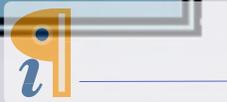


THE CHINTHE



656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL
SUMMER 2012



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OC S REPORT

As always, it has proved another busy period for 656 Sqn since the last report. Following on from recovering from ELLAMY (Libya), we are now firmly reconstituting the ability towards Transitional Intervention Capability (or, the ability to conduct anything in the world at 5 days notice to move).

This period saw the Sqn regenerate aircrew towards the multi-national and tri-service Exercise Joint Warrior on board HMS Illustrious off the North Scottish coast. Following HMS Ocean being re tasked in support of the Olympics prior to her refit, HMS Illustrious, under Capt Martin Connell, has taken on the role of Landing Platform Helicopter (LPH). The work up for this exercise saw the loan of 3 Regt aircrew to the Sqn and the utilisation of the Deputy Regimental QHI and a period of Deck Landing evolutions and ships integration in the North sea in February. With a 100% rotation of both aircrew and SHQ over the period, we ve had quite a task.

Exercise Joint Warrior itself consisted of a good period of preparatory flying and co-ordination at all levels as the ship sailed west around the coast and up towards Carlisle. Upon arrival, we begun to disembark and then operated ashore in either Carlisle airport or Castle Kennedy (scene of the might storm on completion of validation of Apache during CTR1) for 5 days under 16 Air Assault Bde. The weather was generally good for us, however the ground troops (formed from 5 SCOTS, and just down the road in West Freugh) didn t fair so well. Alongside us were Chinook from Odiham, and Sea king from CHF Yeovilton.

Following the land phase, we re-embarked and sailed North to the Cape Wrath range complex, where, under the direction of SSgt Andy Wharmby, we completed the first Hellfire Firings in the UK on a sea range from HMS Illustrious. This led nicely into a 30mm range day at the same location prior to sailing swiftly south to essentially repeat the Land phase exercise, but this time, from ship, and under 3 Commando Bde. This all went well, however, for both Brigades, their recent experience of Afghanistan is obviously still truly engrained, and we still have a great deal of work ahead us educating the 'customer on what the aircraft is truly capable of (outside of solely the tactics employed in Afghanistan).

Following Joint Warrior, a period of courses and leave ensued, in preparation for the Sqn taking over the Station duties and looking to maintaining the day-to-day support to operations from here. This will continue until the end of August when we look forward to some Adven-



turous Training prior to our next big event Exercise Cougar 12, back to the Mediterranean!

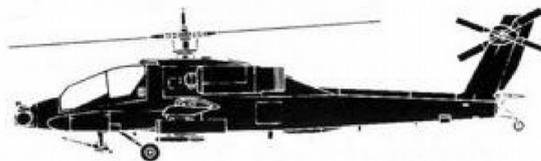
Other news allows me to highlight that the Squadron will now lose the attachment to the Operational Conversion Flight (OCF) training the Conversion To Role (CTR), and the dedicated support to maintaining the bulk of the Regimental fleet of vehicles, and shall now solely focus on a Contingent capability, at least up until the end of Afghanistan.

New to the team are myself, Maj Piers Lewis, having served in the Sqn previously under Cols Dalton, Cash and Maj Amlôt; the SSM, WO2 Andy Eardley with an impressive background in the AAC and Infantry; Ops Officer, Capt Rich Bennett; 2IC, Capt Henry Anderson; OC Ground Support, Lt Nick Kendall; other aircrew, a number of groundcrew and signallers. The strong links between the Squadron and our REME brethren has maintained and built upon with the arrival of Q Baines, however, SSgt Docherty will be missed as he moves over the road to 7Bn REME.

Finally, congratulations should again be highlighted for WO1 Lane for his MiD, Maj Mike Neville for his QCVS, and Maj Amlôt for his imminent promotion to Lt Col.

I fully expect my next report to be compiled from HMS Illustrious somewhere in the Med as we lead up to the Sqn's significant 70th Birthday.

Piers Lewis



PRESIDENT S REPORT

Summer 2012

This report should perhaps be headed 'Winter' given the cold and wet weather we are experiencing around the longest day. I therefore approached our mid June Reunion at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) with some trepidation. As it was an outside event, I prayed for a break in the cold and rain.

I need not have worried, however, as the weekend proved to be one of our most enjoyable and successful. I congratulate Sylvia on finding and booking an excellent hotel, the Appleby Park Hotel, north of Tamworth, where we held our Reunion Dinner and AGM, and which was conveniently located close to the NMA. Reports on the weekend can be found later in the Journal. I sense we will return for future visits not least because the Arboretum if you will excuse the pun continues to grow!

On the morning of our Reunion Dinner we learned that Lt Gen Gary Coward CB, OBE had been knighted in that day's Queen's Birthday Honours. General Sir Gary commanded the Squadron during its 50th Anniversary, and is an Association Vice President, as well as being the Deputy Colonel Commandant of the Army Air Corps. On behalf of the Association I have sent our warm congratulations to Sir Gary and Lady Chrissie.

2013 is the 70th Anniversary of the formation of 656 Squadron.

The OC, Major Piers Lewis, plans to hold a celebratory event to mark this significant landmark, and details will be in our Winter Journal which will be distributed in January. It is planned that the launch of the book, ***The History of 656 Squadron, From Auster to Apache***, by Guy Warner, will coincide with the event at Wattisham, Suffolk. The book will be a most fitting tribute to the Squadron's varied and noble history. Guy has been extremely meticulous in researching our history and ensuring a balanced and very interesting account. I also pay tribute to Ron Ward for his outstanding work with the photographs and Mark Meaton and Derek Walker for their exhaustive research and collation of our archives. As an Association we have gained enormously by this project, which will act as a springboard for further work on the archives and collaboration with the Museum of Army Flying.

We are planning to offer signed copies of the book at discounted prices to coincide with the 70th Anniversary celebrations. We will publish details as soon as we have confirmed arrangements with Guy, the publishers and the Squadron.

Meanwhile, here's wishing you all a belated Summer!

Andrew Simkins



SECRETARY S REPORT

This is my first report as your Association Secretary. As you know John, my late husband, did this job for several years and I have agreed to 'inherit it! Thank you for your faith in me.

The reunion went well this year. The dinner was held at the Best Western Appleby Park Hotel in Tamworth. This proved to be the ideal place for it, as the surroundings were exactly right for our needs. We had the AGM at the same hotel the following morning. You can find the minutes on page 7. There was then a mass exodus to the National Memorial Arboretum where members were taken on a tour followed by a two course lunch. This, too, proved to be a great success. It was very good to see so many of you at the reunion, including several new faces, it's always good to put the face to the name. Forgive me though, if I forget who you are next time! I can remember names and I can remember faces, but I can't always match them up properly! (must be suffering from 'Old Timers')

Once again, I have to thank Mark Meaton, Derek Walker, Ron Ward and Andrew Simkins for all their efforts in making sure the Archives and the new history book are in order. A huge amount of time has been spent on both projects and could not have been done without them. Also, thanks go to Ron Ward for the time and effort he has spent making sure the Roll of Honour is correct. This has also been a mammoth task, checking and double checking all the details. I don't think many people realise just how much time these gentlemen give to the Association.

Next year looks to be an exciting one as it's the 70th Anniversary of the forming of 656 Squadron. As I'm sure you know, we will be celebrating this with the Squadron at Wattisham, Suffolk, next summer and it should be an event to remember. More details in the next Journal.

If you would like to join in the Cenotaph Parade in November for Remembrance Day you will find a returns slip in this journal. Please complete the form and return it to me and I will be in touch with you with details at a later date.

On a personal note, I'd like to say how very much I appreciate the support you have given me since John died. I miss him so very much, and talk to him incessantly! I know he would be so pleased to see how good you have been to me. Thank you.

