



160 SQUADRON, ROYAL AIR FORCE

The Chota Coggage for survivors



SPRING 2004
Number 28

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OBITUARIES:

Sad to have to advise that our old C.O. John Stacey died on Christmas Day. Fulsome obituaries appeared in the press and a reprint from the South Wales Echo is given below. A much longer version appeared in the Daily Telegraph with the headline "RAF Commander who led eight Liberator bombers on a 3460 mile mission during which they laid mines in Singapore Harbour". John Stacey clearly achieved much in his lifetime and we can take pride in the fact that 160 was his first command and it was one of his feats with 160 nearly 60 years ago which took the headlines. It is remarkable to recall that he took over as C.O. just after his 24th birthday in November 1944 and, as we all know, he was an example to everyone. We have sent our sympathies to his wife and daughters. We regret also having to advise of the deaths of Peter Midgley, ex 'C' Flight and a reunion regular, and of Air Gunner E Cook who flew with Bill Cooper. Attendees at the reunion will also be sad to learn that both Owen Morgan and Arthur Evans lost their wives recently.

HEROIC JOHN WAS A TRUE HIGH FLYER

Air Vice Marshal Nichol Stacey flew with the Royal Air Force throughout World War II and was mentioned in despatches three times.

He was honoured with a variety of awards during his career, including the Johan Mangku Negara – one of Malaysia's highest orders – for his work as Chief of Staff of the Royal Malaysian Air Force.

Mr Stacey was born in Cardiff on September 14, 1920, but spent most of his childhood in Croydon.

After leaving school he joined the Merchant Navy as an apprentice

He then joined the RAF in 1938 on a short-service commission.

In December 1942, he carried out a reconnaissance and bombing operation against airfields and harbours in

Death

AIR Vice-Marshal John Nichol Stacey, CBE, DSO, DFC, who died on Christmas Day, aged 83. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

northern Sumatra, for which he received the DFC.

In November 1944, he was commander of a squadron which flew long-range bombers from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

He led a raid to lay mines in the entrance to Singapore harbour in March 1945, which involved a 3460-mile round trip from Ceylon.

For his outstanding leadership and "high degree of courage and resolution" he was awarded an immediate DSO.

After the war he went to Washington as assistant air attaché and he met his future wife, Veronica Sutherland Rudd-Clarke, who he married in 1950.

Mrs Stacey said when she was pregnant with her first child, he sent her to Wales in the hope that, had the baby been a boy, he would have been eligible to play rugby for Wales.

Mr Stacey's RAF career ended with him as Air Officer Administration, Support Command, before retiring to Kent in 1975.

He kept busy with two housing associations and the Royal British Legion.

He is survived by his wife and two daughters.



COURAGEOUS John Stacey, holder of the CBE, DSO and DFC

S.S.O's AND D.R.O's

2005 REUNION: The Falcon Hotel has sent out the booking forms for 10, 11, 12th September. It helps if you send in your booking early – tends to give us more influence in making arrangements.

R A F ASSOCIATION (RAFA): Many will be aware that the Association is just weathering through a bad time financially, with cuts having to be made, and the hope is that more ex-service types will think about joining so as to give added impetus to the drive to keep the association viable. The membership fee is £12 p.a. and, besides the quarterly magazine "AIR MAIL", membership includes access to the numerous RAFA Clubs – there is even a branch at Benalmadena, Costa del Sol. The association also operates care homes at Weston Super Mare, Lytham St Anne's, Morpeth and (jointly with the RAF Benevolent Fund) Storrington.

The magazine "AIR MAIL", after being given a new lease of life, is a very good read now and the March 2004 issue just out, includes an article on 120 Squadron which, having been disbanded on 4th June 1945, was later reformed from 160 Squadron at Leuchars (160 was renumbered 120 on 1st October 1946). 120 Squadron is still operational at RAF Kinloss, flying Nimrods, and recently celebrated its 85th Anniversary (unfortunately the article makes no mention of 160 Squadron!).

If you are Interested in the RAF Association - Contact Central H Q, 117½ Loughborough Road, Leicester, LE4 5ND. Tel: 0116 266 5224.

