

No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

AD LIB

("The Chota Coggage" for survivors)

No.12

Millennium Edition

Spring"

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

REUNION ORGANISER

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

(01-603-660514)

COMPILER OF 'AD LIB'

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

(01-242 255119)

2000 REUNION

Falcon Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon over the weekend of 1st, 2nd & 3rd September. Wives and friends, as always very welcome. Dress most definitely informal. Come and enjoy THE 160 EXPERIENCE"

THE SQUADRON CREST

Copies of the squadron 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.

IN MEMORIAM

Eric Horton inform us that number Ron Adam passed away last December as he was leaving a social occasion.

Roy Schroeder (RCAF) sent us the following information about his crew. His second pilot, Warrant Officer Allen (Scottie) Adam (from Glasgow) was cremated in London (Ontario) on 21st February 1999. His Radar Operator Jim Osborn, died on 2nd October 15181 at Wellingborough, England. Jack Sharman and Bill Everest are also deceased

Two thousand years have passed since Christianity
Bestowed its Golden light upon humanity.
We learned to live in peace and praise the Lord;
Our Saviours word was mightier than the sword
What happened then? Where did we go astray?
To find ourselves today in disarray
The powers of darkness dimmed the golden light.
We took up arms and went to join the fight
To rid the world of tyranny and blight.
We gather here, survivors of the past,
In comradeship, with memories that last.
We mourn the loss of comrades through the years,
but life goes on; We wipe away our tears
and look with hope towards the new Millennium
We won't forget, we will remember them

Doug Flett

THE WRITTEN WORD

'John Dearon of the UK Model Aircraft Club gave a talk in May (1999). He brought with him, on a trailer, a 114 size Liberator. This aircraft has duplicated controls to alleviate accidents when flying. It took almost three years to build and is now valued at .£25,000. It is insured for public liability but cannot be insured for damage to the model itself. It flies at about 70 mph and requires a certificate of airworthiness (Norwich branch news, INTERCOM, Autumn 1999) (Further to a report in AD LIB No.6)

CAN YOU TELL US

Who were the ground crew in the photograph of BZ 867 "P"?

WHAT OUR READERS SAY...

Another Shopping Expedition

'The shopping expeditions described by Geoff Wyle (AD LIB 9) brought to my recall the only occasion I was involved with this type of venture. This occurred during a visit to Bombay from Minneriya on 8th March 1945 in aircraft "Y", stopping off at Kankasanturai and St Thomas Mount on the way.

"As Flight Engineer in Les Waterfield's crew (RCAF), we had been detailed to bring sports equipment from Bombay. Les was the alleged Sports Officer' at this time. Among the ground staff accompanying us was the well remembered Frank Shepherd.

'Looking forward immensely to a free afternoon in Bombay, we had only gone a few yards when we were stopped by two immaculately groomed SP's, who immediately concluded, from our 'Minneriya-type' garb, that we were highly suspicious characters. With no evidence of identification on our person, as only two days before we had flown on 'ops', we were taken into custody. We spent the entire afternoon in the foyer of the Eros cinema trying to convince the SP's, who 1 strongly suspect were using our interrogation as an excuse to spend the afternoon in the shade. Eventually, phone calls to Santa Cruz Airport led to Les Waterfield testifying that we were not enemy agents after all and we were released!

"I only hope that Geof Wyle had better luck with his shopping expeditions when he ventured into the comparative areas of civilisation in the Indian cities that he experienced."
(Jack Burgess)

Ceylon revisited

"I returned from Sri Lanka last week (October 1999) after a tour of the country, including a visit to Sigirya.

"Unfortunately, I did not visit the airfield as I foolishly elected to climb Sigirya Rock first! It was no problem when I first climbed it at 20 years old but, at 76, 1 found the 1200 steps in 90° heat exhausting and I was absolutely shattered and had to rest in the hotel afterwards.

"From the top of the rock, I could clearly see the airfield and noticed that much of the jungle had been cleared from around the runway. I believe that it is now used by the Sri Lanka Air Force and civil aircraft. In the distance I could just make out the runway at Minneriya."
(Doug Fleet)

Preparing for Mine-laying

"The squadron commenced preparations for its new role of minelaying whilst at Sigirya. The aircraft were modified by the removal of all armament (and oxygen equipment, armour plate and the Elsan toilet. FWC) with the exception of the rear turret and provision was made for the installation of auxiliary fuel tanks in the bomb bays. The aircrews were also prepared for the new Ops as well as being able to survive in the jungle in the event of being forced to land somewhere on the Malayan peninsula.