Sylvia Heyes



HONOURS AND AWARDS

We are delighted to report that the three following members of 656 Squadron Group, who deployed on HMS Ocean for Operation ELLAMY (Libya conflict), have been officially recognised in the recent Operational Awards. Our congratulations to everyone who contributed to a successful operation.

Major Neville was OC, Capt Sierens the Sqn Operations Officer and Mr Lane the Sqn Weapons Officer (his second MiD).

QCVS (Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service)

Major Michael John NEVILLE Army Air Corps

DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross)

Captain Neil Michael SIERENS Army Air Corps

MiD (Mention in Despatches)

Warrant Officer Class 1 Jonathan Nicholas LANE Army Air Corps



656 Squadron Association
AGM held at Appleby Park Hotel, Tamworth
0900 hrs 17th June 2012

23 members in attendance.

Apologies: John Bennett, Will Harrell, Val Powley, Reg Goodwin

Welcome by the President Andrew Simkins

One minutes silence to remember lost colleagues

1. **Election/Re-election Committee members.** The committee remain as before excepting Sylvia Heyes who is now Secretary in place of the late John Heyes.
2. **Minutes of the last AGM: Proposed :** Derek Walker **Seconded:** Keith Johnson
3. **Secretary s Report:** Sylvia Heyes thanked Ron Ward for his sterling work on the website and the Roll of Honour; she also thanked Mark Meaton, Derek Walker, Ron Ward and Andrew Simkins for all their efforts on the Archives and the new History book that will be coming out next year. Membership remains stable.
4. **Treasurers Report:** Mark Meaton said the Association funds continue to be in good order. The annual subs to remain at £7.50 per annum. Geoff Mansfield asked if the committee members were paid, Mark said they get expenses i.e. petrol, postage and printing paid.
Acceptance of Treasurer s report: **Proposed:** Bill Morgan
Seconded: Philip Barak
5. **Announcement of recent Squadron Achievements and awards:** Andrew Simkins told of the recent awards given to 656 Sqn. Including **The Sir Barnes Wallis Medal** to; Major David Amlôt MBE AAC. **The Master s Commendation** to; 656 Squadron Group AAC. **The Johnston Memorial Trophy** to; Attack Helicopter Force ('UK Team Apache) and last but not least the **KBE** to; Lt. Gen. Sir Gary Coward KBE CB



6. **Update on History of 656 Squadron book.** The book is in its final draft and will hopefully be completed by July 2013. We will try to co-ordinate signatures in the book of all living OC s of the Squadron. We will offer the book to members at a heavily discounted rate. The Royalties and our profits from the book sales will be shared between 656 Sqn Assn (two thirds) and Headley Court (one third)
7. **Squadron 70th Anniversary plans:** We will be celebrating the 70th Anniversary at Wattisham next year. We will keep you updated via the Journal and the Website.
8. **Grants:** Andrew Simkins had some success in obtaining a few grants of £500-£600 and will continue to pursue organisations for more. We may be able to work with the museum (MAF) to update the small 656 Sqn display using the grant money.
9. **Archives:** Mark Meaton told us they are progressing well and have some 18,000 items, mainly photos of which there are 13,000. Should members wish to look at the archives which are stored at The Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop, they can make an appointment with the museum and delve through the boxes. Alternatively, they could contact Mark asking for a particular era/item and he will send them a CD of the said items. Bill Sanders asked if we had received everything from Dishforth, Andrew to write to the OC to check. If needed, Bill will go and collect anything remaining at Dishforth.
10. **Proposed 2013 tour:** It was agreed that, due to lack of interest, that there would be no tour in 2013. Only eight people showed any interest and to make it affordable, we would need at least twenty people.
11. **AOB:** Vi Macleod thanked Andrew for allowing her to become a member in her own right; she also thanked Sylvia for keeping her informed and up to date. She then thanked all members for their help and support since Colin, her husband, died.

Meeting closed at 1000hrs



REUNION 2012

by Sylvia Heyes

I'm happy to report the Reunion this year was a resounding success! The Best Western Appleby Park Hotel at Tamworth did us proud. Good price, good service, good food and excellent accommodation. I only heard positive comments from our members who attended.

There were 50 of us at the dinner and 52 for the tour of the National Memorial Arboretum. The Raffle made nearly £200 and I'd like to thank everyone who donated prizes, including absent members you know who you are! Mark Meaton, our treasurer, lamented he never wins and went on to have three tickets drawn! two of which he returned to have redrawn, (never believe a man who deals with money!)

After an excellent breakfast we adjourned for the AGM followed by a convoy to the NMA for the tour, unfortunately, due to other commitments I was unable to attend the tour but have heard nothing but good comments about it. You will find a report on it in the following pages.

I hope that next year, being the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the forming of the Squadron, will see many more of you attending. It's always a good weekend with many a tall tale being told.



Keith Johnson and Jane Simkins



Derek Walker selling Raffle tickets to Mark Meaton and Bill Morgan (Left)

*It wasn't me it was him!
(Right)*



Philip Barak



Linda and Geoff Mansfield





**Association Reunion visit to
The National Memorial Arboretum Sunday 17th June 2012**
by Ron Ward

After the AGM at the Best Western Appleby Park Hotel in Tamworth, we met at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in time to join in the 'two minutes silence in the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness, it is observed every day and included the background to the observance . We were then split up into two groups for a guided tour of related memorials.

Our 'head guide' had done a bit of homework and produced a list of our Roll of Honour and recorded where they are listed on walls of the Armed Forces Memorial (AFM) (only available from the NMA records on site), a copy of which is included on page 15.

We then all re-assembled for a two course lunch in a private dining room. An excellent lunch in excellent company.



Armed Forces Memorial (AFM)



*Both humbling and
awesome 458 columns of
3 Panels,
226 columns completed.*





Some happy faces





A few 'Old Boys' pay their respects.

L-R Jack Dandy, (C1956A) Derek Walker (C1955A), Ron Ward (A1956A), Dave Hingley (C1956A), George Laker (A1955A). A=Arborfield C=Chepstow



656 Air OP Sqn RAF & 656 Sqn Army Air Corps - Roll of Honour - Armed Forces Memorial - NMA - Alrewas.

							AFM Panel	
1	1944	Captain	AW	Cheshire	RA	29-Nov-44	not listed	(India) CWGC
2	1944	Gnr	WC	Cherrington	RA	01-Dec-44	not listed	(Bangladesh) CWGC
3	1945	L/Bdr	D	Gibbons	RAF	25-Jan-45	not listed	(Burma) CWGC
4	1945	AC2	HE	John	RAF	25-Jan-45	not listed	(Burma) CWGC
5	1945	AC2	RJ	McCauley	RAF	25-Jan-45	not listed	(Burma) CWGC
6	1949	Captain	John Francis	Churcher	RA	27-Oct-49	23T	Malaya
7	1949	Captain	Kenneth Gordon Wycliffe	Wilson	RA	29-Aug-49	22M	Hong Kong
8	1951	Gnr	Frederick Ronald	Houghton	RA	11-Nov-51	47B	Malaya
9	1952	SSgt	William Denis	Gay	Glider Pilot Regiment	13-Mar-52	55B	Malaya
10	1952	Gnr	Alan	Bond	RA	09-Dec-52	61B	Korea
11	1952	Captain	Brian T.	Luscombe	RAA	05-Jun-52	not listed	(Australia) Korea
12	1953	LAC	Kenneth	Goodfield	RAF	12-May-53	75B	Korea
13	1953	Major	Wilfred Granville	Harris	RA	02-Jun-53	70T	Korea
14	1954	Sgt	John	Perry	Glider Pilot Regiment	21-Jan-54	79B	Malaya
15	1955	Captain	Michael Robert	Mather	RA	29-Apr-55	90M	Malaya
16	1956	Captain	Leonard Philip	Griffiths	RA	07-Jun-56	99B	Malaya
17	1958	Captain	Peter John Layard	Dalley	RA	14-Feb-58	113T	Malaya
18	1960	Sgt	William John	McCammont	Cameronians	20-Jan-60	121B	Malaya
19	1961	Captain	Peter Hyde	Hills	RA	22-Nov-61	126M	Malaya
20	1964	Captain	Daniel Bernard de Valangin	Jacot De Boinod	Coldstream Guards	15-Jul-64	135B	Malaysia
21	1964	WO2	William John	Hutchings	AAC	15-Jul-64	135M	Malaysia
22	1965	Sgt	David JP	Waghorn	RAMC	20-Sep-65	140T	Borneo
23	1968	Cpl	Christopher Stephen	Galloway	REME	30-Jan-68	149T	Malaysia
24	1982	SSgt	Christopher Anthony	Griffin	AAC	06-Jun-82	183B	Falklands
25	1982	LCpl	Simon Jeremy	Cockton	AAC	06-Jun-82	183B	Falklands

