

No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

AD LIB

("The Chota Coggage" for survivors)

No.6

Reunion Edition

Autumn 1998

S.S.O.s and D.R.O.a

REUNION ORGANISRR

E.H. (Ted) Daines, 45 Randolph Road, NORWICH, Norfolk, NR1 2RU

(01-603-660514)

COMPILER OF 'AD LIB'

F.W. (Bill) Cooper, 37 Oakdene, Lansdown Road, CHELTENHAM, Glos., OL51 6PX

(01-242-255119)

1998 REUNION

Falcon Hotel. Stratford-upon-Avon over the weekend of 4th, 5th 8t 6th September.

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

After the sad passing of John Munday, and a period when we were kept going by his niece and her husband, Susan and John Eastley, a volunteer came forward - Ted Daines.

Ted got off to a cracking start and, by dint of much, almost daily, effort with telephonic and written communication, has gained us much publicity which, in turn, has produced new members.

After taking soundings, Ted is going to announce at this year's reunion that the Registration Fee, per member attending is £7, being an amount to reimburse the balance of his personal outlay to eliminate the deficit that arose from having no funding for the year 1996-98 and an amount to finance the promotion and holding of a reunion in 1999.

Ted will also announce that the introduction of AD LIB has been much appreciated but, whilst compilation to the printing stage is done by one of our members on a voluntary basis, it does cost money to print and circulate. Being a victim of its own success, AD LB has grown in both size and cost and it is now thought appropriate that its production and circulation costs should be covered by a subscription. £3 will cover the anticipated costs of 3 x 4 page and 1 x 6-page copies of AD LIB in 1998-99. Donations towards printing and distribution costs of AD LIB, much appreciated in the past, will still be welcome.

To sum up, Ted will announce a Registration fee of £7 per member attending the reunion in 1998 to cover the balance of the 1996-97 deficit and the anticipated promotion and running cost of a 1999 reunion. He will also announce a subscription of £3 to cover the supply of AD LIB for one year to any member so subscribing, regardless of reunion attendance or not.

From now on, any ex-Squadron member who attends a reunion will be placed on the "Active" list for two years. Any that we know of who have not attended the two most recent reunions, will be placed on the "Inactive list and receive no complimentary benefits. AD LIB, at the stated subscription price, will be available to any member, active or inactive. (Bill Cooper, compiler of 'AD LIB')

THE SQUADRON CREST

Copies of the squadrons crest, in full colour, with or without dedication (£3 inc. p & p), will again be available when the member who arranges such things is settled at his new base.

NEWS REPORT

BOB FREEMAN

"S/Ldr Joy, and a number of his crew, lost their lives when returning from a mission over Singapore on 30th April 1945. (AD LIB No.2, Autumn 1997) It is pleasing to be able to report that F/O Bob Freeman, WAG, and one of the survivors of that crew, still lives in Ontario. Many readers will remember this happening and will want to wish Bob well after all these years."
(Jack Burgess)

SOUTH EAST ASIA AIR COMMAND ASSOCIATION

Contact has been made with the SOUTH EAST ASIA AIR COMMAND ASSOCIATION branch in Sydney. This consists of about 170 air crew who served in some 70 R.A.F. squadrons (including 159 and 160) over 4 1/2 years (1941-1945). Members have a BBQ/Meeting twice a year in one another's homes and they march as part of the R.A.A.F. contingent on ANZAC Day. Our letter was to be brought to their notice at their next meeting. There were no Australian groundcrew in SEAC as there were no Australian squadrons, as such, in that theatre. There is another branch of SEACA in Melbourne.

(Contact; David Nesbitt, c/o 17 Jugiong Street, WEST PYMBLE, N.S.W., 2073, Australia)

A LIBERATOR RESTORED

Our Australian cousins are 'restoring' a Liberator. In order to do this, they are collecting body, wing, engine and other components from the many places in Australia where Libs were either based or had crashed. They are working to the highest standards as they recognise they are creating a memorial that must by its nature last, say, 150 years. The progress reported in their February, 1998, news-sheet is most impressive. The value of airframe and parts in their 1997 Balance Sheet already stands at 1,210,00 Australian dollars! There will be no attempt to restore the aircraft to flying condition as the risk of loss is too great.

R J (Bob) Thompson, Liberator Historian from Queensland, likens his Toyota Coaster mobile home (called "The Liberator") to the aircraft we all know so well. It has left and right hand seats up front; there is a day/night lounge where the WOP and Flight Engineer would be; a side entry door enters into the "bomb bay", which is equipped with chemical toilet and shower, and at the rear are port and starboard hatches, complete with wind deflectors, where the 0.5mm Brownings would be. There is a rear window with a view equivalent to the tail turret. The vehicle is fitted with a satellite navigation system and cellular telephone facilities, together with two 120 litre l.p.g bottles and a 75 litre petrol tank.

