

**THE
CHINTHE**



**656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL
SUMMER 2010**

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Andrew Simkins

SUMMER 2010 ...

... and what a Summer! We seem to be in one long, hot Summer with clear skies and sultry temperatures. The weather certainly obeyed orders on our Annual Reunion on Saturday 3rd July. I commented that the sun always shines on our reunions, only to be corrected that it rained on a gathering back in the 1980's! Not a bad record though.

It has already been a busy year and there are still 5 months to go.

We successfully applied for a Lottery Grant a while ago, to consolidate and co-ordinate our **Squadron archives**. The £5,000 grant has enabled us to bring our extensive archives together at the Museum of Army Flying. While previously the various items were scattered around members' attics, they are now in good order (well done Mark and Derek) at the Museum. Our collection is ready to be integrated into the Museum's archives, using a software package called MODES. At the AGM we discussed whether we should donate or loan our archives to the Museum. After a very helpful discussion it was decided that we should donate the collection, once we are satisfied that the Museum can accept them in a satisfactory way, and make them readily accessible to our members, and interested members of the public and researchers. This will not be a quick process, and I anticipate that it will be sometime next year when they are formally handed over. We will keep you informed of progress. If you are able to give some time to this project please contact a member of the committee.

While on this subject, **I congratulate Ron Ward for bringing our website up to date** and tackling essential elements of our history. His efforts will ensure that we present our heritage in a constructive and accurate way.



We conducted our fifth tour of Malaysia and Singapore in May. This year our group was a very varied mix, with members travelling from Barbados, Portugal and Vietnam to meet up at Kuala Lumpur Airport. We then flew down to Singapore where we stayed in the Swissotel Merchant Court Hotel, which is ideally situated on the Singapore River. During our three-day stay we visited the Kranji Cemetery where we paid our respects to our two former members who are buried there. We also visited the Old Ford Factory, which is the site of the British Surrender to the Japanese Forces and is now an excellent Museum. All members marvelled at modern Singapore with its excellent transport facilities and the orderliness of this small, crowded state.

Early on the fourth day we left Singapore, by coach, and crossed the border into Malaysia. Our first stop was Kluang where the Squadron had a major base. Thanks to the persistence of the Malaysian Army Air Corps (MAAC) Duty Officer and Sergeant we were able to travel through the base, while Derek Walker gave us a running commentary of how the base looked in the 1960's. It is pleasing to see that Kluang is now the home of 881 Squadron MAAC which operates Augusta 109's from the same hangars where 656 Squadron operated Auster, Beaver, Scout and Sioux aircraft some 50 years ago.



We spent four days in the capital staying at the Renaissance Hotel, which is in the shadow of the iconic Twin Towers. During our stay we paid our respects at the Cheras Road Cemetery, where five members are buried. At a short but dignified ceremony we laid a wreath, and crosses at each graveside. The cemetery is an oasis of peace in the 'a corner of a foreign field that will be forever England.'

From our hotel we travelled out to Port Dickson to visit the Malaysian Army Museum, and stopped off at Seremban where the Squadron maintained a flight base in the 1950's and 60's. It was fortuitous that we visited this year, as the remaining buildings will be knocked down soon to make way for a new development. After an enjoyable four days, where members were able to revisit many sights



and sounds from their service, we started on the final leg of our journey to Penang.

En route we stopped off at Ipoh Airport which is now a regional airport. Revisiting the squadron hangars we were warmly welcomed by

the current, flight school management. Memories were refreshed, including the time where Mike Somerton-Rayner departed for England in his yellow painted Auster. We handed over a Squadron plaque and received individual baseball caps in return.

We next visited Taiping where the squadron hangar and



offices are still in place. From there we attempted to find the Christian cemetery where Captain Dalley is buried. After many blind alleys we eventually found the cemetery and the grave, and paid our collective respects.

Our tour concluded in Penang, which had been an R&R base for British Forces. It is now a major tourist location with excellent hotels strung along the pristine white beaches. Our two days in Penang were too short a time to do justice to this lovely part of Malaysia.

Details of our Reunion are covered in John's Report. As ever it was a joy to be amongst Squadron personnel and appreciate the hard, often dangerous work they continue to undertake on our behalf.

At the AGM it was decided to continue to form a contingent at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday (14th Nov) and at the National Memorial Arboretum (Thu 11th Nov). As a consequence please find enclosed a pro forma. It would be nice to have around 20 members on each parade.

We have a very varied programme taking shape for 2011, and details will be in the January Journal. So for now I wish you all a comfortable Summer and Autumn, and I look forward to seeing as many as of you as possible at our various events.

NB: SQUADRON ARCHIVES

As mentioned in the President's Report our Archives have now been consolidated at the Museum of Army Flying.

At the AGM it was agreed that we should donate the archives once we are satisfied that the Museum is in a position to accept them. If you have donated any items to the Association and do not wish them donated to the Museum please contact Mark Meaton, or any other committee member.

If you intend to donate any items in the future, please specify if you are content, or otherwise, for these to be ultimately donated to the Museum.

OP AGILA (RHODESIA)

The Association has very few items from the Squadron's contribution to Op AGILA (Rhodesian Independence). Therefore, if you can contribute to our archives could you please contact a member of the committee. *Contact details on page 40.*

SECRETARY'S REPORT

by John Heyes

This year has been very busy for your committee. Apart from organising the Far East trip (see *President's report, page 2*) and the reunion at Wattisham, (see *my report on page 11*), there has been a hive of activity at The Museum of Army Flying where Mark Meaton, Derek Walker, Ron Ward and Andrew and Jane Simkins have been busy beavering away on the onerous task of putting our archives in accessible order. Progress has gone well but there is still a long way to go. Our archives are now in a better shape than the MAF's! Our archives will, eventually, be loaded onto the MAF's database for all to access. Should anyone wish to assist with this task, they will be most welcome but we do ask that, if you wish to assist, to please make time to spend at the Museum for a few days at a time, one day visits to help, whilst appreciated, can be counterproductive. A small stipend from Association funds is available to assist with travel costs for those who wish to help. If you wish to be involved, please contact any of the above named to arrange convenient times.

Ron Ward has come onto the committee to take over the task of 'Webmaster' from John Bennett. John did a sterling task in setting up the website and managing it for a number of years, for which we are grateful. John, having flown the country for pastures new in France, felt that it was difficult to manage the website from a distance as he has very slow broadband (it means something to techno whiz kids, but not me) and was happy to hand the task over to Ron. Ron, with his techno whiz kid head on, has updated the site and made it more user friendly.

