



160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE
The Chotta Coggage
for survivors



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 Number 17

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OBITUARIES:
 Since our last issue we have heard of the deaths of two of our old mates: Like all our comrades they will be sadly missed.
Ray Wilson: Ray was a cook in the Sergeants Mess and an attendant at our reunions. He lived in Rochdale and is survived by his wife.
Len Sutton: Len, a W.O., was a member of John Stacey's crew and was awarded the D F C for the part he played in the long distance minelaying trips. Len had a major stroke two years ago but kept in touch by the reading of Ad Lib to him by his daughter. *(Ted Daines)*

S.S.O's and D.R.O'S
Thurleigh: Ted Daines has had further contact with Mr.Ralph Franklin and is becoming more involved in the scenario regarding the proposed USAAF museum. Frank Green has also responded with a write up and copy photographs. The latest news is that the camp is being reconstructed to be a holding centre for asylum seekers at a cost of £60 million. Locals who are concerned about this development have named it the Colditz Motel. Ted may be going to the museum site and is worried about whether he can escape a second time. Ralph Franklin writes:
 "Would you mind circulating the details of my project to enquire if anyone has any items of memorabilia, photos, uniforms, stories etc. that they would be prepared to loan for inclusion in the display. Receipts will be given for every item loaned, and they will be returned to the owner immediately on request".
'RAF NEWS': This publication will shortly be launching its own website. The 160 Association will be included in the directory of RAF associations and societies.
Reunion, 2001: 31/8/01 to 2/9/01: The hotel has sent out booking forms. If you have not received a form contact the Falcon at 01789 279953 or tell Ted.
References: For more information about 160, visit Robert Quirk's web site.www.rquirk.com.
Items for AD LIB: Many thanks for all the material coming in – but keep it coming. *Editor*

Making contact – Old Colleagues and 'Help':
 With the advance in I.T. 160 is not being left behind. We have been noticed and it is evidenced by the requests we have been receiving for information including the following:
First Ops from Nutts Corner any background details of these early days when Sgt O'Shea was 160's first casualty – killed by 'friendly fire'.
Middle East: Loss of "S" AL620:Tripoli. A relative asks if anyone remembers Sgt Air Gunner Joseph Patrick Foster k.i.a.16.1.43. They do not have even a photo of him from those days.
W/O.G.E.(Ed) Cooper,Dixie Dean's crew: Lost in ditching of "K" FL911 on 6.5.44. We have been able to provide more info to his daughter in Texas. The official account of this incident is in this issue. AND, lost in the same ditching – **F/O Duncan McDonald** a request for more information and news from anyone who flew with him or knew of him. We do know that both survivors Dixie Dean & Kiwi Baker died some years ago but Ed Cooper's daughter advises that they did visit her mother in Canada.
"A" BZ711: Jap submarine probable 'kill' Oct.44: **Ted Stratford RCAF** has made contact and after all these years has been able to compare notes with Ron Eitel on this operation they flew together.
Jim Jackson RCAF:After 55 years has renewed contact with Laurie Jones,RAAF: We have a couple of articles for Ad Lib from Jim and we have more background about the two "V"s both with identical bulldog logos – or was one an impostor ?
W/O Ron Goodfellow died some years ago and his son asks if anyone remembers Ron who flew with member E.G. Horton in F/O McNabb's crew. Again, this is a case where the family wonder if anyone has a photo of Ron from those days.
F/O Mike Finegood, RDF operator – served Ceylon, Feb – Sept 1943. We have been able to provide some information from our resources and this now appears on the Finegood family website. Anyone with more information ? David Flett was on the flight when he was posted to 354 Sqdn.

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD...

Joining 160 Squadron

I have been most interested to read in AD LIB about the experiences of the ground crew when the squadron was formed at Thurlleigh in January 1942 and of their aircraft being deployed to the Middle East en route to the Far East. The re-forming of 160 Squadron at Thorney Island in October 1942 might be of interest to those members who first joined the Squadron in Ceylon.

I was posted to join 86 Squadron at Thorney Island on 5th October 1942. This squadron was re-forming, with Liberators, having previously been a Beaufort squadron which had been wiped-out in Malta. No 86 was unlucky enough to be wiped-out again seven days later on 12th October, this time on paper, when it was renumbered 160 Squadron. The C.O. was Wing Commander Butler, who amazed us all at a welcoming party in the gymnasium with a most professional display of gymnastics on the ropes and bars. We prayed that we wouldn't be expected to do anything like that!

