

# 160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE

## The Chota Coggage for survivors



**AUTUMN 2003**  
**Number 26**

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1. S.S.O's, D.R.O's and Contacts
2. Reunion & Now it can be told  
Les Jewett continued, the Awatea
- 3 "IF": The Jap Surrender
- 4 Jap Surrender continued
- 5 Jap Surrender concluded & Prunery

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

**ANNUAL SUBS:** Most have paid but there are still a number outstanding.

**REUNION 2004:** Early indications are that next year the reunion will be a week later – 10 – 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2004.

**AWARDS:** This information is still being compiled and from Robert Quirk we hear of

S/Ldr R B Fleming AFC and DFC. He was credited with being largely responsible for the conversion of 160 and 86 Sqdns on to Liberators.

S/Ldr J F Percival: Mention in Despatches II/6/42 (pre 160)

Sgt S R Frost, DFM, RAF and RCAF. On second tour flew 15 ops with 160 in Middle East, July – October, 1942. (Awarded pre 160)

And a query. Was W/Co. Brady awarded the OBE after leaving 160?

**BOOKS:** A couple of very short reviews;

**"Above Sumatra"** by Jim Jackson of 160 Sqdn. *'is a penetrating analysis of war's corrosive impact on those who serve in its strategic backwaters. There is action enough here, but the theme is the soul destroying effects of endless inaction, which is as much a part of war as its moments of stark terror.'* Not about 160 specifically but descriptive of life on and operations from a jungle airfield such as Sigiriya. From Trafford Publishing, Suite 6E, 2333 Government St., Victoria B.C. Canada. Web site: [www.trafford.com](http://www.trafford.com)

**"Bawdy Ballads & Dirty Ditties of the Wartime RAF"** With some 350 contributions this is a book to be taken in short bursts and, in between, kept under the mattress away from prying eyes. An innocent non service person might believe that some of the material must have been written by juvenile sub human morons – it is uncensored and very 'blue' in parts. It is available from Woodfield Publishing, Babsham Lane, Bognor Regis PO21 5EL  
Tel.01243 821234 £9.95. Post and Pkg free if you mention this newsletter.

**"Flypast" Magazine.** The August issue has a letter about SEAC Libs with a claim that they were flown back to USA. There is a photo of a 356 Lib "Earthquake McGoon" with the tail of a GR Lib in the background described as a Leigh Light version. Robert Quirk asks if anyone ever saw Libs with Leigh lights fitted in Seac.

**OBITUARY** Ted Stratford, RCAF. We are sorry to have to advise that Ted died recently. We send our deepest sympathies to his family and friends. Ted was Fire Controller in Lloyd Nethererton's crew and figured in the probable kill of a Jap sub as covered in AD LIB No.25.

**MAKING CONTACT:** News, old colleagues and help.

**Steve Willshire** – ex RAF photographer (regular - post war) is interested in being put in touch with anyone on the photographic side who would have info on the types of camera etc used. He assumes that they were hand held cameras and asks what kind of photo section facilities there were on the Squadron/Station.

Was it a small photo section or a limited Mobile Field Processing Unit (MFPU – with its own Type J / Type 41 trailers etc.)?

**Troopships:** The fact that we have been able to come up with photos of various ships prompted a request for a photo of the "Circassia" on which the enquirer had returned to UK from Singapore after his release from the Japs. A copy was duly provided and if any of our readers are looking for similar photos – just ask, we may be able to help.

**F/Sgt Henry Deeny, RAF, Wop/AG, KIA 22.9.43.** The family has been in touch to ask if we can help with any information about his service with 160 Squadron. He was a member of Joseph Cohen's crew on Lib "M" FL939 shot down over Car Nicobar 22.9.43.

Does anyone have any photographs? Bob Coates, in his diary, records that the Japs lost two fighters in this action.

**Jack Stokes, WOM** - a warm welcome aboard to this member of Ben Hall's crew. He attended the reunion minus the toe he lost when "V" was shot up on 1.10.43. See item and photo in reunion notes. We now have two or three photographs of "V".

**Robert Livingstone, RAAF Navigator – F/Lt Trotter's crew.** Good to hear from Robert through his son Bob. He was not with 160 very long (1944) being sent home when his father died.

Son Bob has written a book on the Lib in the South Pacific entitled "Under the Southern Cross" – available from Turner Publishing Co. for US \$35 – web site [www.turnerpublishingco.com](http://www.turnerpublishingco.com).