Sylvia has taken over the task of Membership Secretary from John Bennett for the reasons set out in my last paragraph. We owe Sylvia a great debt of gratitude for the work she does for the Association. Not only does she look after membership, she also compiles the journal twice a year and deals with the printing and distribution, is solely responsible for the shop, does all the printing required for the Association, does nearly all of the administrative work for me and last but not least has been very much involved in the organisation of the reunion at Wattisham. In between she cooks meals for me and my parents who live next door! I'm trying to find a few tasks to fill the rest of her day.

We have recruited twenty one new members this year but seven have retired and, sadly, twelve have passed away. We need new members. The young serving soldiers don't tend to be interested in our type of Association, interest is generally found when they leave the service or

retire. If you are in contact with anyone who may have a connection to the Squadron and is not a member, please encourage them to join us. Arm twisting is permitted but blackmail and brute force are frowned upon. Our thanks go to Andrew for leading the tour to Malaysia. It is not an easy task. It was obviously successful as I have had a number of people tell me that they had a most enjoyable time.

We have commissioned some gold plated and gilt cufflinks to be made for our shop. They will appear on the website soon. It was intended that we had them for sale at the reunion but they were not ready. We hope to have AAC, REME, RA and RAF in stock. Other Regiments or Corps will, hopefully, be available on request, subject to availability. Any other suggestions for shop stock will be welcomed.

As you may have read in the AGM minutes, I am planning a coach tour to Normandie next year. I have sent out for quotations to a number of companies. I plan a five to seven day tour in Normandie, not only looking at the battlefield, D day scene, but also a look at the cultural side of Normandie. At present, the plan is to pick up the luxury coach at the MAF at Middle Wallop, where, I am assured, that we can leave our cars with impunity, but I'll confirm that.

Last, but not least, Andrew is organising our Remembrance Day functions. Details of how to join us will be found in this Journal. If you have never paraded at the Cenotaph, I strongly recommend that you do it at least once. It is a most moving day.

I wish you all the best until next time we meet or until the next missive by Journal.



STOP PRESS!!

ANNUAL REUNION 2011

We are looking at having the Annual Reunion on 11th September 2011. We propose a joint 'Fly in' with the International Auster Club at Popham on A303, Hampshire, East of Middle Wallop. We could then go on to The Museum of Army Flying for Dinner in the evening. Staying in a local Hotel. (Definitely NOT a Travelodge this time!!)

AGM

AGM held at Wattisham Airfield on 3rd July at 1100 hrs

MINUTES

There were 31 members present. **Apologies:** Lou Walker Mark Meaton

1. There was a welcome by the President, Andrew Simkins followed by one minutes silence for lost colleagues.

2. Minutes of the 2009 AGM

Proposed: Reg Goodwin Seconded: Simon Salter

3. Secretary's Report.

John Heyes welcomed Ron Ward to the committee and thanked him for taking over the web site from John Bennett, who was also thanked for his work prior to Ron taking over. John Heyes then thanked Mark Meaton and Derek Walker for their combined efforts at managing the Association Archives in the Museum at Middle Wallop, and thanked Sylvia for taking on the role of Membership Secretary.

John Heyes also said we had 21 new members this year, 7 retirees and 12 deceased. He asked members to try to recruit more from amongst their friends.

John Heyes also thanked Andrew Simkins for heading up the Malaysian tour this year.

4. Treasurer's Report:

This was presented by Derek Walker, Deputy Treasurer, in the absence of Mark Meaton, Treasurer. It was shown that the Association funds continue to be in good order.

5. Acceptance of Financial Report:

Proposed: Les Rogers Seconded: Terry Burns

In favour: All present Against: None

6. Subscriptions:

Subscriptions will remain at £7.50/annum

7. Lottery grant:

The Association was awarded £5,000.00 last year to help with the Archiving costs. This money was put to good use and spent wisely on sorting out the Association's archives at the Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop.

8. Archives:

The Archives were consolidated in the main, by Derek Walker and Mark Meaton. Jane and Andrew Simkins also helped out. The Archives are held on a computer system package 'MODES' which can be accessed by all. It is done on a 'Thesaurus' type method, where you type in a keyword and the computer searches our own archives and compares what we have with the museums archives, thereby showing all the information to hand. Andrew Simkins proposed that we donate our archives to the museum, with the proviso they are looked after in the proper manner. Archiving work continues.

A show of hands showed a majority agreement.

Proposed: Reg Goodwin Seconded: Les Rogers

There was a lively discussion by members with ideas and opinions on the archives. Andrew Simkins asked for members to go along to the Museum to assist with sorting the archives.

9. Website:

John Heyes asked members to agree that Ron Ward should be on the committee. All in favour. John Bennett thanked Ron Ward for doing a wonderful job on the web site. Andrew Simkins thanked John Bennett for starting the web site and keeping it going for so long before Ron took over.

10. Remembrance Day:

Andrew Simkins said the numbers of our contingent at the Cenotaph are fairly static and asked if we should continue to go as a 656 Squadron unit or combine with AAC or stop going to the Cenotaph altogether and just go to the National Arboretum instead. It was put to the vote and agreed that 656 Sqn should remain apart from AAC. It was also agreed that we should keep our contingent at the Cenotaph and go to the National Arboretum as well.

11. Far East Tour:

Andrew Simkins said the tour was a great success, but the numbers have levelled off. Terry Burns thanked John Heyes, Andrew Simkins and Teng Lee the travel agent, for all their efforts in making it such a good trip.

12. Proposals 2011:

There was a useful discussion about the format of next year's reunion. Maybe not in the Museum but possibly as a combined affair with the International Auster Club. The location was yet to be decided, but we

will initially look for a suitable location in the South, although the National Memorial Arboretum could be suitable. There was a general feeling that we should consider holding the event later in the Summer, possibly in September. To be announced in the January Journal. Terry Burns suggested Old Thorns Country Club. It has very good facilities and special rates for Association Members. John Heyes suggested this might be something to think about as an additional place to go, but not as the 656 Sqn Assn Annual Reunion.

13. Tours:

John Heyes suggested possibly Indonesia or Korea might be worth thinking about for a future tour. Will come back at a later date with suggestions.