'I clearly remember going out map-reading during the monsoon, armed with a prismatic compass and little else, and walking many miles, covered with leeches, over the hills and through tall grass, to a point on a permanently flowing water-course. Here, we prepared a raft made from eight or nine lengths of bamboo each about ten feet long. These were lashed to short cross pieces. On the rafts we were required to pole downstream for several miles. We passed a place where elephants, used at a neighboring timber-yard, were enjoying their end-of-day frolic in the water. A fellow some distance ahead of me collided with the rump of an elephant and was very nearly dislodged from his raft..

"Many of the WAGS on the squadron went down to Ratmalana for a refresher course on machine guns (as did the WOM/AGs; WEM/AGs and FE/AGs. All turrets, except the rear-turret, plus the nose and beam guns, were being removed and straight AGs were being posted away. FWC.) This additional training included grenades as well as Sten

Guns. Four or five Sten guns, plus ammo magazines, were included in the equipment of an aircraft going on a mine-laying mission.

"All crew members were fitted with overalls with a multitude of pockets of various sizes to carry such items as thumb-nail size compasses; fish hooks; anti-malarial tablets; medicines, etc., etc. These overalls had a special name that escapes me. Perhaps someone can comment and maybe elaborate on these points. (Our crew were issued with a clear plastic box sealed round the edges with plastic tape. This contained, among other things, the fish hooks and compasses, together with five American cigarettes and matches and a folded-up plastic bag for carrying water. I have no recollection of the special overalls - perhaps they had been discarded as being too hot to wear in the jungle. FWC)

"We were also issued with a booklet entitled 'Malay in 400 words'. This included sketches of Chinese, Japanese, Tamils and Malays to help us to distinguish one from the other. Thankfully, I never had occasion to use it! (I still have 'Malay for Aircrews', 'Pocket Guide to Burma', 'Rubbing along in Burmese', 'Soldiers Guide to Hindustani', 'The Jungle Hiker' and 'Ceylon and its people'. FWC)

"All walls have ears' notices were common round the camp. Another notice urged, 'Natter in Malay as a rehearsal'."
(Bill Stubbs, a member of Roy Schroeder's crew)

Some recollections of life on the Squadron.

"Following an operational trip; seeing the coast of Ceylon coming up was, indeed, a very welcome sight."

"The Galle Face Hotel at Colombo; one could always hear the ocean waves breaking on the beach."

"Leave to Nuwara Eliya; with the one bottle of liquor we could get, plus some Port and Sherry. These refreshments did not last very long.¹¹

"At K.K.S. while practicing low-level bombing; mistaking one of the locals pushing a raft of coconuts for the target. I do believe that no damage was done; however, we probably gave the man a fright."

"The C.O. and his Flight Commanders pushing over some small trees with their Jeep; driving it through a low brick wall to park it by the Adjutant's bedside. They were in their cups; 160 not being busy."

'The Christmas parties in the Mess; again, 160 were not busy.'

'Taxying a B-24 clear so that W/C Stacey could get another out; getting stuck on a taxi-way under construction this after being told not to taxi it back. W/C Stacey was not pleased!'

"The Squadron hospital being burned down at Minneriya; W/C Stacey had our crew standby in case crews returning from Ops had any casualties."

(extracted from a letter from Roy Schroeder, written after Roy Stubbs (see above) had told him of our Association's existence. Roy also sent us extracts from his log book)

A robbing we will go!

"Further to the item 'Where, Oh, where, did that pilot head go!' in AD LIB 9. I would like to give a vote of thanks to Robert (Doe) Cousins for the help he gave me in replacing 'cannibalised' items on hydraulic systems on our aircraft several of which were definitely 'A.O.G.'. Nowadays, the RAF. have a form, colloquially called the 'ROB' form, which is used to record that items have been taken from other aircraft - 'cannibalisation' still exists."

(Geoff Wyle)

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD...

Characters (2)

Remember the two Wilkinson cousins? One a cook and the other an Engine Fitter on "A" Flight. Both from Todmorden on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border. As the border intersects the town, one was a 'died-in-the-wool' Yorkie and the other a 'Red Rose' Lancastrian. The alleged merits and drawbacks of each county were a topic of many a heated discussion between the lads. John was the best man at the post-war wedding of Ron Applegate; alas, no longer with us. Who can forget Ron entertaining us with his golden voice. A regular attendee at the reunions until he passed-away a few years ago, he was also an ardent worker for charity.