We started ground familiarisation on our new Liberator Mk.IIIA aircraft and were very impressed with the green carpeted cockpit, ashtrays and a heated coffee thermos. Day circuits were followed by night circuits, which soon came to an abrupt halt after an angry phone call from the Observer Corps in Portsmouth - "Stop flying your bloody aircraft through our balloon barrage!". We were not aware that we had penetrated the balloon barrage at night, but we hastily complied with their request!

The next stage of our training involved being detached to Ballykelly for long-range navigation exercises over the North Atlantic, at the same time checking the fuel consumption. Those exercises started at Rockall and, as all coastal crews knew, after Rockall there wasall ! After completing one of these exercises, we were ordered to proceed directly back to Thorney Island. The captain asked the navigator for our position, which he calculated to be over the Isle of Man. It was deemed to be safe to descend through cloud over the sea and proceed visually to base. On breaking cloud, we were surprised to find ourselves over land, surrounded, by mountains and entering the Glasgow balloon barrage to a hostile reception from the Navy! Climbing quickly back into cloud, we set course for base, having inadvertently located ourselves 185 miles north of the Isle of Man! Approaching Thorney Island, the tower instructed us to remain north of the airfield and to stay in cloud because the airfield was being strafed by two Ju.88's. When cleared to land, we saw that the hangars had been well peppered and some aircraft damaged, including one which was burning fiercely.

On 4th December, we moved to Lyneham. We were told to hand in our Arctic clothing and draw tropical kit! Our destination had been changed to Ceylon.

We left Lyneham for Gibraltar on the night of 21st January, 1943, routing well to the west of the Spanish coast, in order to avoid a Ju.88 base in N.W. Spain, and arrived at Gibraltar in warm winter sunshine, away from the dreary black-out of Britain. On approaching Gibraltar, we had to be careful not to infringe Spanish air space because the Spanish A.A. gunners took every opportunity to fire on Allied aircraft.

While enjoying a 6d tumbler of sherry in the Mess, I met a Bristol Bisley pilot who had arrived the previous night after flying directly across Spain at low level at night. Apparently, this was normal procedure for aircraft with insufficient fuel for the Atlantic route and considered to be fair play since the Spanish ports and airfields were often open-house to U-boats and the Luftwaffe.

The following night we took off heading south to Morocco before turning east over the Atlas Mountains to Cairo, where we saw Churchill's black-painted Liberator which was taking him on his way to Yalta for a meeting with Roosevelt and Stalin.

The next stop was Habbaniya, west of Baghdad, a well-appointed pre-war station with full facilities for families. After a comfortable night stop, we continued to Shaibah and Karachi, where we spent five weeks on our backsides waiting for our aircraft to be checked at Drigh Road. At last, it was a relief to take of and land, ready for action, on 18th March 1943, at Ratmalana in Ceylon, with its coconut palms and golden beaches.

(David Flett)

MORE MINNERYA MEMORIES

*Last issue the todgy wallahs told us about their activities and you may have thought the author **must** have wanted to keep it anonymous. This was not so. In mucking about in page layout the editor confesses that his grandson was momentarily not at hand when making some 'dramatic' changes and Geoff Wyle must have gone AWOL. There is more from Geoff.....*

Bombay run. Jack Burgess and Ad Libs 9 and 12

On one occasion to Bombay ('sorties' to improve diets in the Officers and Sergeants messes), we went to the Taj Mahal Hotel to meet our air crew, and, on passing through the entrance, the ground crews saluted two high ranking Army officers.

We were in our usual Minnerya 'garb' and were promptly put on a charge by a lower ranking Army officer, who was accompanying the other two 'big wigs', for being improperly dressed. Having come from an operational unit, No.1 uniforms were not in vogue.

When Wing Co.Stacey got to hear about the charges, they were scrubbed on his orders.

About Bombay. The Eros cinema in Bombay was the only cinema where I had experienced air conditioning. I cannot remember whether such a system was in the Minnerya or KKS cinemas. Perhaps someone will confirm!

And about rationing.

Back in 'Blighty', the tea ration was 2 ozs (56 gr.) per person per week when I left those shores for Ceylon.

On arriving in Ceylon, much to my surprise, I discovered that an enterprising department in the then Ceylon Government called 'The Tea Marketing Board' provided forms for military personnel so that parcels of tea could be sent home.