160 ON THE INTERNET: Be sure to look up Robert Quirk's site if you would like to read a draft version of the entire operational records for the squadron for 1944. This was a monumental task bearing in mind the poor state of the original material. It includes a very useful index. Thank you Robert.

To read the records go to

<http://www.rquirk.com/160oper/160Sqn1944.pdf>

Another site worth a visit is <http://www.rafweb.org>

CONCESSIONARY PASSPORTS AND LOTTERY FUNDS FOR OLD SOLDIERS' RETURN: Readers will probably have read that free one-year passports are to be made available for those attending *organised* visits to WW1 battlefields etc. As to travel, the Lottery contribution towards costs is £300 (Europe) and £700 (Burma) "to enable veterans to attend 60th Anniversary events marking the closing of the war". For details ring 0800 169 2277. The fund will be available for trips up to December 2005. It would appear that trips to Ceylon might qualify. Widows may also qualify with additional funding for carers. Further details are awaited and if there is any mileage for 160 to take up whatever may be on offer we will pass the information on.

BOOKS: 'Organised Chaos'. Roy Barker. Erk's eye view of servicing aircraft in wartime in UK, Egypt, Palestine, India, Burma etc. 328 pages Price 17.99. From Midland Counties, Hinckley: Tel. 01455 254450.

MAKING CONTACT News, old colleagues and help.

Jack Dunkley: A Mr Simon Bull has asked if we can help with information about Jack Dunkley who was killed when "K" FL 911 was ditched off Puttalam with only Dixie Dean and Kiwi Baker as survivors. We have supplied a report on the ditching, and other material, but we are still looking for a photo of "K" and the Dixie Dean crew.

Jack is commemorated on the village war memorial at the Harrowdens in Northants and Mr Bull is researching the names hoping to produce a book on local history in which the men named are commemorated properly

Bubble Sextant: Another bubble appears to have disappeared into thin air. Our honorary bubble consultant and man in Antarctica, Mike Gerasimoff, has probably by now helped a Mr Robin Birch who sought our help in finding a replacement.

RAF Ceylon "Air Flow" Magazine: Does anyone have any issues - Editor would like to borrow copies to obtain material for "AD LIB".

Name these men: We have a photo on file (shown under) of two airmen and a bearer and there is a note on the back asking "names please". Does anyone know who they are and, spare our blushes, who is asking the question?



FEEDBACK: Our recent issues have brought some feedback which proves, after all, that "AD LIB" is read – much to the relief of Ted and Les.

1. JACK STOKES WRITES:

Joined 160 at Thorney Island at end October 1942 and flew "V" FL936 (*keeps on cropping up!*) on 7th November leaving for India in "V" on 26th December flying via Lyneham, Gibraltar, Cairo, Habbaniya, Abadan, Karachi, Bombay to Ratmalana arriving (in "V" of course) on 10th January, 1943.

Flew "V" into Sigiriya (being first aircraft to land on the strip) on 28th May and carried out first op (P.R. to Sumatra) on 29th May – *in "V"!*

Jack's last op was a PR to Car Nicobar on 5th April 1944 in "V"

He adds – “Some interesting stuff in Ad Lib 27 and thought I would let you know that I have written to Laurie Jones re Ben Hall – no luck so far and he says in his reply that he heard that Ben had died. Have also written to Jack Fudge in Canada – might get a line on Robbie Roberts, same crew, also Bruce ??” (*Taylor? Editor*).

Jack sent on a couple of photos of crew members one of which includes Frank “Junior” Naylor of Joe Cohen’s crew plus the aforesaid Bruce ..? and “Robbie” (Jack) Roberts and a Sid Taylor. So far, no photo of Joe Cohen’s “M”. He goes on that he was interested to read Laurie Jones’ account and description of arriving at Sigiriya but adds a correction about Ben Hall’s ‘punch up’ over Sabang – “it was with one Navy Zero and not two Oscars and, not one pass, but 25 minutes of a dog fight all over the place with lots of lead flying about - with Ben doing everything but fly upside down, we did escape by an extremely steep dive into cloud”.

