

## No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

# AD LIB

("The Chota Coggage" for survivors)

**No.8**

**Spring 1999**

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

### REUNION ORGANISER

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### COMPILER OF 'AD LIB'

*I wish to express my appreciation and thanks to all colleagues who sent me cards and expressions of goodwill over the Christmas period. Two operations in six days during December left me in no condition to write to you individually, so please accept this poor substitute.*

*F.W. (Bill) Cooper, 37 Oakdene, Lansdown Road, CHELTENHAM, Glos., GL51 6PX*

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### SQUADRON CRESTS

Squadron Crests are again available from myself; price £4.50, protective tube and portage included. This renewed availability is due to our man in Devon; thanks are due to him for his untiring efforts on our behalf.

Thanks are also due to our men in Bristol, Cardiff; Cheltenham, Gateshead and Guildford; without their valued assistance my job would be much more difficult. (Ted Daines)

### THE 160 SQUADRON EXPERIENCE - 1999

This will be held at the Falcon Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon over the weekend of 3rd, 4th and 5th September 1999.

### NEW FAR EAST EXHIBITION

The new permanent Far East War exhibition, covering all branches of the services operating in the Far East from 1941, will be officially opened by Viscount Lord Slim at 2.30pm on Thursday 25th March 1999. Attendance at the ceremony will be by invitation only.

I am hoping that one of the former C.O.s of 160 Squadron, Air Vice Marshal John Stacey CBE DSO DFC, who helped me to raise the funds for the RAF section through various Squadron Associations, will be present.

The Exhibition, situated in the Land Warfare Hall, will be open for general viewing from 2.30pm and then on all days (including Flying Days) that Duxford Airfield, Combs., is open to the public. (Eddie Cooper)

### A COMPILER'S DREAM

Our paid-up membership is now around 65. If every one of these members submitted a short contribution for AD LIB what a wonderful bank of material there would be to draw upon. For example, now is the time to confess to those wartime misdemeanours which made life in the jungle bearable. How about it, chaps)

### WHAT OUR READERS SAY...

*"After reading AD LIB 6 . I feel I should enter into the spirit of things by contributing some of the things that I recall - trusting that my memory does not fail me.*

"Geoff Wyle (AD LIB 6) is right to say that all normal servicing was done on tire turning areas/bays at Minneriya. Even extra fuel tanks were fitted in the bomb bays, and replacement tanks in the main plane. I think that you will find that all major services were carried out at Colombo.

I joined 160 Squadron at K.K.S. some little while before it moved to Minneriya, and was assigned to the ground crew of the team servicing "Y" for Yoga (Squadron Leader Joy's Liberator). As new boys, a few of us were filled-in with all the up-to-date gen and of our young Wing Commander CO., who seemed to have the ability to boost moral in both air and ground crews and for creating team work second to none. Well, nearly! I remember when the Transport Officer relieved the C.O. of his jeep after hearing that he had been on the runway with more than a full load of bods and attempting 'takeoff'

'Talking of the Transport Officer- was it he, or the adjutant, who could be recognised by the large 'V' on the back of his shorts?

"Returning to ground crew duties, "Y" for Yoga was due for a fuel tank replacement in the wing. Being 5' 2" and about 6 1/2 stone, I was told that I had volunteered to get into the wing to deflate the fuel tank. This I did, after returning to my hut to change my shorts for swimming trunks.

"In April 1945, "Y" for Yoga was due for a major service and was flown to Colombo with the ground crew team.

We were all on board, engines running, when, to our surprise, Wing Commander Stacey arrived to take the controls. The flight was uneventful. The take-off - WOW!!

'It was while we were at Colombo that we received the sad news of the loss of Squadron Leader Joy and some of his crew. With our service on "Y" completed, we were due to return to Minneriya within the next couple of days. Who knows, if they had waited for their own Liberator they may have completed their tour of operations and returned home."

