



160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Chota Coggage for survivors



**WINTER 2005
Number 33**

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SSO's AND DRO's

'Tis (still) the season to be merry so it is our hope that all our readers are still in festive mood. The President, Vice President, Editor (and staff) and all who help, send all best wishes for a Happy and Healthy 2006. Remember last year when we were all keyed up at this time for Sri Lanka and what a wonderful experience it turned out to be? (No Ted, they are not going to pay for us to go back again – wishful thinking?)

REUNION 2006: We still have the reunion to look forward to and the dates are 25th to 27th August, 2006. The hotel has advised that it could be possible to bring forward our reunion date in the future and there could be something to be said for looking for earlier dates. Perhaps this would only be worthwhile if we could be sure that we would not lose any of our regulars and if it made it possible for more of our members to attend (and perhaps if it would be cheaper!). What do you think? Please advise Ted or Les Crawley of your thoughts.

BOOKING FORMS: This year the hotel is leaving it to Ted to ensure that everyone receives their booking form so a form is enclosed with this issue. Please return it TO THE FALCON HOTEL as soon as you can. The sooner the better, please.

(Emailers – if you do not have a printer we can post a form to you but please let us know).

ANNUAL SUBS The good news: As matters stand at present, with the newsletter costing little to produce and so many taking by email, we have a tidy enough balance to meet foreseeable commitments so, until further notice, membership will cost you nothing!! Whilst the annual subs would never have been any bar to keeping up membership there were those perhaps who could not be bothered or simply forgot to send their money – if you know of anyone in this category who would like to rejoin please ask them to get in touch and have their names put back on the roll. It would make it very worthwhile if it helps us to renew contact with more of our 160 colleagues. Pass it on, please.

OBITUARY

We are very sorry to learn of the death of Mrs Eric Horton (York) and send our deepest sympathies to Eric and his family and friends,

MEDAL HOLDERS: We have seen samples of a neat idea for holding medals, either full size or miniature, which saves putting holes in your coat or jacket and makes use of a shield which holds the medals and locates into your jacket pocket. Very neat and available at £5 for full size medals and £4.50 for miniatures, including VAT and postage.

Available from Mr R Sanderson, 34 Belle Vue Road, Henley on Thames, Oxon. RG9 1JG: Tel: 01491 574962.

Web site: www.medalholder.com to view pictures.

BOOKS:

"Eyes for the Phoenix" (Thomas): P R operations South East Asia 1941-45. On special offer at £12.99 + p & p. (Was £29.95). There are mentions of 160 Squadron.

From Midland Counties Publications, Hinckley, Leics. LE10 3EY: Tel: 01455 254450.

"Air War for Burma" In last issue we mentioned this book and Robert Quirk has sent a cutting from it of a mention of 160 Squadron. The incident is the loss of "M" – Joe Cohen and crew - but it is only a paragraph giving very brief details.

"Well – You Wanted to Fly" – a book which Jack Burgess helped produce and which includes his own contributions re 160 squadron. £15 plus £1.50 p & p from Woodfield Publishing, Babsham Lane, Bognor Regis, West Sussex. PO21 5EL. Tel: 01243 821234.

'Above Sumatra'. Jim Jackson. See article on Page 5.

MAKING CONTACT, news old colleagues & help!

Robbie Robinson, Canada, advises that, after a major operation, he is resuming his research into RAF/FAA stations but where he was in touch with some ex 160 Canadians he is now unable to raise them. He asks to be put in touch with any who are still around but not only Canadians. His email address is Robbie.robinson@virgin.net. His specific interest from 160's point of view is now to finalise the chapter on Sigiriya for which he seeks photographs and stories along with items about long flights over the Andamans and the dropping of agents behind enemy lines. Can anyone help?

MORE COSFORD LIBERATOR:

Thanks to Mr Peter Elliott, Senior Keeper, Dept. of Research and Information Services at R A F Museum, Hendon we learned that KN751 has been moved to Hendon where it is being prepared for display in the Bomber Hall. This information came to us from Peter after the issue of AD LIB and though we emailed those on the internet to notify, in case they intended to make the journey, we did in fact hear from one of our contacts that it was not there when he called. Sorry about that but, interesting that Peter Elliott reads our newsletters and took the trouble to let us know.

