

"AD LIB"

(The "Chota Coggage" for Survivors)

No.160 Squadron, Royal Air Force

Issue No.16

Spring 2001

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

Thurleigh: This station (111) became the home of the USAAF 306th Bombardment Group. Mr Ralph Franklin, UK representative of the 306th Association, is developing a museum in one of the refurbished buildings and is keen to hear from anyone who can help with material, reminiscences etc. Contact: Mr.R. Franklin, National School Cottage, Keysoe, Bedford, MK44 2HP.
(From 'Flypast' February 2001)

Air Crew Association: 160 Sqdn Flight Engineer Jack Burgess was awarded the ACA President's Commendation for 2000. A photograph appears in the ACA Journal showing Jack on the recruiting stand at the Museum of Flight on the occasion of the 'fly in' on 12th August. (*'Intercom' Jnl of the ACA. Winter 2000*)
Single Air Crew Brevet: As from October 2001(planned) the branches/trades of Navigator, Air Electronics Officer, Air Electronics Operator and Air Signaller will be amalgamated into a single brevet – Weapons Systems Officer/Weapon Systems Operator. Seen as a controversial step by some members of the trade, this may give more scope for employment in different aircraft types – or is it just a job creation scheme for surplus Navigators (how many navigators in Eurofighter, C130J, JST, etc ?). Only time will tell. (Bill Cooper).

'Wings of the Dawning': This book by Arthur Banks includes a fair amount of material about 160 Sqdn. It is priced at £15.95 but was recently on special offer at £7.99 (plus p/pkg) from Midland Counties Publ'ns, Unit 3, Maizefield, Hinckley, Leics.LE10 1YF. Tel: 01455 233747.

Reunion 2001: Same venue. Note the dates 31/8/01 to 2/9/01.

Articles for Publication: Keep sending them in please to the Editor by post or email.

References: Robert Quirk's website, besides having lots of material about 160, now has extracts from O.R.B's.(www.rquirk.com).

'AD LIB' by Email: No new takers but there have been some Gremlins. Offer is still open - subject to compatible software. Anyone prepared to take up the challenge?



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OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the passing of two of our old mates and friends, Bob Sansom and Bill Gibson in January, both from cancer. Bob is well known to me for all the help he and his wife Audrey gave me at AD LIB time and at reunions. Bob and Audrey were staunch supporters, as were Bill and Joan until prevented by Bill's illness. Bob, a gentle and big man, in every sense, was very much in evidence at our reunions: Bill will be remembered as quiet, friendly and unassuming: both were great company. On behalf of the squadron I have sent messages of condolence and our deepest sympathy to Audrey and Joan. No flowers were requested but Audrey did tell me that, if anyone wishes to mark Bob's memory (and Bill's) they could do so by making a small donation to the hospice which was so helpful, or for research. You can do this through me if you wish. (Ted Daines)

Just as we are going to press we have heard of the death of another of our stalwarts, Peter Knee, who was always on hand with help and advice. Peter died on 30th January, aged 75, from septicaemia following a mild heart attack. Our sympathies and thoughts are with his family at this sad time. (Editor)

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD:

Medical matters

1. I left Minneriya on the 24th August 1945 for Dhubalia, Calcutta so I met the dentist before then: he was draining an abscess in a tooth. Before my second visit, the hospital was burned down. Anyway, the dentist lost all his equipment and could not continue the draining. He borrowed the doctor's emergency tools, sat me in the open on a beer crate, then extracted the offending tooth.
(*Jack Palmer, New Zealand*)

2. When I read the above story, I was reminded about an extraction I had in Burma. After walking the best part of 15 miles to an Army dentist, he said, I'm sorry, but I have nothing to freeze it with: at best I can give you half a glass of powdered aspirin. It's up to you." I decided to have it out and, as you can imagine, it was painful. He took pity on me and arranged a lift back. (*Ted Daines*)

3. On reading both the above, I recalled something I was told after the end of hostilities by a Seaforth Highlander Sergeant – when serving in Burma, he had been tied to a tree to have his tonsils removed without benefit of anaesthetic!
(*Bill Cooper*)

Minneriya Memories

1. At Minneriya, some of the 'lads' went to the nearby village of Hinkuragoda and bought Toddy and Arack which was put into Navy Rum stone jars (1gallon). The jars were fitted up with taps and tubing supplied by the Instruments Section, and were then mounted as high as possible alongside the charpoys and the 'incumbents' drip-fed themselves – a favourite pastime after 'Tiffin'

2. Someone told me recently that he had visited Sri Lanka and discovered that Minneriya was still used but had been renamed Sri Lanka Air Force Base – HINKURAGODA.

