

THE CHINTHE



SPRING 2020

656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL

Contents

Cover Spring 2020	1	Goose Green	23
Volans et Videns	3	3 days with the 'SAS'	24
Live Firing in the Arctic	4	A Summer in the Arctic	27
OC Squadron report	5	Noble Field	30
President's report	9	A Near miss	31
Chairman's report	10	Malaya 1958 - 1961	34
Secretary's report	11	Musings of National Service Time	36
Treasurer's report	12	Southend Times Article 1954	38
2019 Cenotaph Parade	14	New Members	39
Press Release	16	In Memoriam	40
Apache 2008	17	Re-union Application Form	41
British Army Lynx	19	Cenotaph Parade Application Form	44
You're never too old to learn	20	Standing order form	46
Falklands Argentine war graves	22	Your Committee	47

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Volans et Videns

Born in 1942 with 656 its name
The Auster's were the first to fly
The Squadrons first airframe

A squadron with great history
That sought to fly and see
From the heady days of World war 2
From land to air and sea

Auster, scout, gazelle and lynx
But now Apache too
The squadrons role has always been
To do what daring do

From North to Southern Hemisphere
It's men and women fought
No finer squadron in the land
The squadron often sought

Some have fallen on the way
We pray there won't be more
Those names remain within our heart
No matter where we shore

Let's fly our flag with dignity
Then fight from land to sky
To be the best that we can be
Strong wings to help us fly

Born in 1942 with 656 its name
Fantastic people's history
Take flight and steady aim

© **Karl Tearney**



Live Weapon Firing in the Arctic

OC 656 Squadron Report

Maj Huw Raikes

I'm currently sat 69 degrees North 200 miles into the Arctic circle, writing what I have sadly realised may well be my last report for the Chinthe. It has been a whirlwind stint with many fond memories as the OC of a uniquely capable and fantastic squadron. Unlike my previous reports where I talk of 'firsts' for the squadron and the UK Attack Helicopter Force I can now talk of revisiting these areas as we continue building our capability as a world leader in Apache operations. In September 2019 we embarked three aircraft on Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RAF) Argus, allowing members of the Squadron Group to continue getting to grips with life at sea. Most recently we have spent almost three months on our second deployment to the Arctic Circle.



My previous report was in fact written whilst embarked on RFA Argus. The ship, designed originally as a container ship and then converted into a floating Role 3 hospital, presents many differences to HMS Queen Elizabeth (QNLZ). At only 175m long, RFA Argus is dwarfed by QNLZ which sits over 100m longer. The deck of QNLZ runs its entire length compared to only 70m on Argus. Whilst this may make the day-to-day running around much easier work on the legs, it presents a dramatically

different training environment for our crews and is challenges even the most experienced maritime trained pilots when the ship starts to pitch and roll.



The squadron were embarked for two weeks on RFA Argus. While blessed with some reasonable weather conditions off the south coast of England for the first week, strong winds and large swells during the second made working conditions very difficult and prevented a lot of the planned sorties being achieved. Despite the adverse weather we were still able to qualify most of our crews in deck landings thanks to some fantastic work by our engineers and ground crew to achieve an extremely high tempo of flying.

Once we were back on dry land the horizon looked snowy and cold as our second deployment into the Arctic Circle loomed. Using the lessons learnt our inaugural deployment to Norway early 2019, we had been busy in the background purchasing new equipment (enhanced gloves, balaclavas and engineering kit). We had revised our operating procedures and had confidence that we could overcome anything the high north could throw at us. The deployment was to be bigger and better than last year, including our cold weather training courses, we would be in Norway for almost 4 months.

Taking four aircraft to the Arctic placed a huge burden on our engineers; preparing them for the extreme cold involved engine changes and clearing the aircraft of major servicing. Working with reduced manning (with many technicians deploying to Norway to conduct their cold weather survival training during this period), they worked tirelessly to get the aircraft ready. The photos below show some of the engine changes, taking up to 16 hours per aircraft, replacing them with the cold weather modified versions.



With kit, equipment and aircraft being prepared for the move to Norway, we moved our attention to personnel. Operating in the arctic can be lethal without the correct knowledge and training. As with our first deployment all personnel who were to deploy had to attend and pass the Arctic Survival course run by Royal Marine mountain leaders. Not for the faint of heart or indeed lover of a warm bed! The course teaches personal administration in the environment, group safety, kit and equipment care. It culminates in a four day field exercise; each night sees a reduction in the amount of clothing and equipment available for use. After the final 'survival night', the exercise concludes with the famous ice breaking drills. These are taught to ensure personnel can get out of freezing water with no assistance and then correctly administrate themselves should the worst happen. Some dread this phase and it is a true test of your personal determination and strength, both mental and physically.



The Sqn redeployed to Bardufoss, Norway, on 6 January 2020. Aircraft that had been pre-positioned before Christmas, were quickly rebuilt and airtested. Aircrew then commenced environmental training, qualifying new aircrew in the cold weather flying procedures. There are 8 sorties in total which increase complexity incrementally. Learning how to fly in Arctic weather is perhaps one of the most important

aspects of the training; wind directions and strengths change from valley to valley and take offs and landings induce a complete white out of snow. This year northern Norway experienced the most snow in 30 years; the Sqn became pretty adept at flying in precipitating snow!

Work aside we found the time for social events and a battlefield tour to Narvik. The Battles of Narvik were fought from 9 April to 8 June 1940 as a naval battle in the Ofotfjord and as a land battle in the mountains surrounding the north Norwegian city of Narvik. Presentations were prepared and delivered by soldiers developing their knowledge and presentational abilities.

Live weapon firing formed a large part of this deployment with packages using both sea and land ranges. The sqn worked closely both with 29 Cdo RA for land targeting and with Wildcats from the Commando Helicopter Force for sea ranges. There is a fantastic video of the Sqn produced by a member of 4 Regt aircrew on YouTube (Search: Hellfire in the Arctic).





The final phase of the exercise saw us operating alongside RAF Chinook, Commando Helicopter Force Merlin and Wildcat and Norwegian Bell Helicopters in Ex COLD RESPONSE. This was a large NATO level exercise simulating an article 5 response in defence of Norway. While the global COVID-19 pandemic somewhat curtailed our involvement and sadly forced our return to the UK earlier than expected, I once again saw the customary professionalism and coolness of the Sqn as it turned about from full-on exercise footing to recovering personnel and equipment in a matter of days.

As I write this it is clear that we are heading into an uncertain period for not just Defence but for the whole of the UK. The Sqn's focus has necessarily switched to potential support to the UK and the NHS. I have no doubt that the Sqn will rise to the challenge if called upon to support Government efforts while we equally keep a close eye on events abroad to ensure that we are ready should we be called upon to deploy operationally overseas. It is with great sadness that this is my last OC's report but I am extremely pleased to be handing over to the extremely capable Phil Parkes (ex-656 Sqn Ops Offr). I am confident the Sqn will continue to build it's Arctic and maritime capability and pave a path behind it which all other Sqns will follow.

Huw Raikes



President's Report

Piers Lewis

I recently had a pleasant surprise email from an old Ops Officer from 656 Sqn. It was great to read about his journey in the last 10 years, and even more surprising to hear that a document that we developed and created in 656 Sqn during my tenure as OC, for Contingency Operations, is still going strong, and has been morphed towards other Squadrons too. At the same time, I was aware of 656 Sqn returning again to the Arctic environment in Norway, to further develop their excellent achievements from 2019; undoubtedly a key element to the award of the Ward Booth Trophy, for which they are very deserved recipients.

Equally, right now, a close work colleague is in the Falklands on business and struggling to achieve an internet connection to keep up with the breadth of work commitments. He has met a number of key people there, and meets the Governor this Friday. Although I am looking forward to his report on his return, it caused me to look again at the 656 Sqn activities, as part of Op Corporate, and reflect at the 'first world problem' of an internet connection against what must have been very different communication issues back in 1982. I am sure many of you will draw many more parallels from your personal experiences.

Returning to my work colleague, I am also very pleased that my company has elected to be a sponsor for the Middle Wallop Wings and Wheels event this July, thus, I am personally very pleased to be returning there seemingly 5 times in 2020 for a mix of work and 656 associated requirements. I, as I am sure, many of you, will have many memories and journeys started in this fantastic base. I will, however, try to steer clear of any 'Possum Pints'.

