

# THE CHINTHE



SPRING 2015

656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION  
JOURNAL

## **COVER PHOTO**

### ANNUAL MOD PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

An Army Air Corps Apache takes part in a dramatic display at the Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford, one of the biggest international Airshows in the world

New for this year is the **Best Overall Image** as voted for by the public on Facebook, which was scooped by Corporal Jamie Peters, RLC, of Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders.

He said: "I was pretty happy when I found out I'd won. It's a good feeling that lots of people enjoyed my image more than the other ones."

His winning shot 'Fireball Flyers' of an Apache flying over a large explosion taken during an air show.



Flying off HMS Ocean

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## **ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES 2014**

### **AUSTER FLY IN - OLD SARUM - SAT 9 AUG**

**W**ith the remnants of Hurricane Bertha bearing down on the South of England, the portents for our planned Auster Fly In at Old Sarum Airfield were not good. We have a long established arrangement with the International Auster Club to hold joint events each year, and the historic RFC airfield at Old Sarum seemed an ideal location, given its close links with Air OP squadrons, its easy road access and relaxed atmosphere.

Come the day the weather proved better than forecast. Our most loyal Auster crews are based at Eggesford Airfield on the edge of Exmoor, and Nigel Skinner, Jeff Houlgrave and Richard Webber arrived in formation, while Jerome Mostyn (a venerable Air OP pilot) came from near Swindon. But perhaps our most intrepid crew came from Biggin Hill. Cobby Moore, the pilot, restores old aircraft and has recently been working on a Tiger Moth, while his passenger, George Butler runs a farm in Kent. They are both over 80, and show no signs of slowing down. During the day 7 Austers flew into the airfield, which was a hive of activity with pilot training and parachuting competing for airspace.

A few of our members had the chance to go for a local flight, while the



remainder were quite happy to soak up the atmosphere of an airfield in full flight. It was also an opportunity to pay respects at the Air OP Memorial and visit the

Aviation Museum. Overall, despite the initial uncertainty, the day proved a success, and we look forward to another event in 2015.

### **REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY & 11 NOVEMBER**

2014 marked the 9<sup>th</sup> time 656 Squadron Association has formed a contingent at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. This year we were only allocated 25 tickets, as opposed to the 70 we had last year for the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Squadron. So while we are a small party we share the same tradition, and sense of duty, that is evident amongst the 10,300 marchers. As we assembled on Horse Guards Parade one sees many familiar faces in countless coloured berets

and assorted headdress. Our Contingent, which includes soldiers from the Squadron, is never far from the AAC Contingent, so there is a chance for reunions and banter. This year we were behind the large WRAC and ATS Contingent, all in their green berets and tops. A lovely former ATS lady in a wheelchair told me she was 93 and was looking forward to going to France the next day.

We waited longer than usual on Horse Guards. However the weather was perfect so we hardly noticed that the clock above HQ London District was fast approaching 11am. Eventually we moved off into Whitehall, only to find that there was no room for us to join Column B. So we were marooned between columns along with the ladies in green. Luckily we were near a large television screen, so could see that the Royal Party were already taking their places next to the Cenotaph. Then Big Ben struck 11 and the Service of Remembrance started. The service is simple, short and emotional, and the thousands of veterans and spectators join in their respect for those who have gone before us.

While church leaders, ambassadors and the like lay their wreaths there is time to chat to the other marchers and spectators. To illustrate the diversity of participants, this year we were next to the *National Pigeon War Service* and I was shown a Pigeon Dickin Medal, the VC for war animals and birds. On the other side was a fellow ex-member of 29 Cdo Lt Regt RA, former CDS, Lord Richards of Herstmonceux.

When it was our turn to march, we had to move right then left before we were correctly lined up in our column. This year the crowds were larger than normal, probably as a consequence of the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the start of the Great War, and the publicity generated by the awe-inspiring “Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red” Poppies display at the Tower of London. As we approached the Cenotaph Ross Skingley kept us in step as James Stirton handed over our Wreath. We then continued the march down Whitehall, into Parliament Square then into Birdcage Walk and back towards Horse Guards where Prince Andrew was taking the salute. Most of us then walked on to a restaurant where we enjoyed a relaxing lunch and drinks. This is always the ideal opportunity for veterans and soldiers to mix, and realise that only the passage of time separates us.

This year Jane and I left early so we could catch a Eurostar train to Paris. After a day being tourists we caught the train to Nogent le Rotruie to meet up with John and Joyce Bennett, who were to be our generous hosts for the next three days.

We started early on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November, which for the French is the “96<sup>th</sup> Birthday” of the Armistice. The French lost nearly 2 million killed and over 4 million wounded during the Grande Guerre (double the British losses) and the memory is deeply etched into the national conscience.



John drove us all to Condé sur Huisne where we met up with the Mayor and his party, along with the village band. We then marched from the Town Hall to the Monument aux Morts, which was on the edge of the village square. The War Memorial was flanked by the Tricolour and the Union Flag. The act of remembrance is coordinated by the village and the L'Association des

Anciens Combattants - the equivalent of our Royal British Legion. Our small British contingent was afforded a key place in the line up. The ceremony was short but poignant as the Mayor read out the statistics and consequences of the Great War and its subsequent World War.



We then moved onto another small village, Condeau, where a similar ceremony took place. The British contingent had now perfected its salute during the national anthems. Fresh plants in large holders and also a poppy bouquet from the British contingent were placed on both the memorials by local children. Afterwards a short walk took us to a plaque on the side of a house, which marked the spot

where two young French men were shot by the SS for no reason, except that they provoked curiosity by talking about the maquis in Nogent. This short ceremony brought home the savagery and cruel randomness of war.

Close to these villages there is a memorial to a young American pilot, Lieutenant Bernard B. Jacobs, who was shot down, in his P38 Lightening aircraft, on 6



July 1944. It is a peaceful spot amidst beautiful French countryside. A small party paid our respects while John Bennett laid a cross. The rededication of the Memorial on the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is detailed in the Summer 2014 Journal by John Bennett.

Another short journey took us back to John's village, Nocé, where we witnessed a further ceremony.



We all then returned to the Condé Village Hall for a "Banquet" organised by the Anciens Combattants. This was a sumptuous feast of countless courses, complimented with wine and liqueur. It was also an opportunity to chat in our school

lesson french to our local hosts.

It was a privilege to attend the Remembrance events on both sides of the English Channel. This year was more poignant than normal and to be able to pay our respects was humbling and thought-provoking. As the various Great War anniversaries unfold over the next 4 years, leading up the Armistice, I feel confident that the public will continue to feel a close connection with their forbears.



### **SITUATION VACANT - WEBMASTER**

After many years of sterling service Ron Ward has requested to stand down as our Webmaster. Your committee is now looking for a volunteer to step forward and undertake this position. As we are also planning a re-vamp to the website soon it will be an ideal chance to be in at the start and help with ideas. For details of what is involved please contact Ron Ward direct, details on last page.

## **656 Squadron AAC – OC's Report**

It seems only a few weeks ago that I penned my first OC's update for the 656 Squadron Association Journal; in reality it was over 6 months ago, and I am now half way through my time as OC! The pace of life remains fast, and the Squadron has proven repeatedly over the last few months that we are very much at the forefront of Defence contingency planning. This makes for a great deal of disruption, both to our working, and our personal lives, but the manner in which the Squadron members have dealt with this has been humbling. It is a challenging but exciting place to serve.

The sad thing about much of the activity the Squadron has been conducting since June 2014 is that I can't give much detail on it! As the very high readiness Apache Squadron we are a potent asset to UK Defence, and it has become apparent that we currently sit pretty high on the checklist of capabilities wanted for contingency operations. This is great news for the Army Air Corps; having cemented Apache's reputation over the years spent in Afghanistan on Operation HERRICK, we are in demand.

