

No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

AD LIB

("The Chota Coggage" for survivors)

No. 13

Summer 2000

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

REUNION ORGANISER

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2000 REUNION

Falcon Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon ova the weekend of 1st, 2nd & 3rd September.

THE SQUADRON CREST

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

GENERAL SERVICE, MEDAL WITH CLASP, "SOUTH EAST ASIA"

We are officially advised you are eligible if you served for 30 days in French Indo China between 3 September 1945 and 28 January 1946 for 30 days in Java and Sumatra between 3rd September 1945 and 30th November 1946. In addition to the foregoing. if you served as aircrew removing by air prisoners of war and internees from Java, Sumatra, Malaya, Siam, French Indo China, and the Andaman Islands, and completed one sortie, during dates peculiar to certain units, you are also eligible, We have been advised that 160 Squadron is one of the units specified. Applications to: Royal Air Force, Personnel Management Agency, Royal Air Force, Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1EZ 9 Reference PMA/132103/6/1/SEC 1c(2))

IN MEMORIUM

Flying Officer R L Freeman, W.A.G., RCAF. died in Canada on 7th January 2000. Bob Freeman was one of the survivor's of Squadron Leader Joy's ditching, albeit injured in the right leg.

NEWS REPORT"

'A GATHERING OF EAGLES'

The above will be held in Perth, Western Australia, over nine days in the Autumn of this year. It is open to attendance by Allied Aircrew (all services) and those who were selected but who did not complete their training. It is already being referred to, in the typically aircrew manner, as The Gathering of Bald Eagles!!!

CAN you TELL US

According to one source, GR MkV Liberators for Coastal Command had their 'fuel capacity increased at the expense of Armour and tank protection'. It is well-known that our Libs had most of their visible armour removed. The question is, did their self-sealing tanks have any armour protection, or not?

CORRESPONDENCE

Unfortunately, the group photographs I took at the 1999 reunion were too underexposed. To achieve good results but, due to the marvels of modern computer technology, a passable reproduction has been managed. Pending running-off a print on ordinary paper when I get it right, anyone who would like a copy by Email can have one sent - no charge!" (lescrawley@lineone.net)

"With reference to the lower photograph on page 318 of WINGS OF THE DAWNING". This is a photograph of BZ 711, "A,, showing the 'Seben come Eleben' dice thrown by a coloured boy which I was talked into applying to this aircraft (as it was the most used by my predominantly Canadian crew. Tom Stevens)

NOW IT CAN BE TOED...

Characters (3)

Who remembers Smokey' Stover a Corporal so-called after the American cartoon character? He held surprise Fire Drills at the East Camp at Quarto by lighting small fires in empty billets, When one was due, we watched where the fire would be, nipped in as soon as he had left, put out the fire, and went back to our charpoys. Then, when the fire gong was sounded, we ignored the call to action. I think he became a very frustrated fire-fighter. His moment of glory came at Sigirya, however, when a visiting Blenheim had problems with its undercarriage failing. A small fire ensued in one engine. Smokey and crew duly arrived and proceeded to spray foam all-over the aircraft - everywhere but the engine, in fact. Yes, you've got it - they ran out of foam; the fire grew and grew and, eventually, what was left of the Blenheim was swept off the runway and shovelled into a truck as scrap! (Hank Illingworth)

Cosford's Liberator

At the end of the war in SEAL, the Liberator Squadrons disbanded and their aircraft went into store at 322 M.U., Chakeri, Cawnpore, India. This was in accordance with the Lead-Lease agreement. Had we continued to use these aircraft, we would have had to pay for them.. Since the war was over, we had spare aircraft and crews.

The Liberator's stood in long rows awaiting their fate - being reduced to scrap. A lot of the work was done by Indians. They, being sensible chaps, got their heads when the sun came up! Two years later, a number of Liberators still stood there; India had achieved its independence, and they asked if they could have some of the Libs in order to form No.6 Maritime Squadron, Indian Air Force (the 'Royal' bit now having gone). They received 19 aircraft and a load of spare parts. These aircraft were flown for years; the aircraft given to the Royal Air Force Museum was not retired until December, 1974. Much has to be said for the men, both air and ground crews, who kept these aircraft flying. Mind, it did help that no-one was now shooting at them! (Geoff Hill)

More on the Cosford Lib

In 1968 a decision was made by the Indian Air Force to present three of their surviving (and still flying) Liberators to each of the following countries - the United Kingdom; the United States of America and Canada. A major problem was to find persons with sufficient, and recent, B-24 flying experience to fly the United Kingdom's gift to England. One such person was Doug Cannor, who had been one of the earlier pilots on 160 Squadron and who had finished flying with the squadron whilst it was based at Sigirya in 1942-43. Doug (a Canadian himself) had admired the spirit of the Americans and Canadians who had loaded up military transport aircraft with pilots, engineers and technicians and flown to Poona to collect their B-24 gifts and fly them to their respective museums.