With that in mind, I am very much looking forward to our Association day this year. Wattisham is always special, particularly for me, but we all hold Middle Wallop – the home of the Army Air Corps close to our hearts, and with so much focus there this year; from Association Day to the Association Talks as presented by Bob Thorpe in the last newsletter, then we have a lot to look forward to.

Finally, to cast minds back to the end of 2019, I cannot avoid but refer to the Cenotaph Parade, again, a good turn out, although not as good as many years, however, the drill last year, aided and abetted by an unexpected 'Halt' pretty much on the Cenotaph itself, truly lent itself to a comedy of errors. If anyone wants a blend of camaraderie, reflection, but also a little light comedy in one morning, then look no further than this year's parade!

Chairman's Note

Bob Thorpe

What extraordinary times we are living through and they bring more meaning to words "Confined to Barracks". I do hope, however, all our members are fit and well and coping with these self-isolating times. If any of you feel down at any time, I am available at the end of my phone, WhatsApp or Facetime for a chat. There is no need to feel alone, we are all in this together – as they say!

I would like to start by thanking David Williams, who agreed to be a temporary editor and is now on his third edition. Thank you, David, you are a star! He has pulled together a great Chinthe Journal and I, for one, am most grateful. I would also like to thank all the members of your committee, who give me, and you, fantastic support to ensure our unique Association is thriving.

How has this pandemic affected the Association? As you may know, we took the decision last month to postpone our series of talks at the Army Flying Museum. These are now rescheduled for October, November and December. Please check the Museum website (www.armyflying.com) for more details.

Secondly, we took the decision yesterday to also postpone the Reunion/AGM at the Army Flying Museum, which was due to take place on Saturday 27th June 2020. This will now take place, assuming we have returned to some sort of 'normal', on Saturday 3rd October 2020. There is a new booking form in this edition of the Chinthe.

For those of you who had already booked to attend and paid our treasurer, we offer two options. We can either retain your payment for the new date or you can receive a refund. Please let Terry (t.betchley@sky.com) or George (georgemckie5646@gmail.com) know your preference. Some you may have also booked non-flex rooms at the Premier Inn. At the moment the Premier Inn is allowing all bookings up to the end of May to be cancelled with no loss of money. I suspect that this will be extended but I believe they also offer a change of date option after 31st May. However, we do not want any member to be out of pocket so if you do end up paying for a room you cannot use, let us know and we will see what we can do about it.

Finally, we are concerned about keeping in touch with all our members and, if you are able to do so, please provide me with your email address as we just cannot afford to send out notifications by post except for the Chinthe Journal twice per year. I would also urge you to join the Facebook Group.

Stay safe everyone and I do hope to see as many as possible of you at the Reunion in October.

Bobthorpe341@gmail.com

SECRETARY REPORT – SPRING 2020

Welcome to the Spring Edition of the 2020 Chinthe and I do hope it finds you all well and fully recovered after the festive season. The battle is already in full swing to lose those extra pounds gained due to the over indulgence in Mince Pies and Turkey.

Things have been a little dormant over the festive season but like the proverbial duck in the water the committee have been beavering away at getting things planned for the 2020 season. By the time you read this the names would have been submitted for the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party. The deadline is always very tight for this event so I do hope that we did manage to get the information out to you in time. If you feel you may be qualified to be considered to attend (Details are available on their website or contact me.) Let me know and I can hold your name for 2021.

The committee are now planning the 2020 AGM/Reunion which will, this year be taking place at the Army Flying Museum at Middle Wallop. Further details are elsewhere in this Journal. Please get your name in by completing the form and returning to me or George as soon as possible with your remittance. It is proving very popular and with it being such a wonderful venue it promises to be a great event.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bob Thorpe, our Chairman for helping to organise a wonderful series of talks that will be taking place during 2020 about the Squadrons history. These again will be held and hosted at the Army Flying Museum. I do hope that as many of you as possible will make every effort to attend. Further details are also in the pages that follow.

Although some way off this years Cenotaph Parade will soon be published by the Royal British Legion and as ever anyone wishing to attend please complete the form in the Journal and return to me so that I can submit the names of the 656 Squadron contingent in a timely manner. Thank you.

Finally, the committee do all they can to get information to you that may be of interest, this comes to us via various sources mainly the Army Air Corps Veteran Association, Royal British Legion, Society's and other Associations. Even from the "Grapevine" "Word of Mouth" and the "Jungle Drums" . If you have anything which you would like to get out there via our Journal, Newsletter, Website or Facebook page please let us know. Especially other events and items to include in the Journal and Newsletter

Finally, I would like to thank all the committee for all their efforts and the support they have given me during the past year and look forward to working with them all again during 2020.

My very best wishes to you all

Terry Betchley
Secretary
t.betchley@sky.com

656 Squadron Association

Treasurer's Report For Year End 2019

The Association's Accounts for 2019 have been audited and found to be in good order. Full details of the Income and Expenditure Account, and the Balance Sheet, for 2019, are shown separately in the Spring 2020 edition of 'The Chinthe.'

The accounts ran smoothly throughout the year but costs exceeded income and there was an overall deficit of -£1,251.59. This was in part due to a donation of £500.00 to the Army Flying Museum and there were higher than anticipated costs for the 2019 Reunion. Members felt the event was excellent, and good value for their money, but not enough income was raised to cover the costs of the Reunion.

At the 2019 Annual General Meeting it was noted that subscriptions had not been increased for a decade and members agreed to an increase of subscriptions from £7.50 to £10.00 annually, from January 2020. This should strengthen the Association's finances. Unfortunately, I forgot to publish a reminder and very few members have increased their subscriptions for 2020 so far.

Nevertheless, there are more than adequate funds in the Reserve Account to meet current needs of the Association and to provide for any future contingencies.

George McKie
Treasurer
656 Squadron Association

Note

At the end of this Chinthe is a new standing order form - would you be so kind as to complete it so we get the correct subscriptions next year? Many thanks.

**656 Squadron Association - Income and Expenditure Account
For The Year Ended 31 December 2019**

Income	£	Expenditure	£
General Account			
Subscriptions	2483.00	Journal Costs	1186.29
Reunion Income	2142.00	Newsletter/ Printing & Stationery Costs	229.98
Donations Received	14.00	Reunion Costs	3305.78 (1)
Postage Paid Income	5.30	Donation to Army Flying Museum	500.00
Interest on Reserve Deposit Account	7.29	Postage Costs	100.51
		Committee Costs	304.90 (2)
		Web and Computer Costs	203.44
		Miscellaneous Costs	59.25 (3)
		PayPal Charges	12.73
Totals	4651.59	Totals	5902.88
Excess of Expenditure Over Income	(1251.59)		
Sales Account			
Sales		Cost of Sales	
Shop Sales	167.00	Opening Stock	984.14
Shop Profits	27.70	New Stock Added	0.00
			984.14
		Less Closing Stock	-844.84
		Cost of Sales	139.30
Total Income	4818.59	Total Expenditure	6042.18
Overall Deficit	1223.59		

Notes to Account

- (1) The Sqn deducted £100 as they received grant from AAC.
 (2) Initial meetings of new committee for travel and incidental expenses for telephone etc
 (3) Purchase of 2 x wreaths and card reader battery

G McKie
Treasurer

D Walker
Deputy Treasurer

2019 CENOTAPH PARADE – SUNDAY 10TH NOVEMBER 2019

Regrettably the turnout for this year's parade was to say the least, disappointing but I fully understand that many had various reasons not to attend the London event. There were however a few die hard's from the Association that decided to attend.

Led by our President, Piers Lewis we all made a gallant effort to maintain the step, although personally I was never much good at drill (Well that's my excuse!) Many thanks to Derek for calling out the time and managing to keep us in some sort of order.

We were also joined this year by Matt Collings who is a current serving member and Patricia Moore OBE also made up the contingent. It was nice to see that although few in number a good representation of the Squadron throughout the years was on show.

The weather was kind to us on the day, which was a relief given that there had been torrential rain in London the night before. Although cold and with a lot of standing around, this was relieved with the aid of a hip flask which was a trick I learnt from my 2018 experience. Come to think of it, I wonder if this has had any bearing on why my marching was not up to scratch!