Typically, the time that we realised how much we were in demand last year was in the middle of Summer leave! I received a phone call recalling the Squadron to Wattisham, and beginning our countdown to deploy. From many far flung parts of the globe the Squadron sped back to UK, and preparations to deploy went ahead. To the credit of all those involved, including many enablers from across the whole of the Attack Helicopter Force, we were ready in all respects to depart well within our required timeframe. On this occasion we were stood down, 24 hours before we were due to deploy. The stoicism with which the Squadron dealt with this was incredible, and morale was not too badly dented even though the recall meant cancelled holidays.

After we had settled down from our reduction in readiness, the Squadron was launched into a series of exercises in order to develop a capability and rehearse for a possible mission. This has again involved being held at extremely high readiness, as well as some real challenges to the way in which we operate the platform. All of this has been exciting to be involved with; definitely what people join the Army to do!

After a period of churn amongst our Squadron members we have settled down with a new team. The disbandment of 654 Squadron has given us a fresh batch of aircrew, all of them seasoned Afghanistan operators, to get up to speed with the contingency environment. We are getting plenty of opportunities to practise, and managed to get a good deal of them deck landing qualified on HMS Ocean just before going on Christmas leave. One stalwart of the Squadron is due to leave in early March: the Squadron Sergeant Major, WO2 Andy Eardley will leave us on promotion to WO1 and become Regimental Sergeant Major of 9 Regiment Army Air Corps. He has been a hugely influential figure, transforming the morale and relationships amongst all ranks in his 3 year tenure. Our loss is 9 Regiment's gain, and we wish him all the very best.

In November it was a real privilege to travel with a small group to London, and to march with the Association members at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. It was fantastic to meet everybody there, and also good to see the banter between the 656 Squadron Association and those in the main Army Air Corps group! It is very important for me to keep a strong link between the Association and all current Squadron members; our shared history is something to be valued and understood. I hope that plans to hold the 2015 reunion here at Wattisham bear fruit – we would be delighted to see everybody here.

Jules Pannett



### EDITOR'S CORNER



As 2014 was a celebration of the start of the Great War it was thought fitting to record some of the events and articles of our members.

On the inside of the back cover is our shop advert and you will see various books are now in limited supply, with the number available in ( ). The 'Auster to Apache' has sold out now but still available on Amazon. It's not just about our history but all the Royalties come to us to share with Headley Court.

If you enjoy the article about one of our members, Philip Barak, and would like to see the full official Powerpoint Presentation, with many more photos of his cars, then ask me and I will email you a copy.

Don't forget to send me your entries of life after 656 for future publications.

## Membership Notices

We welcome the newest members to the Association and look forward to meeting them at a future reunion.

Maj	Don	MOORE	REME	joined August 2014
Maj	Rich	BENNETT	AAC	joined December 2014

### **DEATHS**

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

G. (Taff) RICHARDSON	RAF	Died May 2014
Col. Ronald GOWER	DFC RA	Died Sept 2014
Ed KELLY	RA	Died Sept 2014
A. LOWE	RAF	Died Oct 2014
Lt.Col Ian F. LEDGER	REME	Died Jan 2015
B.R. MORRALL	RA	Died Jan 2015

\* \* \* \* \*

## ANNUAL REUNION - 2015

### WATTISHAM - SAT 11 AND SUN 12 JULY

We are delighted that the Commander Wattisham Station has agreed that the Association can hold its Annual Reunion alongside 656 Squadron AAC.

The event will be held over the weekend of Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th July. We are still working out the arrangements with the Officer Commanding (it could be that the reunion will be on the Friday 10th July).

It is intended to hold a similar event to 2013, with Dinner in either the Officers' or the WOs' and Sgts' Mess. We also intend to make arrangements with a local hotel - probably The Premier Inn, Ipswich North which 9 miles from Wattisham Airfield (IP6 0BE).

We have not included a Return Slip, once the details have been confirmed we will send out an *email to members* (who hold an email account) ( see 'Communications' page 9) and a mail drop to the remainder of members. Returns will be required by the end of April.

## INVITATION TO A PRIVATE FLY-IN

George Butler has invited members and guests to attend a private fly-in at a grass airstrip near Haywards Heath (West Sussex) on **Sunday 21st June 2015**. This is an **invitation-only** event, not open to the public. This annual informal event is free to attend, and often attracts 40+ aircraft, both old and modern; this year the International Auster Club are being invited. Visitors will be able to watch the aircraft joining and leaving the event, and will also be free to walk among the static displays. In past years there have also been aerobatic displays by some of the visiting aircraft.

A bar-b-q buffet lunch is also included as part of the day's events.

Donations on the day may be made to a charity supported by the organisers, which in the past has been one associated with Bomber Command.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible, but please remember that we need attendees' names in advance.

If you think you might like to attend please initially register your name and contact details, without obligation, with Mark Meaton, and further details will be sent to you in due course. (m.meaton@tiscali.co.uk)

\* \* \* \* \*

## COMMUNICATIONS - EMAIL ADDRESSES

It seems that everywhere you look, watch or listen these days all the programs and adverts tell you to go someplace "on the Web". Not only their own dedicated site address but increasingly to "social websites" such as 'Facebook', 'Twitter', 'LinkedIn', 'blogs' and over 100 others, all wanting you to contact them!!

The telephone has now evolved to be a portable computer so, as well as 'texting' you can now do emails and surf the web. All this has come about in the last 20 odd years and I wonder what life will be like by 2035?

The whole purpose of this narration is to reach out to members who have so far avoided being dragged kicking and screaming into the computer age. When you do not have access to this world it does mean that we cannot communicate quickly with any news. We would like to be able to advise you quickly of important happenings. Do you have a relative, friend or neighbour that would accept emails for you? Please ask them, and get their consent to receive any messages and then ask them to send a quick email to w.harrell@btinternet.com so we have a record of who it is for. There would normally be no more than about 4 mails a year!

# The Squadron Badge

by Ron Ward

At the latter end of the research for our book 'From Auster to Apache' we received a request from the squadron 'Story line' team on the origins of the Squadron Badge.

I initially approached Les Rogers who delved into his recall system and he remembered seeing copies of the squadron badges in the archive of the Museum of Army Flying. Mark Meaton and the museum staff made a search but did not find the said badges but did find a document produced by Major John Cross in 1992, 'AAC Squadrons' badges - heraldic descriptions' which gave us the answer.

656 Air OP Feb 47 In front of two gun barrels in saltire, proper, mouths upwards, a Chinthe's head or  
Volans et Videns (Flying and seeing)  
The Chinthe is the mythical lion which guards temples, and this reflects the squadron's first theatre of operations, Burma

As we all know, having bought and read the Book, the Squadron formed in December 1942 and quickly moved to India then on to Burma, the rest you all know!!



**656 Air OP Squadron RAF  
1942 - 1952**



**656 Air OP Squadron RAF  
1942 - 1952**

**1957 - 1964**

**656 Light Aircraft  
Squadron,  
Army Air Corps**



**1964**

**Name changed to**

**656 Squadron,  
Army Air Corps**

The decision on the design was made during the period when the Squadron was finally certain of their destination in the Far East and approved in February 1947. The choice of a Chinthe as a centre piece to crossed Gun Barrels was an inspiration. The rest, at that time, was a standard design for the RAF. Ted Maslen-Jones has an original painting by the College of Arms, signed by the Chester Herald. At the time J.D.Heaton Armstrong was the Inspector of Air Force Badges.

The 'Crown' is that of the reigning monarch worn at their Coronation.

1. RAF: has both the Imperial Crown of George VI (Albert Frederick Arthur George; 14 December 1895 – 6 February 1952) and the St Edward's Crown of Elizabeth II (Elizabeth Alexandra Mary; born 21 April 1926).
2. AAC: has the St Edward's Crown with a red tie at the bottom which joins the scroll to the wreath.

St Edward's Crown takes its name from St Edward the Confessor, although the present crown is a reconstruction made for the coronation of King Charles II in 1661. Two-dimensional representations of the crown are used in coats of arms, badges, and various other insignia throughout the Commonwealth to indicate the authority of the reigning sovereign. Two of the Queen's predecessors - Victoria and King Edward VII - turned down the solid gold St Edward Crown for their coronation because it is so heavy. They opted instead for the Imperial State Crown, in which is set the famous 14th-century black ruby of the Black Prince. Modifications have been made, over the years, to make the crown more comfortable however.