Five years had passed since the Indian Air Force had withdrawn the British gift Liberator from service before Doug was approached about flying it to the United Kingdom. His first attempt in visiting Poona was aborted as a complete lack of preparation made a swift return impossible. An example of this was the oversight in making arrangements for the availability of 100 octane fuel at staging posts en route. Problems arose over arrangements for foreign currency. Essential radio equipment shipped from the UK. had arrived without instructions. Questions arose on how the RAF. could possibly add a B-24 to its inventory when KR's contained no provision for such an eventuality!! Despite a stream of such administrative problems, Doug eventually got through to the important part - would this aeroplane be able to make the flight to the U K?

Doug eventually met W/Cdr Chopra, who was to accompany him on the flight to the U.K. Although the Wing Commander had been chief test pilot for Hindustan Aeronautics, he had little knowledge of Liberators. The two men spent an hour locating all the emergency procedures; 'tits and knobs' in Doug's own words. As far as Doug was concerned, he claimed all his previous Liberator expertise soon returned and shortly afterwards they were rumbling down the runway and taking-off for a test flight. Unfortunately, the landing gear failed to retract and, two air attempts

later, a sticking solenoid valve was diagnosed. This was replaced from an even older Liberator. Some of the massive radio problems were partly resolved on reaching Bangalore where, after two days 'she was sprouting more antennae than a 10-year old elk'

On reaching Bombay, the landing and subsequent take-off were made hazardous by the worst monsoon to strike Bombay for 50 years. The next stop was Abu Dhabi, and the flight engineer, ex-F/0 Daruwala, was kept busy checking that all systems were holding together in one piece. Making for Jeddah, the old radio compass gave up the ghost over Doha. To complicate things further, the auto-pilot could not cope with severe turbulence over the desert and the plane had to be flown manually for over 3 hours. On landing at Jeddah, the temperature was 113 F.

Jeddah to Rome was accompanied by further 'snags', including CSU's sticking in coarse or fine pitch as the mood took them. From Rome to Dinard in France, thence Lyneham, where Doug landed, for the first time in 30 years, on 7th July 1974.

The ex-99 Squadron Liberator was now in the United Kingdom after flying with No.6 Squadron of the RIAF at Poona as HE 807. Doug was able to 'unwrap this aeroplane from my backside' at Colerne. He then returned to his business abroad. Thankfully, he didn't witness the irreversible damage done to the roots of the wings when these were removed to enable the aircraft to be transported by road to Cosford. (Jack Burgess)

Odds and Ends

In previous editions of AD LIB, reference has been made to personal shopping lists prepared when aircraft were visiting India. Ladies' shoes were a popular purchase. The 'bode' asked their spouses and girlfriends to obtain pictures of required styles from magazines/newspapers back home and to send these, together with templates obtained by standing on a sheet of brown paper and running a pencil round their feet. Thus, on trips to Madras, it was possible to get hand-made reasonably-priced ladies shoes, to the correct size and preferred colour, in two days. Bartering being the name of the game

Ground crew whose Demob No. was 45 or over, flew home with 44lbs of baggage, the remainder going by sea. They travelled by stages and I have been told it took their three weeks to reach Scotland. A Flight Sergeant, whose name I forget, 'conned bods below No. 45 to make up food parcels of goods from the N.A.A.F.I., like large tins of salmon, etc., and he would see to it that these would be sent to their respective families back home, since these parcels were labelled with the addresses. Needless to say, I am still waiting for mine to arrive!

Some of the unfortunates with low Demob Nos. (mine was 39) who did not fly home were posted to Koggala, near Galle at the southern end of the island. Here they found something quite different to Libs - aircraft with no wheels, i.e. Sunderland flying boats. No landing strip as such; no aircraft bays, just a 'damn great lake'. The ground crews, or should I say lake crews, had to row out to their aircraft to do the servicing. Incidentally, the lake soon contained crocodiles and it cost us money if tools were dropped in it.

