

NEWS LETTER No.2.

'Phone
BARNET 6141

68 Bramley Road,
Southgate,
LONDON, N.14.

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I feel I must start off with an apology for the fact that no News-Letter was published in 1951. This was due to a number of factors, but mainly to the difficulty experienced in obtaining up to date news from the Squadron, news which from your letters I know many of you await with the keenest interest.

Judging from recent telephone calls and letters I know that news of the next reunion, out sixth, is eagerly awaited. Arrangements are as follows:-

DATE : SATURDAY, 17th May, 1952
TIME : 5.30.p.m. to 10.30.p.m.
PLACE : The LOTUS RESTAURANT, NORRIS STREET, HAYMARKET, S.W.1,
(Third turning on right down Haymarket from Piccadilly)
COST : 11/6d PER HEAD; DRINKS EXTRA.

For catering purposes an early and accurate estimate of the numbers who will attend is essential. Applications for tickets should reach me not later than SATURDAY, 10th MAY, accompanied by a remittance. Members living in the London area who can offer a spare bed for the night are asked to let me know. Provincial members should give early advice of their requirements.

As regular customers at the Lotus we have secured a slight reduction in the price per head, and this is being passed on to members.

1952 subscriptions are due and I should be grateful if all members will send me their humble 1/-s as soon as possible.

A comprehensive list of recent members of the Squadron has just reached me from Malaya. Invitations to the reunion are being sent to these members, so, as accommodation is limited, please let me have your applications as early as possible.

Fifth Annual Reunion Dinner.

It is gratifying to be able to report that our fifth reunion dinner, held on February 24th, 1951, was a success in every way. Major Coyle presided over a gathering of 59 members, joined later by the "unholy twins", John Day and Bob Henshaw, who arrived after we had done justice to the excellent meal provided by our good friends at the Lotus Restaurant.

We missed several familiar faces due to the calls of work (McMath and Gronland), prior engagements (Landers and Clark), 'flu (Nock and Taylor C.R.) and family illness (Abel, Beard, Munro and Shield). In addition Simmonds was kept away by the imminence of an increase in family and Harry Groom by impending examinations. Harold Tinsley was away on holiday in Austria, having a "well earned rest". We were particularly disappointed that Ian Price, on leave from Malaya, had received news of an earlier than anticipated recall and by having to bring forward a Continental tour had perforce to miss the reunion.

On the other hand we were delighted to welcome a number of members for the first time, including original members of the Squadron in Grant,

Not least did we appreciate the opportunity to welcome the following members just back from Malaya :- Keith Buchanan, John Chanter, Mike Prichard, Howard Southall and Bruce Venour.

The following list of other members present may be of interest:-

Andrews, Appleton, Barry P., Batt S., Bainborough, Bescoby, Bonnett, Bromwich, Branston, Butcher, Collier, Cabbage, Davies J.W., Deacon, Disbery, Dobson, Eaton, Ellicott, Foster (Peachey), Fowler, George, Harrison, Humphrey, Hutt, Jarrett, Matthews, Maycroft, Nixon, Pike, Pratt, Rees, Samways, Seager, Seaman, Stannard, Stevens, Twohey, Walton R.I., Watson, Webb, Weaver, Wilson, Wright D. and Wright R.I.

NEWS FROM MALAYA

The following News-Letter dated December 1951, has been received from Major D.P.D. Oldman, R.A., the present Squadron Commander:-

"When Major Coates went in April 1950 Major Oldman took over command of the Squadron which was deployed with S.H.Q. at Changi, 1902 at Taiping in support of N. Malaya District, 1907 at H.Q. Malaya Kuala Lumpur and 1914 with the newly formed 48 Gurkha Infantry Brigade at Temerloh. Soon afterwards, however, the 26 Brigade arrived from Hong Kong, and its demands for Auster in Johore made it desirable to move 1907 Flight South, first to Seremban, then to Changi and finally to Johore Bahru where they lived alongside Brigade HQ. At the same time S.H.Q. - less the MSS - in order to be nearer the centre of operations moved from Changi to 1907's old quarters at Noble Field, Kuala Lumpur, where they remain.

In spite of these moves there was no decrease in flying hours and in May 1950 the A.H.Q. target of 600 was exceeded by 50 hours.