John also asked if members would be interested in going on a coach trip to Normandy on a Battlefield tour. Those present agreed it was a good idea, and John will look at it and go to the members in the January Journal with details.

14. AOB:

George Butler gave thanks to the committee for their combined efforts and this was followed by a round of applause.

Meeting closed @ 1205 hrs



Solution to Cryptic Crossword on Page 17

TREASURERS REPORT

For year ending 31st December 2009

by Mark Meaton

Last year the Association comfortably covered its core expenses of the journals, postage and web costs via subscriptions, which totalled just over £3,000.

The 2009 annual reunion was subsidised by roughly £400 from Association funds, and we incurred £125 in advance costs for this year's (2010) reunion.

We also provided funds for a visit to the Malaysian High Commission in London, as well as Arthur Windscheffel's 100th Birthday lunch at Wattisham in December 2008, and Ted Maslen-Jones's 90th Birthday lunch at Middle Wallop in 2009.

The shop offset these additional costs by providing a very good surplus of more than £1,300, which was due in no small part to the sales of Ed Macy's books.

We therefore dipped into our reserves to the tune of roughly £800 over the year, although this is masked in the figures by the receipt of the £5,000 grant for our archives (in 2009 we spent approximately £1,600 of this initial grant, and the remainder has now been used up in the first half of 2010).

Overall, the Association is in a good financial position; we ended 2009 with cash reserves (excluding the remainder of the archives grant) of just under £4,000. We also held just over £1,500 of shop stock.

As always, I would be happy to supply more detailed breakdowns to anyone who might be interested.



ANNUAL REUNION

Saturday 3rd July, Wattisham Airfield

by John Heyes

Once again we had superb weather for the reunion at Wattisham. I'm not at all sure which member of the committee was delegated to sort out weather but whomever it was, they did brilliantly!

We were fortunate that two other events were taking place on the day. Firstly, the Squadron held its own families day and, as a part of which, a beer tent was available for those inclined to imbibe. The Squadron has commissioned a beer to be brewed at a local brewery, the



The 'Grace' Spitfire Photographs by Ron Ward

beer is called 'Chinthe' and was physically brewed by members of the Squadron at the brewery. It was good to be able to meet and chat to serving members of the Squadron and their families. The other event was a 111 Squadron Royal Air Force reunion taking place at the aviation museum on the airfield. Those of you old enough will remember the 'Black Arrows' 111 Squadron formation flying team, predecessors to the Red Arrows. The Black Arrows flew black Hawker Hunters in a twenty two aircraft diamond formation. As part of their reunion, the 'Grace' Spitfire, a Folland Gnat and a two seat Hunter arrived during the



Folland Gnat

afternoon and gave short flying displays. During the course of the afternoon, we had a chance to get up close and personal with an Apache and later were treated to a flying display of an Apache showing off its speed and manoeuvrability. Most impressive.



Apache 'Bowling' to everyone



Two seat Hawker Hunter

The International Auster Club once again provided a couple of aircraft for those who wanted to have a short flight around the local area. I think that everyone who wanted a flight managed to get one. Our thanks go to Reg and Derek for organising the passengers onboard. We were fortunate to get these Aircraft as the Auster Club was committed to events all over the country on the day and, two days before the reunion, the original two nominated aircraft had to pull out for various reasons. We owe our thanks to Peter Gill, Secretary of the IAC, for organising two replacements at short notice whilst he was extremely busy with his QFI training.

The dinner in the WOs' and Sgts' Mess was most enjoyable. I have written to the Garrison RSM, the regiment RSM and the SSM to thank them for allowing us to use their home for our dinner. The ambience was excellent and the carvery meal prepared by the Mess caterers was of excellent standard, definitely the best we've had so far!! The



'Terry 'Slim' Burns, and his Teddy Bear, with Frances and Derek Walker

Raffle, which was ably organised by Reg Goodwin and John Bennett produced around £345.00. Slim Burns won the large teddy bear, which he most entertainingly auctioned off and in the process, kissed all bidders, regardless of gender, and produced another £30.00 for the association. The bear was bought by Colin Alderson, SSM. We know that Colin has a dastardly plan for it and we look forward to publishing the resultant photographs in the next Journal. Thanks for your contribution Colin. Thanks too, to all the members who contributed prizes for the Raffle, we couldn't do it without you. We allowed a longer period to socialise after dinner this year and this seemed to be a popular move, mess bar prices as they are. We are again in Sylvia's debt for making the flower and candle table centres, printing and producing menus, labelling and place naming us!

Colin Alderson, the SSM, greatly helped with the admin and preparations for the reunion day whilst he was extremely busy with his service duties, once again, our thanks.

Last, but not least, the buffet lunch! The civilian caterers, who were charged with producing our buffet and the families day barbeque let us down, and that is the polite way to put it. The SSM can only be described as apoplectic when he saw our buffet. Colin, the SSM, has told us that we will not be expected to pay for the few trays of rather 'sad' sandwiches that were produced. Please contact Sylvia, *details on page 40*, if you would like reimbursing for your lunch.

All things considered, a most successful reunion and we look forward to seeing you all next year.

Normandie Battlefield Tour May 2011

As you may have gathered from various references elsewhere in this Journal, I am planning an Association trip to one of my favourite places after Malaysia, Normandie. The general consensus of opinion at the AGM and at the reunion dinner was that it is a good idea. We have been to Malaysia five times, at least, and it is becoming repetitive and quite expensive, not to say that we won't go to the Far East again in the future. I'm aiming for, exclusive to the Association, use of a luxury coach. Mid May next year seems to be a good time as the serious holiday season won't have started, the weather should be reasonable and France will have woken up from her winter hibernation by then. Seven days would appear to allow us to cross the channel both ways and give us sufficient time to visit the invasion beaches et al and significant points plus maybe a little time to take in the culture and history of Caen and surrounding areas. Agincourt is very close by. Andrew Simkins is looking at the prospect of parking our cars, in reasonable security, at The Museum of Army Flying and I am therefore proposing the MAF as the sole pick up point, if parking is approved, to ease the logistics. For planning purposes, I'm budgeting on thirty passengers at present, plus a tour guide, if his/her cost is viable. If your responses demand to make it a larger party then I will seek prices accordingly, hopefully negotiating down. I have sent out for quotations stating the minimum standard for accommodation is to be The Campanile motels. The parent group has a number of hotel chains and I would hope that we can negotiate up from The Campanile to a higher star rating chain. Check The Campanile out on the Internet, the French Campaniles are far better than the ones in UK. You can check all the chains in the group at Louvre Hotels on the Internet. At: www.louvrehotels.com

Any suggestions as to sites to visit or ideas to enhance the tour would be welcome.