Some of the contingent had food at L'ulivo Restaurant after the event and as ever the service was friendly and excellent and the food very good and warming. Think we will use them again next year.

I hope we can make up for numbers in 2020. So come on get the date in the diary 8th November.

Finally, a note to myself. When ordering everyone's tickets, remember to take your own!

Thanks to all those who attended.





Remembrance Parade 2019

18th March 2019

PRESS RELEASE

Isabelle Kenyon, isabellekenyon@hotmail.co.uk

For immediate release

Poetry Therapy: Life after PTSD:

Karl Tearney launches debut book 'Second Life'

Poet Karl Tearney dedicated 35 years of his life to the Army Air Corps as a pilot. After medical retirement in 2016, he found a new-found passion for poetry and has since then been a panellist at the Hay literature festival, helped with a poetry workshop at RADA and exhibited his work at the 'Art in the Aftermath' Exhibition in Pall Mall. 'Second Life', published July 12th by Fly on the Wall Press, is Tearney's eagerly anticipated first full collection, exploring mental health, love and therapy.

Tearney is hugely passionate about encouraging other sufferers of mental issues to look toward the Arts as a means of therapy. David James Gandy said, "*His numerous poetic expressions of the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder following his time as a pilot in the British Forces for over 35 years are a testimony to the passion, courage and selflessness of our servicemen and women.*"

Emma Willis MBE, who has worked with Tearney through her charity work for 'Style for Soldiers' said: "*He is an exceptional man, writing poetry that is accessible to all, voicing the struggles as well as the beauty of our times and affirming to anyone the psychological healing powers of creativity.*"

Tearney said, "This collection is an insight into how words have literally saved me from a never ending life of sadness. I am truly blessed that whilst in the very depths of mental health despair I found I could write, and not only write but also record and hopefully inspire! Writing in often-simplistic symmetry has become a record of the prominent thoughts that affect me day to day. Poems have become my diary and my reason to remain part of the spirit of humanity "

To pre-order a limited hardback edition of 'Second Life' go to the Fly on the Wall Shop: www.flyonthewallpoetry.co.uk, Amazon or Waterstones online.

ENDS

Contact Details

For further details or to organise an interview with Karl Tearney, please email:

Isabelle Kenyon
(Founding Editor of Fly on the Wall Press)
isabellekenyon@hotmail.co.uk



APACHE - 2008

So, I joined the British Army as a boy soldier in the early summer of 1983 after spending a short spell in horological design. I had always wanted to be a pilot and sadly had missed out large periods of schooling because of a few issues with my parent's divorce and my moving from parent to parent.

I had joined the Army Air Corps and had to serve firstly on the ground before any application was allowed to apply for a flying role. It was late in 1990 that I attended the Aircrew section centre which at that time was in RAF Biggin Hill. I was so pleased when I passed and could then complete the remainder of the Army selection process before beginning my pilots' course in 1992.

Upon completion of my course in 1993 I was chosen to then go straight to Operational flying in Northern Ireland. I had a tough 26 months and witnessed the harsh reality of terrorism seldom seen on the news. Its odd how when serving on the ground you become fixated on your patch of ground and rarely think of anyone elsewhere. But when in the air your responsibility becomes so much more.

So much of my time was spent hopping from incident to incident and never having the time to ponder on events as the tempo was so high. I remember getting very little sleep whilst there as my mind was awash with imagery and thought. Nobody spoke of any of the incidents afterward less a quick debrief at the end of the duty. The macho image of being a soldier entwined with the expectancy of being completely lucid because you are a pilot seemed nonsense to me but that was how we lived.

Just 5 months or so after Northern Ireland I deployed to Bosnia as part of the implementation force (IFOR) and I had no idea nor preparation for what was in store. Everything was a mess, buildings, roads, power, water, and people were all in tatters. The things I witnessed still haunt me today and especially those involving children.

Upon my return I knew there was something wrong in my head and I sought help. The Army counselling team seemed unusually interested in my own childhood rather than my recollections of Northern Ireland and then Bosnia. I found that very frustrating and thankfully returned to work.

Various things that one might say are just part of life then happened over the next decade or so and I remained in the Army until quite suddenly I began to sob uncontrollably at night. I had no idea as to why but oddly I didn't tire from not being able to sleep. It carried on nightly for a month but then one morning my work phone rang, and I couldn't talk, I simply began to cry and couldn't stop. That was my last day at work, as I then spent time in recovery including a spell as an inpatient in a mental health hospital.

Since then I have struggled to get better and perhaps even return to my old self as I missed the old me. I tried all sorts of therapy but each time it resulted in my feeling worse and being discharged as treatment intolerant. My problem is that I don't have a single point of trauma. I have nigh on 3000 flying hours of trauma stemming from many operational areas.

I concluded I would have to find a way to treat myself and turned to writing. I went for a short walk and wrote about a willow tree that was nearby. The words flowed into a poem, my first ever, and I've written almost every day since.

What has been remarkable about my story is that I realised I will never find the old me but the new one has a remarkable gift, poetry. I have now had some success including work at RADA, the Hay literature festival, promotion of poetry as therapy on the BBC News and the recently released RAF Centenary poem.

My work now spans all subjects and I have released a children's poetry book through the style for soldier's charity whom gave it free to all the children of the injured service people on the charity's books. I ahem spent time at the second largest special needs school teaching them about how use of art and words can be fundamental to inner peace when struggling inside a torn mind.

I would like to share a poem I wrote about the Lynx going out of service:

Karl Tearney

British Army Lynx

So, we say our last goodbye
To the British Army Lynx
Wine and speeches everywhere
Yet still my poor heart sinks

Such elegance and wondered noise
As the gems roared into life
The sound of blades slap in the air
But my god she caused strife

I've known the Lynx since 84
Back then it was mark 1
The last it seems was the mark 9
The wildcat number, none

I will not mourn the aircraft so
But will remember ghosts
The names I cannot record here
To them my final toasts

©karltearney





You're Never Too Old To Learn

(George McKie)

I left school at 15, without any qualifications, and started work at Whitburn Colliery, near South Shields, County Durham. I would descend 1400 feet in the cage and then walk over a mile, down an incline and under the North Sea, to get to the coalface. I was accompanied by a pit-pony that I worked with to haul timber pit-props to the 'fillers,' who shovelled coal on the coalface. The 'fillers' used the props to shore up the roof, which was only 4 feet high. I loved my pit-pony but I hated the pit.

After a couple years at the pit I joined the REME, to escape the coalmines. During trade-training, as a potential vehicle electrician, I discovered that I had little mechanical aptitude, so I left

the course at the half-way point. I then opted for the shortest possible course, which was a 2-week Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) Driving Course. Then, at the age of 18, in December 1959, I joined 656 Squadron at Noble Field, Kuala Lumpur - where I had the happiest 3 years in my 22-year army career. Initially I was Major Weatherhead's driver. He was the Wing Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (WEME). After a while I joined the Motor Transport section as a 3 Tonner driver, driving a Bedford RL. I enjoyed the freedom of being on the road and travelling to Singapore, Kuantan, and up the east coast of Malaya to Trengganu. Later on in my tour I attended a Recovery Mechanic's course at 40 Base Workshop REME in Singapore, where I learned to drive and operate a Scammell Explorer 6x6 heavy recovery vehicle, along with a Dyson low-loader trailer which was used to transport armoured vehicles and heavy equipment. I subsequently became a Recovery Mechanic in BAOR, and then in Aden in the mid 1960s.

I passed the Army Certificate of Education First Class (ACE 1) when I was a 24 year old Cpl and by then I had changed my role to Clerk REME, because of the promise of good career prospects. The syllabus included Military Calculations and I found I actually enjoyed accounting. I also discovered that I was suited to administration and management and I eventually progressed through the ranks to become a WO1 Superintending Clerk.

When I was a S/Sgt Chief Clerk at 48 Command Workshop REME, in Cyprus in 1974, I began to worry about my lack of qualifications and I started doing Correspondence Courses to obtain GCE 'O' Levels. Passing 'O' Level English with a Grade A, at the age of 33, was a great confidence booster and I carried on studying in my own time to pass further 'O' Levels in History, British Constitution, Economics, and Commerce. Before leaving the Army I hoped to gain two 'A' Levels but the Education Officer advised me to apply for a Distance Learning Course to earn a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Business Studies, which I could do as part of the MOD Resettlement Scheme for those in their last two years of service.