The tea was 'Broken Orange Pekoe' packed in 1 lb thin sheet lead clad parcels, 2 lbs per pack, and enclosed in a wooden box.

The forms were filled in with the proposed recipients' names and addresses and handed in to the Orderly Room together with several rupees for cost and packing. We were allowed one such parcel per month - I exceeded my ration by getting forms from other 'bods' who did not want to send any tea home.

My family and friends benefited to the total of a hundred or so parcels during my spell in Ceylon. In fact, I was able to have some of this excellent tea after I was demobbed. (The current price of tea is approximately £2.50 per 125 grams packet). (Geoff Wyle)

ANOTHER DITCHING STORY. 'DIXIE' DEAN & 'KIWI' BAKER SURVIVED.

From File Air23/1953, PRO, Kew

This transcript is from a publication called IOGROPS, Vol.1, No.1. It describes the ditching of FL911 from 160 Squadron.

Ditching of a Liberator

At 1710 hours on the 6th May 1944, a Liberator was engaged in a depth charge dropping exercise 30 miles west of Puttalam. The weather was good and sea moderate. After dropping a smoke float as a target, the aircraft turned and ran in at 50 feet. Two depth charges were released and almost immediately afterwards two explosions were heard by the pilot. The nose of the aircraft was flung violently upwards and the combined efforts of both first and second pilots were required to right the aircraft. The captain shouted to the wireless operator, who had been flung against the back of the second pilot's seat by the explosion, and he managed to switch on his transmitter and send "SOS" followed by a long dash.. This signal, in a corrupt form, was picked up by R.A.F. Station, Ratmalana, which notified N.A.O.R. of the bearing, but were unable to confirm that the signal was an "SOS".

The pilot of the aircraft found that he could maintain a straight course by the use of full power on his port engines and reduced power on the starboard engines. Full starboard rudder was required to do this as elevator and rudder trimmers were inoperative. Height was gradually being lost and the pilot had no option but to ditch the aircraft. It was not possible to give ditching orders as the captain, who had both hands on the controls, could not use the hand microphone. There were two impacts, the first one throwing the pilot (who was not strapped in) against the instrument panel. The second impact, which was not so violent as the first, appears to have rendered the pilot momentarily unconscious, as he next remembers being just below the surface of the water. He scrambled out through the broken cockpit roof and swam to the mainplane. The forward portion of the aircraft, which had broken away at the trailing edge of the mainplane, had come to rest in an attitude where the mainplane was almost vertical. There were no signs of the rear portion of the fuselage.

The wireless operator, who must also have been momentarily rendered unconscious, remembers nothing of his efforts to get out of the aircraft - he was, however, seen by the pilot to be standing on the mainplane with another member of the crew. One of the passengers, of whom there were four, was also clinging to the wing tip of the mainplane. The pilot observed dinghies floating in the water about fifty yards away, and asked if any of the others could swim to them. They replied that the distance was more than they could manage. He, therefore, swam over to the dinghies only to find that they were badly torn, presumably having caught on the jagged edges of the fuselage on being released from their stowages.

Meanwhile, the wireless operator had slipped into the water (or the mainplane had sunk beneath him) and found one of the other survivors swimming beside him. The wireless operator then got hold of a parachute bag from which he extracted the Mae West it contained. This he put on and the other survivor asked if he could find a Mae West for him. While swimming around looking for another parachute bag, the wireless operator found another man in a Mae West, obviously unconscious. He tied the tapes of the Mae West, which were undone, as best as he could and then swam back to where he had last seen the man who had asked him to find a Mae West, but there was no sign of him. The W/O now found himself alone in the water. A 'K' type dinghy that he found was torn and unusable. Shortly afterwards the pilot swam up to him, supporting himself by hanging on to a parachute bag. The pilot had not realised until now that it contained a Mae West and the two of them commenced to swim in what they thought to be the direction of the coast. The wireless operator suffered from burns on his chest and leg and was at times compelled to hold on to the pilot for support. Nevertheless they kept on swimming, being afraid of becoming cramped. They found the water quite cold after a few hours immersion. Small fish occasionally attempted to nibble the wounds of the wireless operator but he found little difficulty in keeping them at bay.