# A day in the archives

By Mark Meaton

For the last five years or so the Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop has been compiling a detailed computerized catalogue of every item in its archives. The Association helped kick-start this project in January 2010 with a donation that allowed the museum to buy a cataloguing system called MODES, which is the standard software used by many military museums around the country.

This work has run in parallel with the Association's efforts to collate and catalogue our own archives, lodge them in the museum for safekeeping, and use them to research the material for our 656 Squadron history book, published in 2013. This in turn built upon the exhaustive studies initially carried out by Les Rogers and Len Edgecock roughly 15 years ago, and since then by various Committee members such as John Bennett and John Heyes, as well as more recently Ron Ward, and Derek and Stuart Walker.

Because I was also helping with the Association's archives, I volunteered to run the museum's MODES project for them, and thus the Association's extensive collection was the first data I copied into this new catalogue; since then I have been gradually adding the museum's own material.



Still a lot more work to do

Previously the museum had already created several separate lists of parts of its collection; since there is only one full-time Archivist and one Curator, much of this initial cataloguing effort had been tackled by a number of part-time volunteers, on whom the museum has always relied.

The lists were therefore in different formats and of varying levels of detail; some were handwritten, some typed, and others held on computer. MODES is being used to combine all these existing lists into a single catalogue, and then to add the remaining material that has never before been itemised. The aim is to produce a central record of everything in the display halls, archives, reserve storage rooms and offsite facilities.

The main purpose of all this work is to improve the museum's research capabilities. There is an in-tray that is always full of requests for information from members of the public, students, authors and researchers; the new catalogue will help the staff provide much faster, more accurate, complete and detailed responses to these requests.

There are other advantages; the museum will become compliant with various industry standards for “collections management” that are often a requirement for obtaining grants and other sources of funding.

Crucially, the catalogue also provides somewhere to record the museum’s growing collection of electronically scanned images of documents and photographs, and it makes it easier to exchange this material with others.

Furthermore, undertaking a major cataloguing exercise will help identify material currently hidden away in storage that would be suitable for showing in the museum’s public displays.



In the library, where the bulk of the archives are held, most of the museum’s photographic prints and documents are stored in filing boxes on racks of shelving. A few years ago the Archivist started the first task in the project by systematically listing the boxes’ contents, and numerous volunteers added to the list over the years.

To give an idea of the scale of this task, the following work had already been completed by late 2014:

- More than 600 filing boxes had been listed.
- The contents of the first 90 boxes had been fully inventoried.
- Each box contained anywhere between 20 to 150 items.
- A total of 2,500 photographs had been itemised.
- 6,200 documents had been itemised.

Before copying this existing list into MODES, much more detail was then added; for example, for *each individual photograph* the following additional information might be recorded, if known:

- The type of image (print, slide or negative, black & white or colour, etc.)
- The location in the museum (box/folder number )
- General description and date of the scene depicted in the image.
- The location (country, geographic location and military establishment).
- Names & ranks of anyone pictured in it, and their military units.
- Categories, types and tail numbers of any aircraft shown.
- The campaign name to which the image relates, such as ‘1950-1953 Korea’.
- The name of the operation, such as CORPORATE, or MARKET GARDEN.

Any security classification, reference numbers, copyright notice, etc.  
Notes about the item's condition, valuation and any conservation issues.  
Any digital images of the print, sometimes both front and back.  
The donor's name and contact details, and date of donation.

Each list is also double-checked beforehand to correct obvious spelling mistakes such as place names, and to adopt standard descriptions for aircraft types and categories, as well as using the National Army Museum's list for campaign names, etc.

Other existing inventories that have now also been copied into the new catalogue include:

- A list of all the books in the library
- A recently compiled list of the collection of pilots' log books
- Lists of the museum's artwork and weapons
- A list of thousands of slides and negatives stored separately in a large filing cabinet.



Archived files & photos

It's a mammoth task, but to date roughly 25,000 individual items have been recorded in MODES, of which around 6,000 items are from the Association's own collection.

Although my work on cataloguing and recording the Association's collection in MODES is now complete, much work remains to be done on the museum's own vast collection. One example is the large number of photograph albums and scrap books, many of which have not yet had their contents itemised. The exceptions to this are the albums containing copies of all the pilot course photographs; one of the most common requests from members of the public is for a copy of a relative's course photo, and approximately 1,400

of these have recently been itemised, including the names, ranks and units of everyone appearing in them. This list will soon be copied into the new MODES catalogue.

Also, several years' worth of research by volunteers culminated in the recent completion of a comprehensive register of Glider Pilot Regiment information. It lists the thousands of pilots who served with the regiment, cross-referenced against the various operations in which they took part, and the gliders used. There is another list of all the GPR honours & awards, which is already available to the public on a computer screen in the newly-revamped GPR display. Both



Screen shot of GPR monitor in museum

these lists will also be copied into MODES as soon as possible.

Then there are the contents of more than 500 remaining archive boxes to be itemised and catalogued, the thousands of additional documents and photographs held in a large storage room, and the uniforms, medals, aircraft and vehicles on actual display in the museum halls.

Taking all this outstanding material into account, current estimates suggest there might easily be 150,000 items held by the museum that will eventually be recorded in the catalogue.

Although no plans have been made yet to directly publish any of this catalogued material to the wider public, the normal mechanism for doing this would be the internet, and MODES at least gives us the starting point for such a task, particularly for material that has been electronically scanned.

The museum therefore continues with another long-running project to make digital copies of as many documents and photographs as possible. Not only does this make it easier to catalogue, retrieve and share information, it also preserves aged, fragile documents that are in danger of becoming unreadable. I recently scanned a very faded, yellowed “flimsy” copy of a report from 1943, which could not be easily read with the naked eye; by enhancing the resulting digital image we were able to retrieve the full text. If it had been left another few years, we might have lost the information altogether.

Our collaboration with the museum has already produced benefits. The list of researchers travelling from around the world to use the archives has meant that our own material is now finding its way to many more interested parties. In March 2014 a serving US Army Major attending their Command and General Staff College as a student flew over to spend a few days’ study in the archives. The thesis for his Masters degree included a study of the operational relationship between The Parachute Regiment and 656 Squadron before and during the Falklands war.

Likewise, another Masters student came from the US last year to research the role of the RAF in the Korean war, and the Association/museum material on 1903 and 1913 flights was an important source of information for her. Another

graduate student from a UK university visited last year to find material for his thesis on the strategic use of helicopters in Borneo during the Confrontation.

I am also currently liaising with an historian in Canada who is compiling material relating to the Canadian pilots who served in the Korean War.

In all these cases the researchers either initially contacted the Association via our web site, or contacted the museum's archivist, who directed them to the Association. I was then able to email information to them in advance of their trips, and thus save them much time and leg-work during their actual visits. This would have been much harder, and taken a lot longer, if we had not had the catalogue produced by the MODES project. Furthermore, most of the material given to these particular visitors was originally from our own Association collection, so it is especially rewarding to see it being useful to a much wider audience outside of our membership.

The Association can justifiably be proud of the help we have given the museum so far, and it deserves our continued support as the work continues over the coming years.

New volunteers are always welcome in the archives, no matter how much or how little time they may be able to commit (no expertise or experience is required). Anyone wishing instead to simply visit and spend some time browsing the material may make an appointment with the Archivist; although there would normally be a daily charge for such research, this is waived for our members.

Finally, if you have any material, please don't leave it gathering dust and deteriorating in an attic; consider donating it to the museum. Someone, somewhere in the World, will find it useful. If you wish to retain the originals, the museum will make copies.

Our thanks must go to all those who have already donated material and information to our collection, and to those who have spent so much time organising it over many years; it will continue to be an important part of the museum's collection.