The day duly arrived when we were told that a ship had arrived to take us back to 'Blighty'. With Deep Sea Baggage' packed and labelled; kitbag and necessaries packed for on board use, plus Sten Gun, we traveled to Colombo and boarded the P. & O. Liner, 'Orentes'. She was about 1/2 mile from the harbour and we were conveyed by a Navy launch, 20 bods at a time. There was this damn great ship riding at anchor, moving up and down, with 'Heath Robinson' style ladders hanging down the side and this little launch alongside, 'bobbing about'. The Navy enjoyed pushing the RAF blokes off the 'gunnel' of the launch on to the lowest step of the ladder. The R.A.F. 'bods', laden with kitbags and other 'bits', performed remarkable feats of agility and no-one fell into the sea.

(Geoff Wyle)

Mysteries of Life

In the very early days at Sigirya, before the squadron moved in from Ratmalana, we lived a fairly lonely existence in our humble jungle abode and welcomed any casual visitor who dropped-in. However, when it was discovered that we had no running-water and no electricity they suddenly remembered that they had more urgent business elsewhere and were soon gone.

A very welcome visitor was the Roman Catholic Chaplain, a jolly Irishman, who was the only parson I knew who could stomach the foul Australian Corio whisky which we had in abundance. This favour was conditional upon my appearance at his church service the following morning, however hung over (me, not him!).

A few days before one of his periodic visits, I had been approached by an airman from the advance party who was in a state of distress. He had received a letter from his wife in South Wales informing him that their marriage was over

because she had fallen love with an airman who was stationed at St Athan. He wanted to know what help and advice I could give him.

I should mention that I was a 20-year old sprog P/O, still slightly damp behind the ears, and here I was being asked to give advice to a married man 13 years my senior! Feeling hopelessly inadequate, I said I would do whatever I could to help. I knew that repatriation was out of the question because several grandmothers had allegedly passed away and each request for repatriation had been met with a blank refusal. You needed a much better excuse than that!

During the Chaplain's next visit I passed the buck to him, giving the airman's name and home address. He said he would contact RAF. Chaplain H.Q. as they had great experience in these matters. A few weeks later he called again and said that he had both good news and bad news for me. The good news was that Chaplain H.Q. had made discrete enquiries at St Athan and had identified the airman involved, who found himself suddenly, and inexplicably, posted to Sierra Leone, in West Africa, for the duration of hostilities. I asked 'how the hell' had they managed to do that. His reply was that God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform'. I passed on the good news to the airman concerned but have no idea whether marital relations were re-established

The bad news was that the Chaplain was being posted to Burma and that this was to be his last visit. I sadly said. 'Goodbye, thanking him for his great help, and gave him a couple of bottles of Corio whisky to speed him on his way.'
(Dave Flett)

Held in suspense!

F/Lt Schroeder and his crew, of which I was a member, were to deliver a party of six Ghurkas, and their supplies, to a point in the northern part of Malaya, and probably closer to the east coast than the west. It was well into the night, the reception party on the ground had heard our aircraft and had lit their fires, which showed up as a large 'T' to the crew of the aircraft.

The drop was completed without a hitch - at least that is what we all thought until there was a hurried message from the rear turret informing the skipper that there was something banging up against the bottom of his turret. Investigation by a crew member revealed that the last Ghurka to leave the aircraft was swinging at the end of a rope and was certainly banging up against the rear turret. It transpired that the knot at the end of the rope which was wound round his waist, and securely tied there, had jammed between the side of the exit-slide and the upright hatch cover. The parachutist would have been pulled up with a sharp jerk at the end of 12 to 15 feet of rope.

It took two of the crew to haul him back into the aircraft which would have traveled many miles from the drop area by this time.

We returned to base and at the de-briefing were castigated by the British Army Officer in charge of The Ghurkas for bringing one of his men back to base. He claimed we should have cut the rope and let him go, even though he would have landed many miles away from his mates. (The officer would no doubt have had in mind the honour of the Ghurkas, which would have been besmirched by one of their comrades not making the drop, for whatever reason.
FWC) (Bill Stubbs, RAF)

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