Bob will be using this vehicle to visit remote areas in the bush where wartime Liberator strips were located.

(info courtesy of Bob Thomson)

A FLYING MODEL LIBERATOR - ONE SIXTH FULL-SIZE

John Deacon, of Aylsham, Norfolk, is in the process of building a 1/6th Scale Flying Model of a B-24. It has a wingspan of 18ft 4ins; a length of 11 ft 3 ins; a weight of 120 lbs and four 45cc petrol engines. It is controlled by two radio transmitters; three 3 receivers; and 24 servos powered by eight NICAD batteries.

(Information from the Internet, via Jack Burgess)

Details of this model, and the loss of its prototype, appeared in the EASTERN DAILY PRESS on, or about, the 16th March last year. It was expected to fly in May of that year. We will endeavour to keep you posted on developments.

THE WAR IN THE FAR EAST

Early in 1999, the Imperial War Museum is set to open a display on the above topic in the Land Warfare Hall of the Museum at Duxford Our colleague Eddie Cooper, has been involved. (local Cambridgeshire newspaper, *EVENING NEWS*, 8th June 1998)

RIP

A. Hindshaw, DFC, (Pilot, and also of 10, 76, 90 & 127 Squadrons) has passed away. (Contact, September 1998)

We have just heard that Doug Turner, RCAF, captain of BZ 828 "P" when it was, successfully ditched on the night of March 20/21, 1945, passed away in September, 1990, at the age of 74

Frank Shepherd, N.C.O. Engine Fitter, who contributed in no small way towards the safe return of so many of our aircrew, passed away in June.

WHAT OUR READERS SAY...

"I feel the aircrew members of our squadron missed out badly by not being with us ground crew bods for the formation of the squadron at Thurleigh in January 1942. I suggest said ground crew bods use AD LIB to provide said aircrew members with the gen of what they actually missed. So, come on lads, dig into your memories and put pen to paper and send in some of your experiences . Perhaps we could even move on to the s.s. CUBA and Durban and so on, right through to the first three Liberators joining us, the advanced party, at Ratmalana in Ceylon. The first three Liberators being V, H and S. What about it, Chaps?"
(Frank Green, Godalming, Surrey)

"The structure at Minaeriya (AD LIB 4) was possibly for testing the guns of the aircraft. since I cannot recall any permanent hangars. Servicing was carried out on the turning areas."
(Geoff Wyle)

"My previous visit Singapore was the first Lib to land there after Hiroshima. The runway had to be lengthened so that we could take off. Those Jap soldiers worked. hard with hammers and pickaxes Does anyone remember the PALM LEAF - our effort at publishing a newspaper. I still have many of the copies." *(Lawrence Davies, writing after a recent World Cruise. We hope to publish extracts from the PALM LEAF in due course.)*

"Thank you for issue No.5 of AD LIB. Greatly appreciated. I thought the enclosed press publications might be of interest." *(Far East Exhibition, see above, and account of Eddies recent visit to Japan with a delegation from the British Legion and Burma Star Association to meet opposite numbers. Unfortunately the description of this reconciliation visit is too long for our available space)*

"This photo of "A" (EV 837) was taken some time in 1944 with the aircraft flying in the area between Sigirya and Minneriya Shortly after the picture was taken this aircraft, and. "J" of the same model were traded for our stalwart Mk VsFor the record, I think that my crew were the longest serving members of the squadron, having joined on 15th December 1943 and remained until 29th June 1945.
(Laurie Jones, Australia)

I would like the members of 160 Squadron, RAY., to know, as a matter of interest, that being the widow of L.A.C. Air Frame Fitter Maurice Field, who was with 160 Squadron from Thurleigh ,1942, until November 1945, Ceylon, that I represent the Squadron at all my local Burma Star Association activities, i.e Remembrance Sunday, V.J. Day Anniversary, and any other memorial services. I am a member of the local association and am proud to wear Maurice's medals and my RAY wing brooch which was given to me as an honorary member of 160 Squadron Association.
(Josephine Field)

THE WRITTEN WORD

The Liberators of 159 and 160 Squadrons were not the first aircraft of the type in the Middle East. No.108 Squadron, at Fayid, began changing its Wellingtons for Liberators, still in U.S. Air Force markings, in November, 1941. These aircraft had flown from the United States to Egypt, via Venezuela, Brazil and the Gold Coast of Africa. The American crews stayed on for a month to train the RAY. The first operational flight was against Tripoli on 10/11 th January 1942. 108 Squadron used Liberators until 26th November, 1942, when the crews were posted to other units. The remnants of the Squadron formed the Special Operations (Liberator) Flight until 25th December of the same year, when the flight was disbanded. *(Royal Air Force Unit Histories and FLYPAST, May 1998.)*