AND MORE - FROM Jack Burgess:

After some kind remarks about "AD LIB" and some memories of his own return to Sri Lanka in 1992 (most poignant being standing at the end of the runway at Minneriya) Jack goes on to say-

"I was pleased to see that you had used Doug Connor's letter to me describing "Recovering the Liberator". It would have pleased Doug to know that his account was being passed on to his 160 colleagues. Doug was generous to a fault and would have given me anything. He had phoned me from different parts of the world where his business interests took him, including Bahamas and Tenerife etc. Every time he returned to his London Mayfair address he would immediately give me a ring to describe his activities.

On one occasion arriving in London he phoned to say he still had the Cosford Liberator workshop manuals in his London residence. He said they 'weighed a ton' and were taking up too much room. He continued by saying that he would send them up to me, as I would probably make more use of them than he could. It took me some time to convince Doug that the proper place for the Cosford Liberator 'manuals and paperwork' would be at Cosford. Doug was such an active and self denigrating person that he was like a breath of fresh air when he came on the phone - he was definitely a one-off!

In a separate email Jack expressed his reservations about learning that the Cosford Liberator has now been moved to Hendon adding that he wondered what Doug would have thought about this move of his 'baby' and advises that he feels a bit put out since Doug had charged him with looking out for it. However, as he says, it may be safer at Hendon away from the low flying 'collapsible' helicopter that hung over it at Cosford.

Jack is very active as editor of the A C A Saltire Branch newsletter and was instrumental in the publishing of the book "Well - You Wanted to Fly" mentioned above. You can see items from the book on the website www.aircrew-saltire.org.

For his peace of mind Jack would like to hear of the thoughts of anyone who sees the Hendon Liberator and how they have taken care of it and displayed it. I think we would all like to know, so, can we have some feed back please from anyone planning a visit? Does it still have the display/contacts cards on show? Peter Elliott advised that contrary to some stories circulating, it will be retaining its original colouring.



Jack - with Doug's baby

RON PALIN - is another who has been back to Sri Lanka, in September 2004 - with a Thomas Cook holiday - and by a lucky chance was able to arrange a visit to Sigiriya airfield. He writes:

"So the visit was wonderfully arranged for me. My guide and I working together - a car and a driver hired for the two of us - a permit to visit - and we set off.

Me - full of apprehension as to what I was going to see and relive 60 years on from when I was 24. The Wing Commander C.O. of the Sri Lanka Air Force Base, Sigiriya, met me and immediately put me at ease by taking me to his office for a drink and sandwiches. Then a tour of the camp, the guardroom and then to Air Traffic Control. Then an exciting double run in his 4 x 4 wagon the complete length of the air strip North/South and East/West - very exciting. Reminded me of my trip from Minneriya/Hingrigoda to visit Sigiriya, March 1945. Wild elephants are still trooping the perimeters of the airstrip and monkeys are still up to their capers. All in all a most memorable day of my return to Ceylon".

Ron then followed the tourist route covering the main attractions and clearly enjoying all his experiences but he was also able to end up with a few days rest at Bentota at the finish - which is more than our own extended itinerary had allowed. Like a number of us however, he did have some problems a few days after his return but happily he is well now.

(I blame the anti malarial tablets - Editor)

Douglas Henry Skinner, RNZAF. We are grateful to Pauline Braaksma, Canada, for a number of photographs to add to our files and particularly of the one of Doug Skinner reproduced below. They show air crew when training at Defoe back in October 1942 and their socialising. In previous issues we have mentioned Pauline's efforts to trace relatives of Doug Skinner and anyone who could remember him on the squadron - so far she has been able to contact members of James Trott's family but otherwise with little success but this photograph may help. *(Do we have any readers in New Zealand??)*



Picture shows Doug with Pauline's mum plus fellow RNZAF James Trott.

Records show that Dixie Dean and the crew of "K" were first posted to 354 squadron on 18th September 1943 and then on to 160 squadron on 27th December 1943. Still hoping that a photo of the crew of "K" and of "K" itself will turn up but Pauline also asks if there is a photo of the squadron which from the timing would have to be when at Sigiriya. Plus, memories of training at Dafoe round that time - 1942/43 - and then in the Bahamas. Anyone remember 'graduation' parties at the Royal Alexandra Hotel, Winnipeg?

For those who trained at Nassau - Pauline adds that she was in Nassau in September and visited a big old Anglican Church where she found a huge book in a glass case noting the names of the many young men who had lost their lives in WW11 - "It was very moving".

More about "K". In previous issues we have sought information about Jack Dunkley for Simon Bull and we have recently heard from Kate Ball, niece of Jack, who read up the full story, and inquiry reports of "K" ditching, on Robert Quirk's web site and was able to fill in all the blanks about what had happened to Jack for his family. However, the family would still like to hear from anyone who can remember Jack and the crew.