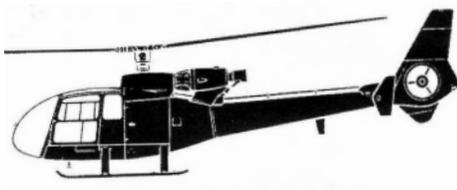
The 2- year course was run by South West London College and the students were from all three services. We attended a 2-week full time introduction to Year 1 at RAF Uxbridge, and then we studied in our own time submitting essays of about 1500 words throughout the year. After completing the first year successfully we attended another two weeks full time introduction to Year 2 and then continued studying from home and submitting essays. As part of the Resettlement Programme we came back to RAF Uxbridge, for four weeks full time instruction at the end of the course to prepare us for the final examination. The subjects included Business Organisation, Industrial Relations, Commercial Law and Applied Economics. The course was very interesting, and hard work, but the discipline I had learned when doing my 'O' Levels, by distance learning, stood me in good stead. I was proud to leave the army, at age 40, with an HNC in Business Studies and (surprisingly for an Administrator) a Class 1 HGV Licence.

In my first 10 years on 'civvy street' I was an Assistant Manager of a Building Society, the owner of a franchise for cleaning house furnishings, and a Contracts Manager in a company that made spray-booth ovens for the car accident-repair trades. I was made redundant from the latter job at the age of 50. Fortunately, my HNC in Business Studies and my Class I HGV Licence helped me to get a job in Local Government as a Waste Management Officer/Fleet Manager.

Not long after I started my new job my youngest son enrolled at Vaughan College, the Adult Education College of the University of Leicester, for a level 2 Certificate Course in Modern Social History (1799-1914). I decided to do the course with him because I liked the syllabus, which included The French Revolution, The Industrial Revolution, and Urban History in the Victorian period. Unfortunately, my son had to drop out of the course due to pressure of work but I continued. Students attended college one evening a week, and some Saturday schools, and studied at home for two years. The essays we submitted had to be 2000 -2500 words long and there were Final Exams at the end of the course. I passed the Certificate and this gave me some credits towards an Open University Degree. However, the Certificate also qualified me to join the 3 - year Part-time Humanities Degree course at Vaughan College, so I enrolled for that course.

Working for the degree meant stepping up a gear! Again, students attended College one evening a week, plus some Saturday schools, and two weeks full-time study each Easter at Ruskin College, Oxford. Essays were 3,500 words long and the Dissertation at the end of year 3 had to be 10,000 words long. The subjects were in 5 - week modules in a variety of subjects covering such things as; social and economic history, politics, philosophy, environmental studies, literature, geography, and church architecture. Studying was very tiring at times but it was rewarding and fulfilling and a strong bond developed in our class of 20 students. The subject of my Dissertation was "A Sense of Place". I wrote about the revival in English Folk Song and Dance and how people found their sense of place by going to Folk Clubs and learning about their social history through traditional folk songs. They also felt a sense of belonging and identity through the music and dance. I was able to do research in the library at Cecil Sharp House in Camden, London, and borrow books that had been written about the Folk Revival. I was also able to draw on my own experience of being a Folk Singer and running Folk Clubs in BAOR and Cyprus. I was very proud to earn an Upper Second Class (2:1) BA (Hons) Humanities in July, 1997. I was 56 years old. My father, who was 86, came to my graduation at DeMontfort Hall, Leicester and it was quite emotional for me.

I took early retirement from the Council at age 57 and then worked part-time in transport but I couldn't kick the study habit. I gained some IT qualifications and passed the Association of Accounting Technicians Level 2. Then I gained a Further Education Teaching Certificate at age 63. My last job was teaching, IT, Book-keeping, and Business Studies, as well as running a guitar club, in a high security prison in Market Harborough. My 'students' were murderers, rapists, armed robbers, burglars etc but I had to keep an open mind and build up a rapport with them, whilst keeping one eye over my shoulder! I actually enjoyed the job and learnt from some excellent guitarists in the guitar club. When I retired at 65 I went to live in Malaysia for 5 years – but that's another story!



Falklands: Argentinian War Cemetary



Goose Green by David Moore

My name is David Moore, and I am nearly sixty years old. Since leaving the forces, I have had a full career in commerce and business, running my own company for nearly thirty years.

I am a former Army Air Corps helicopter crewman, and have flown in numerous places during my years in the military.

The tour which had the most impact on my, then, younger life was that of the Falkland Islands, some six months post cessation of hostilities. At that point I was the Chief Clerk of 651 Squadron Army Air Corps and some twenty-three years old (Oddly enough, my daughter is just about to turn twenty three, the mirror reflects our lives). 651 Squadron was equipped with six Lynx helicopters, armed with eight TOW missiles, and Six Gazelle helicopters equipped for reconnaissance, and its daily administration was my responsibility. This was a full-time task and left me with little time for much else.

As this was an operational tour, getting out in one of the aircraft to view the operational environment was near impossible, as every flying hour was dedicated to operational requirements. However, I can recall on one rare occasion that I managed to aid with logistics in Goose Green, which proved to be a very raw experience, and which I still feel to this day.

I do not wish to go into detail, and neither would it be appropriate, nor respectful to those who gave their lives. However, what I can convey is that what lay before me where open graves which held the remains of unknown soldiers of the Argentinian Army. The majority of which were conscripted, and so had no Identification Tags. Those completed graves had small white crosses, which contained the words "An Argentinian soldier known unto god". Known unto god, because no one else knew who they were. Those words, and the loneliness that windswept isolated place, are etched in my memory.

I can, to this day, close my eyes and be there and see those hollow words. These days, this is made more real by looking at my own twenty-year old son, and as quirk of fate, in later life, and whilst raising my children, I made friends with an Argentinian gentleman, my age and from Buenos Aires, a Mr Victor Pastuszak. Victor, and his wife Diane, had children at the same school as our children. Victor once recanted, the story of how he luckily escaped Conscriptio. The fickle hand of Lady Fate!

In later life I have looked at my old military photographs and have learned to use "Words" to express my feelings relating to life. Subsequently, the verse below is named "Goose Green"

A soldier known unto their God, alone, always alone
The moment comes unseen, unwelcome, ... expected!
Across the Styx, and beyond the shores, ...Valhalla calls
The permanent involuntary release of a friend
Lost forever, to a fixed absence without leave,
And a hole in the ranks.
The new dawn sounds the impermanence of life,
And reveille echoes its losses!
The Last Post never is,.... and so repeats,
to mark one more courageous loss
A soldier known unto their God,
Alone, ...always Alone!

3 Days with the 'SAS'



This was written during the event and is a direct copy of the entries I made into my notebook.

8th April 1996

Imagine the shock to the system when I, a lowly sergeant aircraft commander and gazelle pilot to boot was asked if I would like to fly with the Dutch Air Force operating out of Santici in Bosnia.

Shocked as I was, there was but one reply, yes.

The flight known as SAS Flight (***Santici Air Service***) is made up of 3 Allouette 3 aircraft. Antique may spring to mind, but you've got to put behind you the thought of "Why are they still flying these". From the battery being switched to on to being ready for flight is easily less than a minute. Take off is not much different than the Gazelle with a gentle nudge of right pedal, collective and away you go.

The thing that hits you straight away is the view, totally unrestricted through an estimated 300 degrees. At 80% torque (IPS) the aircraft will respond with 80 to 100 knots and felt similar in performance to Gazelles in Northern Ireland. Hands on feeling is similar to Gazelle except for pedals which are not assisted by hydraulics. The only other peculiarity is sitting in the middle of a 3-seater almost bench like seat and flying.

My first sortie was to fly with the boss (or Major as he was referred to by his men) to Bosovaca and pick up the Dutch Army General. A thoroughly nice man whom spoke in English throughout the whole sortie to Trogir Hospital (Near Split, Croatia) and back.

We then returned the General to Bosovaca and made our way to Santici low level. Upon returning to the base the Major performed a low-level fly by, common place it seems in Santici.

