



160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Chota Coggage for survivors



Spring 2002
Number 21

Life President: F.W.(Bill) Cooper, 37 Oakdene, Lansdown Road, Cheltenham, Glos:GL51 6PX
Tel: 0124 2255119 Email: cooperbill@freeuk.com
Reunion Organiser: E.H.(Ted) Daines, 45 Randolph Road, Norwich, Norfolk: NR1 2RU
Tel: 0160 3660514 Email: ted@160squadron.freeserve.co.uk
Editor: Les Crawley, 10, Cleasby Gardens, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear: NE9 5HL
Tel: 0191 4878734 Email: lescrawley@lineone.net

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. S.S.O's and D.R.O's: Contacts
2. Now it can be told: The 'Hang up' and 'In the beginning'
3. The Orient Express and more travel Plus 'Long Range Flying'
4. Long Range Ocean Flying Cont'd
5. 'AWARDS' a special letter and 160 helps out

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

Diamond Jubilee Reunion 2002: It seems likely that we will have a good attendance this special year. Almost all the reserved rooms have been taken up but there is still time to book. Dates again, - Friday 30/8/02 to Sunday 1/9/02.

160 History: Ted advises that he believes that his history of 160 is now virtually complete. If anyone has any articles, photos or stories they would like to have included please send them to him a.s.a.p.

Web Sites: www.modreunited.com. May be helpful when trying to catch up with old colleagues. Presently asking for members to come forward for a Forces Special edition of Cilla Black's Blind Date programme. It is not stated as to whether wheelchairs will be made available.

www.acseac.co.uk Mentioned last issue - would like to be the official 160 web site for keeping in touch plus a news page for up to the minute items and a message board such as it has for 355/356 sqdns. In return Gary Fowkes asks for all our memories and copies of photos to add to his online encyclopaedia of all Liberator squadrons. Any objections? Seems a good vehicle for putting 160 even more on the map.

www.perth.igs.net/~long/mess.htm. An interesting site with much material about 150 Sqdn and other gen.

Books of interest: Janes's Fighting Aircraft of WW II: End of run @ £7.99 from Pandora's, The Cloisters, Aylesbury, Tel: 01296 338592. Did you know that a copy of 1941 K.R's can be had for £46. Alternatively, ask any ex Halton 'brat' if you really need to know the contents.

Annual Subs: See box on Page 5.

OBITUARIES

We have a nil return

MAKING CONTACT - News, old colleagues and help.

Goolie Chits: A pal of mine recently asked me if it was possible to obtain a copy as he was off to Kazakstan border area on a humanitarian mission and wondered whether it might come in handy. I was able to reproduce a very poor copy from the www.perth.igs.net web site from the RAF slang pages. He was not of course being serious about potential threat (he collects odd things) but it allowed us to exchange some fun emails from fictitious tribesmen and, as a fallback, I did make arrangements for him to join our local ladies choir. He would like a better copy, used or unused, if anyone can help.

By the way, the perth web site invites additions to their RAF slang vocabulary. See item in S.S.O's

F/O Duncan McDonald.(See AD LIB No.17)A request for info from a Claudio Meunier this time. F/O McDonald was born in Argentina and Claudio is an aeronautical historian from Argentina. We have put him in touch with a previous enquirer but he asks if anyone has a photo of 'K' ,FL911, or any other details. F/O McDonald appears to have made only one flight with 160 - the ill-fated ditching of Dixie Dean in May 1944.

W/O G Nightingale. His son has asked for information about his service with 160 in the Mid-East and 159 at Salbani. We were able to give him the information for both squadrons. He was with 160 Sept-Nov 42 (F/O J.Evans crew) and with 159 Nov 42 - April 43 (S/Ldr Beck's crew). Anyone remember him?

Robert Quirk: wonders if anyone recalls the detachment of two 354 Libs 'P' & 'S' to Sigirya in July 1944. He is busy transcribing from the ORB's of the Squadron. ALSO

Robert has sent us a copy of the complete operational files of 'C' (1341) Special Flight - crews, operations, reports and statistics - the lot - on some 85 pages.

Sgt D.Lumley.(AD LIB No.19) Bill Cooper recalls that his crew was originally due to make the flight to Cocos with 'H' but they were replaced and this was Sgt Lumley's first 160 operational transit flight. Bill remembers the occasion and recalls that as they had already had their briefing he went through it with Sgt Lumley who was also a flight engineer.