Kate goes on to tell us that she has just returned from two months in Sri Lanka as a volunteer worker on Tsunami relief - she felt she wanted to go because of Jack's connection with the island. Kate spent some time visiting Sigiriya and Minneriya in an effort to find the place where Jack was stationed. She adds "Of course it's all completely changed, but at least I was able to get a feel for what it must have been like".

Colin Burningham is asking for help in his research for a book he is writing about all the aircraft that were ferried out to the Far East in 1942/43 following the Japanese declaration of war. He hopes to identify each aircraft and its pilot/crew. Although he knows nearly every aircraft, getting names to fit to them is not proving easy without access to appropriate records. He has, through Robert Quirk's web site, been able to pick up that both David Flett and Jack Stokes are in the frame and would like to make contact with them but adds that the arrival dates of the first three aircraft and their crews is a little confused. It seems likely that some of our original ground crew should be able to help on this one.

Here are some of the details which we have so far discovered. Squadron ORB's show that when the ground crew arrived at Ratmalana on 16/1/43, FL936 (V), FL945 (H) and FL935 (S) were already there. It is only known that 'V' (F/S Hall/Jack Stokes) arrived on 10/1/43 probably at the same time as 'H' (S/L Hanson?) then the arrival of (probably) 'S' on 16/1/43 then FK239 (B) (Colin Butler and David Flett) is recorded as 18/3/43. ('H' - S/L Hanson and 'V' - F/S Hall, were the first aircraft out on operations on 6/2/43).

Ratmalana ORB's show FL929 (W) arriving on 3/2/43 (P/O C Pinnell:F/S Hill Capt ?): then FL939 (M) on 5/2/43 (F/L F G Paisley): followed by FL911 (K) on 24/3/43 (F/O Wallace) from Bombay.

Colin would like to have confirmation and journey and crew details from log book records of the ferry flights of these aircraft. His address is 9 Shearstones, Yetminster, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 6NW: Tel: 01935 873219 or email at colinburningham@hotmail.com.

DICK MOULES; we extend a welcome to Dick who has now joined our ranks. Dick was No.2 to Alan Johnston arriving on the squadron in 1945 then leaving after the war ended for a Captain's course in U.K.



F/Lt Dick Moules Front 2nd left with Alan Johnston on his left.

FITTERS 11E HERBERT & DE LA RUE :

The enquirer has not been back to us about tracing these two ground crew and from information from Jimmy Greenstein and Sam Hirst, it turns out that "Chuffa's".surname was something like Mahy pronounced "Mayee". So both Herbert and De La Rue are still being sought by the enquirer but at least we have learned that there was someone called 'Chuffa' who had never seen a steam train!

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD

DIGRI and other places 1946: Were you there?

A tale of unrest and of some political drama. This unique period in RAF history is fully written up on the following web sites:

www.socialisthistorysociety.co.uk/duncancontents.htm

www.jcc.org.uk/news/gazette/113.htm

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/jadastra>

It all makes fascinating reading and is well worth a visit to get to the full story of this episode.

AWARDS: Thanks to continuing research by Robert Quirk we have details of more awards to 160 Squadron aircrew. When 160 was posted from the Middle East in January, 1943, the remaining air crews were posted to 178 Squadron and we have details of the following awards to 178 Squadron announced in February 1943, which were almost certainly made in respect of operations flown whilst with 160.

S/Ldr(A) P A Willatt	42037	Pilot	DFC
F/Lt D J D'Alton	77208	Air G	DFC
F/Lt(A) J S Tannahill	63847	Pilot	DFC
F/Sgt J E J Waterhouse	937265	Air G	DFM
Sgt N F Mose	A411251	Air G	DFM

We also have details of the following two American awards where 160 Squadron was specifically mentioned.

W/Co J J MacKAY, DSO DFC 40404. Pilot DFC (United States) awarded as per London Gazette dated 29 September 1944. Public Record Office Air 2/9599 has recommendation dated 10 January 1943 when he was still a Squadron Leader.

"For distinguished achievement as a pilot of heavy bombardment aircraft on operational missions. On the night of December 1/2, 1942, when other elements of his formation were forced by bad weather to return to their base without reaching their target, he proceeded alone and completed a most successful raid on Tripoli harbour. His example of inspirational leadership has done much to account for the distinguished record of achievement of 160 Squadron."