About 2200 hours, the sound of engines was heard and the steaming lights of a launch came into view but passed out of sight to the westward, heading north. Just after dawn on the 7th May, an aircraft was seen to the westward also heading north. As there were no aids on the Mae Wests, such as floating torches, fluorescine, whistles or distress signals, no attempt

could be made to attract attention although the two survivors, as is usual, shouted loudly when both launch and aircraft came in sight.

High-speed launches had been sent out from Colombo, one at 1900 hours and the other at 2225 hours on the night of the 6th May to search the area indicated by radar plot and the bearing of the distress signal. A pinnacle had accompanied the second high-speed launch. These marine craft searched all through the night and it was probably the pinnacle, manned by a volunteer crew, whose lights were seen by the survivors.

A Walrus, 1 Harvard and 2 Wildcat aircraft searched an area up to 20 miles west of Puttalam before darkness set in on the 6th May, but saw no signs of wreckage or survivors.

On the morning of the 7th May, the Air Sea Rescue Walrus at Ratmalana was ordered to the search area and arrived there about 0430 hours. Two flights, each of six Beaufort aircraft stationed at Ratmalana, were ordered to search an area 3600 square miles in extent around the search position on the morning of the 7th May. Thunderstorms interfered with the Beaufort search and, at times, lowered the visibility to such an extent that visual contact was difficult to maintain. The Fleet Air Arm Walrus from Puttalam carried out combined searches throughout the day with the A.S.R. Walrus, both aircraft returning to Puttalam for refuelling.

At about 1120 hours on the 7th May, the pinnacle, which was searching the southern portion of the area, found an "H" type dinghy, which was picked up. The C.O.2 bottle of this dinghy was not discharged and this would appear to indicate that the dinghy was released on impact and the retaining cord severed before it could operate the cylinder. The pinnacle then combed this area thoroughly, finding several pieces of wreckage. It was not until an hour later that two survivors wearing Mae Wests were sighted; one of them frantically waving his underpants. A member of the pinnacle crew swam to the pilot and helped him to the side of the boat. Both survivors on board, the search continued for another hour. The two appeared to have suffered little from thirst or exposure and, in fact, the W/Op asserted that he could have kept going for several hours longer. The master of the pinnacle nevertheless became alarmed at the feeble state of the wireless operator's pulse, and decided to return to base.

The high-speed launch, whose fuel was running low, returned at the same time and a nursing orderly was transferred from this launch to the pinnacle in order to attend to the two survivors. Base was reached at 1600 hours on the 7th May and the survivors were soon in medical hands.

A relief high-speed launch had been despatched to the area to continue the search in co-operation with the two Walrus aircraft, and she continued this search all through the night of the 7th May. On the 8th May searches were continued by the Walrus aircraft, but no further survivors were picked up or wreckage sighted. The search was called off at last light on the 8th May, 1944.

Comments

As far as can be ascertained, none of the crew or passengers of the Liberator were wearing Mae Wests at the time of the accident. Had the four survivors of the ditching who were not picked up, been wearing Mae Wests, they would have stood a better chance of being rescued.

No additional aids were attached to the Mae Wests. These, if carried, would have made the task of the searching surface crafts easier, for the light from a floating torch signal might have been seen by the pinnacle.

If search aircraft had been laid on when the "SOS" was received, an hour's daylight would still have remained and the aircraft could have searched into the night with a good chance of spotting visual signals. It was not known that no additional aids were carried on the Mae Wests.

Fluorescine would have assisted in the location of the survivors. Men in Mae Wests alone are very small targets for which to search.

(Robert Quirk)

The missing are listed as: F/O Richard H.Morgan,RAAF,2nd pilot: F/Sgt William R Wiseman,RAF,Navigator: W.O.II George E Cooper RCAF,W.Op/AG: W.O.II Franklin T Mabee,RCAF: Sgt.Andrew.Cameron,RAF,FI/Eng.:Sgt.Jack.Dunkley,RAF, W.Op/AG:.F/Sgt.Douglas.H.Skinner,RNZAF,W.Op/AG:(all crew members) plus passengers F/O George Korski,RCAF, Air Gunner: F/O Duncan F McDonald,RAF, and Army Gunners. Goodness and Leeming. All are commemorated on the Singapore Memorial. The RNZAF survivors were F/O John (Dixie) Dean, Captain, & W/O Pumau (Kiwi) Baker W.Op/AG:

THE MYSTERY OF THE 'V's

A couple of months ago, thanks to Robert Quirk in Winnipeg, I was delighted to learn of the existence of the 160 Sqdn Association and the Association's Newsletter. Through the latter I was able to contact, for the first time in some 55 years, my old Aussie comrade-in-arms Laurie Jones. Laurie pointed out that the Mk. III Liberator on the Association letterhead, FL936 "V", was my assigned PR aircraft in "C" Flight, and my log-book tells me I took her over Sumatra nine times. But there is a bit of a latter day mystery about FL936.