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

Thoughts of 160

Thinking back, I am astonished at our professionalism. It was two weeks after my 24th birthday that I became C.O., and most of the squadron were younger. We did enjoy guidance from a few real professionals, including several pre-war ex-Halton brats for ground crews, and I was lucky to have a W.W.I retread as adjutant to restrain my wilder enthusiasms. Nonetheless, when you consider that most ground crew were operating in technical areas quite different from their backgrounds, and for which they had minimal training, the high standard of maintenance of our aircraft was difficult to believe. We had the odd equipment failure but I cannot recall any failure attributable to poor maintenance, This reflects the conscientious dedication and competence of our ground crews, for which all aircrew are still thankful.

I was always conscious, as were all aircrew, of our dependence on the competence of ground crew, especially the NCOs. Soon after arrival as a flight commander at Sigirya I was, therefor, pleased to attend a function in the Sergeants' Mess, at the end of which they entertained a bullock. How they got it into the Mess, or why, I cannot recall,

but I well remember we were all hanging on to the supporting structure some 10 feet above the furniture! I should be grateful if anyone can advise on how, or why, the bull came in the first place, or how he was removed at the end.

While most of the locals accepted us warmly, there was a criminal element in Ceylon, as everywhere, which wished to exploit us. At Minneriya, this took the form of thieves who robbed billets at night, naked and covered in oil, so that even if the occupant woke up it was impossible to restrain the thief. An element of wild colonials, they may have been called Australians, Canadians or New Zealanders, even some Irish, Welsh and Scots, pressed for more positive action about this. I can't understand now why, but I agreed a plan where many with revolvers and rifles hid in the grass before dusk to combat this intrusion. About 0200 hours, an intrusion began and the Battle of the Somme was re-enacted, with bullets flying everywhere. Bearing in mind we were living in Kagang huts (built out of wood and palm leaves), it is astonishing that no-one was wounded or killed. But the thieves never returned!

My strongest recollection, however, is how well we worked together, ground crew, aircrew, and so many nationalities, with no prejudices but with mutual respect and understanding by all. Backgrounds were irrelevant - all that mattered was how each chap did his job, and none failed. We who were there know how terrible war is - but how good it would be if the spirit of then could have re-birth *today*. (*Air Vice Marshal J N Stacey CBE DSO DFC*)

160 in the Middle East

"Posting to Polebrook. Arriving in total darkness, issued with blankets from under a huge pile of snow.

"Formed part of the ground crew for 159 and 160 Squadrons, destined to fly Liberators out to India. Flew from Lyneham (Hurn?) to Gibraltar. On take off from there, standing behind the W/O pilot, I watched spellbound as his shirt soaked up the sweat until '540' (This *would be Liberator Bill AL 540, which later became a CII with BOAC*) finally lifted off at the end of the runway. Later, he informed us that 'we were past the point of no return' and next stop was LG224 at Cairo. I chose this moment to look out into the darkness to see tracer bullets just missing the engines. How was I to know that it was just red hot carbon from the exhaust stubs?

"LG224Flies and more flies!!! Next was Ismailia where the Liberators and I were retained in the Middle East to help in the softening up proceedings prior to El Alamein. Sadly my kit had already been sent on to India months before!

"During my stay in the Middle East, spent time at Lyddaremember that BIG chap, Flt Sgt Rogers, whose party piece was to stand on a table singing 'All of me' whilst gradually stripping off ...when he was starkers, everyone would throw their beer over him ...Ismailia. Fayid, Kasfareetan air test to Cairo in an old Dakota which just had to go u/s so that I could meet up with my Tank Regiment brother. What a night that turned out to be!!! He never forgave me for waltzing off with that mature French girl with whom I later spent my leaves in Alex, Tel Aviv, BatYam, Rehoveth and TiberiusThat's where, after downing half-a-glass of orange left on my bedside locker, I slammed on the light to find it was heaving with huge black ants - those that I hadn't swallowed already!!

My friendship with a Sgt WRAF in Records came to an end when she thought that had been out there too long and had me posted, via Med-Loc, through France to the U.K."