Mark Meaton, Archivist. January 2015

Rough figures for the different types of material catalogued in MODES to date:

Photographic prints	8,100	(including 3,400 digital images)
Documents	6,500	(including newspaper clippings, diaries etc.)
Photographic slides	4,400	

Photographic negatives	2,350	
Books	2,150	(both published and un published)
Pictures & paintings	450	(including sketches & cartoons)
Magazines/Periodicals	300	
Pilots log books	200	
Albums & scrapbooks	150	
Films	150	( 16mm, 8mm, VHS & digital)
Weapons	100	
Maps & plans	110	
Ephemera	40	(including trophies, badges, bits of aircraft, etc.)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25,000</b>	<b>(6,000 are from the Association's collection)</b>



## Brunei Recollections

By Len Edgecock

The 656 Squadron detachment of 2 Austers and 2 Beavers to Brunei in November 1962 all started: -

- for Bill Dick (REME Technician) a couple of weeks before Rebellion Day (RD) when he went to Sandakan to look after our Beaver which was being used on anti-piracy duty.

- for Nick Nicholls (REME pilot) when he went to relieve Bill Duthoit (Flight Commander) who was in Sandakan.

- for Bill Duthoit on RD, a Friday, when he was told to take a detachment to Brunei to support the troops moving into Brunei.

- for Len Edgecock, (Flight Tiffy), on RD:



I was ill in bed when Bill Duthoit turned up on the doorstep at about 2000 hours. The conversation went like this:

"What's up with you?"

"I'm ill."

"How about going to Brunei?"

"I'm getting better."

"Good. Can you contact Scouse Lees (Flight Sgt) and Red Meaton (Pilot) and bring them to my house about 2200 hours?"

"Will do."

The three of us turned up at Bill Duthoit's house as arranged and planned the move over a few beers, which was pretty good going as we would be away for eight months.

- for Dick Jones (REME Technician) a couple of days before, as he had been told to move on the Saturday to Sandakan.



Stone, Powley, Rogers

- for Mick Blake, Shreddie Stone, Killer Mansfield and Noddy Needham (REME Technicians) first thing Saturday morning when they were told to report for work to get the aircraft and kit ready to move.

- for Les Rogers when he was told on the Saturday that he was remaining behind as he was now in charge of 14 Flight Workshop Kluang.

- for Dink Isaacs when he was also told

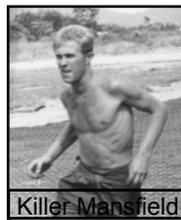


Dink Isaacs

he was remaining behind. They were not happy chappies but missed the point that they had been paid a huge compliment.

- for Simon De La Rue Salter and David Pitkin (Pilots) when they were told they were moving out on Saturday.

- for three Gunners (names not remembered) on the Saturday when they were told to get the



Killer Mansfield

ground sets and themselves ready to move.

The plan for the move and detachment was fairly simple. We were to go as light as possible to support two Austers and two Beavers, one of which was already out there. We restricted ourselves to four soldiers boxes for spares equipment and APs. Personal kit as light as possible, small arms and ammunition to be carried, waterbottles filled. The Austers were to travel out in a Beverley and the Beaver to fly. We were to be re-supplied from Kluang. Saturday morning at about ten o'clock, we of the ground party moved out to Seletar. The aircraft were to fly later. That afternoon/evening we removed the mainplanes and tailplanes from the Austers and loaded them onto a Beverley along with our meagre kit. We then wandered around Seletar shopping centre where we came across some pencil torches, the top inch of which were made out of luminous perspex: most of us bought one.

Sunday morning we landed at RAF Labuan. One of the first persons I met was Dick Jones: I tapped him on the shoulder and told him to forget Sandakan as he

was coming with us to Brunei. Our Austers were unloaded, put together and tested. Bill Duthoit and Simon De La Rue Salter taxied out on to the runway and were given permission to take off. They moved off together when we noticed a Beverley, tail to the runway, running all four engines at full bore. We watched helplessly as the Austers gathered speed but just before they came level with the Beverley. the throttles were pulled back and our Austers took off. We had very nearly lost half our aircraft before we started, not to mention two pilots.

We found that the authorities had decided to bed us down in a hangar being used as storage for tons of ten-man ration packs. No one had mentioned rations to us and going into the unknown in Brunei, I decided something had to be done. We had lined up our aircraft so I suggested to the lads that it might be a good idea if we chocked them with ration packs. They, not being slow, selected 'A' packs and placed them fore and aft of each wheel, all except Killer who came past with a pack of biscuits. The following conversation took place:

"Not that box, Cpl Mansfield. It's too big."

"It's the same."

"It's too big - try an 'A' pack."

"But it's the same .....Oh. I get it."

As he changed it, I stood surveying our work. when a Squadron Leader walked up and said "That's not going to work!" After about a minute I agreed with him and said to the blokes, "It's not going to work - put them aboard."

After which the Squadron Leader and I went happily on our way. Our first case of 'liberation' had taken place. This word came into its own in the days to come. On the Friday. our fourth Beaver took off from Sandakan on Anti-piracy operations flown by Nick Nicholls. He was diverted to help against the rebels and never did go back. On the Saturday, he flew 10.55 hours, doing all his own handling, turn-rounds and re-fuelling. During that day he landed at one airstrip and taxied in the middle of a fire-fight without knowing it until it was too late. Neither he nor the aircraft was hit. A gentleman's war? He was given a well-earned decoration for that day and had started a reputation for 14 Flight Brunei which was never lost.



On the Monday we moved to Brunei; some by air and the rest by ferry. On arrival, we found that we were to be housed in the Brunei airport building, along with about 400 RAF personnel. Our first real problem quickly became apparent and worsened over the next five days: the water pipes to

the airport had been cut. The atmosphere rapidly thickened.

On the fifth afternoon I noticed a dripping tap, tried it and discovered that the water was on. I went to my kit and quietly picked up my washing kit. Red Meaton noticed so I whispered "Water's on." He also got his kit. We locked ourselves in, washed all over, shaved and cleaned our teeth. When we were done, we walked back in and both together yelled "Water's on". We just got out of the way of the resultant stampede.

The water remained undrinkable so we maintained our excellent relationship with the Royal Brunei Yacht Club and purchased our beer by the crate full. About this time I went on board a Kiwi Hercules and asked an 'erk' if I could have a glass of water. It tasted fabulous so I asked for another. I then asked if the blokes could have some. He was amazed to hear that we had had no drinking water since we had arrived and said "Wheel them on". I didn't tell him that we had been living on beer. Perhaps an explanation is needed here: all our drinking water was flown in in jerry-cans and was required for cooking.

It soon became obvious that to do our job properly we needed transport. I had heard that a Clark named Nobby was the ASM of the REME Workshop which had moved in at about the same time that we had. I scrounged a lift with the RAF and went down town to the Workshop which was based in the PWD yard. When I explained my needs to Nobby he said "No problem! Will these do?" One of these was a brand new Dodge Dart with 72 miles on the clock. previously used by a Minister who had chosen the wrong side. The other was an A35 van. When shown these Bill Duthoit was delighted, thought in later days he was heard to complain that he only ever got to use the van as I always had the Dart, I'm sure this was an exaggeration. Thus our MT was born..

We kept the Dart for weeks until one day we were going into town in the Dart and saw General Walker going in the opposite direction in an old beaten up Landrover. Two days later we were going round in a beaten up Landrover whilst he travelled around in our Dart.

Whilst I was busy on these bits of Admin, Scouse Lees was busy organizing communications with his gunners. They picked an excellent wavelength: we found we could talk to Kluang as if we were on the phone - in one respect this proved to be a disadvantage as they asked and kept asking for flying returns etc.

This showed up another deficiency - no typewriter. A gunner and I went off to the Brunei Telecom Building with the intention of borrowing a typewriter. We found the place deserted and wide open. We could have taken anything but, being of honest natures, we found out where the manager lived and dropped in. At first he was extremely reluctant to go back with us, perhaps all the bullet holes



Duthoit & Carey

in the walls were to blame, but eventually agreed. Before helping him to lock up I borrowed, and signed for, a typewriter much to the disgust of the gunner who was a great exponent of 'liberation' by then. The typewriter was still in use in the Flight when I left in 1964. I often wondered what eventually happened to it?