3. At Hinkuragoda railway station, we entrained for a trip to Radella via Polgawella for 'R and R' of about 7/10 days in the hills. Radella had a nine hole golf course(?) The railway line from Polgawella was narrow gauge which ended at Nan-Oya where the journey by rail ended. We then boarded buses to travel to Nan-Oya and Newara Eliya. At Nan-Oya, I once saw an unusual railway engine which was used to negotiate the tight curves on the railway. The engine had two sets of swivelling bogies, one set at the front and one at the rear with the rest of the engine slung across the bogies.

4. Guard duties at Minneriya – one 'bod' in each 'kite'. Charpoys were inserted via the bomb bays. It was a very difficult manoeuvre to 'feed' the charpoy on to the narrow walkway and then through the midships. There seemed to be many bits and bobs like auxiliary fuel tank at one end of the bomb bay and other things sticking out. However, sleep was not really possible because of the jungle noises and the drums.

A 160 Squadron Pilot's story.

I always got a thrill when lining up a fully loaded B24 at the end of the runway. Putting on the brakes: checking with the crew. Having a look at all the instruments: putting down the flaps as necessary: setting the mixture at 'Full Rich': making sure the props were in fine pitch: then opening the throttles wide: cutting in the turbo supercharges: watching the Pratt & Witneys go to warm: then off with the brakes, use all the runway and climb away.
To this day I get a lift in taking off in a commercial aircraft. On April 28th, 1945, in aircraft BZ 867 on a mining operation,

we climbed over the Isthmus to Singora on the East side, found many ships in the harbour and placed our mines. We almost ran into high ground (as Jim Osborne reminded me in 1975 when we paid him a visit in England).

On heading for home, the oil pressure gauge on one of the engines started wavering, it kept dropping, so, when it nearly reached the danger point, the engine was shut down and feathered. The remaining three engines took us home at a slightly reduced speed. The maintenance crews told us later that the oil had almost gone.

The duration of that trip was 17 hours 40 minutes.

I also believe we got one beer a week - Saturday night was beer night.

We have paid a visit to see the memorial for those that lost their lives in the Far East – this was at the RCAF Base, Trenton, Ontario. This is a fine memorial. We also visited The Air Force Museum at this location. (*Roy Schroeder*)

A SUCCESSFUL DITCHING - Capt.F/O Turner's report

At 09.07 local time on March 21st, 1945, we ditched Liberator 'P' BZ 828 in position 0915N 8205E, owing to lack of fuel. We ditched a mile ahead of a merchant vessel and about an hour later the whole aircraft crew was aboard the Dutch MV 'Tubian' (Captain Sante A. Jenker).

Six of the crew of eight had little trouble in getting out of the aircraft. The seventh member, P/O J.H.Dorsey, 1st W.O.P, had fallen down the hole left by the radar spinner which had been knocked out. Dorsey was caught up among aircraft control cables and failed to make his way up through the hole and into the aircraft. In the meantime he was taking in a lot of sea water. Finally, he noticed daylight shining under the aircraft and managed to swim from under the aircraft to the surface. At this point he was practically exhausted. He was helped over the wing by F/O R.K.McCreadie, R.A.F., 164144, and thence McCreadie pulled him up on to the wing.

Whilst this was going on, Sgt Grundy, H, the Flight Engineer, was trapped in the back of the aircraft which was slowly sinking. He had a broken hip and a terrible gash across his face. He was calling for help and McCreadie went over to the aircraft, handed Grundy a knife with which he cut himself free. McCreadie helped him out then over to the wing. Grundy is a very weak swimmer. The rest of us got the dinghies into operation and paddled around picking everybody up until eventually the eight of us were in the two dinghies awaiting the lifeboat from the merchant ship. The merchant ship was in sight at all times, which was a great comfort to us.

McCreadie was the hero of the ditching. In my opinion he saved the lives of two members of the crew.

Signed. S.D.Turner, F/O, Captain.