Paul Churchill: SS 'Cuba': In searching the net for details Paul had almost given up when SS Cuba was shown as receiving a mention in our newsletters. Read about this in this issue. It is remarkable that the search engines on the net can pick up a small mention of the name by us in an article.

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

Jack Fudge sent us a few articles written by Gerry Boyle and a couple have already appeared. Here is another that just proves that, human frailties being what they are, it was not always possible to achieve a perfect result.

THE HANG UP.

In 1944, we were members of RAF 160 Squadron, stationed at Sigiriya, Ceylon. Our mission on this day in March was to drop 4 x 500 lb bombs and 3 cans of incendiaries on the Japanese occupied Car Nicobar Island, which was located on the east side of the Bay of Bengal, north of Sumatra. The bombing was to be done at night and the prime purpose was to get the Japs to turn on their radar. Following about 30 minutes behind us was another Liberator, especially equipped to calibrate the Jap radar.

Vic Allen, our navigator, was in the hospital with a bout of malaria so we asked RAF Flying Officer 'X' a navigator in another crew to come with us. 'X' was older than most of us, probably in his late 20s. He had a calm reserved manner and was considered to be quite competent. We took off at 11.00 pm and six uneventful hours later were over Car Nicobar Island. I could see the whitecaps as the waves ran against one side of the island. The bombing run was carried out at the directions of the navigator, who lined us up as we ran up to the target and released the bombs. We were at five thousand feet and I turned to port to watch the bombs explode as they hit. Nothing happened. A check of the bomb bay revealed that the bombs were still there! They had hung up. For the next 30 minutes we made more runs over the target but could not get the incendiaries or the bombs to disengage from the bomb racks. Jack Fudge even climbed out into the bomb bay and stood on a 12 inch wide runway, with nothing between him and the ground but one mile of air and with a screw driver tried to pry the bombs loose, to no avail.

Finally, we managed to free up the three cans of incendiaries. Each can was filled with about two dozen incendiary sticks a foot long and 2 inches thick. We made one final run over the target and Stan Heffer and Dick Bauer dumped them out by hand through the door in the bottom rear of the plane. A couple of minutes later, we could see a string of fires burning in the jungle below us. Then, hoping the Japs had turned on their radar, so that our mission would not be a complete flop, we returned to base, angry at the armament crew for not hooking up our bombs properly.

We landed at Sigiriya at 15 minutes after noon the following day. The C.O. met us and asked us how things went. I told him the bombs hung up and we had to bring them back. He looked at me in disbelief, peered into the bomb bay and departed unhappily. An investigation determined that 'X' had not properly operated the bomb selection device, causing it to jam. For this, he received a derogatory notation in his log book and a reduced reputation on the squadron.

(By Gerry Boyle - from Jack Fudge)

IN THE BEGINNING.

(From Ted Daines' first book of 160 history).

Some forty members from nearby Molesworth decided to answer the cause to volunteer for overseas service with a newly reformed heavy bomber unit, namely 160 Squadron. Arriving at RAF Thurleigh one of my corporals ran into trouble straight away: he actually saluted Joe Cook with a resulting barrage painful on the eardrums. During the next few days with the arrival of various trades the airfield became rather crowded. This led to the defence flight being moved to nearby Little Staughton. Without a sergeant our life became somewhat idyllic but this was severely interrupted when he burst onto the scene to catch most of us undressed. Much has been said about this particular senior NCO - I don't propose to say anymore.

(Did things go wrong you ask - Yes!)

Pay Parade.

This was pure farce. Never before have I ever been on a pay parade where they have run out of cash resulting in the Acting C.O. making a plea to have money returned. Joe Cooke was having what appeared to be a fit.

(There will be more snips from the history another time).

AND ON GOING ABROAD (More from Ted)

When asked one day what I thought about going abroad, my reply was that where else could I have afforded such a journey; it would have cost thousands. Just imagine I've been to W.Africa, S.Africa, Egypt, Aden, India (at a time when there was no Pakistan or Bangladesh) Burma then, on the way home, Iraq, Palestine and lastly Libya. I will dwell on the sub-continent of India mainly. It was here that one learned the fact that most travelling was gauged in days rather than hours. One journey I made by rail lasted seven days; this of course was Quetta to Salbani on the Bay of Bengal and some seventy miles west of that mighty city, Calcutta. This was a very large place indeed and very densely populated, surrounded by a ring road, on the dock-side of the River Hoogly, named Upper Circular Road, the other going the other way to Sealdar Station was the Lower Circular Road. On the main six streets there were countless restaurants several cinemas, one very large covered indoor market and one could get anything there. Transport of every known variety, taxis, trams or then you might fancy a bus ride, but then again what about a rickshaw, prices were never as printed, a good argument brought a better deal. One could have a suit or a pair of shoes made in half a day. Shirts or pyjamas were almost certainly of the finest poplin. On the other side of the main street Chowringhee, was a huge Maidan, at weekends it was full of people playing sports. At the bottom was the local racecourse. India was full of history: in certain areas one was reminded of the Indian Mutiny. My memories though always reminded me that India was a very beautiful country. There were the magnificent snow views of the Himalayan Massive. Some tremendously large rivers, the Indus, Jumna, and the mighty Ganges plus the Brahmaputra. Then there are the buildings like the Red Fort at Delhi the magnificent