**And from the Army. H.J.Bucknell** was an officer with the 55<sup>th</sup> Lt.A.A.Regt RA and served on the Sigiriya site for most of 1943 during construction of the strip. He has visited and is in contact with the O C the Sri Lankan Air Force unit based at Sigiriya and on his visit this year he hopes to convey some of 160 history to the O C via the info on Robert Quirk's web site. Meantime he asks if we have any more photographs or history which he can pass on.

## REUNION 2003

We never seem to have rain in Stratford and this year was no exception with glorious weather for our, by now, at-ease gathering of old colleagues.

Yes numbers were a few down but the quality was in evidence and, as usual, a good time was had by all.

We were also blessed with the presence of our own Minister - Rev E Glyn Williams (ex 160) - who inspired us for the night and our meal with an appropriate prayer for the occasion.

About the regulars who were missing - you were missed! but fulsome apologies had been received with the hope that they would be attending next year.

David Flett brought along his scale model of "V" with the bulldog logo - it is a beauty and the timing could not have been better with the original artist - Jack Stokes - in attendance. To clear up a point, Jack confirmed that he had painted a kangaroo (with boxing gloves) on the port side out of deference to the Aussies in Ben Hall's crew.

Ted had brought along the video of the opening of the Thurleigh museum and all were much impressed especially with the flypast of the 'Sally B'. Make a note to reserve September 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> for next year's reunion. Maybe there will not be many more but there is no talk of ending them.



*Jack Stokes who joined 160 in the Middle East and served at both Ratmalana and Sigiriya seen with David Flett's model of "V". Jack painted the Bulldog mascot.*

## NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

### THE LES JEWETT STORY Continued

The second gun crew duty, when it arrived, I planned to take out from camp anything I considered likely to improve the cooking facility such as stones, bits of iron or steel, or wood, but there was nothing I could lay hands on. I figured a return to site one was on the cards but they put me with a different crew, on a different site where cooking facilities were, again, non-existent and I had to start from square one. However, there was, marginally, more combustible material around and, after digging (by soaking) a cooking pit, I got more ambitious and tried to incorporate a chimney and flue at one end to give a draught. This arrangement was a big

improvement on the earlier one but it needed constant maintenance, being constructed mostly of mud. As for toilet facilities - they were non-existent.

I do clearly remember one Sunday morning when I asked the others if they would like Yorkshire pudding for lunch. This was constructed in a Billy can lid (I had no idea what ingredients went into a Yorkshire Pud) and in due course, this mixture of flour, water and eggs turned into an oval shaped half-inch thick piece of, what looked rather like, the crepe sole of a boot.... bloody tasted like it too! But we each had a piece and mine lay like lump of lead in my guts.... not so the others ... they spewed theirs up half an hour later. I don't know what upset them - must have been something they ate! On day five of this stint, when the relief came, an officer came with it and he had a look at the 'range' and showed mild interest in it, but so far as I am aware, did nothing to promote the idea.

I have no idea how many gun crew duties I did, offhand. Incidentally, I still have the stiff blue identity pass, with photo, which was issued at Salbani: Also a photo of the guard of honour which Defence Flight mounted for the funeral of the two bods who were murdered in Kharagpur (one of whom was named Batty?) This happened before I arrived from Quetta, but I was given to understand that the Black Watch, stationed in Kharagpur at the time, took retribution via the torch for the murder of a Scot.

It was at this time that the skin peeled off the palms of my hands and fingers to the extent that I had to wrap up my hands before I dare touch anything but, being on gun crew, I was unable to report sick at the time and when the crew duty ended, I had a 48 hr pass waiting so off to Calcutta went Tom Bonnick and self.

We were awakened on gun crew one morning by the sounds of voices and movement nearby, then found to our horror that we had slept in and it was turned eight o'clock; so we did a double shuffle out of the tent and found ourselves looking up at a Wellington bomber, with ground crew bods unloading bombs from it. The kite had been obliged to abort a mission and return to base without dropping its bombs, but the drome it was from had such a rough runway that the plane was diverted to Salbani for safety' sake, where it had run off the runway into the scrub and pulled up just short of our site.

And there was the time when a very heavily pregnant Indian woman, accompanied by two others, passed by our camp and headed out into the thorn scrub, returning about half an hour later with a new born baby, which they wrapped in old rags and laid on the ground alongside where they were working as coolies.