"A squadron song was written at Thurleigh, believed by the M.T. Section. The tune was "It's Foolish but its Fun" and one verse went as follows:

*We paraded at eight thirty, down by the Miners sign,  
And old Joe Cook would come along and start to shoot a line.  
Then to the hangars we would go, with some stupid N.C.O.  
And get detailed to shovel snow.  
It's foolish, but its fun.*

"Can anyone add more verses?"

(Frank Green)

'Towards the end of our war a Lib on ops was blown off course and had to make a landing on enemy occupied land. I'm not sure - but it could have been Penang.. The story goes that the Japs thought the aircraft and crew were an advance party. and crew went along with this thinking. They were taken to a Hotel and wined and dined, etc. Hours later they found themselves walking into a P.O.W. camp with over 200, mostly Australian, nurses. The aircrew could not believe what they saw; it really sickened all of them.

"Before the Lib left Penang, the Flight Engineer asked the Japs for some fuel to get them back. Not trusting them, he had the outer tanks filled up. Its a good job he did He also put some Jap fuel in the auxiliary engine, which would not start on it. The next thing, it wouldn't burn! So the aircraft taxied out to a remote spot and drained the outer tanks.

"Anyway, the aircraft returned to base after this traumatic journey and the crew were sworn to secrecy not to talk about their findings. I believe it was brought to notice years later.

"Can anybody throw any light on this scene?"

(Len Lees)

Jack Burgess has supplied the compiler with a listing of 160 Squadron Liberators which shows for each - Serial No.; Units on which previously used; Mark No. and Disposal (including losses). The list covers 86 different Libs. Source was AIR BRITAIN via the Internet.

CAN YOU TELL US .....

When our ground crew were transferred from squadron control to become part of 7160 Servicing Echelon?

Which, if any, of our aircraft carried 'nose art' as did "C" 'Crusader'? Which were they - and what was it?

## NOW IT CAN B E TOLD...

### Thurleigh to Ratmalana - Part Three

*After a tedious overnight journey from London Road station in Bedford, we arrived at the dockside in Liverpool. Disembarking from the train, we marched through a double file of Military Police towards a freighter type steamship. This was our first glimpse of the ship that was to convey us safely many thousands of miles. Down to the mess decks of this 11,000 ton ship we now knew to be the s.s. CUBA (some said that it was a converted French meat boat, although this was never confirmed, although the majority of the crew were French)*

*We stowed our kit on our allotted mess deck, sixteen to a table, perhaps some twenty tables in our area. Not quite the Ritz, as you can well imagine. The duty roster for mess orderlies was sorted out. They were responsible for the utensils, collecting meals, etc- Having acquainted oneself with all the knowledge that was needed, including your hammock, we were free to explore this converted freighter that was to be our home for the next ten weeks or so. Fresh water was at a premium, obtainable only at certain times. Hot salt water was available at all times if one wanted a wash or shower. For this one used a special sea-water soap. This tended to leave one hot and sticky; not very pleasant. (It was the same on the QUEEN ELIZABETH on the wartime Atlantic run. FWC)*

*Next we found the toilets; they need a paragraph on their own. A long plank approximately eighteen inches wide, with eke necessary apertures. Underneath a trough twelve inches wide and the same in depth, with a constant flow of sea-water being pumped along it in one direction only. About six feet opposite to this, and running parallel, was a duplicate appliance. In calm weather, quite efficient, but later on when we met rougher seas, and the ship pitched and tossed violently, it was a different story. Water being pumped in one direction in the trough, and the natural flow of the same water trying to flow back in the opposite direction, caused quite a few problems for the sitters. As a matter of fact, it created a scene very similar to the Mexican Wave of the present day as bods, one after the other raised themselves off the seat to avoid getting a wet bottom. Also, Wellington boots would have been a welcome addition to our kit issue.*

*More about our sea journey later. We remained in the docks watching the ferries ply their trade, waving to those who waved to us. At last we moved out on February 12th, 1942. Alas, after short trip out to sea, we returned to spend another four days in dock. 160 Squadron on s.s CUBA sailed for their overseas tour of duty on February 16th, 1942.  
(Frank Green do Ted Daines)*