Perhaps you also remember the name of A/C Charlie Wheeler, an Aussie by birth and, if my memory serves me correctly, a professional boxer before joining the RAF. Charlie loved his tiple and would often wake you up in the early hours with the words, 'Have you got a snifter in your kit'. All the local natives knew Charlie and called him 'POPPA'. Toddy and Arak were his favourite drinks. I recall a guard duty at the Ratmalana main gate. Charlie arrived just before the Duty Officer. saying that he was 'a trifle under the weather' or, shall we say, 'under the influence'. This was a classic understatement - buttons were missing from his shirt down to the waist and his battered greasy forage cap was adorned by a badge and buttons that could only be described as 'dull green'. Friend George Ilsley and I quickly propped him between us for the officer's inspection, his feet not touching the ground. Amazingly, the great man passed, only slightly raising his eyebrows. We did Charlie's stint that night. Charlie? He blissfully slept the night away!!
(Hank Illingworth)

Thurleigh to Ratmalana - Part Five

Having been welcomed into Durban harbour by the legendary "Lady in White", we were ordered to pack our kit and, twenty-four hours later, we disembarked from s.s.'CUBA'; the ship that had conveyed us in safety through some very dangerous water. (I understand that Lloyd's records show that 'CUBA' was sunk in 1945. Ref: Doug Jones) We were then taken by special train from the docks to Clairewood Camp (a racecourse), a distance of six miles. This was to be our home for the next two weeks; in reasonable comfort when compared to our lodgings of the previous thirty days or so. We were housed in bell tents; there were open-air ablutions (although I cannot remember hot water being available); these canteens and fruit stalls housed in permanent buildings, as were the administration block. Every day at mid-day, if we had a pass, we were allowed out. Trains would pull into the station and load. As one train filled, and departed, another would take its place, until all who were waiting had been accommodated.

The fare into Durban was sixpence and as long as you were on the last train back you were in the clear. Within a very short time of getting off the train, almost everyone was 'adopted' by a local family. Ron Ryall, Ted Gregory and myself were 'adopted' by a family of Welsh origin - Mr & Mrs Wiggins and their son, Dennis, and daughter, Audrey. These latter were some sixteen and fourteen years of age, respectively. They lived in a very nice house at 63 Easenwood Road, with a black woman servant who looked after us very well when the Wiggins family were not there. We were very grateful for the fourteen days that they made us welcome. There was plenty to see and do in the city itself. One was welcomed at the Jewish Club; pay one shilling and three pence and stay as long as you like; eat as much food as you could possibly manage; leave your name and home address and they would try to get word home that you were safe and in good health. There were rickshaws, pulled by Zulus in their magnificent headdress, and the Zulu Market and beer house which had a rather overpowering odour. The trams were quite cheap to ride on, although I found it very embarrassing to sit in the seats forward of the white line which were for Whites only. The Blacks crowded in the area to the rear of the line; had they moved forward of the line they would have been severely punished. Also, if the Whites walking on the footpath considered the Blacks were in the way, they simply pushed them into the road irrespective of any traffic that might be passing. The colour bar was terrible. The Wiggins family took tea out into the local countryside in their Ford Pilot car, where we could see the 'Valley of a Thousand Hills' in the distance. We visited the Isipingo Beach, where, I believe, many of our hosts took their visitors. On Good Friday, we had a swim at Umhlote Beach. We spent a very delightful two weeks in a great country, with lovely weather, at the end of which our host, who was a Customs Officer at the docks, calmly informed us that we would be sailing on the New Amsterdam in forty-eight hours time. We had one last party, said our good-byes, and, sure enough, the following morning we were ordered to pack our kit in preparation for departure. We boarded the liner on what, I believe, was Easter Monday, and so set sail for a ten day journey to Port Tewfik, Egypt.

The New Amsterdam was, I believe, originally built as the Dutch challenger for the Blue Ribbon for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic but the war put paid to any attempt at that record. We understood that the Captain sailed the vessel out of Rotterdam Harbour under the noses of the occupying German forces and we converted it for troop-carrying. She was pretty fast, and could do the Egyptian run unescorted. Two berth cabins were converted to carry six by adding a pair of two-berth bunks, but she was still a vast improvement on the Cuba, what with extra fans to keep the air fresh and a toilet and bath room. We slipped the Dutch crew a few coppers to bring us a cup of tea every morning when they changed the bathroom towels. There was a swimming pool and a cinema, both governed by allocation due to the number of troops on board I am sure all will remember sitting in luxury, watching French Without Tears ;starring Ray Milland For an hour or so one could forget that we were on a liner in the middle of the ocean, with the possibility of a U-Boat Commander looking at us through a periscope and cursing his luck because of our speed. Walking along the companion-way between cabins, one could open a small sliding door at head height in the paneling and find a tap and a glass and enjoy a drink of ice-cold water.