Armed Forces Memorial - records start after 1945

Commonwealth Forces are not listed

AFM Panel: Numeral is the column number & Top, Middle or Bottom is Panel



MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

A sprog attends the mines and demolitions course

by John Heyes

(I found this one among John's bits and pieces and thought I'd share it with you all. Sylvia Heyes)



John Heyes

It is unclear in my memory as to how I was delegated to attend the Basic Explosives course. I suspect that my 'Tiffie' was fed up with having a mechanic who was loath to get his hands dirty, who would do anything to avoid picking up a spanner and was generally pretty useless unless he was performing some minor administrative task. He obviously decided that he could get rid of me for a couple of weeks, maybe longer if I could manage to blow myself up

With the advent of the Scout and the Sioux in Malaysia, there was a requirement for a few of us to go to Seremban to attend a course on how to use explosives and other equipment to make helicopter clearings in the jungle. I could not really

determine the circumstances by which a REME aircraft technician would be (a) in deep jungle, (b) have the wherewithal to make a helicopter clearing and (c) be daft enough to have to do it himself when others were better suited to this type of work.

The course was run by the Royal Engineers. On arrival, I discovered that the course was not simply how to make a helicopter clearing but also encompassed how to demolish various structures, the correct method of blowing up a railway line and how to set, detect and make safe booby traps. Again, the mind boggled as to how a REME aircraft technician could get himself into a situation requiring these esoteric skills. Who, in his right mind could envisage a REME aircraft technician in a situation requiring him to blow up a railway line or disarm a booby trap? Any normal REME aircraft technician would never let himself get into that sort of situation, they were experts at finding duties that exempted them from any sort of hazardous occupation. It was difficult enough to get them to do duty crew duties at the week end, never mind sending them off to deep jungle! Having had some experience, on other detachments from REME/AAC, in the use of Claymore mines and other such offensive tools



of mayhem, I was quite taken aback by the many more devious methods that had been developed with the intent of doing serious harm to my fellow man. I seemed to do a lot of detachments and courses away from REME/AAC, probably due to Tiffie antipathy as explained in my first paragraph.

The poor old trainee RE s spent many hot and sweaty days constructing sections of railway line. We then went along and blew up parts of the line. The trainee RE s then returned to reconstruct the line for the next course to blow up, a sort of Forth Bridge painting exercise. This also applied to a series of structures in the training area that were built then blown up ad nauseam.

We were instructed in the various Army supplies used to make bangs of various sizes and intensities, detonators and how not to handle them, safety fuse and the test timing thereof. A good bit of kit was 'Cordtex . This stuff looked very much like white plastic washing line. When initiated by a detonator it becomes instantaneous fuse. It burned so fast that it was effectively an explosive plastic washing line. The major toy was plastic explosive. Low explosives were mentioned but nothing specific was said and I had the distinct impression that our instructor knew very little on the subject, just the basic principle. We all drew little diagrams in our notebooks of how to set up a 'Ring main' in both series and parallel. We wrote copious notes on how to set booby traps, how to avoid booby traps and how, if one completely lost ones mind, to disarm them.

Each trainee had to set up an explosive charge using safety fuse, cordtex and plastic explosive. The instructors explained that it was the responsibility of the person who set up the explosion, if it did not detonate for some reason, to investigate the reason for the failure. It tends to concentrate the mind if one has to walk towards half a kilo of PE knowing that the detonation sequence has started but not finished. To my mind, it seemed that this was a good reason for not messing about with explosives to start with!

Our instructor, an Australian on exchange to the Royal Engineers, set up a demonstration explosion using safety fuse, cordtex and a small lump of Plastic Explosive. He had carefully measured a length of safety fuse and timed the burning from end to end. Satisfied that he knew how long it would take to initiate his bang, he then lit the safety fuse.

'It will take two minutes to burn and set off the detonator' he said and retired us all to a safe distance to await results.

Two minutes went by followed by a loud silence.



‘Just to be sure, we allow double the measured time to allow for the fuse to burn more slowly than anticipated, before we walk towards the set up’ he said, sitting down on the grass and nervously lighting a fag.

Fag finished. He said, restlessly lighting yet another fag ‘Just to be very sure we wait another couple of minutes

Two more minutes went by and he stood up and hesitantly took one or two paces towards the detonator at the end of the now seemingly burned safety fuse. On his third pace the PE detonated.

‘There’ he said in a relieved voice, is a good example of why we give it as long as possible before we look at a failed explosive and promptly sat down and lit another fag with shaking hands.

‘The safety fuse must have been damp further down the roll that I cut the test piece from. Let that be a lesson to you all that everything gets damp in this climate and all of the kit that you have been told about can be very unpredictable

Oh joy!! I really wanted to hear that. I was rapidly reaching the conclusion that this business was not for me, it was downright dangerous! Maybe spanner bending was not so bad after all.

We spent a day out in the jungle, hot sweaty and dirty, all the things that I disliked, to be shown how to make a helicopter clearing. First we had to be shown how to use a chain saw and a wood auger. A chain saw is quite heavy bit of kit but the British Army insists that all equipment is stored in a box, usually wooden, that weighs at least twice as much as the contents. Not satisfied with putting just the chain saw in the box, the Army also puts in a number of spare parts, a toolkit and cans of the various lubricants required, thus making the whole kit heavy enough to require a fork lift, or a couple of giants, to move it. The morning was spent in cutting up logs with the chainsaw and boring one inch diameter holes in logs with a wood auger. The afternoon was spent learning how to pack the auger holes with PE then setting up the explosions to learn how to knock down a large tree.

The next day we were taken out into the jungle to make a helicopter clearing. Some sadist had decided that our clearing was not to be in the nice level secondary jungle that we had been in yesterday. Oh no! Our clearing was to be at the top of a ridge. Not any old ridge, but one with a steep slope up to it which was heavily covered in thick vegetation. A bit like Everest’s south Col but densely vegetated. The site chosen for the clearing was about a mile from where the three tonner had dropped us off, all of it uphill.

I and one other poor soul were delegated to carrying the chain saw box; the others were carrying the axes, saws, explosives, safety



fuse, cordtex, fuel for the chain saw, two full jerrycans and two large sacks. We were also carrying our packs, webbing, ponchos, bedding, food, water, weapons and all the miscellaneous kit that the Army determines that you may need in extremis.

The ridge that we were to climb was so steep that one had to go up virtually on hands and knees. Dragging the chain saw box was exhausting, hot, sweaty and dirty again. The Australian Corporal instructor saw that we were struggling and caught up with us and said 'I'll take the box for a while and promptly picked it up and strode off up the hill demolishing the obstructing bushes and small trees on the way. Did I mention that this guy was about seven feet tall and built like a house?

Arriving at the top of the hill we found that the area designated for our clearing had a very large tree, about three feet in diameter at the base, at the side of the area. The rest of the area was covered by large bushes and small trees.