Secretariat with all the Governmental buildings designed by Lutyens who somehow blended the old buildings with the new. Further along the line at Agra was the greatest ever memorial to love, the Taj Mahal, if only one had the money to wander as one chooses.

I wonder is Salbani still there, the airfield I mean. I wonder if Midhapore is still out of bounds. Does the Railway institute at Kharagpur still hold their weekly dances? Can one still travel by train and tell the ticket collector someone holds the warrant further up the train? Do the Charwallahs still tell their stories under the basha verandas? I often wonder if the charwallah at Quetta achieved his ambition to raise two football teams, or did he fall by the wayside in his efforts? Does one ever hear the ghostly growls of heavy aircraft? I often close my eyes and drift back, I often do really wonder.
(*Ted Daines*)

MEANWHILE, ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS.

When the Squadron moved from Quetta to Salbani, I was stuck in hospital; afterwards being put on police duty at White Barracks before rejoining the squadron ... and that train journey across India was the most wearisome journey I ever made. Along the way, we stopped briefly at Moradabad station and as the train stood there, some of the lads threw items of food onto the line-side for a starving pariah dog: As the dog picked up the food, the train started to move and the dog turned and stood astride the track, gnarling at the grub and trying to get it down and paying no heed to the oncoming carriage wheels ... and, as we watched, this wheel cut the dog clean in two; the front half of the body was on one side of the line and the back half on the other, but it still kept on trying to eat the food!

We had to change trains at Howrah and wait overnight for our connection but there was no accommodation for us, so a few of us scrounged around and found some trucks in a siding - one of them was unlocked, so in we went and got down to kip on the floor. How long I slept is a mystery but I awoke and wondered if perhaps we were tempting fate, as in the event of an engine being coupled up to the trucks whilst we slept, we could have found ourselves God knows where: ... - I struck a match to look around and found we were all covered in like a brown-lilac sort of blanket... Millions of cockroaches! We had all felt grubby, filthy and weary before this, but now we felt much worse and we left the truck and made our way back to the platform to wait out the rest of the night. The next day, as we were still waiting, there came a file of Chinese troops armed with rifles and fixed bayonets and this file kept on coming and coming and coming; it seemed never-ending and, inevitably, it prompted us to wonder where they had come from and where they might be going.

We changed trains again at Kharagpur, then had to wait at Salbani for transport to collect us and take us to the squadron. Booking in at the guardroom, I

happened to look into the cell and, there in all his glory was Tom Bonnick! Well, it was too good an opportunity to miss, so I grabbed the bars on the cell window and shouted "LEMME OUT! LEMME OUT! (Like Tom used to do in White Barracks at Quetta) but the old lad did not appreciate the humour of the situation. If memory serves me aright, he was doing a short term of detention for some 'minor crime' and each day, escorted by an SP, he had to go, with a gang of coolies, and do some sort of manual labour on the camp, but in fact all he did was sit down and watch the gang work. Then we were taken to a basha, about 4 miles away, where the Defence Flight was billeted, alongside that small 'lagoon' where the vultures congregated in the trees. The ablutions were across a paddy field, near a huge tree which was home to what seemed like a million rhesus monkeys - every one alive with lice and, across the way, was a deep, wide ditch of unclear water which housed millions of frogs which made the most unearthly row at night.
(*Les Jewitt, Defence Flight*)

AND WHILST ON ABOUT TRAVEL

Keeping in mind that Tokyo is more in the headlines as we go to print - but this time for co-hosting the World Cup - they clearly have trouble with translation.

Car rental brochure, Tokyo.

"When passenger on foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour".

Air conditioning notice, Japan

"Cooles and Heates: For condition of warm air in your room, please control yourself".

Tokyo hotel rules & regulations

"Guests are requested not to smoke or do other disgusting behaviours in bed"

Maybe the best one comes from Nairobi

"Customers who find our waitresses rude, should see the manager".