One of the highlights of this period was the visit of the Secretary of State for War and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who were flown in Squadron aircraft to outlying places in Pahang; this task kept four aircraft fully employed for $4\frac{1}{2}$ days and was partly responsible for the increase in communication sorties which formed the greater part of the flying. Although it is not the most interesting job for the pilots, communication flying is one of the Squadrons most important roles as it represents enormous saving in travelling time for the passengers and, since most of these journeys are in areas where heavy road escorts are required, releases the men for operations against the bandits. Operational flying consisted largely of visual recces for officers of newly arrived units to see their areas, photographic sorties, pilot visual recces - which included finding and map spotting patrols in the jungle, casualty evacuations, leaflets and message drops, road and rail patrols and scheduled mail runs.

In mid-1950 we were re-equipped with Mk 6 Austers, 1914 Flight by the end of June, and other Flights completed the change over soon afterwards. The important advantage that the Mk 6 has over the Mk 5 is that it is possible to carry a No.62 H.F. wireless set at all times. Experiments with trailing aerials have produced very satisfactory results and now it is not uncommon for a ground station in Singapore to be in contact with aircraft flying in North Pahang. This has proved of great value on several occasions and it is most comforting for pilots flying in the remote areas. Against this must be set the loss of the full blind flying panel and the better performance of the Mk5.

Teething troubles were soon apparent and serviceability dropped, due to a shortage of essential spares such as bungees and sparking plugs. One of the chief troubles, besides lack of spares, was oiling and loading-up of plugs which caused at least four precautionary landings and much discomfort to pilots and ground crew alike. The trouble continued while 100 octane petrol was in use but was eventually cured in April '51 when

the correct fuel (80 AVGAS) will be available ready mixed in the near future. Other troubles encountered were bearing metal in the filters and rocker box security bolts shearing, the latter caused severe vibration and loss of power. This was successfully cured by a modification. Since these initial faults, we have also had trouble with wooden props disintegrating and throttle control rods breaking. The latter is thought to have been the cause of a recent engine failure that resulted in one of the Glider pilots of 1911 Flight and his passenger spending an unpleasant week walking back home through the Kelantan jungles.

In July 1950 the first draft of Glider Pilot Officers and NCOs arrived with the Squadron and were attached to Flights to become acquainted with the problems of flying in Malaya and to gain experience in the kind of operations they would be required to undertake before being formed into the first Army Light Liaison Flight. Meanwhile this Flight was formed at Changi as No. 1911 Air O.P. Flight and in August '50 it was moved to Seremban where it operated as a normal Air O.P. Flight in support of South Malaya District. The gradual transition from Gunner to G.P.R. personnel was completed by early March '51 when the Flight moved to Temerloh and changed places with 1914 Flight, who moved into recently completed quarters built around the new airstrip at Paroi village, near Seremban. After 15 months in the 'ulu' this change was highly popular with 1914 Flight; the only regret being that of losing the flight pig and poultry farm which had supplemented the Army rations on a number of occasions. Also the pet crocodile had to be returned to the Pahang river but the rest of the 300 including monkeys, tortoises, carrier pigeons, a python and countless dogs and cats accompanied the Flight to Seremban.

In July '50 in spite of very adverse weather the C.I.G.S., accompanied by the C in C FARELF and G.O.C. Malaya District was flown on a two day tour of units in Malaya. H.E. the Commissioner General of S.E. Asia and Major General Bridgeford - head of the Australian Military Mission - were also added to the list of V.I.Ps flown by the Squadron which includes almost every V.I.P. who resides in or has visited Malaya since the beginning of the Emergency.

During the latter part of 1950 Squadron pilots, co-operating with the pilots of the helicopter casualty evacuation flight, developed and perfected a drill for the speedy evacuation of casualties from the jungle. Briefly this consists of the Auster pilot doing all the preliminary work of finding the troops affected, diverting them to the nearest suitable site for a helicopter landing and supervising the preparation of the clearing until suitable before finally guiding the helicopter pilot to the site and escorting him during the evacuation flight. It is certain that the prompt execution of this drill by pilots of the Squadron has saved the lives of a great many casualties.