Our first task was to clear the bushes with our machetes. Even hotter, sweatier and dirtier. We then had to make a ring main of cordtex round all the small trees. The cordtex was double or treble wrapped around the trees, dependant on size and then led away to a safe distance for detonation. Our instructor duly detonated the ring main. We were left with quite a tidy clearing as most of the small trees had fallen outwards.

Everyone was well knackered by then and packed lunches were taken, our instructor showing us the illegal use of PE to boil up a mess tin of water for tea. Without a detonator, PE burns very hot and very quickly, making for a very quick brew of welcome tea.

Suitably refreshed we set about clearing all the debris from the landing area and began constructing a log platform as the helipad. All the small trees were cut and trimmed then laid down to make a flat pad. Two layers of trees were required. The trees were lashed together with rattan vines, which were taken from the surrounding jungle.

The only remaining problem was the large tree at the edge of the clearing, which caused an obstruction to the landing pad. We were ordered to bore three two inch diameter holes into the tree about three feet off the ground. Using hand augers into the green wood proved difficult and took hard labour, hot, sweaty and dirty, to reach the depth required by the big antipodean. Our instructor then detailed two of us to dig a big hole under the stump between the roots. The topsoil in Malaysia is very thin, tree roots only go down a little way then spread wide. Digging through the topsoil is easy but below it the ground is like concrete. Digging in it, on hands and knees with an entrenching tool is hot, sweaty



and dirty. I've probably mentioned this before. When completed our instructor then packed the three augered holes with PE, inserted detonators, connected all three by cordtex, led us all away to a safe distance, went through the process of test burning the safety fuse, connected everything up and lit the safety fuse.

I think that our Australian had underestimated the power of PE. He'd used a half kilo block in each hole in the tree. When the PE detonated, the tree took off with about as much directional stability as an early V2 rocket. It landed about thirty yards away down the slope. Fortunately it hadn't fallen over onto our carefully constructed platform.

We were now left with the tree stump which still presented a hazard to the landing platform. Our instructor now explained what the two bags of white stuff and the two full jerrycans were for. He was going to demonstrate low explosive. The two bags of white stuff were tipped into the hole, followed by the contents of the two jerrycans.

'Low explosive needs to be initiated by high explosive, I've never done this before but I know the theory. I'm not sure how much PE will be needed. he said. 'I'm going to use a kilo block of PE to initiate it, it should be enough

He primed the PE and shoved it into the hole and led away the cordtex to a seemingly safe position behind some large trees down the ridge slope. The safety fuse burning exercise was conducted and he calculated that it would burn for two minutes before detonating the cordtex. The fuse was lit and we all retired behind trees.

There was a most enormous rumbling bang. The tree stump went up in the air and disintegrated in matchstick size pieces which were spread over an area of many yards. When we climbed back up to our clearing, Our carefully constructed platform was destroyed and a six feet deep pit was left where the tree stump had been.

'I think that I may have overdone the low explosive said our instructor with classic understatement.

We then packed up and returned to camp.

I, quite fortunately, never had the opportunity to use the skills that I learned on this course whilst in the Army but the training came in useful in later life after the Army.



Once upon a Time .

by Roger (Mitch) Mitchell

Damp bangers

Damp bangers are a phenomenon known to exist in the Middle and Far Eastern parts of the World. The phenomenon manifests itself at the most inconvenient and awkward times and is accompanied by dense clouds of black choking smoke and sometimes bad language. I am of course referring to starter cartridges as fitted to the Auster Mk 9 and other aircraft of that period in the 1950's and 1960's. The damp starter cartridge, I suppose, is the Army Air Corps equivalent of Russian Roulette (I wonder if the Russians know about this?) and has been known to embarrass Army Air Corps personnel from the very highest to the very lowest. Fitting a damp banger into the breech and pulling the starter cable is a real journey into the unknown - will it fire or will it hiss? How do you recognise a damp banger? To quote the well known Bard, 'Ay there's the rub' . They all look the same and you can only find out by trial and error. The trouble really begins when the noise and smoke have cleared. The poignant question arises whether to pull the starter cable again or change the cartridges? A choice I suppose is a luxury if one is being chased by members of society brandishing clubs or guns or anything. So, pull the starter cable a second time and the result can go either way. Bang and the engine will start, or bang (accompanied by clouds of black smoke) and the starter safety disc will blow! If the engine starts then our problem is at an end, just rev up and flyaway from the encroaching hordes, but if the safety disc has blown then we have yet another choice. (You can see from this that it is a real challenge being in the Army Air Corps when all these decisions have to be made). So let us examine choice 1, to change the safety disc. The safety disc is situated on the starter at the rear of the engine and will by this time be very very hot. It is also surrounded by all sorts of horrible sharp bit and pieces with locking wire sticking out ready to impale the unwary hand and it is really *ouch!* Now for choice - to hand swing the propeller. The Auster Mk 7 had a nice wooden propeller and it had that comfortable sort of feel to it, a real pleasure to swing, but the Auster Mk 9 has an aluminium propeller which has sharp edges and by the time a few stone chips have attacked the leading edge, the propeller can become like a saw - *ouch!* So once again it is a no win sort of situation, choice 1 is *ouch!* and choice 2 is *ouch!* But as the marauding hordes are approaching, hand swinging



would seem to be the order of the day. The magneto on the Auster has an impulse mechanism and it will be Murphy's Law that the first pull of the propeller with switches off will be the impulse stroke. Which means that the propeller will have to be pulled through again before we get to the contact stage. By this time the engine could be beginning to flood. Give it plenty of throttle. 'Contact' and with a mighty roar the engine should burst into life. If not, prepare to start fighting off the marauding hordes.

VHF tuning made easy

It occurs to me that there cannot be many of us left who can tune a VHF radio set with a compass bulb, in fact I would say that in all probability this is not the sort of skill that is taught at one's mother's knee any more. This article should remedy this. During my Army service at 7 Flight in Malaya during the late 1950s and early 1960's, Professor Stanley Unwin was very much in vogue and some wag (it may have been Tubs Chambers) invented a procedure in Unwin-ese for The Principet of Tunnery of the Sexty Two Step. However here detailed are the principals of tuning a VHF set: These VHF sets were fitted to an Auster Mk 9 and could be tuned by this method when the aircraft was stationary, or under special circumstances or in an emergency in flight. To tune a VHF set whilst the aircraft is in flight sounds like real Biggles material, or the Monte Carlo Rally and is in the true traditions of the Army Air Corps. The Auster Mk 9 had a VHF set fitted in the rear of the passenger cabin and so assuming that the rear passenger seat was vacant, access could be gained to the VHF set. As I remember it the VHF set was mounted on springs and sort of wobbled as the aircraft went along, very restful to watch. However turning our attention to the Principet of Tunnery the first thing that is required is a compass bulb. The compass was situated upside down in the centre of the aircraft mounted on the upper framework of the fuselage next to the flap handle and the bulb was quite easy to remove. Now for the actual VHF set. Unscrew the two knurled screws and remove the front cover of the radio set. Unplug the aerial lead and carefully place the compass bulb in its place. We can now tune the radio. By slackening the locking ring and adjusting the tuning ring until the compass bulb illuminates, then tightening it all up and going to the next channel it was possible to tune all the channels of the VHF set. A slight problem could sometimes arise in flight if there was a passenger sitting in the rear seat, or if the aircraft fitter was in the front seat when the problem arose and had to scramble over the back of the front seat as it could have been a little bit hazardous to exit from the front door and walk round to the rear. However tuning by this method was very effective and



if there was a lady passenger in the rear seat, quite pleasurable. All that is required now is to replace the cover and aerial lead, not forgetting the compass bulb. Or forget the compass bulb - who needs night flying anyway?