In the meantime we were there to fly, and did we fly? All the hours of daylight we flew, taking out patrols, picking them up, spotting, leaflet dropping and quite often search and rescue. My hat came off to our pilots who were flying into territory marked 'unexplored' more often than not. One of their main jobs was updating the maps. A number of times when I was with them we would be on finals and I still couldn't see the airstrip. In the first three weeks our four aircraft and four pilots flew 355.55 hours. Some of this was night flying dropping flares.

One casevac worthy of note was completed later on by Tony Horsey. When he arrived back the Medics diagnosed his patient as having smallpox. They placed Tony and the Beaver in isolation until both could be fumigated. We fed and watered Tony at a distance. The aircraft was fumigated and had to remain isolated for a minimum of 48 hours. The aircraft Form 700 was annotated Ac U/S -suspect smallpox. My returns read "Ac U/S - suspect smallpox". 24 hours later the Medics were able to confirm that the patient had an advanced case of chicken pox so the Ac Form 700 and my returns read "Ac now serviceable -was only chicken pox."

Re-fuelling was done from underground tanks. Two Shell blokes would manhandle a large trailer up to a tank outlet, connect up a large suction pipe, start up a motorised pump, run out a delivery hose to the aircraft and fill it up. It can be seen that all this took time and there had to be an easier way. I had spotted a tractor and flatbed trailer at the edge of the airfield and so suggested to Dick Jones and Shreddie that it might be a good idea if we 'liberated' these. Off they went to return with both. What we didn't know until later was that they had been under surveillance by the RAF Regiment who had discussed challenging them, arresting them or shooting them but finally decided to let them get on with it. We mounted two 44-gallon drums on the trailer and now had our own re-fuelling plant.

Before we had our own trailer one incident was worth recording. I had asked Shreddie to fill my cigarette lighter at the next refuelling. An Auster came in and Shreddie whistled up the trailer. The Shell blokes went through their performance, Shreddie held up my lighter, they dribbled some Avgas in and

Shreddie said "That's all." Their expressions were something to see until Shreddie relented and let them fill up the Auster.

The RAF had allocated the car park for our aircraft. This consisted of hard packed earth with a lead off earth from the pan. Then the rains came and came and came. The hard packed earth became about nine inches of mud.

Brunei airport at this time was like Gatwick with Beverleys, Hercules, Austers, Beavers, Pioneers, Belvederes, Pembrokes, Sycamores, Shell Company aircraft, the occasional Singapore Airline aircraft and weekly Hong Kong Airline aircraft all trying to use the pans. It was fascinating watching the Austers and Beavers negotiating the obstacle course. So far I have concentrated on the admin as it must be remembered that we had gone out there with virtually nothing. We had therefore to rely on doing everything for ourselves except cook, which was done by the RAF. This situation was to change. . . . .

To be continued in Autumn Journal issue No 4

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### Old Sarum Memories

(Extract from Salisbury Journal, 21 Aug 2014)

Will Harrell, 75, was reunited with aircraft he last saw during his national service in Malaya. The Auster was one of five that flew in from Eggesford airfield in Devon and was greeted by an appreciative audience from the Association.



Will Harrell was a Royal Artillery signaller in the Squadron which was used on observation duties over the jungle, and sometimes as VIP transport as denoted by the five-star plate on the nose of the aircraft.

"I was only a national serviceman" said Mr Harrell "so my history with the squadron was fairly brief. I was trained as a Royal Artillery signaller and many of the aircraft had RA pilots as well as signallers. In those days we had special radio routines

for flying and shooting the guns. I spent my service at the Royal Naval Air Station, Singapore much of my time in the control tower and flying as an observer."

Will said it was lovely for some of those who had served in Malaya, to see the Austers again, so well cared for and still flying.

## Soldier's room is left untouched for nearly 100 years



These poignant pictures show an 18 year-old French soldier's bedroom— preserved from the day he went to fight, and die, in the First World War almost 100 years ago. An only child, cavalry officer Hubert Rochereau was born in the room in the family home in Bélâbre (Indre) in 1896. He was a professional soldier and was a sub-lieutenant with the 15<sup>th</sup> Dragoons when he was killed on April 25, 1918, aged 22. He had been away fighting for four years. His grief-stricken parents reacted to news of his death by refusing to change a single detail of his room. The bed, the desk, and his personal belongings have been preserved exactly as they were when he left for the front line.

The wallpaper is starting to peel, and the colours are fading, but the flags, the schoolbooks, the shoes, the military uniforms, fencing mask, pipes, and a collection of guns are all still there. On the desk is a container labelled: "Earth from Flanders on which our dear child fell."

When the family sold the house in 1935, the sale contract contained a clause reading: "Those who take possession must agree to touch nothing in the bedroom of the only son who disappeared too soon, for a period of 500 years".

The family who bought the property have honoured the terms and the room remains a shrine to Hubert Rochereau.

Current owner, Daniel Fabre, says the clause does not have legal foundation but he has observed it out of respect and will continue to do so. Journalist Bruno Mascle said that visiting Hubert's room was one of the "most exciting, touching, memorable things I've done as a journalist.



You feel that if you turn round fast enough you'll see him lying on the bed, or sitting at the desk. It's extraordinary. "The room is a time machine. Take the crucifixes and extraordinary religious details like that..... you don't see crucifixes in young people's bedrooms anymore."

by SAMANTHA DAVID

reproduced by kind permission of: "The Connexion", France's English-Language Newspaper,

[www.connexionfrance.com](http://www.connexionfrance.com)". Photos by Bruno Mascle

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## **News on our Website and "Social Media"**

Those of you that attended last year's AGM will be aware of our desire to update our website ([www.656squadron.org](http://www.656squadron.org)) and start to tap into "social media". We have submitted a Big Lottery Fund (Awards for All) application to help fund the upgrading of our website. We wait to hear whether we have been successful. We already have a number of quotes and intend to proceed as quickly as we can.

We have not made as much progress with "social media" however. This is partly because the Squadron has been extremely busy, and we have therefore not been able to use their expertise. We realise that we need to embrace this important area, and intend to open a Facebook page before our Reunion. If you have any experience here, please contact a member of the committee.

## **The National Memorial Arboretum**

By Andrew Simkins

The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) was conceived by former Commander David Childs CBE RN back in 1988. Having visited the US National Arboretum near Washington DC, he believed that there was a good case for a similar place of remembrance in the United Kingdom. After a meeting with Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC, an appeal was launched in 1994 by the then Prime Minister, John Major. After a long search David Childs found a Blue Circle (now Larfarge) gravel pit which had been fully excavated. The location, near Lichfield, Staffordshire was in the middle of the country with good road links and within the newly established National Forest. The 150 acre

site was donated to the newly established charity on a peppercorn rent of £1 a year, and was officially opened on 16 May 2001. It is now part of The Royal British Legion family of charities.

The Arboretum contains over 50,000 trees, with more added every year. There are nearly 300 memorials for the armed forces, civilian organisations and voluntary bodies which have played a part in serving the country. At the heart of the Arboretum is the Armed Forces Memorial which is fitting tribute to over 16,000 service personnel who have lost their lives in conflict or as a result of terrorism since the end of the Second World War. More names are added to the wall every year. At 11am on 11 November each year the sun shines through two slits in the outer and inner walls of the memorial, casting a shaft of light across a centrally placed wreath.

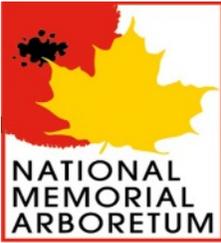
Significantly the Arboretum is not purely military but also includes many national charities, such as the peaceful and reflective SANDS (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society) Garden, and the First World War Shot at Dawn Memorial.

