mr. David Elliott	RA	Died Dec 2007
Mr. William Peers	RAF	Died Feb 2008
Mr. Jack Hallam	RAF	Died Mar 2008
Mr. R.A. (Tony) Harding	REME	Died Apr 2008
Mr. Ray Wright	RA	Died Apr 2008
Col. P.F. Barry	RA	Died Apr 2008
Mr. Cyril Ellis	RA	Died Apr 2008
Col. Bob Begbie	RA/AAC	Died Jun 2008
Mr. C.R.B. Smith	RA	Date unknown

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