Airstrips continue to be developed slowly. The poor performance of the Mk 6 in this climate is disappointing; at full load in the heat of the day it takes all of 300 yards to become airborne at a safe speed for climbing and this restricts its use on some of the old strips; however most of these have now been lengthened to meet this difficulty. A proposed civil airline service for Central Malaya using Beaver aircraft has resulted in certain strips such as Temerloh and Gua Musang being lengthened and improved. The West Coast is now quite well covered but strips on the East Coast remain practically unchanged. There are now no less than 76 strips in daily use.

Christmas 1950 was celebrated in style, S.H.Q. and each Flight had their own parties which started on Christmas Eve and continued in top gear throughout the festival. The Squadron Commander succeeded in visiting 1902 Flight at Taiping and 1914 Flight at Temerloh on Christmas morning and, contrary to expectations, survived the landing at Noble Field in time to visit S.H.Q.'s dinner.

In the following Spring 1907 Flight in Johore Bahru encountered accommodation difficulties and moved to Senawang where they are living

Soon after this 1911 Flight also moved, this time to their present location at Benta in order to be nearer 48 Brigade at Kuala Lipis.

In June '51 we changed to the Calendar servicing system which to date has compared favourably with the old system. Aircraft are now inspected every 13 weeks irrespective of the hours flown during that period. You will appreciate that apart from encouraging higher totals than before, the problem of planning inspections is very much simplified.

In August '51 the M.S.S. moved to Kuala Lumpur airfield where they are more conveniently placed for the rapid and successful servicing of the Squadron aircraft.

There has been little opportunity for training but in October this year S.H.Q. and 1914 Flight both went out on mobile schemes lasting for three or four days; these were of considerable training value in addition to providing a pleasant change from the normal routine. Night Flying is now a regular attraction in the monthly training programmes. Apart from circuits and bumps, short cross country flights have been carried out by all flights and have built up confidence in the pilot's ability to navigate at night. It occasionally proves to be of practical value for pilots caught out late, enabling them to avoid an unscheduled night stop.

Prior to February '51 the only shooting we got - apart from an occasional mortar shoot - was on the rare occasions when we were called upon to observe for the Royal Navy. It goes without saying that these were always highly popular sorties by virtue of the inevitable liaison visits necessary to the ships concerned, but it was with great rejoicing that we welcomed the arrival of 54 Bty from Hong Kong and were able to do some real shooting for a change. 54 Battery have now been replaced by 93 Battery, but as almost all shoots require Air O.P. for accurate observation we have all had an opportunity to polish up our shooting.

Operational flying during the last few months has been concentrated on finding and photographing bandit food clearings and camps. Some Flights have had considerable success in this quest and several of their discoveries have been targets for airstrikes. Experiments are also being carried out for using Squadron Austers, fitted with VHF wireless, as pathfinders for marking targets that the faster strike aircraft have difficulty in finding.

Sport flourishes in S.H.Q. and the Flights but owing to being so widely dispersed there has been little opportunity of raising Squadron teams for any of the principal games although in 1950 the Squadron produced a rugby side that played three matches.

The Beau Brummels of 1907 Flight, aided and abetted by the Royal Navy, set the pace for our social activities. Being the only remaining all-bachelor flight it goes without saying that it is a fast pace only curtailed towards the end of each month by a shortage of hard cash.

The Highlights of our social activities have been the marriages of Hugh Drummond in Singapore, John Campbell at Taiping in March '51 and Derek Vaudrey at Kuala Lumpur in November '51. The latter finished in true Air O.P. style with the bride and groom going away on their honeymoon in 3 Austers owing to floods having blocked the road route to Port Dickson.

Lastly we are delighted to record the award of the D.F.C. to John Molyneux Berry and Bob Warner, the M.B.E. to Dick Wilkinson, and we feel equal pleasure at the award of the B.E.M. to Corporal Wrench (late of 1914 Flight) and Sgt Williams (late of M.S.S.); also Mention in Dispatches to Bruce Venour, Pat Cuppage, Joe Sellers; Cpl Mason and Bdr Page, Chief Clerk at S.H.Q. were also awarded a G.O.C's Certificate and Cpl Hart received a certificate of good service."

Stop Press.

The following further honours were reported in a recent issue of the "Daily Telegraph" :-

"ARMY PILOTS IN KOREA HONOURED - ARTILLERY SPOTTERS"

Awards to two British Army pilots for operations in Korea were announced last night. Both men are pilots of light observation aircraft which direct divisional artillery.