(*Note: F/O Turner, C4456, had just been transferred to 160 Sqdn, from 354 Sqdn, on the 10th February 1945.*)

From Air 27, 1067, Appendix No.19/45.

The crew comprised F/O's S.D.Turner & R.K.McCreadie: P/O's F.M.Yeomans & J.H.Dorsey: Sgts. F.W.Smith, H.Grundy, A.L.James and I. Hewitt.
(*Robert Quirk*)

Note: There is a photograph of F/O Turner and crew (minus H.Grundy) standing on the wing of BZ911 on page 318 of 'Wings of the Dawning' : it includes Jack Burgess.
(*Editor*)

NOTES ABOUT "C" FLIGHT, 160 SQUADRON and 159 SQUADRON

The establishment of this special operations flight was decided on 15/1/44 following the appointment of Wing Co. Brady as 160 Squadron C.O. The two captains selected were F/Lt Bradley (O.C. the flight) and F/Lt Connor, with Mk V Liberators BZ 938 "W" and BZ 939 "Y". F/Lt Bradley had arrived on the Squadron direct from Montreal on 24/12/43 with aircraft "W" and F/Lt Connors also direct from Canada on 10/1/44, probably with aircraft "Y". The first special ops commenced on 22/1/44 and each crew included a 'special operator' - there being 3 attached to the flight.

Regular missions were flown from Sigirya until 30/4/44 when "C" flight was sent on detachment with ground crews to Salbani but facilities were not adequate and they located at Digri. They commenced special operations on 10/5/44, initially sending their operations reports back to 160 at Sigirya. In June 1944 almost all crew members were tour expired and were repatriated except for the two captains and F/Lt Hulse. New crews were posted to the flight - 19/6/44 F/Lt O'Reilly and F/O Childs and 26/6/44 F/O Underhill together with a total of 14 NCOs. At 30/6/44 there was a strength of 6 officers, 20 NCOs and 20 BORs.

Operations continued with the same two aircraft until "Y" (Captain F/O Underhill) was missing on 10/11/44 and "W" (Captain F/Lt [Act. S/Ldr] Bradley) crashed in Burma on 31/1/45 when it developed engine trouble. The skipper gave the order to bail out and six (two officers and four NCOs) of the nine crew managed to parachute safely into the same area where they reunited on the ground. The other 3 crew were believed to have perished in the crash. 159 Squadron C.O had specially selected one of the crew, F/Sgt Stanley James Woodbridge, to fly with this crack crew on the mission and he was one of the survivors of the crash: it was not his first special operation.

The survivors had made their way to a small village and offered the headman a large sum of money if he would find them a boat, to which he agreed. However, when he returned two hours later it was with a force of Japanese soldiers and the six were all captured. The skipper was first to be interrogated and despite the fact that he produced a document in Japanese setting out the rights of prisoners he was severely beaten for refusing to give the name of his base. The second officer, the navigator, was then questioned but not beaten as the Japs were only interested in identifying the wireless operator. Their captors subjected the remaining crew to beatings in their attempts to find out who was the special operator. When they decided that it was F/Sgt Woodbridge, it was he who bore the brunt of the attack in their attempts to make him reveal codes, wavelengths and technical details of the special equipment. The two officers had, meantime, been taken into Jap HQ in Rangoon for more detailed interrogation and later when the British took Rangoon they were freed from gaol in May 1945. The Special Operator was F/O W.J.J.Lowery who was not one of the six: he was listed as missing, presumed to have died, when the aircraft crashed.

The four NCOs continued to suffer beatings and torture with three of them (F/Sgts Bellingan, Woodage and Snelling) being beheaded after being made to dig a trench for their own grave. F/Sgt Woodbridge was subjected to unbelievable torture but he remained defiant. Eventually the Japs realised he was not going to give any information and he too was beheaded and buried at the same spot on 7/2/45.

At the War Crimes trial, in 1947, the three Jap officers and three NCOs were found guilty of the torture and murder of the four airmen and they were sentenced to death.

F/Sgt Stanley James Woodbridge, No.1393806, Wireless Operator, of 159 Squadron, was 23 when he was executed.

He was the husband of Florence Edith Woodbridge of Chingford, Essex, and son of James Henry and May Ashman Woodbridge.

The award of the George Cross to F/Sgt Woodbridge of 159 Squadron was announced in the London Gazette on 24th September 1948.