The Dutch hospitality is exemplary and almost puts to shame the way the Army Air Corps treats its guests. The atmosphere on the flight is superb, they work hard, and I am assured that tonight I'm to find out that they play hard too. Assuming I survive I can look forward to another good days flying tomorrow, Prost.

9th April 1996

A full day flying today with Huub begins with a short hop to Gornji Vakuf to pick up two British Soldiers for a recce of Route Diamond. Which for the first half of the sortie I spend map reading

and then the second flying. Feeling a little more confident I spent the rest of the sortie following mountain tracks in the search for unmapped quarries. On completion its get back to Gornji Vakuf and my first landing.

I feel like a nervous schoolboy, full of excitement and apprehension at the same time. Huub assures me that he will take control if things get too bad and feeling assured, I relax and treat it like an oversized Gazelle. I approach the metal matted landing site and bring the aircraft to the hover only to be informed by Huub that the refuellers are indicating we move to the next spot. So, it's now hover taxi to reposition which was fairly simple, but next comes the landing.

I commit the aircraft to the ground in what can only be described in the skidded aircraft fraternity as "Peachy". I hardly felt the aircraft wheels touch the ground and feeling rather proud I lowered the collective only to be embarrassed as the airframe then sank onto its wheel stops.

A quick refuel and take off which was uneventful thankfully and then off to Split via Tomislavgrad. Huub lands the aircraft and we taxi onto the spots at what feels like 100 mph which feels so alien to me. Two passengers get in with luggage we are now very heavy. Huub now declares it's my turn to taxi, so I displace the cyclic forward, lift the collective a smidge and away I go. Luckily, I have advice in my earphones of brakes, disc, brakes and more disc from Huub.

I decline the take off since the aircraft is at all up weight but clutch the controls back once safely in flight. We fly low, high, low back to Santici where once again I release control for the Santici fly by and soon find myself safely on the ground.

It's my last day tomorrow, so, from the British detachment of the Dutch Air Force, "Cheers".

10th April 1996

5.5 Hours of tasking was assured for me today and if all went well, I could solo the aircraft for a circuit back in Santici.

We lift at 10am and pick up two British officers at Gornji Vakuf and take them to Banja Luka, both are surprised to find me flying. Then it's off to Lubijla to pick up a Czechoslovakian officer for a recce. Unfortunately, our pick up doesn't speak any English and so it had the makings of a difficult sortie.

Imagine the scene, on a recce of western Bosnia in an Alouette 3, a dutchman flying right seat, an Englishman map reading whilst gesturing in sign language at our passenger, a Czech. Almost felt Monty Python.

After a difficult 90 minutes we drop him off and head for fuel at Sanski Most and for some bizarre reason I just can't get the aircraft to lose height quick enough. I find myself sat next to a very anxious Jurgen in a 50 ft hover and a slow descent to the landing pad.

Another quick refuel then attempt a launch for a photo recce of a squadron of T55 to the north.

I have likened much of my flying the Alouette to flying the Gazelle and yet again another similarity. The engine will not ignite so Jurgen goes to hit the starter motor with his aircrew knife. Sadly, the engine still won't start so we have to wait for the spare Alouette to arrive with a technician. He soon has the aircraft serviceable but for one flight only back to Santici.

The spare aircraft will continue our tasking once we have our aircraft safely home. Jurgen informs me that we are going to fly back in formation and with him at the controls we settle into a cruise with one rotor span of separation. Perhaps thinking I was a member of the Eagles display team he then gave me control.

An immediate exit to a standard combat cruise feels a lot more comfortable. The Dutch it seems spend 2 – 3 hours close formation flying each month but no tactical formation flying whatsoever. The rest of the sortie is spent on the chat net trying combat spread and cruise whilst discussing aircraft survivability and mutual support. I think the end result was that they questioned why they weren't flying tactically like us, let alone why we don't have Radalt, doppler or RWR?

We land at Santici and its time for me to depart for duty in Gornji Vakuf in my much missed Gazelle. It hadn't been possible for my solo since the aircraft was unserviceable but that didn't matter as I had had a thoroughly enjoyable 3 days, made many friends and hope that one day I might fly a Dutch Air Force aircraft once again.

A final note is that you don't need any qualifications to be a pilot in the Dutch Air Force, just finish school and sit their aptitude tests. If accepted, you will fly 150 hours on a Pilatus followed by training on whatever aircraft the allot. They are presently desperately short of pilots. Good Luck

1st February 2020

There were a few things that I forgot to mention in this diary of my stay and one of the most gratifying is:

The Dutch forces are allocated a bar of chocolate per day which none of them accept. Instead they are bagged up and whenever the General went out of camp he would take them with him. Then whenever he saw a group of children, he would give them chocolate.



Whilst flying him that day we landed 6 times at his request as he had seen children. Interestingly I heard one group shouting as he jumped from the helicopter. They were all shouting "Schockolade General" which made me smile.

I have attached a couple of photographs of my stay but please keep in mind we didn't have phones with cameras back then.

Karl Tearney

A Summer in the Arctic

My New Zealand Army flying career started in 1962 when I completed an Air OP pilot's course, ab initio on the Harvard and then on to the Auster (J5 and T7). I converted to helicopters in 1963 prior to a secondment to 7 Recce Flight, 656 Sqn AAC, Kluang when I flew the AOP Mk 9 on both the Malay Peninsula and in Sarawak. In 1965, I went back to the Sioux with 45 and then 4 Regiment RA Air Troops before finishing my secondment commanding the 1st Bn Scots Guards air platoon in Kalabakan. From there I joined a US Army airborne brigade in South Vietnam flying Hueys but that is another story. I took early retirement in 1969 and worked as a commercial pilot in New Zealand and Canada, the story of which now follows.

I arrived in Calgary, Canada, from New Zealand in May 1971 hoping to find seasonal employment as a commercial helicopter pilot. After several anxious weeks, I signed on with a helicopter company for a summer contract in the high Arctic. Frantic preparations then began to ready the machine, mechanic and myself for an absence of several months flying in support of oil exploration on the Queen Elizabeth Islands, lying to the north of the Canadian mainland and well north of Alaska.

The Journey North

We set off from Calgary on 16th June and routed with night stops at Edmonton, High Level and Norman Wells before reaching Inuvik on the McKenzie Delta. Our journey of 4 days had taken us well to the north of the tree line and the Arctic Circle and over the west of Barren Grounds, a vast sub-arctic area of tundra perma-frost. We stopped for a couple of days in Inuvik, giving us time to fit floats to our helicopter ready for the sea crossings between the various islands, which lay ahead. Inuvik was a rather desolate place, choked with thick hordes of aggressive mosquitoes, which pressed right up to the coating of strong repellent with which we sprayed ourselves liberally. Our helicopter was a Bell 47, similar to the Army Sioux and comprised a 3-seat plastic bubble cabin with external litters fitted to the cross-tubes of the skid undercarriage. Our toolbox, Arctic sleeping bags and clothing were strapped to these litters and the resulting drag, together with that caused by the flotation bags, reduced our cruising speed to barely 50mph. On 23rd June, we set off for our next refuelling point at Cape Parry on the mainland coast, which was a DEW Line radar station and from where we would strike off across the frozen sea to Melville Island. Strong headwinds delayed our departure from Cape Parry for two days, during which time we repaid the hospitality of the Station by taking them fishing through the cracks on a partly frozen lake. Moving about on the melting ice was like walking on a large waterbed and the dozens of trout and Arctic char, which we caught, were a welcome change for the Station personnel from their usual canned and frozen food diet. The winds finally abated and we set off island-hopping from fuel cache to fuel cache, arriving at the main base for oil and gas exploration at Rae Point on Melville Island, 900 miles from the North Pole. Rae Point was a large portacabin base camp, with a packed sand runway capable of operating the large turbo-prop aircraft used for ferrying crews and equipment from Calgary and Edmonton. Our journey had taken us 51 hours flying over 10 days and we had arrived in the land of 24-hour summer sunshine and a temperature not far above freezing. It is worth remembering that a magnetic compass ceases to be accurate when approaching the magnetic poles and after leaving the mainland, I navigated principally by the sun.