I am planning a seven day tour and the cost is looking like about £100/day or thereabouts.

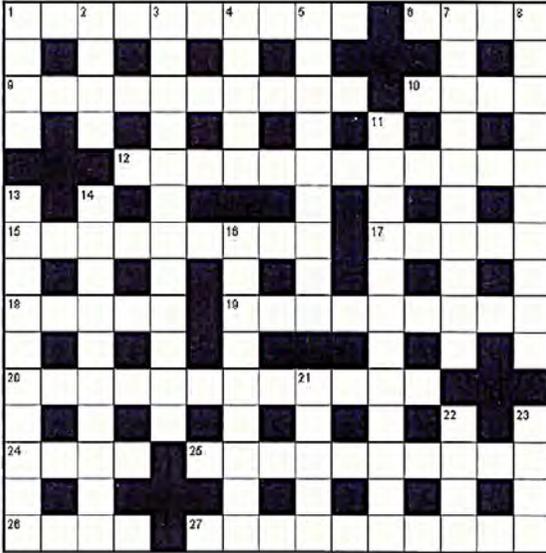
If you are at all interested in this trip, with *no commitment at this time*, please return the enclosed registration form, to me, John Heyes, before the beginning of November, the sooner the better, in order to establish approximate numbers. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis until the coach is full.

Can you name them?



This picture was sent in by Barrie Davies. It shows Terry Pickhaver, an instruments and electrics mechanic, leaning into the aircraft. The one leaning on the lift strut is either an engine or airframe mechanic, do you know his name?. The WO2, (working about two feet behind the spinning propeller!) had been known for smelling the exhaust coming out of the exhaust-pipe then making adjustments to the mixture/ignition and it is said he did a better job of that than the computer machine ! Do you know his name?





Cryptic Crossword

Set by Alberich

Source:

www.freecrosswords.net

Solution on Page: 10

ACROSS

- 1 Came across a record concerning journalist (10)
- 6 Language of old city belonging to the French (4)
- 9 They'll get wrongly blamed for heading off escape by animals (10)
- 10 There's potato in Mum's pudding (4)
- 12 Style of cooking providing contrasts (5-3-4)
- 15 Country-loving Irishman in charge of containing disturbance (9)
- 17 Giving note to terrorists makes one angry (5)
- 18 One who latches on to another is a sucker (5)
- 19 Sailor's intent perhaps is to be self-restrained (9)
- 20 A comment sure upset in due proportion (12)
- 24 Man told to get on his knees? (4)
- 25 Boundary rope may produce such a decision (10)
- 26 E.g. dogs returning from walk (4)
- 27 Not quite one's best friend on the ship (6,4)

DOWN

- 1 Pretty girl gets some food (4)
- 2 Animal found in sea location (4)
- 3 Fat little Edward is biased (12)
- 4 The First Lady touring Oklahoma will awaken memories (5)
- 5 The thresholds of delights (9)
- 7 Heartless robbers go off with a pet. The villains! (10)
- 8 Below, below, below (10)
- 11 Managed to get clergyman in dead awkward situation (12)
- 13 They are seeking work after demolition of aspic plant (10)
- 14 Steam railway takes on head of Railtrack to improve (10)
- 16 To perform in a different key, one's parts must be arranged (9)
- 21 Went on horseback round cowboy show (5)
- 22 Junk mail from the capital (4)

MEMBERS CONTRIBUTIONS

1903 Independent Air O.P. Flight RAF

by Clive Howe

It was interesting to read the report by D.W. Davies under 'Members' Contributions' in the Summer 2007 edition of the 'Chinthe' as he detailed his journey out from RAF Lyneham in a Hastings transport aircraft to Singapore. I did the exact journey with the same stop over's, but carried on from Singapore to RAF Kai Tak, in Hong Kong.

After joining up as a National Serviceman in August 1950, I did my initial training at RAF Wilmslow, then on to Trade Training at RAF St. Athen. I was subsequently posted to RAF Swanton Morley in Norfolk and found the experience less than exciting and when asked how I could 'escape' and possibly get posted abroad, I was told that I would need to sign on for an extra year, which I decided to do.



Square bashing 1950, I'm the one second from right.

I was later posted to RAF Hednesford transit camp where we waited for posting orders. When they arrived we were taken to RAF Lyneham, loaded on to our Hastings and off we went. El Adam in North Africa was our first stop, then the next day on to RAF Habbanyia in Iraq. The following day we arrived in Pakistan at RAF Muripoir and that was an awful experience. The heat was oppressive and the stench dreadful. We went to Karachi in the evening by bus and had to push it to start! Next day we were in Colombo, Ceylon, at RAF Negombo, and that was



1903 Flight HQ Shah Tin , New territories, Hong Kong

just as nice as the previous two stops had been awful. From there, over to RAF Changi in Singapore, where I stayed for about a week when my friend Brian Mulqueen, who had gone through the same trade journey as me, and I were both summoned to the Orderly Office and told we were being posted to RAF Kai Tak, in Hong Kong. We arrived in Kai Tak and after a few days in limbo, we were both summoned again to the Orderly Room and told they needed two Airframe Mechanics to go to the New Territories to join 1903 AOP Flight which was going to Korea!! We were the only two people in the room and both of us were Aircraft Mechanics so we naturally got the jobs.

The Flight was situated in the New Territories about a mile from the Chinese border. Our quarters were excellent – former Japanese Officers' accommodation, we were led to believe. The airstrip was about a mile further back from the border. We were right on the river, so mosquitos were a constant source of irritation. The make up of the Flight was of four sections, plus HQ. Five pilots, including the CO, plus the RAF and Royal Artillery personnel, two of each in each section.

On arrival at our camp at Shah Tin, the pilots on Flight were: Major Ronnie Gower, Commanding Officer, Captains Derek Jarvis, Arthur Stewart-Cox, Leslie Addington, Dick Corfield and Terry Fitzgibbon. In Korea: Major Gower was relieved by Major Jack Hailes, in June 1952 and Captain Bob Warner arrived at the same time. Captains Addington, Corfield and Fitzgibbon left circa September 1951 and were relieved by Captains Crawshaw, Joyce and Joe Luscombe (Australian

who was later killed, crashing his Auster into the north bank of the Imjim.)
Captain Brian Forward (Australian) arrived 27th June 1952.