Yes and there was the time when a new white mobile canteen van appeared nearby and yours truly set off to get a cuppa, only to be intercepted by an Indian chap who asked me not to patronise the van as it was from bahut crab people. This was at the time of the Bengal famine..... I don't think there was a famine, really, just a dire shortage of food created by stockpiling rice in godowns to force up prices which the poorer classes could not afford.... a scandal of some proportions in which some government high ups were allegedly involved.

At Salbani the MO put me in dock with acute pharangitis and the 'hospital' (on camp) was simply another basha with

charpoys. The place was packed and Hutchinson the orderly fixed me up on a low-legged camp bed in a corner: Next morning when he came to attend to me, he could not find me as a ground mist had descended during the night and it was waist high, thick fog, with me laid under it.

(And there we leave Les - not missing – just laying low)  
(*Les Jewett – Defence Flight*)

### THE GOOD SHIP "AWATEA" – a coincidence

The "Awatea" was one of the ships accompanying the "Cuba" which took the 160 ground echelon in convoy WS16 sailing from Liverpool on 16<sup>th</sup> February, 1942.

David Flett tells us that, later, he was on board the "Awatea" on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1942, when it sailed from Halifax to the U K. Unfortunately on the first night out the "Awatea" collided with one of the U S escorts and sank it just off the coast of Newfoundland.

The "Awatea" had to stop with its damaged bows under a full moon for several hours while the convoy continued on its way to Liverpool. As luck would have it there were no U boats in the vicinity.

In the morning under a cloak of thick fog they limped back to Halifax escorted by three U S corvettes.

David eventually entrained for New York and came home on the Queen Mary - perhaps not the luxury cruise one would imagine with enough troops almost to fill a football stadium on board.

Sadly the "Awatea" was later sunk by enemy aircraft in the Western Med on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1942.

### TIME FOR A CHANGE

"IF" Two versions - with apologies to Rudyard Kipling

"IF" in Seac

If you can stick the climate out in Burma  
The blazing sun and dust that fills your eyes  
Your mouth and nose and throat when you are marching,  
the biting of mosquitoes, ants and flies

If you can dream of home and all your loved ones  
Of tasty food and mother's apple pie

If you can still eat bully beef and biscuits

If you can starve and yet refuse to die

If you can make your home in tiny dug-outs  
And little fox holes cut into the ground

If you can suffer boredom uncomplaining  
And two hours "Stag" without a sound

If you can keep your head with Japs all around you  
And everyone is getting in a "flap"

If you can keep alert, awake and ready  
And hold your fire, then blow them off the map

If you can wait for mail that's not arriving  
Continuing to write your letters home.  
With confidence that some time in the future  
You'll be returning never more to roam

If you can fill each unforgiving minute  
With ninety seconds worth of distance run  
Yours is the stuff that makes a SEAC soldier  
What is more – you will beat the "Rising Sun"  
(*R. Payne*)

### "IF" TODAY

If you planted hope in any hopeless heart  
If someone's burden was lighter because you did your part  
If you caused a laugh that chased some tears away  
If tonight your name is named when someone kneels to  
pray  
Then your day has been well spent

### THE JAPANESE SURRENDER

Many of you may have read this report of the Jap surrender in SEAC but the content is so moving it warrants a fresh airing if only to have it in the 160 archives

#### "VJ" Singapore, 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945.

*By Capt. E W Bush, DSO, DSC*

"I looked at the dull impassive masks that were the faces of the Japanese generals and admirals seated opposite. Their plight moved me not at all. For them, I had none of the sympathy of soldier for soldier that by the fortune of war I had seen surrender. I knew too well what these men and those under their orders had done to their prisoners. They sat there apart from the rest of humanity. If I had no feeling for them, they, it seemed, had no feeling of any sort."

*Field Marshal Lord Slim, Defeat into Victory*

The official unconditional surrender of all Japanese forces, land, sea and air, in South-East Asia took place at Singapore at 11 a.m. in the Municipal Buildings.

Under grey skies threatening rain, guards of honour from the three Services were mounted on the space outside the entrance, while additional sailors, soldiers, and airmen formed three sides of an outer square.

Since early morning swarms of excited natives had been streaming across the maidan to get a closer view. The enclosures were crammed to overflowing, and there were people standing on the roofs of neighbouring houses and hanging precariously from the branches of trees. The presence of British-Indian soldiers and sailors aroused particular interest, as the Japanese had put out the story that they were no longer fighting for the Allies.