Recently I was passing time in a large department store. I found myself in the toy department, and noticed a small model of a B-24 Liberator packaged in the usual impenetrable plastic and cardboard. Model Lancs and Fortresses are common here, but model Libs are rare, so for fun I bought it.

The package yielded a die-cast model of a Liberator about three inches long. Nearly all such toys in Canada have USAF markings, but this B-24 had the perspex nose of the Mk III, RAF roundels, and coastal command camouflage; pale fuselage and under-surfaces and a darker colour above.

This was astonishing enough, but what really put me off balance was that the model's letter was "V", the logo on the nose was unmistakably the same as that on the nose of the 160 letterhead's Liberator, and the only deviation from complete coincidence was that the model's serial number was FL938 rather than FL936.

The last time I flew "V" was April 21, 1945 and just a little short of 56 years later I'd found a damn near identical model produced in China and imported by the Canadian subsidiary of a giant American retail chain! The mystery was a little too thick and a little too personal to let lie, so I emailed Robert Quirk. Robert, who modestly denies being an expert although he seems to know more about 160 than anyone, says his sources reveal a certain amount of confusion about FL936 "V". He knows the USAF photographed the aircraft at Delhi, and there is a book** with an artist's impression (which he has emailed me) bearing the "wrong" serial number FL938 and the top-hatted cigar smoking bulldog logo which graces both the letterhead "V" and the model. He believes the Chinese probably copied the book's impression for their model. He has also seen the aircraft identified with 159 Sqdn.

There's only one item that still bothers me, which may be simply the product of failing memory, and that is the bowler-hatted cigar-smoking Churchillian bulldog logo. I don't remember its being on the "V" I flew. It seems to me at one point there was a marvellous Viking on the nose, but I don't remember the bulldog. So the mystery is to some extent still with me. But I do remember "V" was a splendid kite to fly; the Mk IIIs were so admirably nimble compared to their successors! *(Jim Jackson).*

*(Editor's note: After comparing notes with Robert Quirk we are near enough certain that in the book** the Larry Davis "V" is 936 and not 938. FL938 was allocated to 224 Sqdn which was based in UK. There are photos of the Bulldog logo "V" on the Aussie War Museum site with a small Jack Russell (or similar) in view (reproduction not permitted!) and another via the USAF museum with an IAF 'bod' guarding it and a caption saying it is FL938 "V" of 159 Sqdn stationed in Delhi!*

Frank Green who worked on "V" remembers that the logo was painted on by rear gunner Joe Baker (Ben Hall's crew) and we have heard that there may have been a painting of a kangaroo on the other side). If anyone can throw any more light on the matter it would be appreciated).



This bulldog emblem was carried on No. 159 Squadron Liberator Mk. III, FL938, with Battle Letter V, while stationed in New Dehli, India. She was equipped with a Boulton-Paul tail turret. (via USAF Museum)

VICTOR BINGHAM AND HIS FORTHCOMING BOOK ON LONG RANGE OPERATIONS

Ted Daines received a request from an author, Victor Bingham, for confirmation of various dates and facts in respect of the use of Liberators in the Far East including information about one particular operation in May 1944 when a 160 Liberator discovered a hitherto unknown Jap airfield on the west coast of Sumatra.

This approach was on 22nd February and on 9th March we had our first contact with Jim Jackson who coincidentally was Captain on that operation. He writes: I have my logbook open in front of me to the page for May 1944. On May 24th, the record shows my crew and I did the PR Bingham asked about in FL945 "H" which Ginger Nichol's gang maintained so well. The page also bears a vertical aerial photograph, marked "SECRET" on the back, showing a bit of Sumatra coastline, a meandering river, fields and forest and a few clouds, and amidst it all the raw gash of a large airstrip. This was Troemen, which the RAF had not known about before. Jim continues:

Flying on 160 Sqdn was rationed according to a roster, with each crew taking a turn in order. A separate roster was kept for the rare PR flights, which added to the suspense of sqdn life, and my turn came up shortly after I'd started my tour and one week after my 21st birthday. This flight provoked a certain amount of anxiety, because although we'd done a couple of routine anti-submarine sorties up to then, we'd been nowhere near enemy territory, and before we arrived on the sqdn several aircraft on PR had been shot down. We were briefed to take off around 2:00 am to get us to Sumatra half an hour after dawn, to make an approach about 50 ft above the sea to avoid their radar, then climb to 25,000 ft., take pictures of an area by the coast, and then get the hell out. We were told there were no enemy fighters based anywhere near our target, and that in any event they'd never venture more than 200 miles off the Sumatra coast.