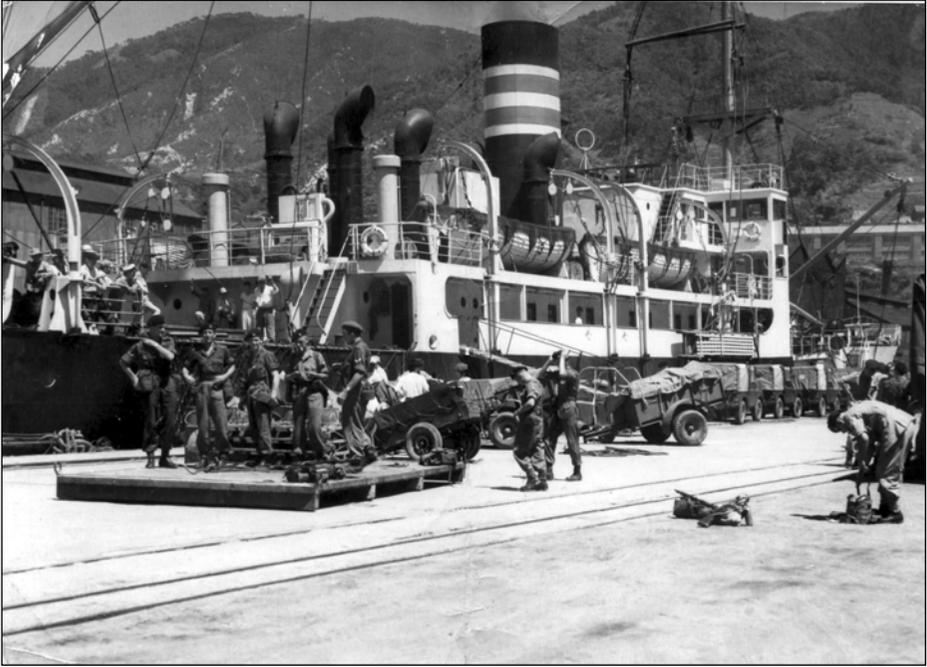


HMS Unicorn

When our orders came to leave Hong Kong, we were transferred to the port and boarded HMS Unicorn, a pretty old Aircraft Carrier which had been in the Far East for some time. We were billeted with various messes aboard and enjoyed the journey to Japan. As an ex Sea Cadet with four years service and having served on every type of ship and submarine this was a fantastic experience. Our first stop was at Sasebo where we went ashore and had our first taste of Japanese culture, alas, only for one night and then on to Iwakuni, a joint RAAF/USAF Base. We were put into the Transit Hotel, which was positive luxury, although most of us soon found our way down town where we spent most of our time until after about ten days, we received our marching orders. We were taken to Kure docks and loaded onto a small Japanese ship, the 'Hanadate Maru' where we experienced dreadful food and open hole toilets!

Pusan was awful, a completely disorganised American camp in terrible conditions. After a couple of days, we were loaded on to a US LST and left for Inchon. On arriving at Inchon we were transported by lorries to Seoul where we were billeted in the Transit Camp next to the Military Prison! We slept on the floor with no bedding, along with Infantry that were coming in to form part of the Commonwealth Division.

We left Seoul and arrived at our first airstrip at Tokchong on July 31st 1951. Our aircraft flew from Iwakuni to the Division, arriving at the same time. Our first airstrip was alongside the main north/south road, with a



1903 Embarking 'Harandat Maru' bound for Pusan Korea. August 1951

small river running to the east of the strip. On arriving at our destination we were told that the small village that we were taking over as our base, was still inhabited and that we had to move all the civilians immediately. This came as a very difficult job for a nineteen year old, to turn families with old and young relatives out of their homes, but it had to be done, and it was.

We had tents but little else and had to make do as best we could as far as sleeping was concerned. Some of us slept in the back of our 3 tonner until tents etc could be erected within the village. Camouflage netting was put over the aircraft positions, vehicles etc and from the air it was difficult to identify our 'equipment'.

Initially, the weather was very hot and all the kit we had was our standard RAF or Army issue. Although civilians had been removed, some elderly ladies still managed to get to us to offer to do our washing, an offer we were pleased to accept. They took our washing down to the river and washed it on stones and it came back in excellent condition. On one occasion, we saw a pregnant woman carrying washing down to the river and when she came back she was carrying a new born baby! It was a

tough baptism with no toilets, no water at times and gun fire, heavy and light, going on just to our north.

The front line was moving northwards at this time and so on the 12th September we moved to our second airstrip, further north. The weather was getting cooler and some of the attempts at getting dug in were disastrous as we woke up in the morning swimming in water – we had dug into a paddy field! Each section made its own arrangements regarding sleeping and general living and we soon were organised in making our existence bearable.

On the 30th October 1951 we moved for the third and final time to Fort George airstrip running parallel to the River Imjim and adjacent to Pintail Bridge. During our stay here we initially had no winter clothing and the weather was closing in. We had no official heating in our tents, so while the Americans had wonderful parkas and winter clothing together with excellent space heaters (as seen on M*A*S*H), we were once again the poor relations. Eventually, winter clothing came in and we changed our RAF Blue for Green Combat suits etc. Some of us managed to do deals with the Canadians for their Parkas and for US space heaters to replace the handmade contraptions made from used artillery shells as a chimney going through the tent inner and outer. Unfortunately, if the flow of diesel from outside the tent into the sand filled base became too much and the shell case chimney became over heated, the tent would burn down and this happened to Section 4 when a lot of our belongings went up with the tent.

We paraded each morning with our issued weapons and I, along with the other Airframe Mechanics, had Bren guns which we had to have at the ready at all times. Engine Mechanics had 303 Rifles, while the two Army operatives had a Sten gun and another 303 Rifle. We did guard duty every fourth night, two hours on, four hours off, two hours on, four hours off and during the good weather this was OK, but once the bad weather set in from October through to March, the conditions were Arctic and frostbite was always to be aware of. The River Imjim froze solid during this period, bearing in mind it was a fast flowing river. It was not until March/April that the ice subsided. During the better weather the river was excellent for swimming and the sand was wonderful. Our aircraft flew three hour sorties from dawn until dusk so we could see our aircraft off and go down for a swim.

