

No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

AD LIB

("The Chota Coggage" for Survivors)

No.9

Summer 1999

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

Reunion Organiser

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Our next Reunion

Friday, Saturday, Sunday, 3rd, 4th and 5th September, 1999, at the Falcon Hotel, Chapel Street, Stratford-upon Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 6HA.

Clangers Department

Our compiler has awarded himself seven days hankers' for omitting to credit Len Evans with the item about "Y" "for Yoga on page 2 of AD LIB No.8. My sincere apologies, Len. By now, you will have received a corrected copy.

THE WRITTEN WORD

*"Aircrew should never forget the overworked, underpaid, seldom mentioned and under-appreciated Ground Crews."
(Anon)*

Update on the Australian Liberator rebuild

"The restoration of Australia's only surviving B 24 Liberator is progressing well. In recent times many of the major problems facing the restoration crew have been resolved.

"When recovered, the main plane had a great deal of damage, not only from the initial action with the Japanese fighters that had brought the aircraft down but also from the subsequent crash landing. 50 years lying in the Ramu Valley of Papua, New Guinea, and long term attention by scrap metal hunters all did their bit to make the restoration of this section of the aircraft a very long term, labour intensive, part of the program. However, I am very pleased to report that the main plane is now in all respects complete, the only work remaining is the preparation and preservation of the inner surfaces prior to a complete repaint. Also completed quite recently were the main structures of the two tail fins which have gone into storage until the dies have been prepared to manufacture the very unusual overlaid skins to cover them. Since its arrival in late 1995, the fuselage has, for the most part, become the focal point for all but a few of the work crew. Work progresses well.

(Australian B-24 Liberator Memorial Restoration Fund Newsletter, October 1998.)

INFORMATION REQUESTED

'Can anyone recall the aircrew who failed to return from the ' Exercise at Nassau on 25th April, 1944? The Flight Engineer was Ken Cameron from Fort William. A recent visit to Ken's family confirmed that the only information received was that the aircraft was missing. Any info to Ted Daines in the first instance. (Jack Burgess)

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD...

Where, Oh, where, did that pitot head go?

We had several aircraft which had been cannibalised You've guessed it - no one knew what was missing from them - who keeps Am? When you want a part...

In Blighty, I had been on an N.C.O course and had some knowledge of RAF stores procedure and so was selected to find out what was missing - a huge task! Then I was to sit and write the requests for spares on the special forms called A.O.G. (aircraft on ground). It took ages.

Since I had no specific aircraft to look after I was able to accompany an aircraft which was sent to Madras, Bombay and Calcutta to get food supplies to augment the rations in Officers' and Sergeants' messes. These became shopping trips and I bought many items of clothing, jewelry, towels and lengths of silk for the 'bods' back at base (with their money, of course!).

On one occasion, from K.K.S. to Bombay, the travel instructions on the previous evening were that we were going to fly over India at high altitude and that we should wear warm clothing. So we did. However, when we were airborne at 04.00hrs, the Navigator said, 'Sorry, lads, I've forgotten the maps. Never mind, we will follow the coastline down S.E. India, then up the West Coast, over Goa (which way neutral) at 1,000 ft. ". Temperature-wise it was different. We arrived at Santa Cruz airport, pinched a gharry and just made it to Thomas Cook's, in order to change our money, before closure at 15.00hrs

We assumed that we would return the same way and dressed in RD. shorts, etc. On becoming airborne, the Navigator calmly announced that he had got hold of some maps and we were flying a more direct route at higher altitude. Again, 'up the creek without a paddle'. In later life, I was told not to assume anything because 'assume' makes an 'ass of you and me'.

Strange, though - on each occasion of a trip abroad, D.R.O.s included a notice that smuggling was prohibited.

(Geoff Wyle)

Road Rage (2)

(continued from AD LIB No. 8)

His intention was to park the jeep by his room, which was just opposite the Mess, but at a critical moment he jeered a mental blockage and forgot which foot was on which pedal. Instead of pressing the brake pedal, he put his heavy foot on the accelerator.