Very early the next morning, about 275 miles off Sumatra, flying in broken cloud in a grey pre-dawn with half the crew still asleep, I was staring drowsily ahead when I suddenly saw a single engine fighter passing from left to right across our bow about 500 yds ahead. Such a sight wonderfully alerts the mind. I grabbed the intercom handset to warn everyone, and at the same time hit the throttle levers. I hit them much too hard, and the boost gauges swirled to 65", far past safe limits, before I came to my senses. I was incredibly lucky,

because the engines had every excuse to blow up, which would have been a hilariously ignominious way to be destroyed by a fighter.

Everyone was awake in the instant. Athol Beck, our rear-gunner, was asleep on the flight deck behind me, about forty feet from his turret, which included fifteen feet along a narrow bomb-bay catwalk the sides of which bristled with hooks and sharp edges just set to tear and catch bulky high-altitude flying clothing. Athol swore later he was in his turret two seconds after he heard my order, without any recollection of how he'd got there.

The fighter had turned steeply to port and disappeared into a piece of cloud and I had followed him, not with any grand ideas of pursuit but to minimise his room for manoeuvre. Jack Hynes (my second pilot), Tom Knott (my navigator) and I conferred briefly about what we should do next. In our situation the answer was not self-evident. A bomber pilot must push on regardless to drop his bombs, but a PR pilot is useless if he doesn't return with photos. I was concerned that the Japanese would be warned we were coming, and be ready for us. On the other hand I wasn't certain the fighter had seen us. We agreed, not exactly enthusiastically, to keep going.

However the climax of the flight was yet to be. We dropped down to get under the radar (which under the circumstances seemed excessively cautious), and climbed into a cloudless sky over our target, and the first thing I saw, down under the nose to starboard was a huge airfield that no one knew existed, near a village called Troemen.

You must understand that seeing the fighter had made us all very edgy. No sky, as we climbed to photo altitude, was ever watched more closely. And then suddenly we were virtually on top of an enemy airfield.

My problem was that our assigned run was over in about fifteen minutes, and we should have left immediately because that was the calculated maximum time before fighters could show up. However the airfield was another 15 or so minutes away, and because it was new and unmapped I knew I should bring back photos. At 25,000ft there is little sensation of movement; one feels one is simply hanging there, naked and motionless.

Those 15 minutes was the longest 15 minutes of my life. But we got the photos, no fighters appeared, and we returned to base without further excitement after 15 hours and 45 minutes in the air. At the de-briefing the Air Officer Commanding, 222 Group, phoned from Colombo up to ask me about the adventure, and a little later one of our photos appeared in the Air Ministry intelligence bulletin from Britain, with the suggestion that this new unfinished airfield might indicate new Japanese activity in the Indian Ocean. However it appeared to be still unfinished when I flew over it (by then quite nonchalantly) a year later, although it was about that time that Laurie Jones brought back a rather hair-raising photo of some half-dozen Oscars lined up on the field.

(Jim Jackson)

(It may be some time before the book is published but we will look out for it. There are contributions from Bill Cooper already included. Editor)

SOME MEMORIES FROM A FITTER ARMOURER

Joined 100 Sqdn, Seleta, Singapore July, 1941, via SS "Capetown Castle". (Still have my I.D. Card, Malaya) February 1942 – to Q Squadron, Australia and, later in 1942, to Colombo, Ceylon. Posted to Minneriya. Found abandoned 'kite' left by previous squadron and forgotten. Cleared metallic strip to take off.

Transferred to 160 Sqdn, Sigirya.

Sent to Ratmalana to sort out rear turret on Lib. – motor, feeding ammo, not working – met old mate from Singapore, Fred Gillam.

Seal on the box. Eventually broke the seal and corrected the problem – made new seal – in business.

Two weeks later "WINGS" an American magazine showed an exploded view of the box !!

