



# 160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE

## The Chota Coggage for survivors



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Number 22

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. S.S.O's and D.R.O's : Contacts
2. A double celebration
3. Awards and Commendations
4. Awards Cont'd and Interlude
5. Very Long Distance Operations and Thurleigh revisited

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

**Diamond Jubilee Reunion 2002:** There is a special reunion message from our Life President, Bill Cooper, in this issue. Not only are we celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 160's re-formation but it is also the 25<sup>th</sup> reunion. It has been said that reunions, like birthdays, are good for you, the more you have the longer you live.

**Annual subs:** Ted advises that these have been coming in slowly. Please respond to this reminder.

**Web Sites:** Yet another web site that can be used to help find old pals from service days: it has pages covering 610 units, squadrons, stations, etc. – as yet without 160  
[www.comradesandcolleagues.com](http://www.comradesandcolleagues.com)

**Thurleigh Airfield Museum:** This is now open at the following times this year: Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 4 pm

September 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

October 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>

November 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>

Further information obtainable from Ralph Franklin on telephone 01234 708715. Entry is free but donations for upkeep welcome.

Parties may be catered for outside these hours by appointment.

Ted was present at the opening on 27<sup>th</sup> July and his report on his visit plus other information is included in this issue. The opening will also be covered in the next edition of 'FLYPAST'.

**Articles for AD LIB.** Although we can continue to fill up with more from ORB's for a while, we are short on topical news items that could be of interest to members. Ideas and suggestions or other material would be welcome.

### OBITUARIES

We have another nil return.

**MAKING CONTACT** – news, old colleagues and help.

**Sky Blue Camouflage.** Frank Green has received a request from associate member Robert Quirk (he is also a model maker) relative to camouflage experiments carried out on 160 Libs at Ratmalana.

He writes: 'On 29/4/43 Mk 111 "W" FL929, pilot F/Sgt Hill, retained its white colouring while Mk 111 "H" FL945, pilot W/O Ben Hall, was painted with one coat of 'SKY', a shade of blue. These two aircraft then flew in line astern over the aerodrome at 1,2,5,10 and 15,000 ft. P/O Brookes, a camouflage expert from A H Q, and five other observers, watched these experiments. The official "SKY" colour was blue, but I believe it tended to have a greenish tint to it. Then there was 'SKY BLUE' which I understand was pale blue: there was also a 'DEEP SKY', a darker blue. The one colour that should be remembered by members of the squadron, especially by those who during 1945 looked after aircraft FL935 "S" or FL936 "V", - is "PRU BLUE" which I understand was the colour used for both these aircraft. I would not know because I left our wonderful squadron and returned to Blighty in January that year. Can anyone remember, and possibly produce, these shades of blue – or know of other model makers who have knowledge/samples. I appreciate that it is almost asking the impossible for a person to remember colour shades after 57 years but it would give me great satisfaction to help the Canadian gentleman concerned with this information in return for all the research he has carried out on our behalf. If, by some miracle, someone can produce the necessary, please send it to me and I will forward it to Canada. (I suppose there is little chance of P/O Brookes reading this?) Frank Green, 4 Silo Drive, Farncombe, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 3NZ' (ORB' for 29/4/43 state that as there was no more paint left, 'sky dope' was used in the test. Editor)

**F/O Duncan MacDonald.** Examination of ORB's suggests that he was a qualified gunnery instructor from Colombo Gunnery School and, during April 1944, he may have carried out the series of nine lectures for gunners and also made several flights in the training programme ending when he, with two army gunners, died in the ditching of "K" FL911 on 6/5/44. No one has, as yet, come up with a photo of "K", FL 911  
**Goolie Chits.** (AD LIB No.21) Is there *anyone* out there on the worldwide Internet who can provide a copy? The request is still on file.

## THE REUNION a double celebration

### .25th Annual Reunion – September 2002

(From Bill Cooper, our Life President)

Colleagues.

Please accept the apologies of Margot and myself for our absence on this momentous occasion.

First, I wish to pay tribute to the late John Munday who initiated these reunions 25 years ago – the same length of time that I have had Multiple Sclerosis. It is worth recalling that John actually spent little time with the squadron as he remained in India after the squadron moved to Ceylon. As his health deteriorated, John was assisted by his niece, Susan Eastley. After the passing of John, Susan stepped into the breach, assisted by her husband John.