The Jeep shot forward, the front wheels fell into the monsoon ditch around the but and catapulted the four of us through the Kangang wall finishing up in a heap on, and around, Dickie's bed to raucous laughter from the Mess. Luckily nobody was seriously hurt, just cuts and bruises all round.

Willing hands pulled the Jeep out of the ditch, leaving Dicke to pay for damage to the KAGANG.

(David Flett)

Thurleigh to Ratmalana (4)

Reaching the open sea in squally weather we then saw just how large our convoy was. Three aircraft carriers; a battle cruiser, HMS Malaya; a heavy cruiser, HMS 'Birmingham'. and countless destroyers and corvettes. The first thing we saw was aircraft landing on their carriers - three being lost in as many minutes, with one Swordfish ending up in the sea. The squalls all but obliterated the nearest ships and these appeared as a blur. It was not long before we had an aircraft alert. This caused a degree of confusion as there were opposing opinions among the bods as to whether we should go below decks or above deck to boat stations, but it didn't matter as a Sunderland had been mistaken for a Condor. Flap over]

We settled down for a stretch of very rough water; at times it seemed as though the waves rose above the ship. I don't know of anyone who escaped completely that scourge of sea travel - sea sickness. It was everywhere, that feeling if only the ship would stop its rolling and pitching and tossing for just one minute it would be heaven! You must keep eating, they said. This was easier said than done; even eating a crust of bread was an achievement. Several

spent their time above deck in the fresh air. Everyone was happy when this period passed and the warm winds of the Equator pervaded our frozen bodies.

As we passed the port of Brest, although well out to sea, we had a submarine alert. It was quite a sight to see the navy boys nipping about their charges.

160's Medical Officer, F/Lt Riddell, was called upon to perform an emergency operation to remove an appendix. The ship slowed down and stopped zig-zagging for about an hour. We were alarmed to see the convoy disappearing in the distance, but happier when a destroyer fell back to keep us company. We were all greatly relieved to rejoin the convoy and be surrounded by the might of the Royal Navy again.

Some days before the incident of the operation we had changed into our K.D., and a changed atmosphere seemed to come over the ship; people acted more at ease, more relaxed, laughing and joking. Then, of course, there were the Bingo Boys; strange to say, they were always able to dodge the duties that the rest of us had to do (and there was no doubt who made the profits).

We made a break for the coastline and, passing through, we entered an inland waterway with the port of Freetown in the rear distance. For five days we watched dealings with the native Bum-Boats and the Empire Flying Boats landing or taking off. At sundown it was a orders to wear long sleeves and slacks and apply anti-mosquito cream to all exposed skin - altogether very unpleasant. in Freetown's hot and humid climate.

We were not unhappy when, after a concert the night before, we up-anchored and steamed slowly towards the gap and the open seas. We found out that the escorts, including the 'Eagle', were much lighter. (Regretfully, HM.S 'Eagle' was sunk on the Malta run shortly rifer leaving us.) The seas became choppy again as we neared the Cape of Good Hope. It was here that the convoy split in two - one half moving into Cape Town; the other half; including ourselves, sailing on to Durban. On 21st March 1943 we entered that port , becoming one of the many troopships sung into harbour by the legendary Lady in White.

(Frank Green and Ted Daines)

A Night Out from Salbani

Twelve miles by train from Salbani was the town of Khargpur (pronounced Carrickpore). The same distance in another direction was Midnapore. There was a difference, though, in the latter being out-of-bounds. One could get to Khargpur either by rail or liberty truck. The main feature of this place was a dance held at the local Railway Institute which, I believe, was held weekly. One could get a soft drink, tea or coffee, or probably a snack. The dancing was well worth watching and depended on the chaperone with the younger female. If she passed you, a dance would be available to you. If you behaved yourself; you might just qualify for another. One thing, if you came by rail not to forget to tell the driver to slow right down when going through the airfield. This enabled us to jump of saving about a four mile walk late at night.