The NMA could not operate without the dedication and professionalism of the many volunteers. They conduct tours - which our Association has greatly benefited from - answer questions, help the disabled and act as a focal point for all visitors. Every day at 11am a volunteer oversees a two minute silence in the Millennium Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness, followed by the Last Post and Reveille, after which he gives a 15 minute talk about the Arboretum. In 2010 these NMA volunteers were awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the highest award that any voluntary organisation can receive, equivalent to the MBE. The Arboretum has proved so successful and always busy, that there are plans for developing the visitor facilities and expanding the restaurant.

I thoroughly recommend a visit at any time of year. I suggest you plan to arrive in time for the 11am talk in the Chapel. Entrance is free with a small charge for car parking. I suggest you pick up a map, and plan of walk around memorials of particular interest, taking in our three Association trees! There is also a 'train' which takes a leisurely tour of the site. Feel free to ask the volunteers; they will be very happy to advise. I have been to the Arboretum over 10 times but have seen only about a quarter of the whole site. As I have said a number of times . . . . .

## **the Arboretum continues to grow!**

\* \* \* \* \*



## Association Tree Dedications

by Ron Ward

As many members are aware we now have three 'Tree' dedications at the NMA but some people may not be able to locate them when they visit, hopefully this article will help. I would recommend obtaining a free site map on arrival which will give an overall picture and the staff will be only too pleased to help if you need it. Our most recent dedication took place during the 2014 Reunion on Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> June.

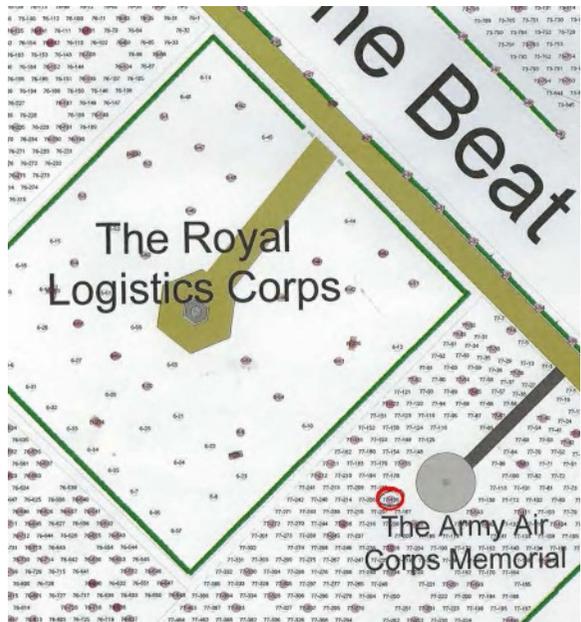
Our Tree plaques are located at:

Burma Wood 27-145

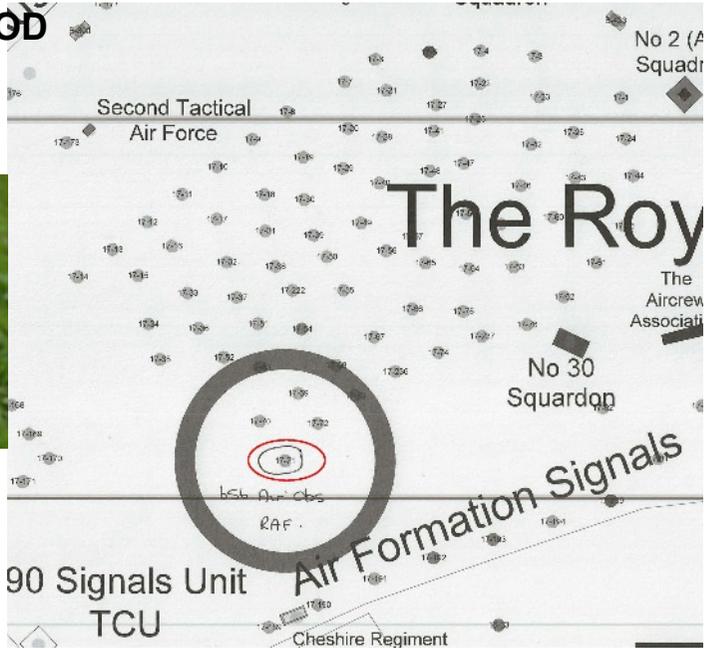
RAF Wood 17-71

Army Wood 77-186

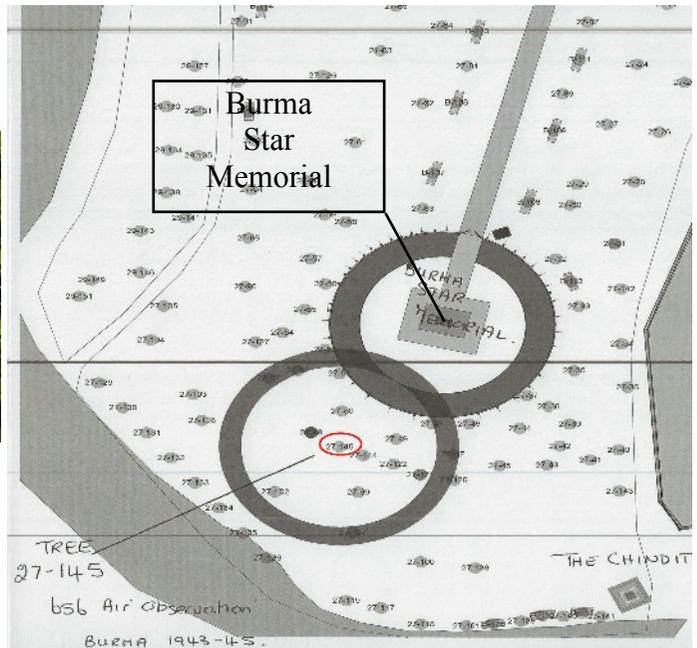
### **ARMY WOOD 77 -186**



**BURMA WOOD**  
27- 145



**RAF WOOD**  
17 - 71



## With 656 in Borneo 1965 - 66

By Dickie Dawes

Although not directly connected to 656 the activities mentioned here took place close by, and often with the co-operation of 656's Flights, for example, we shared the hangar in Kluang for a while in 1965, and later participated in the same engagements with the enemy.

We formed up at Kluang in June '65 as the Air Troop, 4 Lt Regt R.A. and with two Sioux (XT 109 and XT110) sailed aboard the LST Reginald Kerr through the tail-end of a China Sea typhoon to Kuching.



Aboard the LST Reginald Kerr

Not an enjoyable trip as the old ship wallowed and corkscrewed along at a snail's pace in the heavy weather. The passengers were more numerous than usual due to the RAF's Hastings fleet being temporarily grounded after the terrible crash at Abingdon. (*An elevator fault had caused the RAF's worst ever loss of life.*) Thus the

food soon ran out, not a sad loss as few could eat it anyway. There was a film projector on board but nobody appeared able to use it. I owned up to knowing how and then regretted it as I was condemned to watching 'Woman of Straw' umpteen times. I wondered what the Gurkhas thought of it. We eventually reached the Rajang River and made our way upstream to be met by LCTs. Whereupon the Sioux were craned (derricked?) off into one LCT, a very tight fit. We then headed for the Port of Kuching where we saw the reason for the mid-river transfer. A freighter had capsized at the quay, its stability having presumably been upset by the loading/unloading process.



A tight fit on the LCT



Batu Kitang hangar

After the Sioux were readied for flight the rest of us headed for the luxury of the tented camp at 7 mile Bazaar. The outgoing Air Troop was based at Batu Kitang a few miles up the river and next to the waterworks. We met CPO ‘Fingers’ Cowan there when we moved in

and his technicians left, I think to Terendak. He had suffered the loss of some digits to a Sioux fan whilst adjusting the dreaded 345 valve. The camp was a bit better than the tents at 7 ml Bazaar but the food was not exactly Cordon Bleu. Operations continued from there until sometime later when the helipad and accommodation was secured at Semengo Camp next to the airport.