Writing about Gerry Boyle’s last flight he points out how the RAF likes to run you close by Gerry being shoved on a day flight before being sent home. He had a similar experience the day after his birthday when they were being repatriated on 6th April but were shunted on to a night P R on 5th April. “I suppose pretty nearly every aircrew has the same sort of story” ends Joe. *Joe Stokes*

2. AND MORE ABOUT “M” AND HENRY DEENY.

Hank Illingworth writes:

“There was our new baby --- FL 939 “M”

The crew were as follows:

Pilot: P/O Joseph Cohen (21) RAAF

Co Pilot: F/O Taverner (Tam) Pallet (21)

Navigator: Frank (Slim) Somerville (32)

Wop/AG:W/O Lloyd (Moose) Munsen (21) RCAF

A/G: Sgt Arthur Owen (23)

A/G: Sgt Francis (Junior) Naylor (21)

A/G: Sgt Fred (Blossom) Last (29)

AND last but by no means least

F/Sgt Henry Deeny - a pipe smoker, known affectionately to the young lads as ‘the old man’.

Henry was a cool unflappable character who smiled but said little but, nevertheless, was still a fully paid up member of the whole team of air and ground crews.

Operational flights in those days averaged some 16 to 18 hours so periodic inspections rolled round quickly, the skipper would have the whole air crew down to wash the airframe down from top to bottom with buckets and brooms while we, the ground crew, got on with servicing the engines and airframe and the armaments.

Only days before their last op we had fitted extra fuel tanks in the bomb bays to give them greater range. On the night of “M”’s last op I was duty crew fitter; this made me one of the last to see the crew arrive in the truck and embark with all their gear to load the aircraft.

Engines were started and I got the 700 signed by Joe Cohen, this is standard procedure.

Wishing them “Good Luck” I left the flight deck, then it was chocks away and up into the night went “M” with her crew at about 2200 hrs - she was due back about 1500 hrs the following day

Sadly, we waited in vain hoping against hope to hear the sound of those Pratt & Whitney engines. I sat on an old engine cover at the side of the strip till dusk came about 1900 hrs. F/Sgt C Ross of “B” Flight came up and said “Come on, Hank, she’s well overdue now - you sitting there isn’t doing any good”. That was that.

I am not ashamed to say at the age of 82 I almost cried when writing this letter, and I thought “We are now old; they will be forever young in our thoughts”.

“160 Braves, God Bless them all”. *Hank Illingworth*
(*Strange to say the loss of FL 939 was reported by the Japanese - equally strange they reported the loss of a Zero fighter during this engagement - Editor*).

3. ARRIVING AT SIGIRIYA: This obviously brought back many memories and Eric Horton writes:

“I’m afraid I remember very little of what went on in those far off days. I looked in my log book to see what was happening in July but see I have Nil return for July so I think it must have been when I had a dose of malaria and then went up country for a couple of weeks to recoup. I do see that we did a PR in June. I liked the description of Sigiriya it was dank wasn’t it. Was it Sig where there was a Rest House just outside the camp I remember coming back from having a meal there one night and the trees were full of fireflies? amazing, just like fairy lights. (*Maybe this was the rest house just off the beach at KKS - a haven for a Gin & Lime - not tonic - after a swim.* *Editor*)

Another thing I can remember is at KKS - how you took your life into your hands dodging those coconuts that came hurtling down when the monsoon winds were blowing. I can’t remember much about Minneriya except that it was not so “jungley” and we were flying those bloody long mine-laying trips. You know I have never seen a mention of McNabb and we flew on that first Singapore op. along with another four hundred and eighty odd hours. Ah well. I’m going on and that won’t do.

I keep promising myself that I will come to the next reunion but it is always close to my wedding anniversary. Also in the middle of September I get the Cranwell reunion and my entry get-together. That was down to nine last year - when you get beyond eighty I suppose you must expect it though, again, I suppose that is all the more reason to try and make it to Stratford. I’ll try.

All the very best for the coming year, and keep up the good work I realise how much of your time it must take. *Eric Horton*

4. AND HERE'S ANOTHER - from Jack Fudge.

"Hi Guys So happy to have received the latest edition of A.D. LIB.