Entertainment came from the UK and the USA and at 'rear div' they had an ideal open air auditorium which could hold over 1,000 sitting on a hillside. I met Danny Kaye and Ted Ray personally. Danny



Audience at Hy Hazel Concert August 1952. I was at this show and sat 2nd row from back!!



Above: Danny Kaye



Right: Myself and Ted Ray

Kaye flew with Major Gower in my aircraft 582 after his show. He did NOT enjoy the trip!!

I enjoyed three R & R's in Tokyo, arriving at Ebisu Leave Camp, getting de-loused and kitted out with fresh kit then off to the Ginza for five 'lost days', what an experience for a 19 year old. Money was no object as we spent no money in Korea and the rate in Japan at that time was 1,000 yen to the pound. The Ginza Beer Hall was the Commonwealth Division's drinking den and every serviceman who ever went to Tokyo came away with a picture taken in the Ginza Beer Hall.



Ginza Beer Hall, Tokyo. I'm sitting 3rd from right.

1903 Independent AOP Flight RAF is a very special part of Korean history. The only RAF unit to have served on active service there. A small, very efficient unit which at any time only comprised of about 50 servicemen who, despite horrendous weather conditions, lack of proper clothing, housing and heating, survived, and all aircraft were operational except when extreme weather prevented. The Flight flew some 3,000 AOP sorties and Captain Jarvis flew 210 on Hong Kong and 639 operational hours in Korea, which included 306 operational sorties, 304 air shoots and 60 night landings.

A NEAR MISS – AUSTER AOP 9 XK375

by Bernard Redshaw

An abridged version of this article first appeared in the Chinthe in 2000. We thought it worth printing again, in full. Ed.

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

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

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

In 1959, the focus of our operations moved northwards the Thai border, and I moved up to Grik to establish a forward Tac HQ in the Police Station there. 656 Squadron established a forward presence with two Auster 9s on the local airstrip at Grik. Very soon after, one of the Squadron's pilots (as I recall a Staff Sergeant with the nick name of "Hawk Eye" - I can't remember his name, but I'm sure that he does!) sighted a very large deep jungle CT camp in the Betong Salient (Thailand).

The camp was so large that it was considered almost certain to be that of the Secretary General of the MCP, Chin Peng. And so an operation was immediately set up to take it.

At that time Commonwealth Forces were not permitted to cross into Thailand, so the operation provided for a combined Malay and Thai Police Field Force company to attack the camp, whilst 28 Brigade forces maintained a large network of ambushes on the border. I moved up to Kroh to set up a further forward Tac HQ and the 656 Squadron detachment moved up with me. Also on the strip at Kroh, the RAF positioned a Whirlwind helicopter, which it later replaced with a smaller Sycamore.

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

against the Japanese. Davis's knowledge of Chin Peng's mind-set and likely actions was to play an important part in the operation.

During this time, I made a number of discreet observation flights (as a passenger of 656 Squadron) over 28 Brigade positions. The Auster 9 that we flew in



Bernard being loaded up for the first sortie

9 that we flew in most frequently (XK375) was suffering a number of minor problems, which should possibly have warned me of what was to come. On one occasion, as we were coming in to land, the pawl securing the sprocket for the HF antenna winding gear came adrift, the antenna unwound violently

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

Then, two days before the attack was due to go in, a CT courier, travelling north towards the camp, was ambushed and killed by a patrol of 3 Royal Australian Regt (3RAR). It was considered imperative that this courier should be identified without delay, so the body was carried back in relays to a 1 NZ Regt position that was considered to be sufficiently far enough away from the CT camp area so as not to compromise the operation.

The 1 NZ Regt patrol cleared an LZ from which an RAF helicopter was to bring out the body. However, at this particular moment a suspected design fault had grounded all the Sycamores, and the one remaining Whirlwind in the area was declared unserviceable. It was therefore decided to parachute in a camera and fingerprinting equipment - a mission for the 656 Squadron detachment. The same Auster 9 was

tasked, with Captain Nigel Budd, 10th Hussars, as pilot, and myself flying as dispatcher.

We were to drop the equipment into the same DZ that had been prepared for the helicopter. This, we noted, was sited on a ridge. We



The DZ on the first run in

swooped in and, on Nigel's signal, I dispatched our load. As we circled, the parachute developed and started to descend perfectly into the clearing. Then, to our dismay, an up-draft from side of the ridge lifted the parachute upwards and sideways, depositing it into the top of a tall tree on the edge of the DZ.

It soon became obvious that the patrol could not recover the parachute, and it seemed very likely that another parachute would also suffer the same fate. So we returned to Kroh to collect another set of equipment prepared for a free drop on a streamer.

So back we came, and into the clearing we dived. As I threw the bundle out, Nigel pulled the Auster tightly up and out. Whilst I was looking downwards and backwards, focusing on the streamer, I felt a bump and heard a loud thumping, ripping noise on Nigel's side of the aircraft. I then saw that we were now flying very low, almost skimming the jungle canopy. "Oh Christ!" came Nigel's voice over the intercom, "I've never done that before." When I looked out to his side, I saw that we had lost a

piece of our port wing, loose canvas was flapping and that we were carrying a piece of branch about 3½ metres long. We had clipped the same tree that had claimed the parachute!

We were still flying! As we recovered and gained height, Nigel turned to me and said that, since we had lost our pitot head, he had to do a stall check to be certain of his ASI before we could land. Today, with more knowledge about flying than I had then, I have often wondered whether or not this was really necessary, given our circumstances. But he explained everything to me, and after gaining more height, we did the stall check. This frightened me much more than hitting the tree!



XK375 with damaged port wing removed

Then, as we made our way back home to Kroh, we were surprised to be joined firstly by the "grounded" Sycamore, then by the "unserviceable" Whirlwind and finally by a Pioneer that had been in the vicinity. Apparently the 1 NZ Regt patrol on the ground were sure that we had gone in, and had put up a Mayday. And so this mixed convoy slowly made its way above the ocean of the jungle canopy - rather like the final procession in *Peter and the Wolf*.

We eventually made a perfect landing on Kroh strip, with a large audience of worried-looking military personnel looking on. When the aircraft was duly inspected, it was discovered that we had lost the end cap

of our port wing (including the pitot head) and that the fuselage was twisted out of alignment. As a result, the airframe was written off – or so I was told.