F/O D P MacIntyre DFC J5998 Pilot DFC (United States)
"For distinguished service as heavy bomber pilot, particularly on the 15th of November 1942, when he lost one engine while bombing Benghazi Harbour, but remained in action and started five fires."

NOTE: Public Records Office Air 2/9599 has this more detailed citation as transmitted 10 January 1943.

"For distinguished achievement as a pilot of heavy bombardment aircraft on operational missions. On the night of November 15/16, 1942, while participating in a raid on Benghazi harbour installations, he lost one engine. Using his skill as a pilot and his determination and zeal to accomplish his mission, he remained in action and succeeded in bombing his target, starting five fires. His accomplishments on this and other occasions exemplify the fine spirit and morale of 160 Squadron".

Additional notes re Donald Philip MacIntyre: re both earlier and later awards.

MacINTYRE, F/O Donald Philip (J5998) - DFC - No.35 Squadron - Award effective 20 July 1942 as per London Gazette dated 4 August 1942 and AFRO 1413/42 dated 4 September 1942. Born in Saint John, New Brunswick; home there; enlisted in Saint John, 7 October 1940. Trained at No.1 ITS (graduated 21 January 1941), No.11 EFTS (graduated 29 March 1941) and No.6 SFTS (graduated 3 July 1941). Sergeant in 14th Field Ambulance before RCAF. Commissioned 1941. The Halifax bomber mentioned below was later raised from the lake and sent to the RAF Museum, Hendon. For his personal account, see **Flypast**, October 1982. Medal presented 15 April 1944.

"One night in April 1942, Flying Officer MacIntyre and Pilot Officer Hewitt (RAFVR) were captain and navigator respectively of an aircraft detailed to carry out a low level attack on the German Naval Base at Trondheim. The target was located and in the face of intense opposition from the enemy's ground defences the attack was pressed home with great coolness and determination from a low level. During this operation the aircraft was hit. The outer portion of the wing caught fire and the fuselage and cockpit were filled with smoke. Soon the aircraft was well alight and, as it had become uncontrollable, Flying Officer MacIntyre decided to descend onto a lake to which he was directed by Pilot Officer Hewitt. This he achieved by a feat of superb airmanship. The crew then manned their dinghy and made their way to the side of the lake. After a perilous journey and suffering great hardships, Flying Officer MacIntyre and his crew eventually reached England. The greatest credit is due to both these officers for their calm efficiency and courageous devotion to duty"

It is worth adding another excerpt from 160 ORB's in respect of an operation on 14th - 15th January, 1943 - the last carried out by 160 in the Middle East and during which "S" AL620 (Peter Price, captain) was lost.

"While making run encountered heavy and light A A. Aircraft holed 700 times. Hydraulic system and wireless unserviceable. Bombay doors shot away.

22.46 hrs observed bomb bursts of aircraft ahead and saw a large fire which disappeared - smoke screen - afterwards.

23.23 hrs jettisoned bombs in sea. Aircraft received three direct hits, one in the bomb bay, one in the flare chute and one in the rear hatch. Two members of crew slightly injured.

03.27 hrs over L G 159 - fired colours of day and received no response. Observed lights and landed at L G 143.

Bombs carried 6 x 1000 lbs. Nose Inst."

These further awards are also noted:

MacINTYRE, F/L Donald Philip, DFC (J5998) - Mention in Despatches - No.178 Squadron - Award effective 14 January 1944 as per London Gazette of that date and AFRO 874/44 dated 21 April 1944. No citation to MiD.
MacINTYRE, S/L Donald Philip, DFC (J5998) - Air Force Cross - No.5 OTU - Award effective 11 August 1945 as per London Gazette dated 14 August 1945 and AFRO 1453/45 dated 14th September 1945. As of the AFC recommendation, he had flown 1,354 hours, of which 334 were as instructor, 129 in the previous six months.

"This officer has proved himself to be an outstanding Chief Flying Instructor of this Operational Training Unit. Through his general knowledge, tenacity and resourcefulness he has raised the flying on this unit to a very high standard. He is a natural leader both in the air and on the ground and has shown himself capable of tackling any job. His outstanding ability, perseverance and tireless devotion to duty on this unit are worthy of the highest praise."

NOTE: In January 1997 the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society (Canadian Branch) presented to the National Aviation Museum a "dossier" (actually more like an album) with extended autobiographical notes on members (catalogued in the museum as D.805 C3 L96 1995 NMM). This included much information on MacIntyre although very little about his evasion which was relatively uneventful.
Per Robert Quirk

RADAR – more from Angus Hamilton's book:

The term Radar was well known and appreciated by all but in fact most of us knew little about it or its variations. This book covers the whole subject exhaustively and with many personal stories of individual experiences of their service in South East Asia 1941 to 1945. Some 23 of the 723 RCAF Radar Mechanics in SEAC actually served on 160 so it includes excerpts telling of their time on the squadron.