Pot drop

A pot drop was an operation on the Auster Mk 9 that seemed to occur with alarming regularity. This entailed removing the cylinder barrels, taking out the valves, examining them for sticking and putting the engine back together again. This operation always seemed to be carried out when the engine was hot, and usually at night. A typical pot drop would be something like this: The aircraft would return to base very late and have a few problems. So it would require an after flight inspection, refuelling and all the snags rectified and then we could start. Firstly the engine cowlings including the filter cable and carrier plate cover were removed. This would ensure that hot dirty oil would run very slowly up your arms, down your body and in some cases stop in an oily ring round the top of your trousers. *Yuk!*

The carrier plate together with the camshaft would then be removed and also the four cylinder barrels. More hot oil, more *Yuk!* The valves would then be removed and everything cleaned and inspected. The inspection usually consisted of a senior body eyeing up the parts and muttering such words as 'Sallright' or 'Snackered'. The engine could then be put back together. First the valves, then the cylinder barrels, then the carrier plate. This was the awkward bit: the camshaft drive had a master spline and this had to be lined up with the master spline on the engine. This would invariably take a great deal of time and bad language, with arms aching from holding up this by now great heavy weight. By now the hot engine oil would be cold and so cold oil would now find its way up your arms, down your body and into your trouser tops *Yuk! and double Yuk!*

Having at last secured the carrier plate, the tappet clearances could be adjusted and the cover together with its gasket could now be fitted and the engine test-run. Seat lap straps were fastened around the control column and the engine given a run. If the test run was all right, then the cowlings were refitted and the form 700 was duly signed up. The aircraft was now ready for a test flight. A pilot would be detailed to take the aircraft up on a test flight and all the fitters would scatter. No-one really wanted to go on a test flight, as it has been known to have been said, 'Only fools and birds fly'.



CASEVAC

by John Vetch



My mission was to pick up a British NCO from Mersing on the East coast of Malaya. He had been bitten by a particularly venomous snake so there was some urgency in getting him to hospital.

On arrival at the strip, the battalion Medical Officer helped me lift the unfortunate soldier into the right hand seat of the Auster. It was clear that the poor chap was very unwell.

As I was preparing to start the engine, the MO stuck his head through the window and shouted "By the way, the most dangerous thing that can happen to my patient is for him to swallow his tongue!

"Great I said "and what am I supposed to do if I see his tongue sliding down the back of his throat, FLY INVERTED? In response, the MO produced a very large safety pin and said that if I did encounter this problem, I was to stick the pin through his tongue and position it vertically on the top and bottom lips. When I explained to him that this type of aircraft did not have the luxury of autopilot which would have allowed me to perform the minor in-flight surgery, it fell on deaf ears.

Having applied full power on take-off, the throttle remained in that position until touch down at Kluang some 30 minutes later.

I am happy to report that the Corporal made a full recovery, which is probably more than the Bombardier in my Auster did!



Service with 656 Squadron AAC in FARELF

by Tony Markham

Following the usual selection process at Biggin Hill in 1963, and serving out six months notice with the Junior Leaders Regiment, Royal Signals, where I was a Regimental Weapons Training Instructor and Troop Admin Sergeant. I was Loaded onto 166 Course at AAC Centre Middle Wallop to begin training from 1 January 1964.

The De Havilland Chipmunk T10 basic trainer course of 60 hours, which included full aerobatics, was completed satisfactorily, as was the basic rotary course on Hiller B & C models. The advanced phase was carried out on the Scout AH 1, and quite a lot of time was devoted to air test procedures, which was to stand me in good stead during my tour in the Far East.

Passing out of the Egg in September 1964 I was to join 656 Sqn. AAC, at Kluang, Malaya, after leave, to carry out a theatre familiarisation.

The Theatre QHI was Bomber Harris, who had joined the Theatre only recently before me to replace Baldy Hutchins, recently killed in a tragic accident with Captain Jacko De Bomeau, but the poor Scout serviceability took my conversion through the Christmas period into 1965. I was deployed with 11 Flight, via Singapore and Labuan, to Long Pa Sia, in Sabah, a small airstrip about 100 miles from Brunei, near to the Indonesian border. The Flight consisted of a Major OC, 6 pilots and supporting REME and RA personnel,

The main task was to deploy a Company of Gurkhas, by Platoon, to HLS along the border for them to patrol, with resupply and extraction as required. A secondary task was to shuttle all airdrop supplies from Bario to Bahkalalan, a forward troop base almost on the border. This was required because the airdrop aircraft were taking too many hits from enemy ack-ack guns nearby. We also returned good quality parachutes to Bario for return to Labuan by Twin Pioneer.

Our accommodation was annexed to the Platoons on a hillock, surrounded by a barbed wire entanglement, trench system and (punjies), sharpened bamboo stakes. Stand-to was at every first and last light. The aircraft sat on log platforms, to avoid flash-flooding damage during monsoons, again surrounded by wire defences and covered by fire from the trench and bunker positions.

We only once thought we were under direct attack, when awakened by the alert procedure. Sleeping fully clothed we manned the bunkers in seconds, and checked in with control by field telephone. Listening watch revealed sounds to the front of my bunker, as if an infiltrator had encoun-



tered the wire defences. Ordered to throw two grenades, I eased into the trench to a throwing pit and complied. Squeals were followed by silence, and we stood-to until first light without another sound. A fighting patrol was mounted to our front, which returned with a dead pig, a useful addition to our composite rations. The airdrop only produced fresh rations for one day in ten and then it arrived with drums of aviation fuel. If these candled we lost the fresh rations through contamination, along with NAFFI stores and mail.

Navigation was something of a mix between dead reckoning and map reading. The maps were appalling, white sheets of paper with an artist's interpretation of longhouses, rivers, etc. taken from aerial photos, with huge areas blank and marked "obscured by cloud".

This led to my overshooting a turning point near Pensiangen on one occasion, eventually picking up my mistake I landed near Bantul too short of fuel to reach a fuel dump. The RAF took pity on me and delivered a drum of fuel, thanks to a Gurkha patrol radioing in. I learnt about flying from that.

11 Flight alternated with 10 Flight about every four months, and at Kluang we would cover exercises working up the next infantry unit to deploy to Borneo. These times seemed to speed up, as we were soon on two cans a day airdrop back at Long Pa Sia.

As the last out of the Egg, and having most airtest experience, I would be tasked with flying duff aircraft out to Brunei, where an MSRD had full repair facilities. If I had a system temperature gauge there would be no pressure gauge, and vice-versa. Also there was no one to speak to once five minutes into the sortie or five minutes from Brunei. Studying the riverbeds for possible forced landing sites passed the time, but the journey was worth it. Wow, air-conditioning and unlimited beer supply. Did I make a pig of myself?

Two or three days later, however, with air testing complete, I would consider the met for a return flight, but usually the cloud build up in the mountains would preclude any return after 1400 hours.

The MSRD and Beaver flight would then play a blinder by scrounging potato, bread and any fresh fish, meat or vegetables ready for my departure. Once in contact with base inbound, an army of willing hands met my aircraft and everything was whisked away for the cook to provide Chips for tea.

I enjoyed my time at Long Pa Sia, even when HRH the Duke of Edinburgh dropped in by Twin Pioneer, and we had to try to look smart. He could not quite grasp why we all wore the blue beret, but all had different cap badges.



We were required to keep the locals on side as part of the hearts and minds campaign, and often flew them from Bahkalalan back to Barrio on return trips, thus saving them a three-day walk. On one such occasion, on starting the approach into Bario with four locals and a dog behind me, I felt a hand on my left arm, and could not lower or control the collective. Looking behind me, an old woman with a towel over her face was terrified, and clutching my arm. I had to overshoot a 2000-foot runway before I could disengage her, and return to land.