Capt. R.B. Addington, Royal Artillery, of Highway Manor, Calne, Wilts, receives the Distinguished Flying Cross. Sgt. J.W. Hutchings, Glider Pilot Regt., of Swanswood, Mercvale, Atherstone, Warwickshire, receives the Distinguished Flying Medal.

According to the citation Capt. Addington "on one occasion flew 8000 yards into enemy territory to indicate hostile guns to the aircraft directing Allied fighters. He remained over the target although his petrol was getting low. He dived and fired Very lights on the guns. His determination was instrumental in the destruction of eight enemy guns".

NEWS FROM SCOTLAND.

A most interesting letter from H.M. Green in Edinburgh gives details of a Club and Association formed to hold an Annual Scottish Burma Reunion. Gunner Green attended the first Reunion in the Music Hall, Edinburgh, where an audience of over a thousand people were entertained by Wee Georgie Wood, Pat and Marie Burke and others who had visited the troops in Burma. It is planned to hold reunions alternately in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Anyone interested should get in touch with the Secretary, Scottish Ex-Burma (Memorial) Club, 15 Brunswick Street, Edinburgh, 7, who could also give details of the club's branches in Glasgow and Galashiels. Attendance at the reunions is restricted to holders of the Burma Star.

Alan Horne writes from Elgin to say that he has been roped into an Ack-Ack Territorial Regiment, is working hard at the Law and is busy raising a family.

James Cowie has passed a Civil Service Exam. for Admiralty Engineering Draughtsman and has an appointment in the dockyard at Rosyth. He sends his particular regards to ex-members of 1587 Flight.

W. Wallace is settling down happily to married life in Airdrie, Lanarkshire.

Bill Walker has returned to banking in Rothesay on the lovely Isle of Bute, but can still find considerable amusement in a press cutting sent me by R. Borcham (St. Leonards-on-Sea). Some of you may remember the article entitled "Quiet Week-end", published in Java, and well worthy of reproduction in full if only I could afford the space. This story of experimental landings on a strip of road within the Semarang perimeter by "Walker's Flying Circus" is a real gem and mention of "Finger" Roberts, "Pranger" Walker, "Hotpants" McNinch, "Lech" Lamont and "Barry-Jackson, Digger & Co. - the Old Firm", will evoke many happy memories.

Ian Lamont is still flying with the Edinburgh Flight of the Scottish Territorial Squadron and mentions that any old friends visiting the vicinity of South Queensferry will be made very welcome - the local R.A.F. Station having the best bar in Edinburgh.

Thanks to the generosity of P.J. McLinden ("Black Mac"), who lent me his house for a week during August 1950, I was able to look up one or two of our Scottish members. It was grand to see such stalwarts as "Jock" Wiggins, now a master builder and decorator in Rutherglen, and J m Stewart, the proprietor of an attractive gift-shop in Perth. Both showed great interest in the photographs of our Reunions and send their regards to all former colleagues. "Black Mac" himself, perhaps less swarthy than in the days when his intensive efforts brought such credit to "C" Flight in the Arakan and beyond, was otherwise the same immense genial type we remember so well.

NEWS IN BRIEF.

Original members of the Squadron, and particularly "A" Flight, will remember Ted Butler, who later left on posting to Redhills Lake, Madras. Whilst in Cornwall in August 1951 I looked him up at his home near Redruth where he lives happily with his wife and small daughter. He too sends best wishes to his old friends.

Tug Wilson's retirement from the Army has been deferred and he is still very much in harness as W.O.II with 457 H.A.A. Regt. at Southsea.

Frank Brown (1587 Flight) wrote from Sheffield to say that he was studying hard for the A.C.W.A. examinations. We wish him well and hope to see him again at one of our reunions at no distant date.

Through the medium of our Association two of our Norwich members, Abel and Windscheffel, were put in touch with each other and enjoyed a "real chin-wag". Neither knew that the other was a "Canary".

Also from Norfolk came news of Harry Groom, another who was in the throes of examinations. We hope to meet him again soon as a fully-blown Auctioneer and Estate Agent.

A cheery letter from R. Pett in Devonshire proves that some at least of "A" Flight still keep in close touch despite distance, as he gives news of Topliss (Carlisle), Jones (Consett), and Weaver (London).