The High Arctic

On 1st July, we flew north to Eureka on Ellesmere Island, almost 10 hours flying away. Eureka was a weather station situated on the 80th parallel, exactly 600 nautical miles from the geographic North Pole. We had passed the area of the magnetic north pole, which drifts about 25 miles a year, on the way. The snow and ice, which blanket the polar region in winter, were clearing rapidly under the influence of the 24-hour sunshine and rising temperatures, which were to peak at about 9 deg C in July. Leads of clear water were opening along the shoreline and the thinning sea-ice was pock-marked with seal blow-holes. Although the region is classed as a polar desert, alpine flowers bloom in profusion for the brief summer. Polar bears were a frequent sight, sometimes at very close quarters. Our camps were formed from insulated portacabins and on one occasion, when a door was opened to investigate some scuffling noised outside, a young polar bear was standing outside eating the tub of ice-cream, which had been left to soften. I refuelled my helicopter from pre-positioned fuel drums and it was common to find fresh polar bear tracks around the drums, making refuelling an exciting affair. One amazing sight, etched on my memory, was that of having my attention caught by a scarlet stain on the otherwise sparkling white and blue seascape, as I flew by. On closer inspection, I found a polar bear dragging and devouring the remains of a seal, which it had ambushed at a blow-hole and was staining the ice with its blood. The animals of the Arctic live on the edge of survival and this makes them quite bold, at times. I well remember hand-feeding Arctic foxes and throwing food to wolves, which would come to within a few yards. Perhaps the most surprising animal to be seen was the musk-ox, herds of which were a common sight. When



the helicopter approached, they would “circle the wagons”, placing the calves inside a protective ring of adults with the lead bull positioning himself between the “threat” and the remainder of the herd. One can image them doing this in the face of a polar bear or wolf attack. The presence of these grazing animals this far north is evidence of the profusion of summer flora. At the bottom of the land animal food chain were lemmings, hunted by the fox. Arctic hares, still white in mid-summer at these latitudes, were an amusing sight as they stood up and ran on their hind legs, a skill perhaps evolved to cope with the snow-covered ground. My work routine consisted of re-supplying and repositioning geology parties and their tented camps every few days. These two groups were spending the summer on surface geology, following up aerial photography from the previous summer in the hope of identifying potential drilling sites. When it became too cold for them to continue working, later in August, I carried under-slung loads of drill-pipe and drums of fuel for the Caterpillar bulldozer and grader crews, who were, by then, repositioning plant for the next winter drilling season. Although the weather was cloudless and sunny for much of time, I note from my log book that I was grounded by snow and winds once in early July. As the temperatures dropped back below freezing in September and sea fog began to form, my rotor blades became iced-up in freezing fogs on several occasions, forcing me to land and remove the ice. (I was to learn, when serving as a Boscombe Down test pilot on icing trials later in the 1970s, that this had been a much riskier experience than I had realised at the time). All good times come to an end and in late September, as freezing fog began to make flying more and more difficult, I returned to Calgary by Lockheed Electra and from there continued my journey to England. I have recently learned that this Electra was later sadly lost with all on board in a crash on the sea-ice



at Rae Point.

NOBLE FIELD

(George McKie)

Like an eagle at the dawning,
Amidst the sunshine's warming glow,
From the mists of early morning,
The Auster swept below,
It combed across the jungle tree-tops,
Like a green broccoli field,
Where amongst its gloomy confines
Chin Peng's bandits were concealed.

From Temerloh a signal, feint,
Is battling through the static,
Whilst below a lonely conscript
Puts the Bren on automatic,
And from the sky, like snowflakes falling,
Gently drifting in the breeze,
Leaflets, offering pardons,
Make their way down through the trees.

In an ambush near Bentong,
The soldiers lie and shiver,
Plagued by mosquitos,
By the mighty Pahang River,
Tired, and wet, and soggy,
Their eyes all bloodshot red,
Longing for a shower,
And the comfort of their bed.

For the patrol it had been fruitless,
And their patience sorely tested,
They'd tabbed across the Bukits,
And rarely had been rested,
With leeches for passengers,
As they waded jungle streams,
And snakes for bed companions,
During nights of restless dreams.

Then through a tiny jungle clearing,
Two small figures did appear,
They were tired, and emaciated,
And a paper they did bear,
It promised them a pardon,
And it offered them release,
From the savage, unforgiving, jungle,
To a life once more of peace.

The soldiers were elated,
As the CTs were apprehended,
Then they gave their captives food and drink,
And their ailments were attended,
For the battle now was for 'hearts and minds',
Whilst the past would be forgiven,
And after debrief in Temerloh,
To Kuala Lumpur they'd be driven.

The Auster soared up through the clouds,
On completion of its mission,
And winged its way back to K.L.,
Having thwarted Chin Peng's ambition,
And at the Coliseum,
We'd have steaks in celebration,
And toast 656 with Tiger Beer,
On a night of jubilation.



A NEAR MISS – AUSTER AOP9 XK375

Bernard Redshaw, Capt RNZ Signals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During this time, I made a number of discreet observation flights (as a passenger of 656 Squadron) over 28 Brigade positions. The Auster 9 that we flew in most frequently (XK375) was suffering a number of minor problems, which should possibly have warned me of what was to come.

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

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

The 1 NZ Regt patrol cleared an LZ from which an RAF helicopter was to bring out the body. However, at this particular moment a suspected design fault had grounded all the Sycamores, and the one remaining Whirlwind in the area was declared unserviceable. It was therefore decided to parachute in a camera and fingerprinting equipment - a mission for the 656 Squadron detachment. The same Auster 9 was tasked, with **Captain Nigel Budd**, 10th Hussars as pilot, and myself flying as dispatcher.

We were to drop the equipment into the same DZ that had been prepared for the helicopter. This, we noted, was sited on a ridge. We swooped in and, on **Nigel's** signal, I dispatched our load. As we circled, the parachute developed and started to descend perfectly into the clearing. Then, to our dismay, an up-draft from side of the ridge lifted the parachute upwards and sideways,

depositing it into the top of a tall tree on the edge of the DZ.



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

[The prepared DZ](#)

So back we came, and into the clearing we dived. As I threw the bundle out,

Nigel pulled the Auster tightly up and out. Whilst I was looking downwards and backwards, focussing on the streamer, I felt a bump and heard a loud thumping, ripping noise on **Nigel's** side of the aircraft. I then saw that we were now flying very low, almost skimming the jungle canopy. "Oh Christ!" came **Nigel's** voice over the intercom, "I've never done that before." When I looked out to his side, I saw that we had lost a piece of our port wing, loose canvas was flapping and that we were carrying a piece of branch about 4 metres long. We had clipped the same tree that had claimed the parachute!

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

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



We eventually made a perfect landing on Kroh strip, with a large audience of worried-looking military personnel looking on. When the aircraft was duly inspected, it was discovered that we had lost the end cap of our port wing (including the pitot head) and that the fuselage was twisted out of alignment. As a result, the airframe was written off – or so I was told.

[The damaged XK375](#)

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

Malaya 1958 – 1961 Tour, GET TOGETHERS.

By Derek Walker.

Recently perusing the latest CHINTHE, I read an article which took me back in time, to my days with the squadron in Malaya, in the late fifties. That article was the coming together of the pay sergeant of that time at SHQ, in KL, and a naval CPO, who was employed in the Squadron Workshop, assisting with Auster rebuilds that were being undertaken at the time, and how they had found friendship together late in life. Of course it was CPO Stan Read and Sgt Bob Stanton, It's doubtful that they will remember me personally, but I remember them distinctly, and many of those in the photograph they sent to the editor!

Anyway this raised an idea in my head about producing an article for the magazine, covering our reunions. We hold a reunion, annually for all of the fellow 'Malayan tourists' from that time, who were also Apprentices together at Beachly AAS. Although the group has somewhat reduced in number since its inception, it was originally suggested by Nev Frost, at one of the squadron main reunions in Yorkshire, having to be held midway between the annual squadron reunions.

Original attendees were Colin McLeod and wife Vi, Malcolm Dempster and Marlene, Nev Frost and Carol, Terry Burns and Carole, Dave Hingley and Vee, Peter Beard and Audry, Jack Dandy and Von, Ali Davison and Rose, Doug Miller and Marion, and Derek 'Chunky' Walker and Frances. Regretfully since initiation, Colin, Peter and Malcolm have all passed on, and Ali's wife, Rose has an illness which precludes his attendance. But we still drink to their health.in memory.