Other humorous incidents included buying a pig by negotiating a price per hand, holding the pig steady, and watching in amazement as the headman sent for the male with the smallest hands in the village to act as the measure. Then we needed a new latrine digging. Again an agreement had to be reached as to which man would be the depth measure, and he had to stay on the daily payroll, being lowered into the hole three times, until the required depth was met. And finally, working with the Ghurkhas provided some laughs. A REME Sgt missed his angling, and determined to fish the river between the local kampong and us. After an hour or two with no luck, but being spotted by a couple of Gurkhas, they promptly went round the next bend and tossed hand



*M43 1965-66 7 Flt XP888 Gunong Sepadang Red 267 Sarawak
Major Woodbridge*

grenades into the river. The ran giggling past him as stunned fish slowly floated past.



M43 Scout XP888 landing at Gunong Sepadang in Sarawak, a hilltop re broadcasting station code-named Red 267, which was close to border with Kalimantan

By mid June 1965, following another change over, I was posted to 7 Flight, which alternated with 14 Flight to Kuching in Sarawak. This was the 28 Commonwealth Brigade Flight, and was made up of two Aussies, two Kiwis and two Brit Pilots, a British OC and a mix of support troops.

Most of our support was required in the first and second divisions of Sarawak and proved quite exciting, with change over s of Royal Marines and Infantry Units sometimes taking place actually in the front line.

A number of incidents occurred to me personally during my time at Kuching. On Sunday the 4th July 1965 I was tasked to take an O Group of A Coy, 60th KRRC into the border area to recce an intended attack on an enemy base. The weather was perfect and the brief and pick up at Padawan short and sweet. After an hour into the recce, the GPO (Gun Position Officer) asked to examine the site for his guns on top of a mountain, which had been prepared by sappers blowing off the top level

for an area the size of two tennis courts. It was also to be the HLS for the insertion troops of A Coy. On being told to head for base, I turned onto heading and initiated a descent, only to hear the engine wind down completely. Entering autorotation for range I wanted to get clear of the 200 foot trees of primary jungle, which would certainly have killed us.

After warning the O Group to strap tight, confirmed the engine had stopped, transmitted a Mayday call, and carried out Immediate Actions, I realised a ridge was looming towards us. I pulled back on the cyclic and used some of the kinetic energy of the rotor to skip over the ridge, and when clear, resumed range auto to recover the rpm. Shortly after another ridge required the same treatment. Fortunately the initial height had been about 3000 feet but as we had descended quite a bit I knew I could not clear the next ridge. Looking along the ridge I spotted a lighter green area and adjusted the approach and speed to reach it, flaring the forward speed off, and as the rotor blades started hitting trees, kept a very high nose up attitude and used the remaining kinetic energy of the rotor to create cushioning lift.

We flopped the last few feet into secondary jungle, which completely covered the aircraft and left all four rotor blades on one side. I remember it was eerily silent. After checking that all were OK, we disembarked and began clearing the secondary undergrowth.

It's amazing how training kicks in during these situations, so I organised two of the officers to look for water to generate carbide gas in order to inflate a signal balloon, the others to cut a clearing, piling the debris for a signal fire, and set off a rescue beacon. One of the officers had a camera, which I used to photograph the aircraft, especially the areas of damage.

Whilst waiting for the water seekers return, I made some tea from my emergency kit to relieve their symptoms of shock. We were all grateful for it.

The next problem was to dissuade the Coy OC from marching out, which would have taken days. The contents of the survival packs were checked and flares readied, just as we heard to sound of a Whirlwind approaching. A couple of flares later they were winching up the first man, the GPO, who had hurt his back on landing. The Whirlwind returned some minutes later, but could still only take the OC. On its next return it could take two, so I was left alone.

I used the waiting time to remove radio frequency cards, stow all kit in my pack, search the area and aircraft for anything of value, and found the complete op-order behind the OC's seat cushion. Stuffing this inside my shirt I was subsequently winched up and taken to Padawan.



After a stiff drink with the O-Group, I was taken back to base at Kuching, only to be met by my OC, to whom I presented the four doors of XP 905 and a grid reference for the remainder. The aircraft was subsequently recovered by Belvedere, shipped to Singapore, and re-issued to BAOR as a TOW anti-armour equipped Scout.

Some days later all available pilots were required to marshal at 0500 hours to transit to HMS Albion, then to act as guides and second pilots on Wessex, to carry out a complete change of battalions in forward positions.

On coasting out, our Whirlwind developed a fuel malfunction, and we ditched in shallows, enjoying a paddle until collected by two of Albion's Wessex.

After drying out, and a cup of coffee, we completed the task and were delivered back to Kuching. Shortly after I returned to Malaya to find that our families had moved to Terendak near Malacca, and didn't know where I lived. The local MP's delivered us, street by street, but only letting us disembark when claimed by the wives. She had her chance, and I sometimes remind Jean of it.

Before we could enjoy leave, kit had to be checked, and another airtest to high altitude carried out. I again drew the short straw, and initially all went well. On approaching 12,000 feet, the engine went into deep surge and flamed out. This was my third EOL within a fortnight, and perhaps my most difficult. Terendak offered two airstrips bordering the sea, and several sports pitches, Malacca airport might just have been a possibility, but time was wasted by the REME trying to determine what had happened, they panicked and left open mics on, so I elected to land on a hard laterite strip near the hospital because of our near to maximum AUW limit. It was a firm but safe landing and we all walked away for some well deserved leave.

Other deployment continued, and on one occasion whilst flying the Brigade Commander, was required to take him to observe an incursion operation. Landing below the crest line, which marked the border with Kalimantan, we climbed on foot to join the CO of the Gurkha Battalion mounting the op. I was to witness the withdrawal from action for which Lim Bahada received the VC

An Indonesian incursion also took place on Sarawak side of the border, and during one at 21 mile bazaar, was tasked to take the CO of the Police Field Force Unit, plus bodyguard, and the Brigade Commander to observe a contact and engagement, with several enemy pinned down. We could clearly see the patrol, but not the enemy, and I was ordered to land behind the patrol, which I duly did. Remaining with the



aircraft ready to go, the officers went forward for a briefing. On rejoining the aircraft, I found I was struggling for power to take off, and would need a running take-off technique to get airborne. I used the full length of the area available, turning immediately once clear of trees, when the area ahead of me lit up with a wall of tracer. I turned rapidly first one way, and then the other, until it ceased and without being hit, called out a reserve Coy to act as a blocking action, and then acted as pathfinder and recce until they were in position. The action was successful, but the patrol lost one man when storming the enemy position. I was thanked for drawing the enemy fire, and saving more of the patrol, but if only they knew why.

My final incident occurred when tasked with a very mundane flight to take Members of Parliament to a number of Company positions to be briefed on the situation in first division of Sarawak. VIP type handling, ten minute hops, and wait half an hour at each Coy HQ. However the situation changed on the way to the final Coy HQ at Padawan.

A lone soldier was waving a recognition panel in a forward HLS and seemed in distress. I Briefed the MPs that I would drop them as planned, but go and see what the problem was, before taking them back to Bde HQ.

It didn't quite work out like that as, following a few recce passes; I picked up an Australian SAS trooper who asked to be taken back to their HQ. He wouldn't explain, which was not unusual, as I frequently worked with them, and need to know is always observed. On arrival I closed down to see what help I could be, before returning on task, Things were looking up, as I was briefed that a 4 man patrol had attempted a night river crossing, got into a strong current, and separated.

Could I return Bill, plus another fighting patrol to the area? I readily agreed and prepared the aircraft by removing every piece of surplus to requirement equipment such as seats, doors, etc. Finally we took off and I realised immediately that these were big heavy guys, armed to the teeth, and I could only make half the normal cruising speed until fuel burned off.

I made a low level approach right into the most forward HLS, turned round and they were gone, slipping under the green lashing straps, which I had rigged across the doors.

Flight safety sometimes cannot always be observed in a tactical situation. On return to Padawan I asked the MP s if they would care to wait for me to re-role with doors, seats etc. but they elected to travel like the troops back to Bde HQ. I briefed them how to leave the aircraft as I would not be shutting down, and this they duly did. The truth was I did



not wish to incur the wrath of the Bde Major for returning his VIP s late and dishevelled.