At 10.20 General Sir William Slim, commanding Allied Land Forces, Admiral Sir Arthur Power, C.in C. East Indies, and Air-Marshal Sir Keith Park, commanding Allied Air Forces,

arrived in their cars. A few minutes later distant cheering and clapping heralded the arrival of the Supreme Commander, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had been driving round the town in an open car with his Deputy, Lieutenant-General Raymond Wheeler, US Army.

Bugles sounded the alert, guards of honour presented arms and the Royal Marines' Band played the opening bars of "Rule Britannia" as "Supremo," looking most regal in white naval uniform and gold aiguillettes, stepped out of his car and was greeted by his Commanders-in-Chief. Then followed the fly-past.

While the guards of honour were being inspected, sounds of whistling and cat-calls signified the approach of the Japanese representatives. We took this to be a signal to take our seats for the signing ceremony.

The Council Chamber is a large room with a balcony and with marble columns at the sides. A portrait of HM King George VI, recovered from the Raffles Museum, provided the only wall decoration. In the centre two long tables had been drawn up so that the Allied representatives and Japanese signatories could sit facing each other.

While waiting for the Japanese to arrive I had time to look around the assembled company, about a hundred all told. Among those with whom I had already been associated in SEAC, I picked out the representatives of India, USA, France, the Netherlands East Indies and China, also several ex-prisoners of war, including the Rt. Reverend John Leonard Wilson, Bishop of Singapore (later Bishop of Birmingham). He looked remarkably composed considering the inhuman treatment he had received in Changi Gaol.

At 10.55 the double doors were opened and all eyes turned towards the Japanese as they filed in. The two Admirals were in long trousers while the five Generals wore knee breeches, highly polished brown riding-boots and spurs. Their leader, Major-General Itagaki, was bald; the others had very close-cropped, almost shaven heads. All wore their medal ribbons including some Allied ones of the First World War.

When Lord Louis entered a few minutes later, there was a scraping of chairs as everyone stood up. He crossed over to his desk, glanced round the room, removed his cap, and motioned everyone to sit down.

He began by reading a telegram from Field-Marshal Count Tarauchi explaining that he was too ill to attend and appointing Major-General Itagaki to sign on his behalf.

"In these circumstances," said Admiral Mountbatten, "I have decided to accept the surrender from General Itagaki today, but have warned the Field-Marshal I shall expect him to make his personal surrender to me as

soon as he is fit enough to do so." (he did in fact hand his sword to Mountbatten at Saigon on November 20th, 1945, and died the following year).

"I wish to make it entirely clear," Mountbatten concluded, "that the surrender today is no negotiated surrender. The Japanese are surrendering to our superior forces."

After the text of the Instrument had been read by a staff officer it was handed to Itagaki to sign. The General put on his spectacles, placed his left forearm flat on the document, picked up a writing brush and dipped it into the well of the ink slab; then resting his right wrist on his left forearm he signed Seishiro Itagaki slowly and carefully in Japanese characters moving the whole of his wrist (the Japanese do not write with their fingers as we do). He then produced Tarauchi's official seal from the depths of a pocket and as he pressed heavily on the paper, a spasm of rage and despair twisted his face.

The documents were now passed to Admiral Mountbatten for his signature. While this was being done the Japanese sat back in their chairs, their faces expressionless, their hands folded in their laps.

After the Japanese had been presented with one copy of the document, Admiral Mountbatten said quietly, "I now ask the Japanese representatives to withdraw." Itagaki rose at once and made a slight bow, but the others sat still until tapped on the shoulder by their escorts. None of the Japanese had spoken or even glanced at each other throughout the whole of the proceedings.

After a suitable interval the Supreme Commander left to join the parade and we all followed him out of the room. I went on to the balcony and stood on a chair close to our ex-prisoners of war from Changi Gaol and Sime Road.

"I have just received the Surrender of the Supreme Commander of the Japanese forces who have been fighting the Allies," said Lord Mountbatten, reading his Order of the Day and I have accepted the Surrender on your behalf. I wish you all to know the deep pride I feel in every man and woman in the Command today. The defeat of the Japanese is the first in history. For hundreds of years they have been told to look upon themselves as a superior race of divine origin. They have been taught to be arrogant to foreigners and to believe that the treachery they practised in Pearl Harbour is a virtue so long as it ends in Japanese victory. They are finding it very hard to accept the defeat or to wriggle out of the Terms of Surrender."

After calling for three cheers for His Majesty the King, Admiral Mountbatten went down the steps and stood by the flagstaff for the formal hoisting of the Union Jack - the actual flag which had been carried as a flag of truce when Singapore fell in 1942 and afterwards, unknown to the Japanese, it had been hidden in Changi Gaol where it was used for funerals, only a handful knowing its history. Now, though soiled and worn, it fluttered proudly.