(*None of the above is relevant to our forthcoming festivities at the Falcon - we hope - Editor*)

LONG-RANGE OCEAN FLYING

By F/Lt C.F. Wilson

Reproduced, with permission, from 'The Aeroplane' Monthly - edition 7th September 1945.

ROYAL AIR FORCE Consolidated Liberators of the Indian Ocean Air Force are flying distances never before flown over this vast expanse of water. Their patrols over Northern, Central and Southern Malaya are taking them on flights extending to 3,400 miles. They frequently remain airborne for 22 hours, flying distances equal to one and a

half flights across the Atlantic or eight and a half flights between London and Edinburgh without landing.

One pilot -Flt. Lt. J. A. Muir, RCAF – recently created a record by flying right round the clock twice, remaining in the air for 24 hrs. 10 mins. With the exception of U.S. aircraft operating over the South-West Pacific such endurances as these have not been achieved before.

All the crews engaged in these exacting reconnaissance patrols have long experience of coastal operations but, whatever their previous knowledge, special 'nursing' is required to fit them for a 22-24 hour sortie. Directing their 'nursing' and their operations from a room at the Ceylon headquarters of the Indian Ocean Air Force is a Wing Commander. J. N. Stacey, D.S.O., D.F.C., with the experience of three anti-U-boat tours behind him. He received his first award as a Liberator pilot after leading a mining operation and his second as a Catalina pilot for his performance in an armed reconnaissance over Sabang. With his own wealth of operational experience to guide him he now works out complex details of navigation and fuel consumption to ensure that these long sorties over water, jungle and mountains are completed with as little trouble as a flight across the English Channel.

The patrols are planned in such detail that, unless some unforeseen trouble arises, the amount of fuel aircraft will retain one hour before reaching the target and again on return to base can invariably be estimated to within 50 gallons. Patrols of this nature could not possibly be undertaken unless every member of the crew were thoroughly 'keyed up' and knew his aeroplane backwards. No crew when it first joins could attempt such flights without intensive training, however experienced it might be in other forms of general reconnaissance flying. A new captain will always go on one of these long flights with an experienced crew before he makes the attempt himself: so will a navigator. When he has flown on six trips he invariably finds his knowledge of range-flying has improved enormously and he can get far more out of his aeroplane than he could before. The same applies to the entire crew. They have to be specially nursed, beginning with the shorter flights a sortie of 2,750 miles, for example, is almost a daily occurrence and gradually working up until they can tackle a 3,400 miles flight with confidence. The great difference between operating over huge distances in this theatre and over the smaller expanses of sea nearer home is impressed on crews. Out here they have nothing like the same scientific navigational aids that they had over the Atlantic or the North Sea and wireless is neither as reliable nor as accurate as they knew it at home.

Wherever possible the crews are briefed for these operations on the previous day, but in planning ahead many possible weather hazards have to be taken into account. Navigating over these enormous areas is a most intricate business. There is always the likelihood that weather will force aircraft anything up to 60 miles off their normal course and there might be an unexpectedly long search for the target – both of them factors liable to throw estimates of fuel consumption right out. With very little margin to play with, the pilot must keep a shrewd eye on

his petrol gauges and in the event of an unexpected change in the wind he must use his discretion, whether to turn back or complete his task at the risk of running dry many miles out at sea. These distances could never be achieved unless every advantage was taken of the weather, especially the freakish monsoon weather – flying at varying heights to dodge the cloud tops, for example.

Operations of this nature throw a tremendous responsibility on to the ground crews, but they are doing a really great job. Whatever work they are called to, they never let the aircrews down and look after the Liberators as proudly as if they flew them themselves. They work under merciless conditions of heat. They start their day's work as early as possible without risking malaria by getting up before dawn but they are busy through the full heat of the day - and working in or on all-metal aircraft through a temperature of 100 to 140 degrees can be a grilling business.

The unusual length of these sorties, and the necessity for regular inspections, mean high-pressure work for these ground crews in crowding their maintenance duties into brief periods between flights. Many a time they have laid down their tools at five, had a meal, changed into slacks and returned to their aircraft to work on until midnight - perhaps all night.

These Liberators carry a crew of eight, each trained to take over another's duty during almost a complete day and night over the ocean, but opportunities for sleep are rare.