XK375 loaded and ready to go back to base

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



RETURN TO TAIPING

by Glyn (Tubs) Chambers

I suppose it is human nature to seek out ones past history and I have always hankered to go back to places that made impressions on me at much earlier times in my life.

I was a National Service REME/AAC Technician, in fact one of the last. I found myself at 7 Recce Flight at Taiping, North Malaya in 1960 and 1961, just eighteen months into my two years service. (I was late going home)

The yearning to return has always been strong, more so in recent years. The excuse came when my son went to live in Perth, Western Australia. He and his lovely wife have given us a beautiful granddaughter. My wife, who is not one for travelling, could not wait to get out there and see the newly born little one. Six months later we did it again, and by flying with Malaysian Airways the stopover is Kuala Lumpur. This was too good an opportunity to miss as Penang is only less than one hours local flight away, with it's own airport now.

With my wife and daughter we stayed at an excellent hotel just outside Georgetown and did most of the sights, just like I did forty seven years previously when I managed a leave period at 'Sandycroft' was it? Forces leave centre.

We hired a car and driver for a day so that we could visit Taiping, and although the old ferry still runs, we used the new bridge and then Taiping is only one hours drive down the new trunk road.

Taiping looked much the same, but a large Tesco store greets you as you enter the town. The lake gardens are much as I remember them, but the main attraction is now a zoo – but not for us.

We could not find the location of the old Trincomalee camp as this is now lost in development of the area, which is very much a Malaysian Army town.

I did however, find the old airfield and our compound. Still very much as it was back then. No flying at all takes place now on the airfield and even the civil part, with its control tower is falling down.

Our old compound is now a small Malaysian Army Depot and unfortunately, on the day of our visit, they had a major exercise on and I could not get permission to take any photographs, which would have been nice to compare with the ones I took five decades ago and show here.

Anyhow, it was a trip I had to do. I do not suppose I will visit Taiping again, but we really enjoyed our visit to Malaysia and I have finally laid one particular old ghost to rest.

MY REST DAY IN BURMA IN WORLD WAR II - FEB 1945

by *Furdoon (Duck) Mehta*



I was the only Indian Artillery officer to have volunteered for AOP and served with 656 AOP Squadron in SE Asia operations of war in Burma and Malaya in World War II.

It was February 1945 and we were victoriously battling on from north and south in Burma in support of the XIV Army and we were approaching the mighty Irrawaddy River which we crossed a few weeks later. This was the period when the AOP in Burma was at its busiest and was very stretched as we had a lot of area to cover. Whereas, the normal allotment would be one Squadron per Corps, our squadron covered

the XIV Army area of operations stretched over hundreds of miles.

We had just captured Schwebo, a strategic town in North Burma and my Flight was supporting XXXIII Corps in which I served from our very own Advanced Landing Ground (ALG). There was also an RAF fighter strip not far from us.

My Flight Commander was a very serious looking man called George Deacon, a very good hearted man, who one morning in February 1945, told me 'Duck (that was my nickname, as I came from Bombay, famous for its delicious eel like fish, called Bombay Duck) I am pinching your aircraft for the day as mine has developed serious compass problems. Its at least 35 - 40 deg out. I've called some RAF technicians from Group HQ to put it right. You take it easy today and hold the fort as you've got a very busy day tomorrow'.

After a leisurely breakfast, I was about to settle down and catch up with my mail, when the telephone rang. It was our CCRA, Brig 'Hair Trigger' Stevens, who said 'I want an aircraft to drop me to an ALG (name sounded like Timbuktu) about 45 minutes away'. I explained that I had an aircraft, but it was waiting to get its compass fixed. He said 'Damn the compass, you can map read your way. I am coming in 15 minutes' I had the aircraft fuelled and had just started the engine, when he dashed over, on he dot, in a cloud of dust and said 'Let's go' and came and sat in the passenger seat. I had a ¼ inch map sheet and he pointed to an ALG at one corner of the map and said 'There'. Our armies have a knack of fighting a war at the corner of our maps. So off we went and landed at the ALG where I saw a group of officers with black berets, gathered to meet the CCRA, who got down and said to me 'Don't switch

off'. He had a brief meeting with them and came back to me and said 'Take this Colonel, CO of the Corps Armoured Regiment, on a low level recce and bring him back alive'. The Colonel came and sat in the passenger seat and belted up. He then showed me on his 1 inch to the mile map, some track he had to recce and asked me to fly at treetop height, and said to me 'You concentrate on your low level flying and I'll navigate'. That was the first mistake I made. Never let anyone else navigate!

After flying about ten minutes or so, I was seeing Jap like troops jumping into trenches as I passed over them. After another twenty minutes or so, I spotted a mass of water. I said to myself, 'That's the mighty Irrawaddy River' - we were at least 60 miles into Jap territory by then. I looked at the Colonel and he appeared agitated, looking at his map (which we had long overshot). I asked him 'Where are we now?' And he replied 'I am honestly lost'. I said, 'Not to worry, Sir, I will now navigate' and pulled up to about 1,000 feet to see what I could identify. I turned 'homewards' and flew for about ten minutes when luckily, I spotted a rail and road running parallel and altered course to follow the rail homewards. The Colonel insisted we go in the opposite direction, so I had to be firm and said 'Sir, you are a passenger who has lost his way, I'm going to put matters right, so please relax and view the scenery'. He didn't like that at all and muttered something to himself. I was doing what is commonly called 'Bradshawing' - looking for a railway station to fly over and read it's name, but I had no such luck. I looked up at the petrol gauge and saw it had about half a gallon of petrol left. I started looking around for somewhere to force land the nearer the road the better. After going a few minutes more, at last, as luck would have it, I spotted an ALG and as I got nearer, I saw white crosses marked on it which meant mines located, but not lifted. I flew over the strip a couple of times to memorise the location of the mines and determined my landing plan. The Japs were stupid - they placed most of the mines nearer the centre of the strip and left just about enough space to make an AOP type short landing with the nose up and bags of engine. I also noticed friendly activity around the strip and was hoping that they would be engineers. The Colonel asked me what the white crosses meant, so I said that they were only mines and said I was going in for a landing. You should have seen his face.