I heard no more about this incident until, retiring early one night before a dawn sortie. I was woken by an armed sentry and told to accompany him. We got into a waiting land rover and left camp, with all questions being ignored, and I assumed I was going for another funny farm briefing. There was a huge party going on to celebrate the Aussies handover to 22 Sqn SAS. Instead of being taken to the briefing room a cold beer was pressed into my hand and despite my protests was informed that I would not be leaving until they had finished with me.

A bed was provided, along with towel and toiletries, and for the next three days we toured and partied with all the Australian Regiment Companies. It was great fun but I wondered just how much trouble I would be in when I got back. The answer was nothing. Returning on the fourth evening to my accommodation, I caught up on sleep, and reported for duty first thing the next day. Nothing was said at all but you've guessed it, I had an air-test to carry out before having the rest of the day off.

Before Kuching was supported with a REME MSD or Workshop, aircraft requiring major component changes had to be flown to Brunei, some 450miles away, and as this was over the endurance range, the first leg was inland to Semangang to top with fuel. Then followed a flight, on dead reckoning, over mangrove swamp to a sand bar at the mouth of a river where the Royal Navy had dropped fuel drums. After opening and testing enough drums a portable pump was used to refuel by turning a handle. It took ages, and following another of these stops we could reach Brunei shortly before last light.

Despite all the hazards of operations over hostile jungle, we only lost one aircraft, a scout flown at night by Set Doc Waghorn RAMC whilst delivering a prisoner and escort for interrogation. Despite intense searches, no trace was found and he was declared missing in action.

Before returning to UK, my last few months were settled at Terendak and I left the Sqn in the autumn of 1967 to be a VIP pilot at Wildenwrath. BAOR. There I was invited to join the 50 strong elite cadre of SNCO s of the AAC, was promoted through the ranks, and eventually commissioned to serve a full career to 55 and a further 10 years as an RO for the Director AAC at Middle Wallop. I look forward to the next Sqn reunion, which I hope to attend with Jean.



Things that change ones life

by Gordon Fielder

There I was sailing and sunbathing, a Senior CPO Artificer where care was the maintenance of one Dragonfly S51 helicopter on HMS Vidal, surveying for a year in the Caribbean, when the pilot asked where I would like to be posted on our return to UK in December 1958, he said he would fix it. I would like to go to Culdrose in sunny Cornwall.

On return we did a short survey in the Bristol Channel. At the weekend most people left the ship to visit their loved ones but my wife, a highlander, and family, were with her folks in the far North of Scotland, too far for to get back for Monday morning.

On Saturday morning I had acute appendicitis, removed in Bristol Royal Infirmary. When I caught up with the ship a few days later at Chatham the pilot told me he had fixed my posting but had forgotten where I had said, so, as my wife was in the North of Scotland, Lossiemouth which is on a level with Inverness was where I would be going. January 2nd 1959, it was a very hard winter.

The Squadron I was with often worked late into the night to get the aircraft ready to fly early morning. My car had shed a gear while I was away and many a night I was walking home in a blizzard and became very poorly with earache. When I got back to work a notice on the board asked for CPO Artificers A & E (Airframe & Engines) to serve with the Army Air Corps, REME, all over the world. I would have volunteered for anything to get away from 'Lossie'.

With Chiefs Stan Reed & Jim Green we went to 656 Sqn AAC, then to the Light Aircraft Squadron Workshops (LASW) REME, OC Major Bill Storey, a big bluff ex-Indian Army Officer with ASM Frank Penfold and AQMS George Southon. I went to HQ 656 Squadron AAC as assistant to the Wing Electrical & Mechanical Engineer (WEME) Major Denis Weatherhead who had initially wanted an ASM, however, we got on extremely well together and I learned a lot from him including not taking things too seriously and he was well liked.

In May 1960, Sgt McCammont's Auster, which had been missing since the 20th January, was found by a Chinese Logger whilst looking for ways to get felled trees out of the jungle. It was much nearer to Terendak from where he had taken off than the main search area, much further south west. Major Weatherhead took charge of the Auster recovery with a party of Aircraft Technicians from 656 LASW and a party of Gurkha Engineers.





Recovery Team for WZ728 Going in and bogged in!



L-R Back: 2 Lt Davis, Tim Yates, Mike Doyland, Gordon Fielder, Keith Frost-bridges, Bill Sanders, WEME Maj Weatherhead, Front: Terry (Slim) Burns and Ted Shingles

We took the Auster, which was rather broken up, down to its main components and there were large number of bits to be gathered and the Gurkhas carried it many miles through the jungle to the loggers road where they made a big log sled to carry the pieces and was pulled by a decrepit ex-military logger s vehicle with no brakes, only restrained by the sled, all the way

downhill to the nearest road.

The engine was slung between two saplings using tree creepers and the Gurkhas ran with it through the jungle. I had a job to keep up with



Crash Site

them. When dark came the Ghurkha Sgt gave word to make camp, they each selected four saplings forming a rough square using their kukris constructed a platform about four foot above the ground to sleep on, adding a leaf thatched roof and all done in a very short time. I ended up with a very great regard for the Gurkhas.

At 656 LASW the bits were laid out for a Civilian Accident Investigation team from Farnborough who stayed for sometime.



Sgt McCammont's funeral in 1960 Gordon was a pall bearer (Front left) and Bill Sanders who attended the funeral paying his respects in 2006

Sgt McCammont's body was found sometime later in a stream some distance from the aircraft and I had the honour to be a pall bearer at his funeral in Kuala Lumpur.

When I left 656 Sqn the Army managed to get me to Culdrose Naval Air Station from where I left to transfer to REME in 1964 and



subsequently got a posting to 14 Flight of 656 Sqn as their Artificer, but that is another story.

Thanks to Gordon Fielder for the article and Bill Sanders for additional information and photographs

NB.

22577658 Sgt. McCammont W.J. Cameronians Aged 28

11 Flight 656 Squadron

Died: 20th Jan 1960

Cause: Failed to return from Gemas. Auster Mk9 WZ 728

Found: 2nd May 1960 Pax: Pte J. Finnerty. Cheshire Regt.

Buried: K.L. (Cheras Road) Christian Cemetery, Malaysia.

Row 33. Grave 1277

Pte J. Finnerty. Cheshire Regt. (pax) died in the crash on his 21st birthday. Sgt McCammont's body was found later. The fuselage was burnt to remove an infestation of ants before transporting to the Workshop's at Noble Field where an Accident Investigator from Farnborough carried out tests but none were conclusive. *Bill Sanders was a member of the team who went 'in to recover the aircraft and subsequently worked with the investigation team at LASW.*

Magic!

by Gordon Fielder

I was with 14 Flight of 656 Squadron doing three month tours on rotation with 7 Flight in Kuching, Borneo 1965/66.

Cpl Kent was our Radio Technician and I was the flight 'Tiffy'. Our workshops working accommodation was palm thatched and walled 'bashas very open and dusty.

One day a few Aircraft Technicians had gathered in Cpl Kent's workshops, saying "Come on, tell us how a radio works .

Cpl Kent took a piece of chalk and drew a simple radio circuit on the bench top explaining carefully the function of each component. He then delved into his big box of bits and put a component on top of each chalked item took some wire and joined them up and we had music!

'MAGIC!' said the technicians and Cpl Kent was known as 'Magic henceforth.

Also below his bench was a fermenting pot of sakè, extremely palatable. A most enterprising man was 'Magic Kent. I wonder what became of him?



Mayday Article

A sharp reminder of the dangers faced by those who served in the jungle areas of the Far East that only after 58 years were these men found.

"Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! We are going down!"

They could have been the last words uttered by the pilot of the ill-fated Douglas C47B-DK Dakota C4 plane before it disappeared from the radar screens on 25th Aug 1950 over the jungles of Gua Musang in Kelantan.