Eventually, it was considered appropriate to find one of our own to take on the task. I recall mustering all of my powers of persuasion one afternoon in the corridor lounge of the Falcon and persuading (or was it perhaps strong-arming) Ted Daines into taking on the role of reunion organiser. To do this, I had to persuade him that, to a man of his considerable organising abilities, the job would be a doddle. (Sorry, Ted!)

In the Spring of 1997, I started a modest quarterly news-sheet, AD LIB, which on occasions boasted eight A4 pages. This seemed to be well received. After issue No 14 (Autumn 2000) my M.S. progressed to a point where the production of AD LIB became more of a chore than a pleasure. Les Crawley stepped into the breach and deployed more advanced word processing technology than I possessed. We must be very grateful to him as AD LIB is the cement that binds us together. (In passing, I might mention that I have discovered that Les and I, many years ago, shared a common interest in a little known operation – “OPERATION WAGGLE-B”).

At the reunion in 2000 you did me the great honour of electing me to be your Life President. I can assure you all that I am very proud indeed to be the first holder of this position.

It is my earnest hope that enough of those presently able to attend the reunions will be able to continue to be able to do so in the future in order that the ‘160 Spirit’ will survive for some time yet and that the Falcon at Stratford-upon-Avon will continue to be the venue. It is conveniently located for most attendees and must be imbued with the spirit of comradeship, being the scene of so many service reunions over the years. It is a pity that the organisers of these have experienced so many changes in ownership and management of the hotel.

We are a unique band of brothers, survivors of a little heard-of, and short-lived, squadron which achieved so much. Please rise and drink a toast to “The Squadron History Forgot !”

Enjoy the rest of the reunion. I send the best wishes of Margot and myself to each and every one of you.

BILL COOPER      LIFE PRESIDENT

### The ‘Diamond Jubilee’ Year of the Re-formation of 160 Squadron R.A.F.

(Some recollections from Ted Daines, Reunion Organiser and Vice President)

The start of the re-formation of the squadron began very badly for the ground echelon, with the airside of this unit already engaged in assisting Coastal Command operating from Nutts Comer and busy helping with the protection of the shipping lanes, and other aircrew personnel taking on the training of crews at Nassau in the Bahamas.

The ground crews formed up at RAF Thurleigh (Bedfordshire), and with space and facilities at a premium, conditions could not have provided a worse start, especially with about three inches of snow covering the ground.

Boarding the SS Cuba on about February 10<sup>th</sup> 1942; setting sail for foreign climes on February 16<sup>th</sup> 1942; the first few days were quite comfortable observing this mighty armada with its huge protecting escort.

This however, as the saying goes, was the calm before the storm. The weather changed from squally to downright rough, with waves higher than the ship we were sailing in - we were in the waters of the infamous ‘Bay of Biscay’. I think all suffered with that scourge of sea-travellers, seasickness, - “You must keep eating” they told us, easier said than done. Clothing always appeared to be on the damp side, trying to keep warm was also a problem.

After five days of pure misery, the heaving seas eased somewhat: people were smiling again, even taking in some food, but this was nothing compared with the feeling of well being when we were able to enjoy the warm winds blowing from the equator. Then, to crown it all, the order to change into K.D was given. Even the Bingo games started up again, though it seemed to me these were people who never seemed to have a duty to perform.

Having already written about the voyage, often termed ‘A Cooks Tour’ by most of us, I am using it as a lead in as to why I think that the squadron kept together all these years, ultimately to enjoy a sixtieth anniversary.

I believe it was the epic tour that bonded these men together for their overseas period of duty plus the acceptance of the mixture of Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and U.K. aircrew, with each other taking all together, it provided a happy squadron that saw them through till re-pat.

Now, some sixty years later, the days that pass have built up to this anniversary. This would not have been possible but for the foresight of one man who deemed that 160 squadron should meet once a year at a place suitable to talk with old friends to re-enact old times. I refer of course to John Munday, now sadly departed, but certainly not forgotten. It is true that we have branched out somewhat into an Association, but bearing in mind John was a very sick man, I think all will concede that he did a remarkable job. Numbers at times sadly diminish but we maintain a goodly turnout, though I’m often irked when asking some if they are going to attend the reunion, the answer comes back, “No, I wont come because I wont know anybody”.

The question surely is “Were you or were you not of 160 squadron?” And not “If you knew or did not know anybody?”

I don't think that anybody in the dark days envisaged that we would ever be preparing for a Diamond Jubilee Anniversary.