It is also enlightening as to the number and types of Radar used and the vast numbers in service along with details of locations.

Just as a taster:-

"ASV: AIR-TO-SURFACE-VESSEL RADAR AND REBECCA & EUREKA"

ASV became an essential tool in ocean surveillance and was first fitted to Catalinas and whilst the first Mk II's were less effective against submarines the newer Mk V was first introduced on Liberators patrolling the North Atlantic resulting in 43 submarines being located and sunk in the Bay of Biscay in one month – May 1943. Eventually the Mk V did arrive in SEAC although 160 squadron was fitted with ASG, an American version of ASV.

Mike Finegood (one of the few commissioned Radar experts) was posted to 160 and arrived early 1943. He writes:-

"With the arrival of the ASG-equipped aircraft we were interested in getting to know all about it. We were ordered to remove the gear from the first one to arrive. This proved to be quite difficult as the transmitter was housed in a radar dome under the nose. We did get it out but managed to break the glass on the magnetron since we didn't know that it was somewhere in that piece of pipe! I put several of the boys to work circuit tracing the units and determining how they all functioned. When the "gen" finally arrived we found we had everything pretty close except for the transmitter pulse forming unit.

Having figured out the operation, when the next aircraft arrived I started to fly it and got enough experience to start training the WOPs. Although we had orders not to fly the equipment, we couldn't restrain our curiosity. When a Wingco from New Delhi came down I took him up to demonstrate its effectiveness. He didn't say anything about the order because he was as curious as I was!"

Nevertheless, the early Mk 11 ASV was *theoretically* capable of detecting a submarine at 8 miles when flying at 8000 feet and a convoy at 32 miles when flying at 3500 feet. Contact ranges actually varied widely with the average reported submarine contact at 6 miles when at 800 feet. The Ceylon coast could normally be detected between 45 and 60 miles away when at 1000 feet, while a lifeboat contact at 4½ miles (from 800 feet) was considered outstanding. A single vessel contact averaged between 12 and 24 miles.

REBECCA AND EUREKA.

It is interesting that Mike Finegood again figures prominently in the introduction the Rebecca/Eureka system. This was a combination of an airborne radar interrogator, Rebecca, and a ground transponder beacon, Eureka, whereby an aircraft could pinpoint a target. It is believed that the code name Eureka was given to the ground beacon after the Greek word meaning "I have found it" and that Rebecca was derived from R.B.C.A. [Radio Beacon Control Approach] although it is possible that its choice was also influenced by the name of the woman in the old testament who followed Abraham's servants into another country.

From the information given by responses shown on the Rebecca indicator an aircraft could home from approximately 50 miles to the portable Eureka beacon with an accuracy of about 200 yards. The Eureka beacon had no controls and could be left unattended. The operation of the airborne apparatus was simple and required only one man in addition to the pilot. Timing of the aircraft's arrival over the target could be gauged fairly accurately because Rebecca indicated both the range and the direction of Eureka.

(The description above is from Chapter 12: "Rebecca/Eureka" in Volume in of the RAF Signals History. Further extracts from this chapter describe the evolution and the role of Rebecca/Eureka).

The system was developed from the early wartime use of radar ground responder beacons by airborne apparatus for identification and homing purposes. The T.R.E. [Telecommunications Research Establishment] developed Rebecca from A.S.V. Mark II and Eureka from an IFF beacon.

At first Rebecca/Eureka was used to mark dropping points for supplies and agents for the resistance movements, but its use was later extended to marking dropping zones for airborne forces. It was also used as a means of re-supplying army units in isolated spots. It [also] provided homing and beam approach facilities. The fact that it was an airborne radar interrogator, independent of any other radar system, meant that it could be used by aircraft not already equipped with a main radar installation. Rebecca Mark II was the standard installation in powered aircraft and Rebecca Mark III in gliders.

Mike Finegood was posted to UK in December, 1943, for training on this equipment then boarded the 'Stratheden' for his second trip to Bombay arriving in April, 1944. He writes:

"Early in May, 1944, I was briefed at AFHQ, ACSEA, in New Delhi regarding the arrival of Rebecca/Eureka equipment in India. The whole thing had been badly balled up but the junior officers were afraid to let the Group Captain in charge know what had happened. (One plane with all of a certain category of equipment had arrived but they didn't know where the other half of the gear had disappeared!)