When on deck, one could watch the huge sharks and multi-coloured fish that followed us up the Indian Ocean . As we went through the Straights of Madagascar the Allies were active in the area. Due to the number of troops on board, all meal times were divided into separate sittings. This meant rather long queues, but at least we had a service band playing to us in a dining hall, which still had chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. If only the food had snatched the

surroundings) All they seemed to serve was the new - to us - 'SPAM', but the ship did have a large and well run canteen. As usual, the biggest enemy was boredom, although that was relieved to some extent for me by the fact that I was detailed off for fatigues -cleaning the toilets in the senior officers' cabins. This kept me in hair oil and sweets - that is when they forgot to put them away! The ship seemed to run constantly on top revs to maintain a good speed. I remember sitting on the stern promenade and the vibration was such that it was impossible to read my book.

We did not see anything other than the sea until we reached the area known as the Horn of Africa. It was here that, just for a short while, we could see land on both sides of the ship. When we saw land in front of us, and the ship slowed down considerably, we knew we were almost at our destination - Port Tewfik.

(Frank Green and Ted Dames)

The squadron post-war

After the war ended, on August 15th 1945, we continued to fly supply missions to the civvies in Malaya. An old friend from St Athan, F Round, had come to Minneriya with 200 Squadron and, on an op to Malaya, they developed engine trouble, landing at Kuala Lumpur on what had been the racecourse. They were there for a week during which they spent all their 'escape money'. Don't ask what presents they acquired!! (Tom Stevens)

Salbani Airfield, Bay of Bengal, India, 1942

160 Squadron, except for the advance party destined for Ceylon, moved from. Quetta to Salbani by train. It took some eight days of travel and when they arrived there is no doubt that they were fed-up with the sight of the train after such a journey in cramped conditions. Inspections were held on stations where the platform form was long enough.

Salbani Airfield was a large. sprawling and. as yet. unfinished airfield and the Squadron were not pleased to find that they were to be right away across the airfield, away from such facilities as there were. The knowledge that 159 Squadron were already in residence did not help. Neither did the typhoon, and tidal wave that ensued. These caused the loss of many lives and much livestock.

The runway at Salbani was of a brownish substance, not unlike iron-ore; hence the resident seam-roller standing in the near vicinity. The operational Liberators of 159 Squadron had the brown and green (European. FWC) livery.

The C.O. of 159, W/C Skinner, was lost on operations just after Christmas, 1942.

Salbani was named after a small village some four miles distant from the airfield. Although very small, it had a mainline station and its services. This line bisected the airfield, making the flying side at the top half and the admin at the bottom. The trains, after stopping at a junction named Khargpur (pronounced Carrickpur) about ten miles; from Salbani, terminated at the huge city of Calcutta, some seventy miles away.

Nights out could be spent at Khargpur; a dance held weekly at the Railway Institute could be just enough to relieve monotony. If one had been attending, it was important not to forget to jump of the train as it proceeded very slowly through the airfield - this saved a four mile walk late at night.

At last the order came for the squadron to move to Ramalana in Ceylon. From here they were detached to Vavuniya for a short period. Their main effort there was chopping down a tree outside the C.O.'s office. When they arrived back at Ramalana they found three beautiful white Liberators waiting for them.

As part of the preparations for the Squadron's initially intended service in the Burma theatre, a Defence Flight had been formed before the squadron left the U.K. This was headed by the writer of this account. Airfield defence would not be required in Ceylon, so the same day that the squadron left for Ratmalana, the Defence Flight also left -for the Indo-Burma border! for training and re-equipment, its members fought with distinction in the re-conquest of Burma as part of the RAF. Regiment. Sadly not all returned to the U.K. (Ted Daines)

"The Staff' of AD LIB wish to express their appreciation of the seasonal greetings and messages of goodwill which came their way,

We out these remarks at the end of this issue as at least one of our readers has slated that he never reads the bits at the beginning!!!)

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