When the light fades and one starts to grow sleepy and then startled into wakefulness, when hearing a ghostly choking growl of a Twin Wasp starting up - or was it something in the street?

Does the Railway Institute at Khargpur still hold dinner dances? Does the train instinctively slow down when going through the airfield at Salbani? Do tigers still roam the Bay of Bengal area?

Did the char wallah achieve his goal of providing a first and reserve team or, when trying for an "A" team, did he fall by the way side?

All who served with this elite squadron have dreamy memories that the years have failed to shake off and probably, like me, often wake up near the fire and start wondering.

Does Joe Cooke count the stones gathered at Fayid from the so-called parade ground in his sleep? Has Charlie still got his flywhisk? No doubt the poodle has been dispensed with.

Yes, I often really, really wonder, - perhaps they now only exist in our minds; there again, what priceless memories we have to discuss with fellow members and friends.

One final thought to end this anniversary writing, that is the memories of the squadron that through the years have served us so well at reunions.

Long live the Reunions! Long live 160 Squadron!  
(*Ted Daines*)



The 160 Diamond Jubilee Cake prior to being consumed with relish at the 2002 reunion.

With grateful thanks to David Flett, the donor.

## AWARDS AND COMMENDATIONS FOR 160

This newsletter cannot cover all the good things that have been said about 160 but a mention of some items from ORB's is appropriate at this time.

From the Middle East operations

### Successful Bombardment Operations: Date 4.12.42

1. The following letters have been received by the Commanding General, Ninth Air Force with much gratification:

"I have just seen photographs of yesterday's attack on Tripoli carried out by the 98<sup>th</sup> Heavy Bombardment Group. Please convey my hearty congratulations to your Bomber Command on the high standard of accuracy their bomber crews are now attaining: they are doing grand work".

Sgnd. A W Tedder

"The undersigned has noted with satisfaction the very successful raids carried out by the units of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command over Tripoli Harbour during the night of November 28-29 and during daylight hours of November 29<sup>th</sup>. The night raids conducted by British Liberators and the daylight raids by United States B-24's resulted in the destruction of many vessels in the harbour and considerable damage to enemy shore installations.

Please express my appreciation to the officers and men of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command. Congratulations and thanks - to the ground personnel who "keep em flying", and to the splendid teamwork and precision of the airplane crews".

Sgnd. F M Andrews

2. General Brereton expresses his own personal congratulations and his appreciation of these commendable tactical operations.

3. I add my appreciation to the officers and men of the 1X Bomber Command for these and other prior successful missions.

F W Timberlake.

Brig.General, U S A, Commanding

## ANOTHER ACCOLADE.

The date of this report is not recorded but it is an appendice No.16/45 from the ORB's for March 1945

## AIRCRAFT ATTACK JAPS' SEA LIFELINE

Aircraft of the Indian Ocean General Reconnaissance Group, which has its headquarters in Ceylon, are continuing the war against the enemy's lines of communication by throttling the sea lifeline that lies between Rangoon and Batavia, a thousand miles apart.

To maintain her rapidly seized island 'empire', as well as her armies fighting on the Irrawaddy and Arakan, Japan has to rely on shipping to a great extent, and in the past three years she has built a large merchant navy consisting mainly of little wooden ships, varying in length from eighty to a hundred and twenty feet and with a gross tonnage ranging from 100 to 200. These ships are the latest targets for coastal aircraft, targets against which the triple armaments of mine, bomb and torpedo are now ranged as part of a gigantic operation directed against the enemy wherever he may be found in South East Asia. Although separated from the Burma front by over a thousand miles, there is no mistaking their part in the mosaic of the whole.

## AWARDS Continued

Every cargo of reinforcements, arms, ammunition materials and supplies that goes to the Straits of Malacca or the Gulf of Martaban has a direct bearing on the progress of operations on the Irrawaddy or even the Burma Road.

The task of laying mines in Japanese-occupied waters is arduous as well as hazardous and often aircraft are operating near their extreme limits while they are actually engaged on the work. The Indian Ocean is never an easy stretch of water to navigate and when a definite landfall has to be made at some lighthouse, the lot of the navigator becomes especially onerous.