(Ted Daines)

Libs that shared an airfield with the Japs - Two

I was particularly interested in the bit by Len Rees (AD LIB 8) regarding the Lib landing on a Jap airfield almost immediately after the surrender. Although I have no direct knowledge, I can add some flesh to the bones. If I remember aright, the site was in Sumatra and not Penang, and the landing was due to mechanical trouble which needed another aircraft to go to the rescue with bodies and spares.

This was much to the liking of the C.O, W/Cdr Williams, who was, as you know, a larger than life character and much respected by all-and-sundry at that time as was amply demonstrated to me when I had the squadron for a week or so', the other Flight Commander being away for some reason or other and the Wingco recovering from injuries sustained when he overturned his Jeep charging the barricade of a Wrennery in Colombo - an occurrence not widely broadcast.

Arming himself with an American Cavalry carbine (heaven know how he got it) and two revolvers, he set forth in the relief aircraft, not flying it as he had not converted on to Liberators. On arrival, I understand, he sorted out the Jap C.O., commandeered his car and driver, and proceeded to rule the roost in every way until repairs were completed and the aircraft returned to K.K.S. No doubt when Allied troops eventually arrived they found the Japs well versed in 160 discipline.

(Peter Gay)

How many bods remember the 'Lady Blamey' - the bottom part of a 26oz beer bottle, which served as a drinking vessel in the mess? (I remember them distinctly, but not by that name. They were created by filling the bottle with oil to the desired level and then inserting a red-hot metal rod. FWC)

(Bill Stubbs - Australia)

Water Polo - 160 Squadron vs the Navy

The late afternoon sun was still very warm as we set off in the truck - our destination the Galle Face Hotel and the swimming pool in its grounds.

A few days earlier, Cpl. George Nichol had approached me with news that '160' was to play a water polo match against a team from the Royal Navy. Colleagues I recall were LAC 'Paddy' Cranston, a formidable swimmer and Centre Forward who could skeet & skim a shot along the water like a Barnes Wallis bouncing bomb; LAC Alf Weston of Newcastle, also a stalwart forward in our 'Villains' and 'Arboreals' Rugby teams; Cpl. Trevor Stocks of Halifax, our Armourer and member of the 160 Swimming Team at Quetta in India and Cpl. Neville Roberts.

Bobbie ; alas no longer with us, was at that time ground crew chief of one of our first aircraft which was dubbed The Xmas Tree' as it was being cannibalised for spares due to lack of these at that time.

The aforementioned 'Ginger' Nichols - Fitter (Engines), Ground Crew Chief, Swimmer & Rugger fanatic from Hawick in the Border Country - was a gent in everyone's book. LAC Hampson, another 160 Swimming Team member, was a virtual eel in the water. Then there was myself, 'Hank' Illingworth, 'erk' of this parish, who never ceased to wonder that the RAF in its wisdom entrusted large aircraft engines, and even larger aircraft, to my care and responsibility.

On arrival at the hotel, we quickly changed and presented ourselves at the pool side to meet our opposition -one bearded Petty Officer and - wait for it - the rest of the Navy team - WRENS!!! The 'Beard' turned out to be the goal minder, whose face bore a quizzical look -to be explained later.

On with the match and the quick realisation that these "Babes in the Wood were not all as ladylike as they might have been. Fists, knees, grabbing hands, ducking and weaving, the 'ladies' went to work, clinically and brutally. Out on the wing in relative safety, I spent my time trying to survive and occasionally surface for air. The 'Beard' in goal had a comparatively easy time.

The honour of the R.AF. was lost, sunk almost without trace by the Amazons of the Senior Service. The Beard's' cynical and quizzical smiles will remain and haunt me forever. Needless to say, that was the last time we of 160's swimming team ever played water polo. Education can be very cruel. (Hank Illingworth)

An appeal

*Do you envy reading AD LIB Of course you do. You wouldn't be without it. Well, the compiler has news for you - the features and articles don't grow on trees, and his stock of these is drying up. The next issue, planned to consist of six pages, will not be of that size unless you put pen to paper NOW and reveal some of your murky past! You have been warned - please extract the digit!
(The Compiler)*

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