Aug 16 I see "W" crashed on nose returning from 159 Sqdn with spares. Only casualty one of my armourers, Rigazoni, - jumped from rear escape hatch and broke an ankle.

Adapted one kite to drop 30,000 candlepower flares: had to use shears to cut off outside fin of bottom flares to close bomb doors. On test flight, on catwalk, opened bomb doors: hit a storm, beret flew off, shirt flew up: got the last one off, yelled all clear: straight away put nose down and dived. I went flying down to finish under the top turret. Landed OK, - three with burst ear drums. We were all in hospital for a week – 2 bottles of Guinness a day !

While on leave, bomb dump blew up. Theory – my shears were locked away – hacksaw used to cut fins – heat generated ?

May 27th Lord Mountbatten visit. Seven of us introduced to him. Told him I was from Cardiff, said he was there for three days and it p.....d down (his words)

June 15th: Lib 'A' - night take off. Watch Tower saw flash and' from the time the noise reached them, estimated 6 miles away. Following day the Gurkhas cut a track to get us to the scene - Taff Pearce and I went in – about 12 inches of ash and hot ! One depth charge, end cap off, like a blow lamp. Got two depth charges out – the fourth had crystals around the edge – Oh dear !!

Officer i/c demanded it be brought out. I said "Not on"!!

Demanded a written order to be handed to the Gurkhas – he backed down. Bomb Disposal came up from Ratmalana – said no way - and blew it up.

July 31st: As we arrived at KKS, Cpl Pay Accounts, was shouting 'Shag' Wedlake your on the boat. Had a big P.... up at Jaffna Resthouse - on me !

(From R [Shag] Wedlake, Cpl Fitter Armourer)

THERE WERE OTHER FIRES.

The ORB's show that 160 had a history of accidental fires

There were 2 fires at KKS, October 1944 and December, 1945. This latter was actually resulting from a bonfire. Sadly, there were deaths in both instances.

Sgt Eric Dyson and LAC Duncan McKay were the casualties.

At Minneriya there are similarly 2 fires recorded: in June, 1945, S.S.Q. was burned down and in July we lost the Station Stores.

As a result, the redundant air raid siren that had become the daily signal for taking anti-malarial precautions was remustered as the station fire alarm.

(Les Crawley)

THE RESULTS OF "C" FLIGHT, 160 SQUADRON'S, FIRST 26 OPS FROM SIGIRYA.

We all wondered what these secret ops were hoping to achieve and now, thanks to Robert Quirk, we are able to provide the official record.

Transcript from AIR 23/7762 Public Records Office, Kew

SECRET

PROGRESS REPORT NO. 1 ON R.C.M. INVESTIGATIONS BY AIR COMMAND, SOUTH EAST ASIA.

INTRODUCTION

1. Between 22 January and 29th March, 1944, the two listening Liberators flew a total of 26 sorties from Ceylon to investigate enemy radar transmissions. The two aircraft have usually operated simultaneously in the same general area and have on occasions been accompanied by diversionary bomb carrying aircraft.

2. As a result of the very insistent reports of the operators, the possibility of the use by the enemy of land based radar, having exceptionally long range, was included in the "Interim Report on Japanese Radar Activities in South East Asia."

3. The signals referred to in this report on 43, 53 and 78 megacycles with P.R.F.s varying around 200 cycles per second, were received on a number of occasions at all heights practically throughout flights lasting more than 12 hours.

4. It was only as a result of exhaustive air and ground tests that these signals were proved to be almost certainly spurious. No single satisfactory explanation has been ascertained but it is now reasonably certain that the received signals were due to the combination of British signals beating with pulses generated within the aircraft sets and auxiliary equipment.

5. The special operators with this experience behind them are now much more prepared to differentiate between genuine and false signals. In addition an aural indication is now obtainable in the aircraft to check the P.R.F. of any signal.

6. To co-ordinate the reports of the special operators and to provide technical assistance and guidance, a F/Lt. Technical signals Radar post for duty with the Special flight has been created and a suitable officer posted to fill the vacancy.

7. The flight has been handicapped by the lack of technical spares and suitable test and calibration equipment, which has resulted in discrepancies in the logging of the same signal when received by the two aircraft.

8. In comparing the work of these aircraft with that of aircraft engaged in similar tasks in other theatres, it must be remembered that the return flight from Ceylon to Simalur, for example, involves a flight of over 14 hours. Only a relatively small area can therefore be covered in each flight.