### Snakes alive - and dead!

*I, with many others, joined the Squadron at Minneriya, arriving there in the early evening. Such a mad scramble to get billets and bed (sorry - charpoy!) nets fixed up, mosquito boots, cream, etc., that it was panic stations'. Just think - all these 'Moon Men' from. Blighty joining these hardened jungle fighters. Most of us wanted to use the latrines and all went well until someone shouted that cobras had been sighted there. Panic struck the Moon Men Someone tipped high octane fuel into the latrines and threw alighted match. The result was a burned-out latrine and several cooked cobras.  
(Geoff Wyle)*

### How I came to be in Minneriya, via a pony and a pig

*I and my friend, Peter Stenbridge, who became a flight commander on 8 Squadron, had done sessions as instructors on 3 (C) O.T.U. and being promised half-rings if we came and helped with starting up 78 O.T.U. in Palestine, found ourselves in the Transit Camp at Aden with the Wellington crews we had picked up as chaps timed to return to squadron duty. We were in the transit camp as 8 Squadron was about to reform in Ceylon and 244 to which I had been posted was disbanded whilst en route!!*

*My Navigator, Jock Farrell, was a vet who had joined the RAF rather than look after animals for the duration of the war. The C.O. of the camp was a Cavalry type and over the odd drink in the mess complained that one of his polo ponies was lame. Jock volunteered his services, inspected the pony and prescribed the correct treatment.*

*Two days later, I was summoned to appear before the A.O.C., Aden, who asked if I did have a vet in my crew. I said that I had, whereupon he sympathised with my lost Flight Commander job on 244 and indicated that the C.O.'s job in the Aden Communications Flight was shortly to become vacant and if Jock stayed with me the job was mine as at that time there was no qualified vet in the Colony. I told the C.O. that I must have a crew meeting and as a result told him we would take our chance elsewhere which was the H.C.U. on Liberators in Egypt and a posting to 160 where I got my Flight Commander job and Jock demonstrated how hard it was to shoot a pig with a .38 in the styes at K.K.S. no humane killer being available.  
(Peter Gay)*

Never a dull moment

*"Hearing a crackling sound across the road from our billet at Minneriya in September, 1945, I dashed out to find the Station Hospital ablaze, with patients and staff throwing out their belongings. About the same time the oils stores were set ablaze. A spate of thieving also erupted about this time, when dark arms and legs were coated with grease, to avoid being held, as shadowy figures moved quickly along the attic space from room to room. Aircrews firing off revolvers, to scare these intruders, reminded me of the Wild West. Were we witnessing the beginning of operations for the Tamil Tigers? (Jack Burgess)*

Road Rage

*All who were stationed in Ceylon will be familiar with the CADJAN construction of the huts at our airfields. A concrete slab was laid, to which wooden upright poles were attached to form the skeleton and cadjan panels, consisting of interwoven palm leaves, were tied to the poles with hemp rope. (No, you couldn't smoke it!)*

*This was a quick and economical method of construction which kept the rooms cool and the monsoon rains out. However, cadjan had one serious fault - it was prone to accident damage, as indicated by the tale which follows.*

*The Adjutant, F/Lt Dicky' Dixon, used to drive his Jeep down to the flights at lunchtime so offer a few of us a lift back to the mess which was about fifty yards away along a winding path between the trees.*

*To add a little spice to what was a boring jungle existence, he developed a novel method of driving his Jeep by folding down the windscreen on to the bonnet and sitting his ample eighteen stone frame on the bonnet facing the rear with the steering wheel between his legs and his feet tucked underneath on the pedals.*

*I sat next to him on the bonnet, also facing the rear, and we co-opted two volunteers to kneel on the back seats and face backwards.*

*This ensemble then moved forwards with the four occupants facing backwards. Dickie skillfully manouvered the Jeep between the trees and emerged on to the clearing in front of the mess, to a chorus of cheers and jeers from the assembled mob.*

*(I have to confess that as a consequence of a series of rather nasty indispositions (or sheer carelessness!) I have either mislaid, or inadvertently destroyed, the remainder of the above story and two others that accompanied it. Will the author please forgive me and supply a further copy? Bill Cooper)*

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