This copy was really exciting to me because of hearing about Jack Stokes although I always called him Joe. (*Joe is the RAF version - Jack the civilian version - says Joe/Jack*) We were buddies as were most of his crew [Ben Hall] and we spent some time together - some of our two crews in Colombo at Mount Lavinia beach and at the Air Crew club and the swimming pool in town. I still have a drawing he made for me on an air-graf letter which I sent to my parents in Canada and my mom had it framed and it hangs on a wall in my home. A valued memory. I would love to hear from him. I have some pictures of us. Joe was quite an artist. Also, I remember the day vividly when Joe Cohen went missing. Gerry Boyle and I were in the jungle on jungle warfare course put on by, I think, Sgt. Bull or Bullock, and we knew Joe Cohen was supposed to be back around 4 p.m. that day and we waited and waited. It was a sad day. We were all so close in those days - we lost Jock Davies in a crash on take-off, another crew was shot down, S/Ldr Joy crashed in the jungle on take-off. It seemed we lost so many in such a short time. I really don't know how or why we managed to survive. The Good Lord must have been really looking after us. Must go now. Thanks again for everything. Oh yes, if anyone has any info on Ben Hall's Aussie crew, I would be interested. Take care.

- Jack Fudge.

(Jack has since heard from Joe - Editor)

NOW IT CAN BE TOLD.

WATCH OUT - THERE'S A TIGER ABOUT

In issue No 1 of AD LIB Ted Daines told us of the night spent guarding the Homing Beacon between Digri and Salbani when the headman of the village sought help to guard their village or even to have one guard with rifle in the village or failing that to borrow a rifle, all of which had to be refused with the result that more and more of the villagers came up to the guards fire and stayed until morning. They had good reason - there was a tiger about which was really not that unusual for Bengal! An article in the RAF Regiment SEAC Association News by the chairman Henry Kirk gives confirmation of the Digri incident adding that when they (99 Squadron Wellingtons) left Digri for Jessore they were told it was tiger country. At first they thought it was just put about to keep the guards on their toes until one morning the crew of a Wimpy went out to test fly their aircraft after servicing. When the Bedford arrived at the dispersal there was a tiger stretched out in the shade under the wing! They drove round it hooting their horn until it got up and moved away. The next thing they knew was when the tiger

suddenly leapt up at the open back of the vehicle giving all a fright.

When aircraft were on night ops they had to guard the beacon which was towed out on to a river bank. At daylight one morning a tiger was seen swimming across the river close to the guard and it came close to the beacon. *Henry Kirk (via Ted Daines)*

(*The photograph of the swimming tiger is reproduced but unfortunately the copy is not clear enough to include here. Editor*)

INTELLIGENCE REPORT ON MINELAYING.

In Ad Lib Number 14 we printed a light hearted account of a mine laying operation in April, 1945, as seen through the eyes of Intelligence Officer F/O Andrew Boggon. In operations records there was a follow-on to this report which helps to give the truer picture of this type of operation.

From ORB's for May 1945 1066b130.

"In our F 540 for the month of April a frivolous article appeared as appendix 49/45. Below is a more serious extension of that article, intending to convey that the squadron can be seriously as well as humorously minded".

"In a previous issue an article alleging itself to be descriptive of the mine-laying role of the squadron within the Indian Ocean General Reconnaissance Group appeared and this article is an extension of that and also an attempt to correct certain of the erroneous impressions which that article might have conveyed.

To the average public, it matters little and indeed is not a matter for question, that after hours of flight 'across the empty ocean etc...the aircraft came down low to pinpoint their position by picking out some landmark.' Nevertheless, such haphazard a thing, on second thoughts, is scarcely the method which any of us would think would be adopted by any squadron, bomber or coastal, engaged with such a firm world-wide repute as the Royal Air Force.

A bomber squadron bombs a particular target - not any target and so, in mine laying, pinpoints are not "some landmark" and least of all is landfall made at "some lighthouse". No, before every aircraft even think of leaving the ground on these missions, other aircraft have been engaged in securing photographs, the headquarters of the Navy have been cudgelled and dragooned into disgorging every available chart procurable, tide tables, moon charts, reports and pictures have been anxiously and carefully consulted by the Squadron Commander in whose care there is entrusted the job of getting his aircraft there, the job done, and getting his aircraft back with the express purpose of accuracy so that, at what as yet is an unseen and enemy coast, the last thing a navigator shall do is use as pinpoint any or 'near pinpoint'.