The crew members are listed as:

Taken prisoner and later rescued from Rangoon Gaol May 1945:

84656	F/Lt.A/S/L	J.W.Bradley, DFC	Pilot/Captain
147114	F/O	A.G.Jeffrey	Navigator/Bomber

Missing, 31.1.45, Deaths inscribed on the Singapore War Memorial for those with no known graves

156576	FIO	W.J.J.Lowery	W.Op. 'Special Operator'
Age 28			
Aus/42	1484	W/O A.R.Williams	W.Op/A.G
Age 34			
1493958	F/Sgt	J.Adams	Navigator
Age 35			

Executed by the Japs on 7.2.45 at Myaungmya (buried Rangoon War Cemetery, Myanmar. Col. Grave 3.F. 6-9)

1393806	F/Sgt	S .J Woodbridge	GC W.Op/A.G
Age 23			
710193	F/Sgt	L.Bellingan	Pilot
Age -			
1803337	F/Sgt	J.D.Woodage	W.Op/A.G
Age 22			
1234728	F/Sgt	R.J.Snelling	FI/Eng.
Age 25			

(With acknowledgements to extracted information from Robert Quirk's web site [story 'A Barbarous Enemy' provided by Jim Fail ex 99 Sqdn]: the citation from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission site and operational records from the PRO for both 159 & 160 Sqdns). Les. Crawley

SIGIRYA DAYS - WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

From ORB's.

On 6th May 1944 at Sigirya, a suspected case of a rabid dog was confirmed and 8 Europeans (including one member of an ENSA party) and 25 natives were bitten. It was a case of inoculations all round by the M.O. and a dog shoot. Some 18 dogs were destroyed.

Then, on 11th May, the camp was visited by WAAF Air Chief Commandant Trefusis Forbes to assess the suitability of employing WAAF's.

We were given the thumbs down, lads, and I suspect that was without the Commandant even seeing the O.R's latrines!

Would we have had a happier camp if the dog had bitten the Commandant and a more rational decision taken?

(By the way, 11th May is my birthday - but not that time).



(Les Crawley)

AN EX-BRAT HAS HIS SAY

(With no apologies for printing in full)

Herewith some notes from my diaries, kept during my service career. 576415 Cpl. Coates Ex Brat, 40th Entry. After training at Halton and Cosford I moved to Sealand (30 M U) in May 1941 and worked on Bristol Mercury and Hercules sleeve valve engines. The following November I moved to Finningley, near Doncaster, working on Ansons, Oxford and Avro Manchester (Lancasters). Posted overseas in February 1942 Three days embarkation leave followed by fourteen days in Blackpool then joined the 'Johann van Oldenbarnasvelt' (renamed the Lakonia after the war and which caught fire as a cruise ship and sank in the Bay of Biscay) This was the sistership to the New Amsterdam.



(Photo J. Van O: Courtesy, Trinity Maritime Centre, Newcastle - LC)

Places visited en route to Ceylon were Freetown, Capetown (four days) Bombay (seven days) and arrived in Colombo on 19th May 1942. Caught a train down to Boosa near Galle, staying for one week, then to Katagurunda to join Fleet Air Arm 814 Sqdn. Their carrier had been sunk during the previous month off Trinco. We moved to a new station opened at Minneriya in the November. Joined 22 and 217 Sqdns. Several months later I met Ginger Austin from Colombo headquarters and asked him for a posting as I was fed-up with life in the jungle! He wangled me a transfer to 160 Sqdn at Ratmalana on 9th April 1943. My first assignment was on No 4 engine on V aircraft where I met Frank Green who was on No 1 engine. By the 18th April he had me playing rigger for "The Villains" (hooker). At this time I met Cpl. "Wing" Hudson (another ex brat 38th Entry) and Bill Horrocks.

REGULAR ENTRIES FROM DIARY.

1943:

May 6th Vultee-Vengeance (84 Squadron) crashed in lake at Ratmalana minus prop (eventually found near sickbay) pilot swam ashore!

May 10th 'V' went on ops for the first time.

May 25th My first flight in 'V'...No.4 engine cut-out (mixture control) then on ops.