Semengo Camp  
much better hangar

Whist at Semengo one of our Sioux approached its Minor Servicing and I was lucky enough to accompany the pilot on the long flight along

the coast to the MSRDR at Brunei where it was done. An unforgettable experience as we flew along a seemingly endless beach for hours, refuelling at Sibul, Bintulu and Miri. We returned to Kuching in an RAF Valetta.



Endless beach at Brunei

A few weeks later the experience was repeated in reverse ‘as I knew the way’! This time we flew to Brunei in a Malayan Airways Friendship. The return leg in the Sioux was through thunderstorms which was rather hairy. Our parent Artillery regiment and the Sioux took part in the famous action when Rambahadur Limbu won the V.C. mentioned by Tony Markham in the Chinthe (2012 Issue 2 Page 30.)

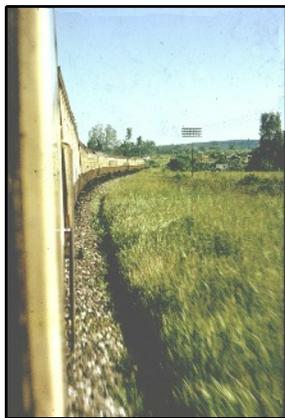
A concert party led by Frankie Howerd visited during this period which raised morale considerably, especially the lovely Shirley Abicair who showed off assets other than her zither playing! Apparently Howerd made

a film of his service concerts which the BBC won't show as it was too close to the mark!

Our time to exchange with 49 Lt Regt Air Troop arrived and we departed by RAF Hastings for Hong Kong in late December which necessitated a night in Nee Soon Barracks, Singapore. Then onward in a British Eagle Britannia to Kai-Tak. The artist Terence Cuneo was also on board. After Borneo it was bitterly cold in Hong Kong so our route to Sek Kong was via the Castle Peak Road instead of over Route Twisk. Our first task was to purchase a rather bizarre Chinese fan heater for the billet. We soon 'hit the lights' and were amazed when a rather irate Kowloon bar girl took umbrage at our 'artificer' P.O. Pete Gunning's 'companion'. She called him a 'far sam robar' which apparently means butterfly. It seems Pete had been to HK before on an aircraft carrier!

Flying was rather more infrequent than in Borneo and soon fell to nought as all Sioux were grounded until a part of the control system was modified. At least we had all managed to go on an aerial tour of the colony before this occurred. The Sioux got airborne again after the mod and it was soon approaching the time to exchange again, this time to Terendak in Malaya. However, events took another turn and the Easter 'Star Ferry' riots erupted, so called because the ferry company wanted to raise its 'steerage' class fare from 10 cents to 20. I was driving a hire car when this started and was amazed to find a double decker bus on fire in my path. I executed a sharp about turn and headed back to Sek Kong to find

a curfew was about to be enforced. We were very busy on 'operations' again and the changeovers were delayed, no doubt to the dismay of those in Kuching.



Magic Arrow to Tampin

The troubles subsided and we were soon heading west to Nee Soon again, then by the 'Magic Arrow' train to Tampin and thence to Terendak by minibus. *(There is a sequence I made for YouTube with photos of this period - search YouTube '5 Months in Sek Kong 1966'. There is a brief glimpse of the 'souvenir' I eventually brought home.)*

We acquired Maj Counsell as the OC soon afterwards and I seem to remember there were one or two exercises we supported. At this time a new Aircraft Workshop was being formed in Kuching and to my dismay I found my wonderful existence in first line was about to come to an abrupt end. I was posted to 78 Ac Wksp which consisted largely of newly trained technicians plus a few 'old hands' such as me with all of three years' spanner-bending experience. Before that happened though, I went off back to Hong Kong for some leave. A few weeks later I arrived back in Kuching after a flight in a RNZAF Bristol Freighter from Singapore. The flight was notable for the rain which came through the clamshell doors! The loadmaster distributed Chinese paper umbrellas to those most affected! It was with some not unfounded trepidation that I walked across the runway towards my new unit. I was once told that REME is like manure. Spread around thinly as in First Line units it soon gets down to useful work; piled in large heaps like workshops and it festers and seeks ways to annoy everybody. With this in mind I approached the Orderly Room and almost immediately found myself having a haircut.



78 Aircraft Workshop -  
combined Inaugural/  
Disbandment Parade

I longed to be back on the Bristol, taking off in the distance. In fact it almost seemed as if 78 was a jungle version of Depot REME. What other unit on active service had 'advance in review order' parades? 78 did, albeit practices for the combined Inaugural and Disbandment parade. This was of immense daily amusement to the RAF lads arming up their Gloster Javelins only a few yards away. I began to think it was all a bad dream.



Last Auster on Active service

I was partially saved by having some knowledge of the Auster Mk 9. I had also driven a 3 tonner. These two 'skills' got me out of the main workshop and I became, I think, the last Auster technician to see active service - albeit with only one serviceable aircraft, the others

were either still in transit boxes (2) or lying about looking rather sorry for themselves (about 5).

The Austers had been left behind by 20 Flight which had gone to Malaya to re-equip with Scouts. This serviceable Auster flew every night although I was obliged to keep mum as to what it was up to. With only a couple of boxes of 'bangers' left (for the starter) and not knowing how long this was going on for, I resorted to hand swinging which usually entertained a few onlookers, no doubt hoping to see blood and gore. *(They were disappointed but the sequel to this occurred in 2006 when after a working life successfully avoiding rotating dangers I stupidly cut the ends off two fingers adjusting the slow-running on my rotary mower!)* Eventually our Government persuaded the other side to cease confrontation and it looked like my days in 78 were numbered, I wasn't sorry and I doubt if any of the other NCOs were either. A signal arrived from on high telling us to remove the Bombardier engines with the lowest life, and despatch them to Middle Wallop. Not having the proper boxes a large crate was found and the engines were placed inside separated by mattresses! One afternoon great excitement was caused when a high wind blew up and the engineless Austers decided to make a break for freedom across the active runway. They were retrieved post-haste and given a telling off. The next day the whole lot including poor old XK409, were piled in a heap and burnt.



Austers await their fate



War is such a waste

I was posted to the Air Platoon

1 KSLI in Singapore and was soon aboard a Hastings. As it climbed away I could see the bonfire still burning far below. I still had 14 months of my 2 and a half year Far East posting to run. What an eventful 14 months they



Left to right:

Rod Kyle VM REME,  
myself,  
Cfn Yeo (locally enlisted  
driver)  
Danny Bett VMREME  
and XK409

were, Hong Kong, Singapore, an exciting day in Vietnam, Terendak and Australia were on the horizon - but that's another story.

\* \* \* \* \*

## FIRE

By Roger Mitchell

And it came to pass that some mandarin, probably in an office somewhere in the heart of the war office decided that each flight in the Army Air Corps flight should have someone that was responsible for the fire equipment. With hindsight it was probably that they wanted someone to blame if things went wrong, and so I was volunteered, (detailed) to be responsible for all the fire fighting equipment of 7 Flight. I did wonder if this had anything to do with the fact that when I was at Middle Wallop I did get lumbered for a stint on the fire picket. This involved being up all night in the guardroom waiting in case the fire alarm sounded, and if it did we, about four of us, were to rush to the fire pulling a trailer fire pump to the scene of the fire and presumably to put it out. How this was to be achieved is a bit of a mystery because we were not even told how to start the engine, let alone how to connect the hoses up to a hydrant or put them in a pond. Actually my job in civvy street before I was in the Army was to repair and service local council vehicles which included fire engines so I did know about suction and delivery hoses and how to operate the little trailer pump, but as a lot of people have found to their cost, in the Army sometimes silence is golden. However being made a fireman meant that one had to go on a course, this time at Changi Airport Singapore. I must have been a good boy for I was flown down there by

Teeny Weeny Airways (Ron Ward's affectionate name for the Air Corps at the time) in one of our own aircraft as it was only a one day course and one of our aircraft was going there anyway.