OBJECT OF INVESTIGATIONAL FLIGHTS.

9. The purpose of these investigations is firstly to produce data on which enemy radar cover can be estimated and secondly to obtain the necessary technical information which will lead to the introduction of suitable ground or airborne counter measures.

SUMMARY OF OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE USE OF RADAR BY THE JAPANESE

10. LANDBASED. In other theatres, a number of Japanese radar ground stations have been captured, all having the same basic design and similar operation characteristics. The radio frequencies of these sets are of the order of 100 megacycles with the P.R.F.s between 750 and 1000 cycles per second.

11. Signals have been intercepted in the South West Pacific Area which strongly suggest that the Japanese have additional landbased radar equipment operation on higher frequencies, for aircraft warning, A.A. gun and searchlight control.

12. SHIPBORNE. A Japanese cruiser has been photographed and the aerial system of a radar warning system is plainly visible. Signals intercepted by aircraft when far from land indicate that other Japanese vessels, particularly submarines, are fitted with radar.

13. AIRBORNE. Intelligence sources report that a form of A.S.V. is fitted to enemy flying boats of the Emily type. Combat reports and other information continue to increase the suspicion that the Japanese are using or experimenting with a form of A.I. fitted in night-fighters

(Paragraphs 14 and 15 comprise some three pages of tables, calibrations and highly technical data which I can email to any 'buffs' out there upon request. Editor).

Photographic evidence.

16. South Andamans. Good quality photographs exist of the radar installations at Mount Harriett (approximately 3 miles N.W. of Port Blair). Twin radar installations are clearly visible with aerial systems similar to those of the Japanese stations captured at Guadalcanal and Attu.

17. Car Nicobar. Recent P.R. cover of the island is incomplete and still under examination but so far no suspicious installations have been observed.

18. SABANG. The available P.R. cover is 9 months old but a note from C.P.I.S. states that within 1 1/2 miles of the pinpoint given in Flight 9 (2) (05° 53 ' 95° 15') a small oval shaped clearing had been made near the summit of G.Iboih. While no definite installation is visible on the sortie of the 22nd. June, 1943, levelling had taken place, possibly for some future construction. The position affords an unobstructed field of vision except towards the south, where it is obscured by the slightly higher ground forming the actual summit of G.Iboih.

CONCLUSIONS.

19. On the results so far obtained the following conclusions have been reached: -

(i) The Japanese are employing, in this theatre, beam swept ground radar of the Attu or Guadalcanal type.

(ii) This type of installation is certainly installed at Mount Harriett (south Andamans). Similar equipment is almost certainly in operation on Car Nicobar and Sabang, although in the case of the latter there must be some difference as the signal is vertically polarised.

(iii) Watch on Mount Harriett site is continuous and non-continuous on Sabang and Car Nicobar.

(iv) The signals can be received in an aircraft flying about 8,000 ft. up to a distance of 160 miles or more, dependent on whether the beam is sweeping or looking towards the aircraft.

(v) The performance of each individual station has not been completely established but the effective range under favourable conditions is probably of the order of 80 miles.

20. Where no results have been obtained in a given area, e.g., Simalur, it cannot be assumed that no radar exists. The explanation may be that either, the equipment is temporarily unserviceable or alternatively that search was not made on the correct operating frequency band. Such negative results can only be confirmed by photographs and future intensive flight investigations.

Sigs/1106/R.C.M.

23rd, April, 1944

BUT NOT EVERYONE SEEMED TO THINK 160's WORK WAS SO SECRET

On 21st April, 1945, W/O.T. Davies of ASWDU, Ratmalana, and formerly of 160 Squadron, reported to the C.O. that, whilst in a café in Colombo, a Sqdn Leader, accompanied by a civilian lady, engaged him in conversation during the course of which the Sqdn Leader informed him that 160 would be on a minelaying operation on 22nd April off Singapore.

Wing Co.J. Stacey reported it to Air Staff and proceeded to H.Q. 222 Group. The target was altered as a precaution. Efforts to trace the Sqdn Leader were to be made. W/O Davies commented that there was much loose talk about 160's role and its targets

(From ORB's)

THIS IS NOT A SECRET !!
160's REUNION IS FROM
FRIDAY 31/8/01 TO SUNDAY 2/9/01
YOU CAN BOOK FOR ONE, TWO OR
THREE NIGHTS
CHECK IT OUT WITH TED