June 8th After fixing booster pump, ran up three engines, checked flaps during ground test as usual. Repeated operation and gave "thumbs up" to indicate flaps in working order. Then I observed Wally Ducken throw his cap on the ground and start jumping up and down on it! I was, of course, unaware that the jacks had gone through the flaps TWICE!! No charge involved because we knew whose fault it was after retraction test had been completed!

June.10th Second op for 'V'. Fourteen hours and forty minutes. Everything ok.

June 15th 'P' New aircraft landed. Hurricane crashed after dive from 8000 ft. At Rat.

June 18th Frank ran up engines.

June 26th. Congratulations in the canteen from C.O. on our work.

July 15th Received two more Libs (eleven kites now). Soon be going to Sigiriya.

July 16th Lib and Hurricanes practise combat. One H collided with Lib and landed in lake. Pilot ok.

July 30th Went up with "Pranger Moody" for firing practice. Flew over sea at fifty feet.

July 31st 'V' on ninth op.(Ben Hall and crew)

Aug 3rd Left for Sigiriya. Moved in billet with Cpl. Hudson,

Freddie Wafford and Doc. Cousins. Major inspection and engine change on V

Aug 16th 'W' crash-landed on nose

Aug 24th 'B' aircraft overdue ('A'. 'M'. 'F'. Took off in search) Mr. Calder, Sports Officer on board 'B'.

Sept. 22nd 'M' took off at 2.30. Joe Cohen and crew, plus one of 'V's crew lost on ops. Japs reported incident. They lost two fighters.

Sept.30th Flew on air test over Minneriya with Frank and Ben Hall (pilot)

Oct 1st. 'V' came back shot up. Joe lost a toe. Main bolt shot out of tail unit. Fuel gauges smashed. found bullet in engine casing after hitting rocker cover. Took tail fin off 'S' to put on 'V'. 'S' now the Christmas tree.

Oct.12th Jap rec shot down by Beaufighter.

Oct 26th 'J' aircraft shot down by Japs.

Nov.3rd Kandy to play rigger with Sgt. Moncur and Taff Evans.

Nov 21st 'V' 'H' and 'P' on photo rec.op. S/Ldr Brady & crew and F/O Davidson & crew.

Nov.24th 'V' engine change with Stumpy Rooke and Nida.

Nov 27th Taff goes in dock

Nov 28th Met Cpl O'Reardon. New on sqdn. Previously met on board ship. Familiarised him on engines.

Dec.5th All aircraft bombed up with twelve 5001b s.a.p. Bombs. Jap fleet sighted.

Dec. 7th New Mark 5c Lib crashes ('L') about three miles from drome. All crew killed.

Dec 10th Catalina took off and crashed in sea. Crew found safe in dinghy. 'V' in search for Lib which was lost looking for Catalina. (I found out when I got back to U.K. that the pilot of the lost Liberator was an old school friend..Desmond Sutcliffe)

Dec 12th Checked prop domes on 'C' aircraft which were swinging to left on takeoff and in flight.

Dec 14th. Went on air-test with S/Ldr Paisley and F/Lt Pinnell. Frightening experience! Found wing to be out of alignment (ex-Ford product)

1944

Jan 13th C.O.has farewell parade. New C.O. S/Ldr Brady. Some 30 Sqdn ground crew posted to our unit.

Jan 15th Took off in 'V' (painted half black/half white) Transferred to maintenance. A very wet period with little flying. Just the odd op.

March 3rd Two new Libs and three Wellingtons arrive. March 15th My Rolex Oyster watch stolen from billet March 21st Bombing ops today with incendiaries. 'F' 'B' 'Y' and 'W'.

March 25th .Air Chief Marshal Pierce came and watched 'P' 'H' 'Y' and 'W' take off on dangerous bombing op. 'P' and 'H' damaged.

April 19th Heard 'B' crash during the night. Ammunition going off Sq. Leader Percival and five others lost their lives. Three survivors.

April 20th Bombed North Sumatra. Photo rec. Shows good work by squadron..

May 6th 'K' missing from air firing. P.O. Dean and one other crew member saved. 11 killed including 2 from the army.

May 8th A Bisley bomber crashed and caught fire on edge of runway. Crew saved.

May 11th Lord Louis Mountbatten's York lands.

May 17th Lord M. Gave a talk to squadron.