Normally, each crew undertakes one of these long flights about every five days, but the record for sheer concentrated flying belongs to **W.O. R. H. Crawford**, a navigator, who in eight days flew four sorties ranging from 18 hrs 42 mins to 19 hrs 38 mins – a total of more than 76 hours. In two of these sorties he flew with his regular crew: in the other two he volunteered to fly with a new crew, to help the less experienced navigator through his initiation in this type of patrol.

If, as is sometimes necessary, the crews are briefed on the actual day of the operation, they may be out of their beds and 'on the go' for 27 hours at a stretch. This is a typical timetable of their movements between rising and retiring: -

5.00 a.m. called out of bed

5.30 a.m. breakfast

6.15 a.m. briefing

8.00 a.m. take-off

6.00 a.m. (following day) landing

6.15 a.m. interrogation

7.30 a.m. supper

8.00 a.m. back to bed

The crews carry the normal flying rations, but in this part of the world they take plenty of liquid preferably a refreshing drink like limejuice. A good meal before they take-off and another when they return are found to sustain them satisfactorily throughout these long, monotonous flights. And 'a good meal' means the same operational meal as in the aircrew canteens at home – eggs, bacon and chips.

(From Derek Collins: Derek {Fl.Eng} & Ron Crawford {Nav} were both members of Ted Horton's crew)

The purpose of the 24 hr 10 mins flight was to drop two British Agents behind Japanese lines in Southern Malaya

AWARDS.

A number of awards were made to members of the Squadron arising from long distance flights and we are grateful to Roy Schroeder for a copy of the letter that was sent to his parents in February 1946



MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FOR AIR

OTTAWA
February 22, 1946

Mr. and Mrs. W.W. Schroeder,
R.R. #2,
Centralia, Ontario.

Dear Mr. and Mrs Schroeder:

I am writing to say that all ranks of the Royal Canadian Air Force join me in warmly congratulating you and the members of your family on the honour and distinction which have come to your son, Flight Lieutenant Wellington Leroy Schroeder DFC, through the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross for great gallantry in the performance of his duty while serving with No. 160 Squadron of the Royal Air Force.

The citation on which this award was made reads as follows:

Flight Lieutenant Schroeder has completed many long ranged operational sorties all of which have entailed the double crossing of over one thousand miles of sea and deep penetration into enemy territory both by day and night. He has also taken part in a number of moonlight mire-laying operations which have been flown at a low level over heavily defended areas. This officer has at all times displayed a high degree of courage, skill and devotion to duty."

The personnel of the Force are proud of your son's fine service record

With kindest personal regards

Yours sincerely,

Colin Gibson

Minister of National Defence for Air

S.S. CUBA:

In "Making Contact" on Page One, the item regarding Paul Churchill's research into his father's Merchant Navy career has brought an insight into how scanning the net can bring quite amazing results or answers to what might otherwise seem to be lost causes.

Paul had had no success in finding out details of one of the ships his father had served on as a steward when in the Merchant Navy – the Cuba, and had almost given up hope until he spotted a reference to the word Cuba under 160 Sqdn Association. In a 27 year career it was the only ship that his father had sailed on for which he did not even have a photograph.

We were able to send him a picture of the Cuba plus maps showing the route of the convoy. Ted was also able to provide him with details of the voyage. He had a special interest in the Cuba since his father joined the ship (obviously with the squadron in February 1942) and Paul was born in November that year.

One bit of information he did have however, about life on the Cuba, is of interest covering the catering side of a troopship – a stores calculation sheet for when it was carrying American troops later in the war but underneath the American ration (higher surprisingly!) can be seen the 'Military Ration'. It would appear that 160 members were entitled to:

"Meat,Fresh: 10 oz from a combination of
beef,lamb,mutton,pork & veal,
sausage & liver.
Fish Fresh 3 oz. Dried 2 oz
Meat Preserved 1.5/7 oz
Veg Fresh 5 oz
Veg Dried 1.1/7 oz
Potatoes 13 oz
Rice 1 oz
Butter 1.1/2 oz
And so on"

The only distinction between the ranks comes in Fresh Fruit, where officers get 2 pcs daily, and troops 3 pcs weekly.

Paul, a retired Customs & Excise Officer, and now Commodore of West Kirby Sailing Club, advises that he is very grateful for the responses that followed his email to Robert Quirk and that 160 Sqdn can be proud of its contribution to the human history of Britain.

(Thank you, Paul)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

These are due from 1st September and as we virtually operate on a year to year basis EARLY payment is requested to finance the coming year. Ted would prefer to have payments before the reunion so that he has more available time to look after the organising.

HOW MUCH ?

£5 Annual membership plus
£3 For "AD LIB" newsletter p.a.