In mid May I was posted to 322 M U at Chakeri, near Cawnpore. There I got a fitting party organised even though the equipment to be installed couldn't be found. Meanwhile, I had my men modify some surplus Mk 11N IFF's to function as Eureka beacons."

Reproduced with kind permission of the author, Angus Hamilton.

"ANNIHILATION" THE FAR EAST WAR 1940-45: Author: Victor F Bingham. (Flight Engineer who served in SEAC)

Along with Ted Daines I have been hoping that Victor would finish this book as there is very interesting material in it and 160 has good coverage. However, although the writing is completed, apart from the conclusion, Victor has decided he is unable now to pursue publication so, as matters stand, we only have a couple of draft chapters which he kindly sent to us some time ago.

One of the chapters covers "Long Range Operations" and because it includes references to Eureka and Rebecca it seems timely that we should publish an excerpt which, happily, allows us to pay a tribute to our own "Bill Cooper" who contributed most of the information for this item. George Franklin also Jim Jackson and Bill Bunkell are elsewhere mentioned in the draft. Ted Daines also provided Victor with some of his experiences on the Burma front which Victor had proposed to use in the final chapter.

"LONG RANGE OPERATIONS", AND THE USE OF REBECCA & EUREKA.

SOE in the Far East was by the latter part of 1944 requiring long-range 'drops' into Malaya. 200 and 160 Squadrons, both based at Minneriya, were called on to supply the means of transport. This type of operation was carried out at low level over the DZ (dropping zone) and over long distances. With this type of operation there was a greater risk of being shot down by fighter aircraft or light anti-aircraft weapons, so crews were given jungle survival courses.

Bill Cooper describes this additional chore to the squadron duties.

"On 28 December 1944, we made two flights, practicing homing on to 'Rebecca' radio beacons and dropping supply containers into jungle clearings.

One member of each crew went away to India to learn how to parachute and make a practice drop. This was so that he could become our despatcher and safely see 'bodies' out of the plane at the dropping zone.

Eventually we were ready and made our first drop on 15 June 1945. My logbook says it was "Seven containers and five packages E.S.E Alor Star, Malaya."

On this type of operation the crew consisted of two pilots, navigator, flight engineer, two wireless-operators and a wireless mechanic (the latter due to the amount of radio equipment).

The latter four had all additionally qualified as air-gunners. There were no air-gunners in the squadron as they would have been so much ballast to carry, for the three hours or so we were within range of enemy fighters.

After pre-flight checks and taxiing out to take-off position, final cockpit checks before take-off were made.

We then started the take-off run of two miles and eventually staggered into the air because of gross over-loading. We were all soaked with perspiration due to the heat and humidity.

Our one thought was "Will she come unstuck?"

The pilot levelled off at cruising height and airspeed, usually 600 feet and 156 mph IAS.

Once settled I would start the flight engineer's log. This was essential for the calculation of fuel consumption as the fuel gauges on these early model Liberators were 100% unreliable for our purpose.

For these long journeys we carried the following fuel:

Main tanks	1960 gallons
Wing auxiliary tanks	374 gallons
Bomb-bay tanks (3)	1005 gallons
Total	3339 gallons

The recording and transfer of fuel was the flight engineer's responsibility, entailing first the transfer of fuel from the bomb-bay tanks to the main tanks after five hours flying, then the transfer of fuel from the wing auxiliary tanks to the main tanks after eight hours. Further to this, the flight engineer would be recording the changes in engine settings so as to calculate the fuel, carrying out changes to rpm, as well as monitoring the engine performance gauges".

The aircraft approaching the dropping zone, Bill Cooper continues:-

"We would be anxiously looking for the DZ. This involved the navigator and pilots in map reading and scanning the jungle ahead for smoke signals.

In a small number of cases a radio aid, known as 'Rebecca', was employed. I would enter the bomb-bay.

As soon as the navigator opened the bomb-doors with his controls in the nose compartment, I would hold the duplicate control in the bomb-bay in order to hold the doors open against any hydraulic 'creep' which would interrupt the bomb release mechanism. To do this I would be squatting on the foot-wide catwalk at the bottom of the fuselage between the bomb-bays, the bomb-doors would have moved upwards and I would be virtually squatting in space - my view of subsequent events was unsurpassed.