May 25th Airman reported missing

June 15th Heard engines screaming at high pitch Lib 'A' crashed near Habarana. Four depth charges exploded. Abel, "Paddy" Hutchinson (pro for Ireland), "Daisy" Williams and rest of crew killed.

July 5th Inspection on 'H' (new aircraft Mk. 5)

July 9th Five kites going out tonight, looking for sub.

July 24th Went up in Vultee Vengeance for drogue towing over Puttalam with Ginger Austin (Libs practice)

July 31st Squadron moved to K.K.S. In fifty two wagons.

Aug 1st I set off with overload tanks on Queen Mary Arr. at 1800 hrs. Four in a tent. Freddie Watford, Hugh Nida, Doc Cousins and self. Trouble with ants! Added legs to boxes then stood them in cig tins containing paraffin. This ensured ant-free tea thereafter! Plenty of good swimming up here at Pt. Pedro. Rest House nearby.
 Aug 18th. Fourteen days leave with Jimmy Larcombe at Ratnapura tea plantation.
 Sept 10th. Heard that Taff Haynes' skeleton had been found between Sigiriya Rock and Bear Rock.
 Sept. 23rd Left for Ratmalana to do engine change on 'D'. Maintenance appears to have transferred to Colombo on 62 RSU.
 Oct 10th After nearly completing engine change found undercarriage damaged. Aircraft likely to be written off after removal of fuel tanks and stress plates.
 Oct 12th Next gang comes down for 'S' overhaul.
 Oct 28th Heard one of our aircraft.. 'A'..had sunk U-boat.
 November F/L. Parsons commits suicide in temple and an M/T airman dies.
 Nov 10th Ensa show.
 Nov 17th Lord Louis M pays us a visit. Heard that Air Vice Marshal Lee Mallory is missing whilst on his way here to take over S.E.A.C. (Air Force)
 Dec. 18th List for married men for returning to Blighty.
 Dec 21st Heard some of ground crew may be posted to RSU. Plenty of swimming and football over Christmas period.

1945.

Jan 6th Volunteered to service and maintain C.O's Hurricane (keep boredom at bay!)
 Jan 10th Nobby Dawes repatriated.
 Jan 15th "Wing" Hudson receives Sgt. Stripes.
 Jan 20th Started packing for move to Minneriya.
 Feb 10th All ground crew leave today, apart from twelve of us (including four aircrew). Put on 'Z' (Christmas tree) to make serviceable. Control column jammed i.e. broken stud. Worked with 'Rosie' Roberts (airframe) as engines are ok.
 Feb. 12th Flight to Minn. Took off at 11.50 with W/Co. Stacey at controls. By way of 'Goodbye' we shot up drome for fifteen minutes. First time I ever felt sick looking up at palm trees from rear turret!
 Arrived Minn at 1300hrs. On later inspection, aileron linkage broken (only half thank God!)
 Feb. 17th Fourteen days leave in Rudella with Jimmy Larcombe.
 March Back on full moon ops again. Plenty of 45* 45** 45*** and majors to do.
 March 27th Waited for 'Y' to come back from the longest minelaying op of the war (3,600 miles) non-stop.
 April 1st Received Cpl. stripes today OF ALL DAYS!, along with Reg Hubbard and a few others.
 April 9th Been with 160 Squadron for two years now. Best unit ever in my nine years of service.
 April 27th Orderly corporal today (first time). Nothing to report
 April 29th Air test in 'Z'.
 May 8th & 9th Two days off. End of war in Europe.
 May 10th Transferred to C Flight and put in charge of 'H'.
 May 11th Informed that ground crew may be sent to Ramri Island in Burma in the near future for P R work.
 May 12th Flew down to Colombo in 'F' to play rugby against Koggella. Won 13/10.
 May 14th 'H' landed at 12.30. Fixed ground crew up with accomm.
 May 17th Heard I'd been posted to No.1 ASR at KKS. Sorry to leave 160 and good mates.
 May 23rd Arrived KKS.
 June 9th Orderly corporal. Heard my last kite 'H' had crashed on takeoff.
 June 12th Nineteen killed in 'H'. Paddy O'Reardon (who replaced me) Jock Dawson, Reg Hubbard (Cpl. Air frame) Blondie" Sage. Heard later that Joe Donald (Instruments)

should have been on it but had to go to dentist. Some of us are lucky (nine lives). Poor Reg. He hated being in the RAF, "Blondie" Sage was so happy-go-lucky. Paddy took life very seriously.