The format is, that one of the members already nominated through annual selection, locates and organises, a respectful hostelry, with accommodation and meals, for Friday and Saturday evenings, the latter, if possible, to be in a dedicated dining area with service. Given the location, tours or visits are arranged as an add-on, if possible.

Over the past years, we have managed to visit, and hold our reunions in, Salisbury, Stockbridge, Liphook, Petersfield, Ripon, Leeds twice, Stratford-on-Avon twice, Wells, Bath twice, Warwick, Leamington Spa, Southampton, Portsmouth and Southsea, Limpley Stoke and Devizes, and have another year to go to achieve two decades.

Every outing is filled with anticipation and the wives enjoy listening to our recollections of our days with the squadron in Malaya, which one would have thought that by now would be very tedious. But one, if not most of us, seems to dig down and come up with a new account or twist on a previous tale.

Our memories surprise us sometimes, in as much as the depth to which we all, or most of us, can remember events. In sports, the football, hockey and rugby teams we played for are prominent

in our minds. And various matches stand out for us, whether they were in searing heat or pouring rain, with the playing field being a lake at the time (Sungi Besi or Noblefield come to mind!). We always seemed to do well in the football and hockey, but not the rugby, though quaffing a Tiger tops on the Selangor Club, verandah after a match always did it for me.

There was a melee at the local dance hall one night in town with quite a few personnel being involved, whatever that was all about. Also the workshop/squadron Christmas dinners and cinema shows we attended downtown. Then there was 'Mitzi Gaynor' turning up in the accommodation ablutions in KL, one Sunday morning, after 'South Pacific' had been showing in town! Later carousing in the NAAFI lounge, we were charged twenty cents a kiss from her by some enterprising young lad! There were detachments to Sungi Tinggi, Temerloh, Kuantan, Kota Baru, Alor Star, Grik, and Sumpitan to name but a few. The experiences of night sentry duty in the ulu, and all night flare dropping too were forever implanted into my brain!

Talk of the workshops usually covers the Bay responsibilities and operatives that we worked with, and tales we recall about them. The teams formed for the Auster Strip-down programme and all the work that involved, with RAF and RN personnel posted in to assist us. Visits to HAEC, in Hong Kong; assistance to the Flights, 2, 7, 11, 14 and 16 from time to time with trades men. Searches for lost aircraft and their recovery, especially the one at Yala in Thailand, a most memorable venture!

And then our individual memories whilst serving out on the Flights, at Seremban, Singapore, Ipoh and Taiping, quite a cross section stems from that quarter. The anniversary of Merdeka; the achievement of 150,000 Sqn flying Hours Parade at Noblefield; Auster Carrier landings, and eventually 'airportability' for exercise 'Trinity Angel', after standby for Laos, with the Commonwealth Brigade.

Of course during these periods the wives have a tendency to revert to 'Retail Therapy', and explore the towns and cities' extensive shopping centres; catching up on all the year has presented for them and their families with whom we all now have extensive, intimate knowledge.

Rarely has there been a dull moment or a specific upset during our meetings over all these years and it does wonders for our individual feelings and constitutions to partake in them. Especially when they tie in with big sporting events like the Rugby World Cup or such!

I hope this article lights kindred spirits across the membership, to create similar groups and relate events from them for the membership.

Musings of National Service Time

1952 and the end of my Student time with Nuffield and just having my first wage in the Development Dept. the post came and I was to be a member of the National Service Group...a small donation was enclosed and the orders listed.

Army Training, young full-time spitting in your face, Officer Selection Board, (fail), trade training, embarkation.

Empire Windrush, Med. Suez Canal, Indian Sea, going to Korea.

A buzz and we docked in Singapore. Two days and into Malaya.

Spent a few days at a Malayan army base, inspecting vehicles, and then I was put on a night train with full kit, rifle and ammo. In the early hours a lorry came and I arrived at Kuala Lumpur. A day with the AOP and then flown to Benta. A basic air strip and a few tents, radio shack and a few other buildings.

Settling in, and seeing others who had moved there from another base, as those who had left were only there for nine months, as it was basic conditions.

We were a mixed bunch, Army and R.A.F.. I looked around and saw the jungle and sky and immediately thought of my Dad.

He was a Dunkirk survivor, and later a CSM in India and the Burma campaign down to Rangoon.

I could now see from where I stood, this was more simple. I was taken by the weather conditions, clouds, jungle noise and wild life.

Jungle boots, rifle and ammo were part of everyday life, as the bandits were active in the area. This was active service time. There were times when we were told they were moving on the other side of the river, and one time a couple were just the other side of the strip. One of our Land Rovers was shot at when going into the local town.

Camp life was helped by having R.A.F. cooks who would trade our food items for the local produce, hence our curry was out of this world!!!

One time we were interested to have a visit from a prototype plane, "Pioneer" I think it was called, a short field landing type. Also we were visited by the SAS bringing in body bags to be flown out. I always hoped they were not one of their own.

As you would expect out there, illness could be nasty. Sure enough half the camp came down with a bug. By the time they returned to duty some had lost half their weight. We had to fit in when they were away, guard duty every two days and commander every three.

I did come down with a fever and lost three days out cold. The doctor came and said leave him alone!! This resulted, after a week in bed, with a number of under arm blind boils leaking a grey sticky mess. Later a very large boil formed on one arm, nasty.

I was able to have a number of flights, as observer, and be paid looking for camps and clearings.

Sometimes the pilot wanted to visit army pals and show off. Good job there were paper bags on tap!!! One time in the early mornwe were awoken by three 25 pounders, firing away over our heads into the jungle. What a wake up call.

You could be able to go on a Malaya Army patrol. I did, and spent a very long day to find a little bandit camp. It was very hard to find and I have a pipe bowl with contents I found there. We were lost on the way back and in the end came out of the jungle very late at night.

I had a camera and took many photo's of my time there, they fill three folders. A few, with pamphlets etc., are now in Middle Wallop archives.

Came back home on the Empire Clyde, which broke down in Malta making my demob a two week late situation.

It took me until I was over 40 to catch up, *financially*, to those who did not go in.

That was my National Service

L Phillips



Benta today

R.A.F. and Army work together in Malaya jungle

A lonely airstrip at Benta, in a remote region of Pahang Province in Malaya, provides an excellent example of Army-Royal Air Force co-operation in the struggle against the Communist-inspired terrorists.

Austers of No. 1914 Air Observation Post Flight are flown here by Royal Artillery officers or Glider Pilot Regiment sergeants, while R.A.F. personnel, service and maintain them.

Royal Artillery men also operate the Flight's signal section, which keeps contact with the Austers in flight, while the motor transport yard, flight orderly room and cookhouse are jointly run by Army and Air Force mechanics, clerks and cooks.

No. 1914 A.O.P. Flight is detached to Benta from No. 656 (Air Observation Post-Light Liaison) Squadron, R.A.F., whose Flights are strategically based elsewhere in the Federation and in Singapore.

No. 1914 Flight's airstrip, a narrow grassy, often muddy, runway set amid jungle-strewn hills, is flanked by a main road and tall rubber trees, while at one end cluster the native-style "basha" huts in which the soldiers and airmen live and work.

The Austers which use it are playing a valuable part in the air operations against the terrorists. Daily they leave on varied missions.

One may be flying an officer to another remote outpost and another may be searching for terrorists or their camps while others may be assigned to supply or leaflet dropping, in which event the Flight's own "supply-dropper", the "Selrick" Auster, named after Captain J. Sellers, D.F.C., R.A., a pilot and Corporal P.R. Rickards, B.E.M., an R.A.F. engine fitter (both now back in Britain) is called upon.

Supplies which it parachutes to ground security forces will include rations, wireless sets, batteries, mail, cigarettes and other essentials.

Once, paper money and coin, weighing 80lb., were dropped to a jungle fort. Leaflet dropping long ago became routine to the Flight which in the past year has showered some 2,000,000 leaflets over Northern Malayan terrorist areas.