(John ("Jack") Rist, 36th Entry (Engines), Halton, who was one of our very first ground crew, joining 160 at *Thurleigh as an Engine Fitter*)

Thurleigh to Ratmalana - Part One

Waiting in a bitter wind swept railway station in January, 1942, encumbered as we were by having all our kit with us, did nothing to lift our spirits. Mate Ron Ryall and myself were waiting for a wagon to take us to R.A.F. Thurleigh and 160 Squadron. Our spirits sank further when, on arrival, we could see it was, as yet, unfinished. We checked in, presented our documents and were then directed to our billet. Seeing a newly built building, we thought it could be our quarters; it hadn't any doors or windows in it, in fact there was nearly as much snow inside as there was outside. The builders' standpipe outside was to meet our washing requirements - the only snag was it was frozen solid! We made two visits to the stores for bedding, each taking three pallets and ten blankets. That night I put three blankets under, and seven over me, plus my greatcoat. On waking the next morning, looking at Ron, I could see his hair and eyebrows were white with frost. Such was our introduction to 160 Squadron in the snows of 1942.

(Frank Green)

A Tale of Two Football Teams

"The Char wallah who served us at Quetta always looked, and probably was, old. He was one of undoubted wisdom, a very good talker and often held forth under the Basha verandas. He was a good friend to us all, ran a slate for hard-up

airmen, so you see he was very popular. One night, I asked him how many children he had. " Sahib", he said, "I have a football team, three reserves and another on the way." Seeing how frail he looked, I said, "Its about time you packed up." "Nay, Sahib", he said, "all good teams have got a reserve team." Laughing, I turned away. I had not got very far when he called out to me, "Sahib, what is an A team?"
(Ted Daines)

Ratmalana to Sigiriya - The Beginning

After five weeks kicking out heels in Karachi, waiting for modifications to be carried out on the aircraft at Drigh Road, the twelve Mk III Liberators of 160 Squadron eventually arrived at Ratmalana, Ceylon.

Local training flights took place during the following weeks but when the first operational PR flights over Sumatra were planned it was soon apparent that a fully laden Liberator could not take off from the shortened runway at Ratmalana due to the presence of a sacred tree, which could not be removed, just off the end of the run way.

The decision was taken position the aircraft to Sigiriya which had a 6,000ft concrete runway under construction.

For my sins, W/C Butler posted me with a ground crew party to Sigiriya to receive the aircraft on arrival and despatch them in due course on their operation) flights.

We left Ratmalana in a convoy of two Thorneycroft 3-ton lorries containing goose neck flares, refuelling equipment, etc., and towing a Chance light.

On arrival at the jungle airfield I was directed by a young soldier of the Ceylon Defence Force to the Officers' Quarters where I found the C.O., F/Lt Kirby, and the Adjutant, F/Lt Dixon, covered only in a layer of soap, spraying each other from a barrel of water by means of a stirrup pump, this being the only shower arrangement available due to the lack of an installed water system. Sigiriya was in the hands of a Care and Maintenance Unit only.

Our job was to ensure that the aircraft crew were fed and bedded as comfortably as possible on arrival (tinned M & V being the only food available) whilst the aircraft was laboriously refueled from barrels of 100 octane.

The goose neck flare path was laid and a final run down the strip before the night take-off to remove aircraft returned directly to Ratamalana.

This idyllic situation lasted for a few weeks enabling me to explore the ancient sites of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Dambulla and Kandy in between operational sorties, Eventually, the squadron moved, lock, stock and barrel, to Sigiriya in June, 1943, and thus the daily routine of squadron life resumed.

(David S Flett, ex-F/Lt, 160 Squadron)

MY MISSPENT YOUTH

Old Cadjun huts, an old Airstrip
The jungle has now claimed them back
Holding there in a vice like grip
Existence would be hard to track

After the hurly-burly all has gone
What stories all the trees could tell -
You may not be able to find some-one
Who would remember those lads so well

It's said sometimes voices can be heard
Even engines sound during the night
A Liberator like some big white bird
Flies on some low silent flight

Restless spirits of those young men
Left when they flew out for home
Experiences of those days, disturbed them
Their minds still think, wander and roam

No Press Report, no tape or fuse
Just flew the Squadron home to rest

It was the finish for most of us
We left our planes and gave it best.

A greeting in the Daily Press
Would have let us leave with pride
Made us feel wanted, no more no less
It's too late now, we will not hide

Our members will die, photographs fade
Just remembered by our own Families
Forgotten men, no books no heroes made
Go to rest, so say the jungle trees

C. F. Armstrong

++STOP PRESS++STOP PRESS ...STOP PRESS+++STOP PRESS++.STOP PRESS.

Just received from Australia, a book by a 160 pilot who flew P.R. missions from Sigirya, Kankesaturai and Minneriya over a period of eighteen months. Rivetting stuff'. Review in next edition of AD LIB.

Designed and typeset in Cheltenham by ADASTRAPRINT - free. gratis and for nothing!