Although the British ex-prisoners of war around me had stood the strain very well, the sound of our National Anthem

(followed by those of our Allies) was too much for them. While some lowered their heads to hide their emotions, others wept openly. The women, some of them friends of mine of China Station days, were almost unrecognisable in their old faded garments, hair ruined and sad worn faces. Their children were nervous and wide-eyed as they clung to their mothers, not knowing what they were supposed to do.

At last the band had finished playing and the parade was stood at ease; then buglers sounded the "attention" and the guards of honour presented arms as "Supremo" drove away. The ceremony was over.

When the crowds had dispersed I joined Rear Admiral Benjamin Martin, Commanding Naval Force W, which for the past year had been carrying out amphibious hooks down the Burma-Arakan coast. I was his Chief Staff Officer. Starting his career as a seaman boy Martin had climbed the promotion ladder rapidly. Now he had the distinction of being the first man from the lower deck to fly his flag in battle.

Before returning to HMS Bulolo, Headquarters' ship, the Admiral and I paid quick visits to Changi Gaol and to the Naval Base.

We found Changi as quiet as the grave and empty, except for our sentries mounted over the Japanese staff now locked away in cells previously occupied by our people. The whole place was so haunted by the sufferings of our men that we found ourselves talking to each other in whispers.

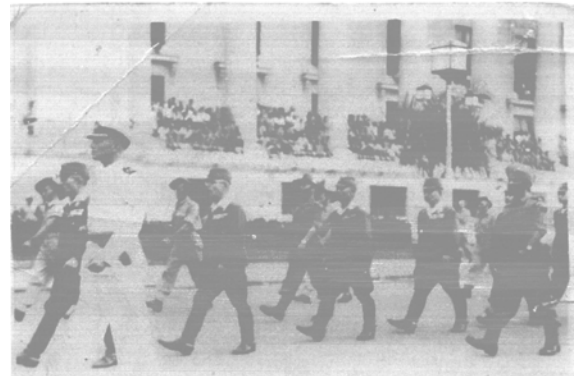
What stirred our hearts most was the pathetic messages we found written on the walls of cells - addressed in most cases to loved ones at home. But there was one exception. "Damn God!" one poor fellow had written in his agony in bold capital letters.

We had expected the Naval Base to be much more knocked about than it was. True, many of the workshops were destroyed and roadways were pitted with bomb craters, while the enormous floating dock was resting on the bottom with a Japanese ship sunk in her. Yet most of the wharves were in good condition. In some of the offices and married quarters, which had been occupied by the Japanese, pictures of England's countryside still hung on the walls. The sight of two eight-inch Japanese cruisers and a fleet destroyer provided the greatest interest. Each was flying a black flag in place of the Rising Sun as required by the Terms of Surrender.

"Wait a minute!" said Admiral Martin as we turned to go. A party of Japanese sailors under an officer was approaching and he wanted to see how they would behave. "Will they turn their backs on us as the German sailors used to do when the high Sea Fleet was surrendered at the end of the First World War?"

On the contrary. The Japanese were most punctilious with their bowing and saluting. Why were they behaving like this? Was it on account of their respect for the Royal Navy? Or was it because they at last acknowledged defeat and were hoping for lenient treatment? Was all this bowing and scraping genuine?

Of course it was genuine and at the same time a warning. The Japanese acknowledges the master - but not for ever. He knows how to wait. As a Japanese proverb has it, "The wise bamboo bends before the storm."



*This is a photo we have on file and thought to be the Japanese surrender party on the way to signing in Singapore.*

**AND NOW, JUST SPACE FOR A "PRUNERY"**



**THE MOST HIGHLY DEROGATORY ORDER OF THE IRREMOVABLE FINGER has been awarded to S/Lt..... AND Acting Leading Airman ..... For prolonged finger insertion in more ways than one:**

Their aircraft had to make a forced landing in the sea and much to S/Lt ..... 's satisfaction, as Squadron Safety Equipment Officer, the "M" type dinghy functioned correctly. Subsequently, however, it developed a small leak and since the only leak stopper available was too big for the hole, the three occupants of the dinghy took it in turn to use their fingers till picked up two hours later. It was later pointed out to them that a leak-stopper of the proper size was stowed inside the larger one they had rejected

**FINALLY - Don't forget to send off your subs to Ted.**