My plan was to make the shortest possible landing at one end, then navigate the mined area like a car, using brakes to steer at slow speed. I made a super short landing safely and asked the Colonel to get down and help me steer through the mined area. Just then a Captain

wearing 'IND ENGRS' shoulder titles came running to the aircraft and said he would help in navigating, which he did, and we came through safely. I said 'Thank God for the Engineers' and requested two jerry cans of MT fuel and also requested him to lift three or four mines to give me sufficient space for a good take off run, which he said he would do. In the meantime some hot sweet tea and omelettes were produced for us. We refuelled with my funnel and chamois leather, which I always carried for refuelling. The engineers got down to lifting the mines. They lifted three of them and I said that was sufficient. I also asked them to give me a map sheet, either 1 inch to the mile or a ¼ inch sheet and asked them to show me the way back to the Colonel's ALG. After thanking them profusely, I took off. I dropped the Colonel at his ALG, by which time, the sun had just set, in winter the twilight is very short and gets dark quickly. To this day I don't know what the Colonel reced.

It was a toss up whether I should continue to fly back to my ALG at Schwebo, or stay the night at this ALG. I decided to battle on and navigate following the dusty track to our ALG. Brown dusty tracks at night show up fairly clearly against the green jungle and I followed it. Besides that, my flight commander would be most worried and might send out signals for 'Lost Aircraft' call covering the Corps area. I had decided that if I couldn't locate our strip, I would go and land at the fighter strip which was much longer, risking ant-aircraft fire at night. I know they had no search lights. As I approached our strip, lights started coming up on both sides of the strip, making it easy for me to land, which I did - a real daisy cutter, amidst cheers from the gunners and airmen who lit up the strip as soon as they heard my engine.

George Deacon had an ingenious idea, he got loose earth piled up on both sides of the strip every 30 yards or so, then soaked them in kerosene with orders to light them as soon as they heard an Auster engine approaching. George came to me as I got down and said - 'Duck, never again, never again' He was very angry with me and didn't speak a word at dinner 'til I broke the ice and said what had happened that day. Then a smile came to his face and he said 'Well done Duck' and served me a peg of his precious Scotch.



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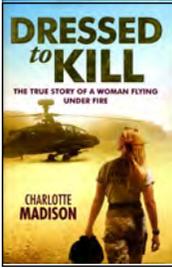


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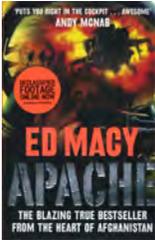
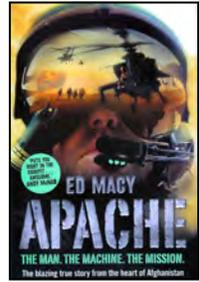
Ed recounts the intense months that followed Mutay: the steep learning curve, the new missions, the evolving enemy and the changing Rules of Engagement. He also sheds light on his early career as a young paratrooper, his operational baptism as a pilot and how both shaped his ability to fly, fight and survive during that fateful first Afghanistan tour against a cunning and ruthless enemy.

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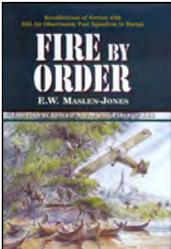
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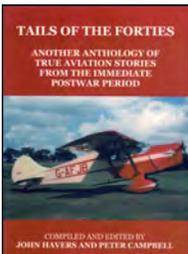
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NOTICES

War Medals. With a Crown or without?

Ron Ward asks the question

Having noticed that my father's Korean War Medal, Queen Elizabeth is not wearing a Crown, all my medals show her wearing a Crown. This also applies to the WW2 Defence Medal.

This I feel is because the Korean War Medals were awarded during the period of just prior to her Coronation on 3rd June 1953. At that time my father was serving in Hong Kong and took part in the Coronation Parade. Also King's face to the left as you look at the medal and the Queen's to the right.

If this is correct, how many more instances are there where a Campaign award was made prior to her Coronation without a Crown?

Has anyone got, or know of, a 1918-1962 GSM with Malaya Clasp from this period or any other Campaign Medal without a Crown?? It would have to be the first award of the medal as later awards were added to the existing Medal as a Clasp.

Some more useless information is that the 'genuine' GSM, the portion with the Monarch's head will swivel and has number, rank, name etc. around the rim and fake or a copy does not.

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

Whenever we have a bit of news that might be of interest to our members, we send out an email to keep them up to date. If you do not have an email address, perhaps you have a friend or relative who can receive these emails on your behalf? If so, please let Sylvia Heyes, *details on page 40*, have their email address so that you can be added to the contact list.

An Appeal from Oliver

Hi, My name is Oliver Andrews, I am 10 years old and I am doing a project at primary school on my Great Granddad Raymond George Pett, who was part of 656 AOP serving in Burma in WW2, and I wanted to know if anyone has any pictures or stories that you would share with me so that I can add to my project. My email contact is: neil.andrews89@btinternet.com Thank you.

NB. If you do not have email, please pass on any info to me, Sylvia Heyes, contact details on page 40, and I will see Oliver gets it.

OLD NEWSLETTERS

Ron Ward, our webmaster, has a gap in the Newsletters on the web site. Do any of you have any old copies between 1953 and 1992 tucked away in your attics or garages or anywhere else?? If so, could you please let us know, so that Ron may copy them to put onto the web site. Thank you.

JOURNAL CONTRIBUTIONS

We are rapidly running out of your anecdotes and tales for inclusion in the journal. We don't necessarily need great works of literary genius. Any length, short or long are welcome, even one liners from mess line books etc. Any amusing tales, stories of your experiences, memories from yesteryear or today, or anything that you think may entertain us in the dark winter nights. So please sit down and have a think, ***remember the stories that you last told at a reunion dinner when lamps were swinging*** and put pen to paper. Your efforts will be appreciated by all. If you have sent one in and it hasn't been published, please contact John or Sylvia Heyes, *details on page 40*, and we'll find out where it has got to.

NEW MEMBERS

Val Fissler	Associate	Joined	Feb 2010
Mike Kerry	RASC	Joined	Mar 2010
Charlotte Madison	AAC	Joined	Apr. 2010
Reece Fissler	Associate	Joined	Apr. 2010
Terry McGuire	RAF	Joined	May 2010

DEATHS

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

Russell Matthews	RA	Died February	2010
Peter Proost	RA	Died April	2010
Alan Cottam	RAF	Died April	2010
Colin Macleod	REME	Died July	2010

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