July. 203 Squadron based at KKS appear to be taking over our flight. Object to senior staff (who haven't a clue about Libs) telling me {with my experience on 160 Sqdn) what to do! Introduction of Bullshit instead of being allowed to get on with the job we came out here for... ..Robert S.Coates)
For our non-service readers an ex-brat {boy entrant} could be likened to a term of endearment - until you met one! Actually they were very highly regarded, highly respected and highly skilled.
 (Editor)

A CUMULONIMBUS CLOUD

"Skipper, the water's awful close!"

Our third operational flight after arriving in Ceylon took place on Sunday, Aug. 25th 1943.

The previous day, a Liberator captained by RAF F/O Jock Campbell had departed from our base at Ratmalana, Ceylon, on a mission to photograph some enemy bases in the Japanese occupied islands of the Dutch East Indies, on the other side of the Bay of Bengal, about 1,000 miles away. They had taken off after midnight and were expected to return 14 to 16 hours later or by mid-afternoon. The rule on this squadron was to fly on radio silence so that one would not be monitored and found by the Japs.

Four p.m. came and people were sitting around in the heat waiting for the first sounds of the returning aircraft. Then it was 5 o'clock; then 6. One could feel the unspoken concern. As the evening wore on, it slowly became obvious that Campbell and his seven crewmates were not going to make it back. They were down somewhere in the Bay of Bengal and the odds of surviving a ditching and being found were very small. A search mission was laid on. It was our crew's turn to fly. The plan was to fly along their flight path to within 100 miles of the Andaman Islands and carry out an ever-widening square search to the limit of our fuel endurance and return to base. We were to fly at 5,000 feet and search not only with radar, but also with the eyes of every crewmember.

Our B-24 lifted off the runway at 1.30 a.m. in order to be in the search zone by daybreak. Five hours later, as the sun rose, we were there in a partly cloudy sky. The radar was manned and every one took up positions by the windows, straining to see an orange dinghy, floating wreckage or an oil slick. Several hours later, the pattern of the search had become quite large. We had seen nothing, but we were getting close to a solid wall of black cloud, stretching north and south as far as I could see and reaching from the surface of the water to a very high altitude. I had never seen a cloud like it. At its darkest spot, there were tinges of yellow. It was a fearsome sight.

I did not like the idea of flying into it, but that was where the next leg of the search would take us. No one had told me about weather like this, and what if Jock Campbell and his crew were in a dinghy right under this cloud? We headed into it at 5,000 feet.

It was almost like hitting a brick wall! The aircraft was buffeted unmercifully by violent turbulence. It poured rain - visibility was zero. We began to lose altitude, as though being pushed down by some invisible hand. I moved the throttles forward to regain altitude. It was a struggle to keep the plane straight and level in the maelstrom. We kept losing altitude and. I kept pushing up the throttles. But we were being inexorably forced down. Finally, with the four engines wide open, the altimeter said zero - sea level! I still could not see the water below us. The altimeter moved to

50 feet below sea level. Any instant I expected to hit the water. Then the voice of Jack Fudge came on the intercom. He was riding lookout in the nose. "Skipper, the water's awful close!" Then I saw the water for the first time through the side window. It was only a few feet away. It felt like we were flying along a trough between the waves.

The plane began to climb a little. The water disappeared again. We got up to 200 feet on the altimeter. I simply had to turn around and take the risk that the turbulence would not flip us. I began a slow shallow turn to the left. Finally, we had made 180 degrees. A few minutes later, we burst out of the cloud into the bright sunlight at 300 feet. The air was calm. We all breathed deeply in relief. There was little doubt about what had happened to Jock Campbell and his crew. We set course for home.

This was a tropical cumulonimbus cloud. They are a lethal destroyer of anything that flies or sails into them. They extend to nearly 10 miles in height and are filled with rain and hail. Up and down drafts at speeds of up to 200 miles an hour rage inside of them. Somehow tropical cumulonimbus clouds had been left out of our education. But we had a lesson we would never forget.

It apparently had been left out of Jock's education too. But his luck had run out during the lesson.

(Jerry Boyle, RCAF, from Jack Fudge, RCAF)

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

WE ARE SURVIVORS (For those born before 1940)

We were born before television, before penicillin, polio shots, frozen foods, Xerox, plastic contact lenses, videos camcorders and the pill !