A pinpoint is some outstanding piece of geography which stands out even if the moon is cloud hidden. A pinpoint may be the mouth of a fair sized river - either the bank to port or starboard as has previously been decided at base. It may be a promontory of dimension or a small island.

Let us not use the hackneyed "intrepid" as the adjective descriptive of the men who take part. Let us not see pictures of the men, battling their way through fierce storms, hundreds and hundreds of miles from base, finally coming to enemy held coasts bristling with anti-aircraft devices such as will make the imagination freeze. Rather let us look at the greater danger of an aircraft admittedly flying more than a thousand sea miles from base, under a calm moonlit sky, with a calm sea below and then consider what might - what conceivably might - befall it. Often these aircraft, per sortie, each fly more than three thousand statute miles and the particular squadron record was a sortie of just short of three thousand five hundred miles.

Ask any of these boys and they will tell you that, of course, there is a sense of anxiety prior to each trip. That's natural. But once the trip has started, to a large degree that feeling fades. There's a job to be done and the chief enemy is weather. Hence it is that they do not seek to battle with the weather - they go round it. If the weather is too bad they return - aircraft cost money, crews are lives.

Distance is not the barrier. The barrier is the ever present worry of the serviceability of your aircraft, and the limitations of the petrol you can carry.

It is normally felt, when writing an article, that we must include a succulent paragraph or two of personal experiences about flak, and searchlights, and a sky full of enemy fighters which, on account of their remarkable skill, the gunners, as a matter of course, have, as the public expects, shot down into the sea to join the broadening stream of those who have gone to seek their ancestors. Hence it is that reference is made to this subject as from this point this article will be unique if only for the absence of the familiar personal touch. But, opposition from the ground is sometimes met, searchlight beams do sometimes sever the blue of the night, enemy aircraft are sometimes evaded, for the role of these aircraft is to evade these undesirable things whenever possible, in order to drop their mines in the right position and return within a day or two to drop another load. Dropping is done with such care that base has already plotted their mines in their right position in the channels before the aircraft have landed once more at their 'jungle airfield'.

A dreary business? No. A hazardous business? Not especially. A speciality? Yes. These boys or blokes, whichever expression you like to use, are trained to do a job properly. Whether the target is in Sumatra, Burma. Siam or Malaya, believe me, they know exactly where they want to go and how to get there and once there, what to do, before ever they

put a foot in the truck which takes them to their aircraft".

Yes, like all specialistic jobs, it's something which you get to know by heart. You become so certain about things, you know instinctively what to do. Do not believe that everyone is staring at instruments all the 20 hours. They have their 'on' and 'off' times like you. I know a navigator who read a complete novel on each trip and, the job? It was done perfectly

(As ORB's are sent to Group HQ it seems possible that this follow up was for the benefit of the higher echelons who may have been thought to have been given the wrong impression about 160's attitude to operations. The author is not stated - I wonder if it was the Navigation Officer - or even the C.O - Editor)

FLIGHT ENGINEER

Now when this war is o'er and done,
Perhaps by nineteen fifty-one,
There'll come a cry from some small lad:
"Tell us a bed-time story DAD !"

Then sadly reaching from a shelf
A book which notes not dwarf nor elf,
Dad slowly reads from faded leaves
Of Wing Tip and the Vortices.

And other gen the notes unfold
Before the tale is fully told;
The loss of lift at tip and wing,
Defeated by the Flying Ring.

When cruising for the greatest range
The I.A.S. must never change;
Except you know when bombs are gone,
And then you chose a lower one.

Economy in mixture strength
Has often been discussed at length;
Full tanks last longest using "Weak",
In "Rich" you think they've sprung a leak.

Now bombers are not flown for pleasure
With Revs and Boost fixed at your leisure;
Boost must be high and Revs quite low,
If flying further you would go.

Endurance cruising is a bind,
Its rules stick in the simplest mind.
The first one's short: you just "Fly Slow",
The second's shorter still ; "Fly Low".

And now you bear in mind my lad,
What happened to your poor old Dad:
For scoffing at these tales of flight,
He ended up a Stalag mite.
(From Tee Emm with permission from HMSO)

**RAF CEYLON: "AIR FLOW" MAGAZINE:
There could be useful material in these
mags. If you have any issues please think
about lending them to the Editor for
possible extracts for "AD LIB"**