Leaving the jungle airfield in the heat of the afternoon, he has to watch his instruments all through the long hours of the outward journey. The slightest miscalculation may easily have a disastrous effect. It is not a question of dashing across the channel to lay mines in the Bay of Biscay or even flying from an Italian base to the opposite side of the Adriatic. Air war in the Indian Ocean is always one in which huge distance forms a formidable barrier. In the case of mine laying, this is even more obvious. For hours on end then, the aircraft fly across the miles of empty ocean, maintaining a height of between 1,500 and 2,000 feet: then, as the enemy occupied coast is neared, they come down low to pin-point their positions by picking out some landmark.

All this sounds very much a matter-of-fact sort of job, but this is far from the case. Naturally, there is a direct approach to a hostile shore and there the aircraft have to run the gauntlet of anti-aircraft fire. "As we approached the enemy coastline, we were picked up by enemy searchlights and subjected to intense anti-aircraft fire", said S/Ldr S.H. Trotter of Brandon, Manitoba, Canada, after one recent very successful sortie.

"Some of it was quite accurate, but the really heavy stuff was well out of range. Fortunately none of our aircraft were hit and we were able to carry out the mission without interruption. There was a great deal of shipping at the time". On one occasion, the crew of an aircraft piloted by F/Lt J F Leeper of Toronto, Canada, found a Japanese tanker, 180 ft long, completely severed in two. "We had been laying mines there a little while before", he said.

The Squadron Commander who had lead many of the mine-laying sorties is no stranger to long-distance trips across the Indian Ocean. He is W/Cdr J.N. Stacey, of Broughton Park, Manchester, who in 1942 led a bombing raid on Sabang, off the Northern tip of Sumatra, by Catalina. With the possible exception of the American raid on Tokyo that was then the longest bombing raid of the war. W/Cdr Stacey was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his work in that raid.

*(Editor's note: The author is not stated - maybe it was the Intelligence Officer. The operation mentioning J F Leeper was in "N" BZ752 on 24/2/45. There were, as we know, two ditchings in this period of long distance operations - "P" in March and "X" in May 1945).*

## AWARDS – there was recognition.

The efforts of 160 did not go unrewarded and the ORB's for March 1945 carry the following report.

It is extremely gratifying that the Squadron's work generally and on mine laying and V L R (*very long range*) operations in particular, has been granted recognition this month by the award of the following decorations to the under mentioned personnel, Authority: HQ AC SEA letter 725/26/R/ Pri dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1945 The immediate occasion for these recommendations by the Station and Squadron Commanders was the very successful effort of the squadron mine laying in Singapore Harbour on 26/27 March 1945.

The Squadron Commander was also recommended for decoration by the Station Commander on this occasion.

W/Cdr J.N. Stacey	DFC	RAF	Awarded DSO
F/Lt L. Waterfield		RCAF	Awarded DFC
F/O H.P. McNabb		RAF	Awarded DFC
F/O J D A Davidson		RCAF	Awarded DFC
W/O L.T. Sutton		RAF	Awarded DFC
F/Sgt J McGarry		RAF	Awarded DFM

All the above showed an outstanding example of determination and devotion to duty and an example to the other members of aircrew and encouragement to all ground personnel.

*(Editor's note. There were other awards to 160 crews, e.g. Roy Schroeder DFC and Laurie Jones DFC as well as Taff Williams DFM that I know of: - it would be good to have a complete honours list of all those who were given recognition on the squadron – does anyone happen to have a list?)*

## TIME FOR AN INTERLUDE: Looking back 60 years – some thoughts on this getting older business.

Old age is when it takes longer to rest than to get tired.

By the time a man is wise enough to watch his step, he's too old to go anywhere.

Old age is having the choice of two temptations and choosing the one that will get you home earlier.

You know you are growing older when you realise that caution is the only thing you care to exercise.

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you grow older it will avoid you.

The ageing process could be slowed down if it had to work its way through parliament

A man has reached middle age when he is cautioned to slow down by his doctor instead of by the police and when he has started growing in the middle instead of both ends.

## WHEN V. L. R. STARTED AND WHAT WAS INVOLVED

It was on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1945 that the Squadron commenced the new mine laying operations and the following, dated 19.1.45, covering general instructions, is extracted from ORB's.

### MINING SQUADRON ORGANISATION FOR OPERATING FROM ADVANCED BASE

#### TOP SECRET

##### General

Owing to the distances involved aircraft will be operating and doing their final take-off from Minneriya, although maintenance, servicing and arming will continue to be done at Kankasanturai.

Aircraft will leave Kankasanturai fully equipped for their sortie but final briefing and collection of target data will be done at Minneriya.