This was probably just as well as Malayan Railways were not exactly reliable in those days and it could take up to two days to get to Singapore from Taiping, one day to get to Kuala Lumpur and then another day to get to Singapore. On arrival at Changi I reported to the instructor and there were about half a dozen of us there and we were told all about fires and fire extinguishers. Then



we came to the practical when we were to see a real fire. This consisted of a small amount of engine oil in a tray which was duly ignited. If we had done nothing it would have gone out in a few minutes, however we roared into action and put out the fire with a fire extinguisher. It can be a very satisfying experience to empty a fire extinguisher. Then it was back for another talk and then lunch. After lunch it was the big one. We taken out onto the airport and an old piece of fuselage was set on fire by pouring some petrol on it, then we fire fighters were to put it out. This old fuselage had been set on fire that many times that there was very little on it to burn. However we rushed to the scene and extinguished the fire. It was then time for a cup of tea and a flight back to Taiping.

After some time had passed it was decided that 7 Flight should have its own little fire tender, and so a one ton Morris lorry was duly sent to workshops for a few bits to be welded on and painted red. Unfortunately after a few weeks in the hot Malayan sun the red turned into a nice shade of pink. Whoever heard of a pink fire engine? Unfortunately as well, the petrol ran back from the engine to the tank overnight, and the fuel pump on the engine had no hand primer. This meant that to get the engine started one had to churn the engine over on the starter until the battery was nearly flat before it would start. Not quite the thing for a fire engine. This could have been cured by fitting a new fuel pump, preferably one with a hand primer, or an SU electric fuel pump which should have been the preferred option, but this was never done. This could be got round by tipping petrol slowly into the carburettor and starting the engine at the

same time, but the object of the exercise was of course to prevent fires and not start them. The other problem with this fire engine was that it would lose its gears now and again, which could have been embarrassing on the way to a fire, as the gear lever had to be taken out and repositioned before it was drivable again.



The one thing that I do remember about this fire engine is that on one admin inspection day I was detailed to take the fire engine and the camp dog Sputnik out for the day to keep out of the way. So with a ration pack between us and a full tank of petrol we went to the seaside for the day.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Were You a Former BEAVER Pilot?** **(Or 'tech/ground crew?)**



If you were a former Beaver pilot Mr David Kellock would like to hear from you. He is compiling a book on the DHC Beaver aircraft used by the AAC between 1960 and 1989 and has been in touch with a number of Beaver pilots who kindly shared their reminiscences with him. All of these pilots flew the Beaver pre 1972, however Mr Kellock is keen to correspond with those flying during the late 1970s and 1980s who were posted to 7 Regiment AAC or Northern Ireland. He is also interested to hear from anyone who was a Beaver pilot stationed at BATUS. This does not preclude any Technicians and ground crew who can add suitable anecdotes. Please e-mail him at: [davidkellock@live.co.uk](mailto:davidkellock@live.co.uk)

## Racing Legend - Philip Barak

One of our members, Philip Barak, holds a unique position within the United Kingdom motor racing fraternity. Philip served as an artillery observer with the Squadron from 1952 to 1954 in 1907 Flight in Benta and Taiping. He has very fond and loyal memories of his time in Malaya and is an active member of the Association. Prior to his tour he was already racing bicycles for the North Shields Polytechnic Team



which had much success during that era.

It was only two years after he returned to the UK that Philip took up serious car racing and he is still competing. His racing career started at Brough in 1956 where he drove a Cooper Norton Mark 6. He also drove a Cooper Formula 3 car and went on to drive a Brabham BT 36 Formula 2 car at all the classic race circuits in the country. From the start he began to accumulate track records. For example in his Lotus 11 he achieved 19 Podiums from 21 starts and set the fastest lap at Charterhall. On this track he went on to set the Outright Track Record in a Cooper Ferrari. He was well known to be competitive in any car and raced a Brabham Formula 2 where he set the Longridge track record.



1962 married June, who could always be seen at the track hanging out pit signals, cleaning the cars, cooking for the pit crew and so many other things. "I owe a major part of any success that I have had to her." Together they were both involved in the theatre, June the actress and Philip the writer. They went to London for

their honeymoon and stayed at the Steering Wheel Club where they mixed with Stirling Moss and Graham Hill. “We actually interrupted our honeymoon to drive to Scotland to race at Charterhall.” They went on to have 2 children and Adam, the younger boy, still goes to his race meetings and helps in the pits, as well as with sponsorship.

In 1973 Philip entered negotiations to drive in Formula One for the Tyrrell Team (they eventually selected Patrick Depailler) and again in 1979 he was offered a drive with the Ensign Team. Though he didn't make the move to F1, that has not stopped him beating F1 drivers' times on a number of occasions!



“It was at Charterhall, where the likes of Moss, Mike Hawthorn, Jim Clark, Bob Gerard as well as Jackie Stewart and many other F1 drivers raced, that I won and posted my fastest lap with the Lotus XI, where Stewart came

third. I set the outright track record with a Cooper Monaco; it has a special memory that I will always treasure.”

With his natural racing talent it was natural that he would try his hand at touring cars. He drove a Ford Escort V8 to championship success. You name the classic car and Philip has been at the wheel, from the Lotus Esprit 700hp Chevy V8 to the ex-Gerry Marshall Vauxhall Firenza “Baby Bertha” to the Lotus Cortina, which was one of his favourites.



In 1987 Philip was in the team including Innes Ireland and Louise Aitken-Walker which secured 7 British speed records in a Lynx D-Type Jaguar at the MIRA banked oval, Warwickshire. His best season was 1960 where in a Lotus 11 Climax he secured 19 podiums from 21 races; an outstanding

achievement, yet 42 years later in the Europa Engineering Elan Challenge he won at Mallory Park and achieved a further 8 2nd places and the championship. An unsurpassed record.



Philip is remarkably modest about his unique record, but he has been the subject of numerous articles and profiles over the years and can be very proud about his 5 track records, nine championships and over 300 podiums. He still runs Woodcote Racing at Silverstone and currently races a Mallock 20A.

It is a joy to see him attend Association events and he achieved another ambition this year when he flew in an Auster, after a gap of 60 years, at Old Sarum.





## LAST LAUGHS



### **Excerpts from a Royal Flying Corps safety report 21 December 1917.**

INTRODUCTION Another good month. In all, a total of 35 accidents were reported, only six of which were avoidable. These represented a marked improvement over the month of November during which 84 accidents occurred, of which 23 were avoidable. This improvement, no doubt, is the result of experienced pilots with over 100 hours in the air forming the backbone of all the units

#### RESUME OF ACCIDENTS: Avoidable accidents

##### 1. Avoidable accidents this last month.

- a. The pilot of a Shorthorn, with over 7 hours of experience, seriously damaged the undercarriage on landing. He had failed to land at as fast a speed as possible as recommended in the Aviation Pocket Handbook.
- b. A BE 2 stalled and crashed during an artillery exercise. The pilot had been struck on the head by the semaphore of his observer who was signaling to the gunners.
- c. Another pilot in a BE 2 failed to get airborne. By an error of judgment, he was attempting to fly at mid-day instead of at the recommended best lift periods, which are just after dawn and just before sunset.
- d. A Longhorn pilot lost control and crashed in a bog near Chipping-Sedbury. An error of skill on the part of the pilot in not being able to control a machine with a wide speed band of 10 MPH between top speed and stalling speed.
- e. While low flying in a Shorthorn the pilot crashed into the top deck of a horse drawn bus near Stonehenge.
- f. A BE 2 pilot was seen to be attempting a banked turn at a constant height before he crashed. A grave error by an experienced pilot.

##### 2. There were 29 unavoidable accidents from which the following are selected:

- A. The top wing of a Camel fell off due to fatigue failure of the flying wires. A successful emergency landing was carried out.
- b. Sixteen B.E. 2 s and 9 Shorthorns had complete engine failures. A marked improvement over November's fatigue.
- c. Pigeons destroyed a Camel and 2 Longhorns after mid-air strikes.

#### COST OF ACCIDENTS:

Accidents during the last three months of 1917 cost £317 / 10 / 6 , money down the drain and sufficient to buy new gaiters and spurs for each and every pilot and observer in the Service.

To be continued in next Journal.....

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