Then it all happened, the navigator pressed the 'tit' and the containers dropped away. At the same time he flashed a light in the rear of the fuselage. On seeing this the despatcher dropped a hand and the 'bodies' slid down the chute one after the other. If there was any hesitation the despatcher would assist them - they

had to be out in a tight bunch or some would drop outside the clearing. We would climb away, bomb-doors and rear hatch now closed.

The despatcher and I would take a gun hatch at either side of the aircraft and break open packets of leaflets. We would drop these on villages and roads as we sped to the coast.

All this time the member of the crew in the rear turret would be keeping a careful watch for enemy aircraft.

Our long range missions lasted from around 18 hours to 24 hours 10 minutes in the air without refuelling. This was a record for a landplane in World War Two.

As mentioned earlier, part of my job was to calculate the fuel used and the amount remaining to complete the mission. This latter figure could sometimes put one's heart in one's mouth! On occasions we returned to find there was insufficient fuel remaining in the tanks to wet a dipstick. These flights were equal to non-stop round trips from London to Bucharest, Benghazi or Casablanca. The distances covered ranged from 2500 miles to 3400 miles".

The chapter concludes with a tribute to the ground crews:

Amongst all this subject matter and aircrew experiences let the ground crews be not forgotten. Flight engineer F.W 'Bill' Cooper of 160 Squadron says it all for all aircrews-

"We would taxi into dispersal and tell the ground crew how things had gone. At this point let me stress that we who were aircrew should never forget these over-worked, under-paid, seldom-mentioned and under-appreciated men who made it possible to do what we did."

(We are very grateful to Victor for allowing us to reproduce these extracts from his draft book)

"ABOVE SUMATRA" Author, Jim Jackson.

A copy of the review release of Jim's novel was sent to me and I am sorry to say that I had mislaid it at the time I mentioned it way back in an earlier AD LIB. I am pleased to put this right now.

Of this story, the great Canadian poet Earle Birney wrote, "Not since St-Exupery has any story-teller caught me up so powerfully into the terrible and beautiful world of flight."

Written by one of the few Canadian novelists who saw air combat in WW2, Above Sumatra is a penetrating analysis of war's corrosive impact on those who serve in its strategic backwaters. There is action and terror 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.

(St-Exupery - a very much loved French aviator and author who wrote about flying and disappeared on a wartime flight. Editor)

SYNOPSIS

Gil Kramer is a Canadian pilot on a Royal Air Force squadron in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. It is 1943; a year after the Japanese attack on the island was thwarted by Canada's Squadron Leader Birchall. The Japanese have shifted to Burma in their drive to India, and have withdrawn their navy to the Pacific. When Kramer arrives in Ceylon, the island has been bypassed and the squadron, equipped with four-engined Liberator aircraft for long-range operations at sea, is virtually idle.

The squadron is based in the jungle, where the heat and humidity are exhausting. There is little flying because the enemy is far away and the aircraft are seldom serviceable. But the Jungle is also Kramer's personal hell, in which months of inactivity leach away his resolve, the lack of flying weakens his confidence, and the constant fear of death from the aircraft's unreliability or the violent tropical weather gnaws at his will.

The letters from his high-school sweetheart, Jessica, come from another world that seems so vacuously unreal that he breaks off with her. He is unmoved on hearing she has married his boyhood friend, Chuck Leowey, back in Canada after a tour on bombers in Europe.

After eight months, reduced to lethargic passivity, he is shocked to be nominated for promotion as a flight commander. As he wrestles with this threat to his fragile stability the jungle's menace is suddenly manifest in a bandit gang's attack on the

camp by night. Kramer is wounded in a violent encounter with one of the bandits; it forces him beyond the breaking point, and he collapses.

In hospital he becomes convinced the promotion will empower him to master the jungle. But just as he realizes he must have the job to survive, it is filled by the unexpected arrival of his friend Leowey. Kramer, stunned at losing what he believes promised his salvation, is maddened to find Leowey is to fly a photographic sortie he saw as confirming his new-found power.

The jungle is no longer his enemy but his element; he retreats into it and becomes one of its creatures. He emerges to air-test the aircraft Leowey is to fly and Okays it despite a defect in its controls. When Leowey is killed on takeoff, Kramer is consumed in guilty rage. He flies the sortie in Leowey's place, achieving a distance from the jungle but unable to escape knowing he has killed his friend, and when a huge tropical storm looms ahead, he is ready to let it destroy the aircraft. The storm is violent, but Kramer's blind will to survive asserts itself, and the Liberator gets through.

The storm exhausts him, and the draining away of emotion cleanses his soul. He sees his failure was not the jungle's corrupting power but his own weakness.