Requests for air co-operation reach the flight in a steady flow from outposts in the North-Eastern States of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan. To meet them the Auster pilots must fly over some of the wildest mountain regions in the Peninsula where diversion facilities are non-existent.

At certain seasons these hazards are added to by atmospheric turbulence, low cloud and heavy rainstorms.

On one occasion a Police Field Force patrol working with a Battalion of the Malay Regiment, was "lost" for two days when its radio failed. Eventually an Auster located the patrol, 2,000 yards from a patrol of the Malay Regiment. Messages dropped to both parties told each of the other's whereabouts and prevented the patrols from later mistaking one another for the enemy.

No. 1914 Flight , as part of No. 656 Squadron, is one of the few units of any Service which were in Malaya in July, 1948, when the emergency began. Most of the many units it has worked with have now gone but it still “soldiers on”. It works amid tangible memories of its former associations. In the Flight Commander’s office are appreciative gifts for its “co-operation, help and friendship”.

They include a framed regimental crest presented by Seaforth Highlanders Officers in 1950. and a handsome Kukri presented by the 1/10th Gurkha Rifles in 1951.

In the Officers Mess are three tankards presented by three General Officers Commanding South Malaya, each in recognition of 100 hours flown by the Austers.

Service with the Flight is popular, mainly perhaps, because every man has a chance to fly if he wishes, and it is surprising how many flying hours have been “logged” by individuals.

Southend Times
5th of May 1954



New Members

Since our last Chinthe Journal we have the following new members.

Charlie Hanscombe, REME, who served with the Squadron at Dishforth between 2003 and 2208

Deborah Higgs, whose father, Owen Harris, GPR, served with the Squadron in Malaya in the 1950s.

Paul Willson, AAC, who served with the Squadron in between 1980 and 1983 in Farnborough, Netheravon.

Villiams Matanibukalevu AAC, who served with the Squadron at Wattisham between 2007 and 2009.

Terry Twohey, whose father served with the Squadron in Burma and whose mother remained as a member after his death in 2015.

Jen Parker, who works at the Army Flying Museum and is very supportive to the Association. The Committee decided to offer her an Honorary Membership.

Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen to our unique Association.

In Memoriam

Since the Autumn version of the Chinthe Journal, we were saddened to learn of the passing of the following friends and colleagues:

2015

Sylvia Twohey, the widow of Gordon James Twohey, who served with the Squadron in Burma during WW2, and was a long-time member of the Association. After he died in February 2005, Sylvia continued as a member and she attended, with her son, Roger, the 60th VJ meeting, which was held at Middle Wallop later that year hosted by Andrew Simpkins.

2020

Peter Andrews, who was one of our last surviving Burma veterans. Peter was one of the original RAF ground staff, serving with the Squadron from 1943 – 1946 in Burma, Malaya and Java. He was a quite wonderful man and he was a very keen and popular member of the Association. He attended all our events until he became too frail to do so and he also went on one of our 'Airfield Tours' to Malaysia and Borneo.

REST IN PEACE. YOUR DUTY IS DONE.

656 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REUNION RETURNS FORM 2020

Name of main contact for your party:

Address:

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

1. Association AGM/Reunion (including Dinner) – Saturday 3rd October 2020 (14:00 – 2300). Army Flying Museum

I will be attending the AGM Reunion including dinner at a cost of £35 for member and £40 per guest. Please note that due to space limitations only members will be able to attend the AGM. Guests will be free, however, to visit the Museum during the AGM.

Names of additional guests:

I/we have the following dietary requirements _____

2. AGM and Reunion Only – Saturday 3rd October 2020 (12:30 – 17:00)
Museum of Army Flying

I wish to attend the AGM and Reunion but will not be attending the dinner. This is free of charge for member but at a cost of £10 per guest. Please note that due to

space limitations only members will be able to attend the AGM. Guests will be free, however, to visit the Museum during the AGM

Names of additional guests:

3. Coach between hotel & museum – Saturday 3rd October 2020 (1830-2300),
Premier Inn Andover

I wish to book _____ seat(s) on the coach: Names of additional passengers:

The coach leaves the Premier Inn at 18:30 and leaves the Museum for the return journey at 23:00.

We recommend that members book accommodation, if required, at the

Premier Inn
West Portway Industrial Estate
Joule Road
SP10 3UX

Unfortunately, we cannot get special rates from Premier Inn but obviously the sooner you book the better rate you will get from them.

The coach to and from the dinner will go from the Premier Inn

4. Payment

Attending the AGM and Reunion including dinner

£35 per member _____ Cost _____

£40 per guest _____ Cost _____

Total due: _____

Attending the AGM and Reunion only _____ Cost _____

£10 per guest (members free) Total due: _____

I wish to pay by cheque (YES/NO) _____

Make your cheque payable to "656 Squadron Association" and post it with this completed form to:

Mr George McKie		Terry M Betchley
10 The Blossoms		7 Barn Meadow
Markfield Retirement Village	Or	Combs
Markfield		Stowmarket
LE63 9SB		Suffolk
		IP14 2QG

I wish to pay by online transfer (YES/NO) _____

Print & complete this form, then either post it to George at the address above, or scan & email it to him at:

Georgemckie5646@gmail.com Or **t.betchley@sky.com**

We will acknowledge receipt of online payments by email; make your payment to:

NatWest Account Name: 656 Squadron Association
Sort Code: 60-12-34
Account Number: 51137135
Reference: Your surname

Remove this page, Complete the form and return ASAP

Application to attend the

Annual Parade at the Cenotaph

(There could be a restriction on numbers)

Please return by 1st September 2020

To

**Terry Betchley
7 Barn Meadow
Combs
STOWMARKET
Suffolk
IP14 2QG**

REMEMBRANCE PARADE CONTINGENT RETURN
SUNDAY 8th NOVEMBER 2020

Full Name _____

Address _____

Post Code _____ Phone Number _____

I wish to join the 656 Squadron Contingent at the Cenotaph Ceremony on
Remembrance Sunday

(Form up on Horse Guards Parade by 1000 Hrs
Sunday 8th November 2020)

The following information will be required:

Military Service Number _____

Title/Rank _____

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Please ensure full details are correct

Do you wish to join the party for lunch in a local restaurant **YES/NO**

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To: The Manager Bank
Full address of Bank
.....
.....
.....

Please pay **National Westminster Bank plc**
Branch **Langport**
Sort Code **60-12-34**
Account number **51137135**
Account name **656 Squadron Association**
The sum of **£10.00 (TEN POUNDS STERLING)**
Frequency **Annually, on the 2nd of January**
First payment **2021**
Reference **Your name and membership number**

Please note that this Standing Order Mandate supersedes any previous standing order mandates in favour of 656 Squadron Association, which should be cancelled.

As my annual subscription to the said Association, until further orders from me, and debit my account:

Sort code
Account number
Account name

Signature
Date

Please fill in your Bank's address, and your bank account details, on the dotted lines. Make sure you sign and date the form, and then return it to the Treasurer, so that we may make a note of it in our files. We will then forward it to your bank for you.

Thank you.

**George McKie,
Treasurer, 656 Squadron Association,
10, The Blossoms,
Markfield Retirement Village
Markfield, LE67 9SB**

Your Committee

It was decided earlier in the year and ratified at the AGM that the Association would create the post of Chair in addition to the President to take on the day-to-day management of the Association, with the support of the committee. At the AGM the committee was elected as follows:

Your committee is therefore:

President - Pier Lewis

Chairperson - Bob Thorpe *email:* bobthorpe341@gmail.com

Mob: 07935796164

Secretary - Terry Betchley *email:* t.betchley@sky.com

Treasurer - George McKie

Membership secretary - Bob Thorpe

Assistant Treasurer and Auditor - Derek Walker

Webmaster - Mike Kane

Chinthe Editor - Dave Williams *email:* padawan1965@yahoo.com

Mob: 07942880886

The committee have agreed to remain in post until 2020 but as always we need more members to get involved. In particular Dave Williams has only agreed to be the Chinthe journal editor on a temporary basis. There must be someone who would like to take on the role.

Send Bob your email address so he can update you with news and information on a regular basis plus send you the Chinthe Newsletter, which is complimentary and in addition to the Chinthe Journal which will still be sent to you twice a year.