Since then, the crashed aircraft had been a mystery for 58 years but this was answered on 12th Nov 2008 after a special team set up by the Malaysian army came out from the Gua Musang jungles with the skeletal remains of the Dakotas crew and parts of the plane.

The Dakota C4, registration number KN630, was from the British Royal Air Forces (RAF) 52nd Squadron based in Changi, Singapore.

According to the Malaysian military archives, the Dakota piloted by Lt Edward Robert Talbot was dropping smoke markers during a bombing run on the communist terrorists' positions in Gua Musang when the tragedy happened.

The ill-fated plane was carrying 12 people when it crashed. Apart from the pilot, they were seven British troopers, a member of the Malaysian police, two civilians and an Orang Asli guide.

Taking into consideration the security situation at that time, the search and rescue team that had discovered the plane's wreckage decided to bury the crew's remains near the spot where they found the aircraft.

The mission to recover the crew's remains began after their next-of-kin applied through the Malaysian military attaché in London, early this year, for a search to be made to recover what was left of the Dakota. Hence, the order went out for the remains to be brought out and a search party from the Army's 8th Brigade at Pengkalan Chepa Camp in Kota Bharu managed to locate the exact position of the wreckage last June.

Based on this discovery, Army Chief Jen Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail Jamaluddin said the military was willing to assist the British Government to bring out the remains.

A special 100-member expedition team comprising representatives of the Royal Malaysia Police, Institute of National Forensics Medicine, Universiti Sains Malaysias (USM) Archeology Research Centre,



Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (HUSM), Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA), National Heritage Department, Forestry Department and Malaysian Historical Group (MHG) as well the representatives of the British government was assembled.

According to Army Museum Director, Lt Kol Norhayati Mansor, the Garis Waktu team comprised many specialists in their respective areas of knowledge, as their skills were needed for the mission to be successful.

The 10-day expedition started last 2nd Nov 2008, led by Mejar Mohd Izam Md Yamin. The team members started the journey on four-wheel-drive vehicles. However a journey that usually took about five hours from Gua Musang to reach the timber camp at Kompartment 117, became 12 hours due to torrential downpour.

The team had to scale up a hill for some two hours before reaching the site of the plane crash, located about 30km from Kampung Penchong, Gua Musang. The bad weather made the climb difficult for the team members. Rain caused the earth to be waterlogged and soggy, posing more problems for the excavation team who had to exercise caution during extrication of the skeletal remains of the plane s crew.

On 8th Nov 2008, the team had to scramble to safety and away from the crash site as the heavy rain caused a flood at the spot, placing them in danger.

The team had been digging out the soil around the crash site for days to no avail, until on 9th Nov 2008, during a heavy rain, team member found a shred of yellow-coloured cloth-like material and referred his discovery to the teams research head Kapten Muhd Zuraiman Abdul Ghani. After a close scrutiny, he confirmed that the material was a piece of a rubber dinghy or Mae vest known to be carried by the Dakota. He then directed for the 'rescue excavation' method to be immediately carried out and the ensuing search found several human bones.

An interesting point to note was the fact that the bones were found some 67 metres away from the initial excavation site and the digging was made difficult as the area where the skeletal remains were discovered was at a rivulet. Among the bones found were parts of the femur, skull and mandible. A flying boot believed to have been worn by a British trooper on board the Dakota was also recovered.

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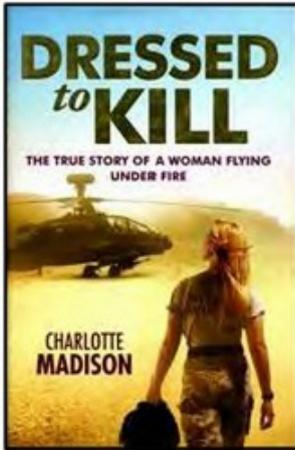


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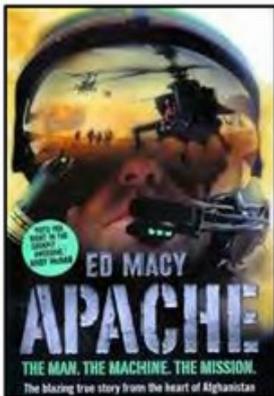


'DRESSED to KILL by Charlotte Madison

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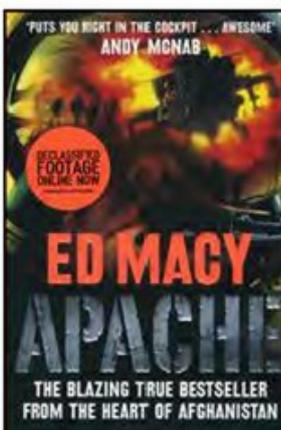
Charlotte Madison is a typical twenty-six year-old woman. Britain's first ever female Apache pilot, Charlotte knows exactly what it is like to be at the controls of the Army's deadliest frontline weapons platform. During the legendary Jugroom Fort rescue, she became the only British pilot since WW2 to use all her ammunition in one mission. She has mastered the complex skills required to fly and shoot from the air, and earned the respect and admiration of her male co-pilots. Whatever they can do, she can do just as well. From her intensive training through to her three tumultuous tours of duty in Afghanistan, Charlotte shares the adrenaline rush of lethal, full-scale mid-air assault, the exhaustion of confinement in an airless cockpit for up to eleven hours at a time, and what it is like to kill - or be killed - in the name of duty. Dressed to Kill is the extraordinary, gritty, exhilarating and often heartbreaking story of life at the heart of the action - from the unique perspective of a woman in what was - until recently - an exclusively male world.



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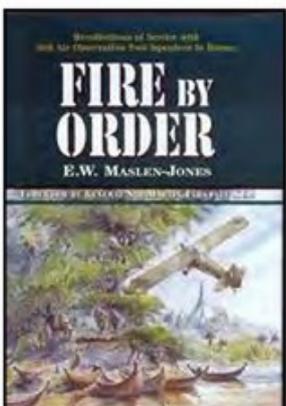
Ed recounts the intense months that followed Mutay: the steep learning curve, the new missions, the evolving enemy and the changing Rules of Engagement. He also sheds light on his early career as a young paratrooper, his operational baptism as a pilot and how both shaped his ability to fly, fight and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

It was here, in the dusty wastes of Helmand that Ed, his colleagues in 656 Sqn and the Apache found themselves on trial for their lives and for the reputation of a machine on which the British Government had staked a fortune.



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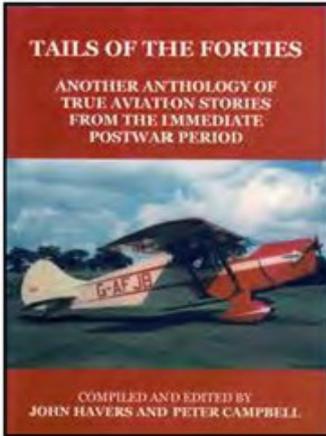
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NOTICES CAN YOU HELP?

I have recently acquired a print or original cartoon done by Sherpa. This shows a Auster no WJ356 taking off on a supply run to 2/10 PMO Gurkha Rifles. I would date the event in the 1950's or early 60's.

I would be keen to hear of any information on the artist or connection with 2/10 that 656 Sqn AAC might have had.

Thanking you for any assistance you can offer.

Ollie Cromwell OLLIECROMWELL@aol.com

NEW MEMBERS

Peter Jacobs	RAF	Joined Feb 2012
Peter Williams	RA	Joined Mar 2012
David Canterbury	RA/AAC/Staff	Joined Apr 2012
Richard (Dick) Pugh	AAC	Joined May 2012
Mike Hall	Associate	Joined Jun 2012

DEATHS

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

Michael Badger	AAC	Died 2011
Tom Sutcliffe	RAF	Died Dec 2011
Willie Wastell	GPR/AAC	Died Feb 2012
Edward Stannard	RA	Died Feb 2012



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