In the bleak morning light before landfall on Sumatra he is left spiritually empty, needing an undefined reassurance. He ignores a message from HQ to abandon the flight, certain there is more to discover. And then, at altitude for the run over Sumatra, he sees earth no longer as a suffocating jungle but as something sublime, a magnificent amphitheatre of green mountains and dramatic ravines glowing in morning mists, with a thin strip of human habitation clinging to the edge of the sea. After the dark night of his soul he realises that the humanity he shares with those below confirms his own humanity that he had almost thrown away.

The epiphany, the possibility of redemption, is so powerful that he delays leaving the target, giving time for the Japanese fighters climb to the attack.

BIOGRAPHY Born in 1923 in North Vancouver, BC, James Jackson avoided ignominious failure in First Year at the University of British Columbia by joining the Royal Canadian Air Force. He married during the war and as an aircraft captain on Very Long Range B-24 Liberators, completed a tour of operations in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war he went back to UBC and on to a Master of Fine Arts degree with the Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa. He returned to Canada to teach at the University of Western Ontario, followed by appointments at the Air Force College in Toronto and with the University of Toronto. During his time in Toronto, Baxter Publishing issued 'To the Edge of Morning'. His final job was as University Registrar of Carleton University in Ottawa.

Jackson took early retirement and returned to his wife's birthplace, Victoria, where she died in 1985. He subsequently moved to Salt Spring Island to live as a hermit and write, and it was on Salt Spring that he finished Justin Fowles, a novel to be published later this year, and decided to re-Issue 'To the Edge of Morning', after minor revision, as 'Above Sumatra'.

He recently returned reluctantly to Victoria for reasons of health, where he continues to write and tries to keep track of fifteen grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

The author has written, "This is not my own story. I served with great comrades under brilliant leadership, whereas the novel deals with entropy and demoralization. But I knew men who had endured long periods of inactivity, and saw that in war there is more than killing that can corrupt the human soul. I wanted to say something about the effects of boredom and lack of purpose, to make a kind of allegory which would in many ways be closer to the reality of war than the usual stories of violence and slaughter."

The only photo I have of Jim is from Laurie Jones' book 'A Pilot's Story' and as it happens to include some other 160 'celebrities' it makes good print.
Editor



It depicts the Christmas party, 1944, at KKS. Centre row S/L Joy W/Co Stacey, S/L Trotter, F/O James Jackson with F/Lt Laurie Jones gesticulating at the rear of the group. Anyone know who the other ne'er do wells are in the photo?

Above Sumatra, ISBN 1-55369-491-0, Trafford Publishing, Victoria, BC, telephone 250-383-6864 or 1-888-232-4444, and at <www.Trafford.com>. Jim Jackson's email address is <jaxonbooks@shaw.ca>.

160 TO THE RESCUE. THE HILL CLUB.

(And not many people know this)

Those who were lucky enough to use the club during the war years will be pleased to know that despite many members being absent on war service, on top of financial problems, the club prospered in that period to such an extent that all debts were repaid. (160 has still not received an award for this) *Les Crawley*

A BIT OF USELESS INFORMATION BUT INTERESTING.

The sum of 111,111,111 x 111,111,111

Is 12,345,678,987,654,321. (Not *my* service number)

Like to bet none of our readers knew this?

AND

In Shakespeare's time, mattresses were secured on bed frames by ropes. When you pulled on the ropes the mattress tightened, making the bed firmer to sleep on. Hence the phrase:

"Good night, sleep tight"

(Never tried it with the old charpoyis! And never remembered it being said by the Orderly Officer/Sergeant)

EDITOR: This is my fifth year as editor and I am now ready to hand over the reins to a successor. Pay is rubbish but you do have a lot of time off. I hope there is someone out there prepared to carry on the good work - it is worthwhile and gives introductions to a continuing increasing number of contacts from all over the world. It is absorbing and every now and again something crops up which can prove very rewarding in helping enquirers to obtain details from squadron history as well as the many other sources which nowadays are available.

I will be able to continue offering help to enquirers as I have accumulated a large amount of squadron and other RAF history which is probably not immediately transferable. (It is all over the house!!).

I am sorry to have to hand in my notebook and pen (or whatever the tools of an editor might be) but my eyes have been giving me a bit of trouble over recent months and need a rest and a fresh approach by someone new will hopefully give AD LIB a boost.

Will anyone interested please contact me? *Les Crawley*

FINALLY - DON'T FORGET TO SEND OFF YOUR FALCON HOTEL BOOKING FORM.