We were born before Radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ball point pens: before dishwashers, tumble dryers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip dry clothes and before man walked on the moon.

We got married first, then lived together, (how quaint can you be?)

We thought fast food was what you ate in Lent, a Big Mac was an oversize rain coat and crumpet something we had for tea. We existed before househusbands, computer data, dual careers and when a meaningful relationship meant getting along with your cousins and when sheltered accommodation was where you waited for a bus. We were born before day care centres group homes and disposable nappies. We never heard of FM Radio Tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial hearts, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings.

For us "Time Sharing" meant togetherness and a 'chip' was a piece of wood or fried potatoes. "Hardware" meant nuts and bolts and software wasn't a word.

Before 1940 "Made in Japan" meant junk. The term 'making out' referred to how you did in your exams, 'stud' was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and 'going all the way' meant staying on a double decker bus to the depot. Pizza, McDonalds and Instant Coffee were unheard of. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, 'grass' was mown, coke was kept in the coalhouse. A joint was a piece of meat you had on Sundays. Pot was something you cooked in.

Rock music was Grandma's lullabies, Eldorado was ice cream. A 'gay person' was the life and soul of the party and nothing more, while 'Aids' just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We who were born before 1940 must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way in which this world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make.

No wonder we are confused and there is a generation gap today. BUT, by the Grace of God, we have survived.

ALLELEUIAH.

(G. Wyle)

MOVEMENT OF MAIN PARTY OF 160 SQUADRON FROM QUETTA TO SALBANI. (A Diversion)

Exit Quetta 15/11/42. This consisted the following personnel- F/L. Riddell (Med.) F/O. Poole (Equip). 1 W/O. 10 SNCO's, and 267 Cpls and other ranks. This was a journey of some seven days. You can imagine it wasn't long before things got a trifle difficult, space was at a premium with so many per coach. Only one tap per coach for washing purposes and that was in the toilet. Kit was difficult to find, you might have thought that parades would have been thrown out of the window, this was not to be. These were held on any platform of suitable length: this also applied at meal times. It certainly caused many an upheaval. We appeared to travel via all the loop lines, thus avoiding the main line traffic. Nevertheless, life was not devoid of visual enjoyments. This was not however apparent when crossing the infamous Sind Desert - that oven-hot stretch of sand that caused so many casualties throughout the years. One very good point was the making of tea with the help of the driver and his fireman.

We did pause awhile at Sukkur, it was here we were able to see the then longest causeway in the world, the town however was out of bounds.

Two other places of note we saw early in our journey, one was the inhabited city of Hyderabad (Sind) the town of Fatepur also walled, however this was deserted. Evening time was the best and much more comfortable, the sun dropping in the heavens losing its heat as it did so. The carriage door opened inwards, being nice and wide one could sit in relative comfort and watch the world roll by. We often caught a glimpse of the very large express trains as they thundered past, names like the Frontier Mail and the Peshawar Express spring to mind. As usual in our early days abroad we were not allowed to buy from the vendors who plied their trade from station platforms, this would have made the journey much more bearable. Day followed day, always the same procedure, this was a journey in contrast to what we were used to, measured in days rather than hours. The sight of any large town at least broke the monotony. It would not have been so bad if they had informed us about the length of our journey, as usual we were probably the last to know.

Arrive Salbani 22/11/42. This was a small mainline station some four miles from a large airfield complex of the same name. Imagine our feelings when we were told it was the base of 159. We knew then that it was just another brief halt before we found our true destination. It was here that we spent our first Xmas abroad. Another party of 160 Squadron had departed from Quetta just before us: they would end up at Ratmalana Ceylon 160's destination at last. On the 2/11/42, acting F/L C.W. Hunter (Adjutant and acting C.O) was admitted to C.I.N.H. Quetta (*Ted Daines and Frank Green*).

(There is more about life at Salbani in AD LIBS 9 & 12. The articles continuing the Thurlough/Ratmalana story, comprising Drigh Road to Quetta and then the advance party Quetta to Ratmalana, are booked for future newsletters. Editor)

2001 Reunion

Remember the dates

Friday 31st August 2001

TO

Sunday 2nd September 2001

**AT The FALCON HOTEL,
STRATFORD UPON AVON**