##### Prior to KKS departure

Normally aircraft will leave KKS for Minneriya at 15.00 hours the day before the take-off on their sortie. At 10.00 hours crews will report to the old intelligence library, where transport will be waiting, and collect jungle kits, then go to the parachute section to collect parachutes, wireless section to collect headsets and microphones, equipment section for boots, armoury for collection of sten guns and ammunition (and revolvers if so desired) then to the aircraft where all this equipment will be stowed. Jungle suits on personal charge are also to be stowed aboard aircraft at this time.

Personal kit sufficient for one night is to be taken but a maximum weight of 10 lbs per person is not to be exceeded.

An hour and a half before time of take-off transport is to leave the Sergeants' Mess, proceed via the Officers' Mess – where it is to pick up officer aircrew – and then go to the Operations Room. In the Operations Room the following items are to be collected: -

- (a) Escape Aids    (b) Stop Watches    (c) G R Wallets
- (d) Wireless Gen    (e) Torches                    (f) Navigators' Charts

##### NOTE: -

It is emphasised that Captains are wholly responsible for their aircraft being fully equipped and operationally serviceable in all respects.

### MINNERIYA

On arrival at Minneriya, all equipment will be left in the aircraft with the exception of the following: -

- (i) Personal Kit    (ii) Navigators' Charts    (iii) G.R.Wallets
- (iv) Wireless Gen    (v) Escape Aids

Escape aids will be handed to the Intelligence Officer and re-issued before final briefing.

Crews will be informed by the Squadron Intelligence Officer the time of final briefing when they hand in their escape aids. All routeing, target information etc., will be covered in the final briefing on the day of take-off.

Flying rations will be collected at Minneriya.

Crews are warned that there will be a 'pocket turnout' both at Kankasanturai and Minneriya.

Fuel permitting, aircraft will land at KKS for de-briefing.

Wing Commander, Commanding

19.1.45                    No.            160            Squadron

*(Robert Quirk has provided a full copy of the tactics used by the Squadron for aerial minelaying and, all being well, this will appear in a future issue. Editor)*

### **AND, BACK TO WHERE IT ALL BEGAN or THURLEIGH RE-VISITED.**

#### **306 Bombardment Group Museum.**

It was on 9/10/42 that a formation of B-17 Flying Fortresses left Thurleigh for what was to be the first of 341 daylight bombing missions over occupied Europe. The museum, opened on 27.7.02, celebrates the lives of over 8000 Americans who passed through the base and of the local community in which they lived. It includes material on 160 as well as many other historical items and a chapel.

Ted Daines was invited to the opening and writes: -

'My return to Thurleigh, unlike my previous visit, was purely voluntary. Also, unlike my former visit, the weather was much kinder; in fact it was a glorious day. Gone were the traces of unfinished buildings, water ran freely when the taps were opened.

I was paying a visit to the place where 160 squadron was re-formed on 12.1.42. The purpose of which – the kind invitation of Ralph Franklin on behalf of the 306<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, USAAF, who took over this airfield towards the end of 1942 after we had departed for warmer climes. A small but very purposeful building had been turned into a museum.

From experience I knew that this must have entailed much hard work and dedication. In this they had certainly chosen the right man for the job, dedicated certainly, hard working, again certainly, very knowledgeable, a man who would listen to you when asking questions on various things.

One thing, all these things would have been impossible but for the generosity of one, Jonathan Palmer, who donated the building etc.

A real team effort ensued. The result, a small but magnificent museum that would delight young and old alike. We, who went to Thurleigh, likened it to Colditz. We all escaped in 1942 – the thing was would I escape a second time?

I spent the day walking around chatting to people who were there and appeared to take great interest in 160. I even managed a glass of champagne.

Carrying surplus photographs with me, I took delight in giving them away. This was not enough for the receivers – they wanted them signed. I had the pleasure of speaking to two former American pilots and many others who were there – in all a very pleasant return to the place we often talk about.

Television sent a crew from BBC Cambridge.

However the highlight of the show was sprung on Ralph Franklin by a ten minute flying display by the well-know 'Sally B'. This, a well kept secret, delighted a happy audience: it certainly pole axed Ralph. I left this happy gathering mid afternoon for the journey home well pleased that the time had been well spent.

My grateful thanks to those who made my journey possible:

*Ted Daines*

NOTE: Entry is free but donations to help further development and upkeep will be much appreciated.