All his old friends will be sorry to learn that Jack Jones, the Squadron "soccer" star, had a bad accident at work, partially paralysing his right arm and shoulder, which kept him idle for four months. With characteristic spirit Jack wrote to say that he hoped to resume cricket shortly and to act as coach to a local boy's club.

F/O Ken Bescoby when last heard of was still stationed at Yeaton and, now a married man (poor girl!), had a flat in Harrogate.

Jim Landers is still a Field Welfare Officer, whatever that may be, in Exeter, and is an active member of the local Civil Defence.

David Houlding has left Oxford for Eastbourne College where he combines teaching with golf tuition to the boys and instruction on "lift" and "drag" to the Combined Cadet Corps.

The one and only "Peachey" Foster has been in trouble, first a fractured wrist and then broken ribs, but is fit and well again. Shadow

Frank McMath, having completed a thorough apprenticeship as a farm labourer has become a fully-blown farmer in Kingsbridge, South Devon, and appears thoroughly to enjoy his busy open-air life.

Frank Roe wrote from Hull, cheerful in spite of difficulties besetting a butcher in these days of meagre meat rations.

Micky Batt, whose first visit we still await, wrote in amusing vein from Bristol and sends his regards to his old friends.

Another farmer, H.L. Holliday, writes from Stape, Yorks, and sends particular regards to his pals in the Equipment Section.

Our members continue to take the plunge. Among others Gordon Twohey and Maurice Fox have joined the married ranks during the last year or so.

Peter Phoenix, who describes himself as a "non-playing member" sends from Halifax best wishes to all, in particular 1587 Flight.

Harry Nock, now a father, sent an interesting article from the "Wolverhampton Chronicle" on the work of 1954 Flight of 663 Squadron, with illustrations which bring back many memories of the Auster in action.

"Jim" Collier, now married and living in Finchley, leads a busy life combining business interests in London and Cambridge, where an unexpected meeting with "Daddy" Cross led to a convivial evening.

E.J. Edwards reports a visit from Cottam followed by a joint visit to H.V. Foster, also a later visit from Jack Hallam - "all 17 stone of him".

D. Beard, who due to his father's illness has had a difficult time keeping the family business going, has also been visiting, to see Cyril Taylor on the Norfolk Broads, and in turn has been host to Len Parker.

P.G. Samways, erstwhile Serjeant in "B" Flight, has now reached similar rank in the Birmingham Police. Congratulations!

Harry Tinsley, still a self-styled "innocent bachelor" and a busy Lincolnshire farmer, gives news of Teddy Maslen-Jones, an unaccountable absentee from our last reunion. Teddy has left his job as manager of the farm at Oundle School and when last heard of was seeking a small farm on which to start a pedigree heard of Wessex pigs.

Bill Morris tells of the difficulties which beset a cotton mill manager and sighs for the introduction of the old Squadron spirit into industry.

Inserted by special request of S.G. (Cpl) Butcher:- "Snokoy Joe" is still killing them at Hanwell, London, W.7. He states that business

W.R. Morris (M.T. Section) has settled down at Chigwell and sends news of Stapleford Tawney, of blessed memory. The hangar used by the Squadron was hit by a rocket in 1945, and the Sergeant's Mess, Cookhouse, N.A.A.F.I. and most of the billets have been taken down. The Can. Unit hangar survives and is used by an electrical and radio Company.

Friends of "Jackie" White will be pleased to hear that he seems to have recovered completely after his long spell in hospital out East. He now lives in Surbiton, Surrey, and looks forward to meeting his old colleagues at the forthcoming reunion.

"ADMIN". NOTES.

We were disappointed to learn that members of the present Squadron knew nothing of our Association. Now that our old friend Major David Oldham is in charge of the Squadron we feel sure that our News-Letter and correspondence will be used to better advantage.

Copies of our first News-Letter were sent by AIR MAIL to the Squadron and all members abroad who could be traced. The only acknowledgement received was from Johnny Hill in Jeddah, so that whether the others reached their destinations is not known.

During the last year we have regained touch with Chas. Bennett, our popular Fabric Worker, E.G. Smith (Sgt. Arty. Clk.) and Ian Lamont.

I am still trying to locate W/O McCarthy, who has been seen in the Portsmouth area, BQMS Bourne and BQMS Smith, and in addition would like to trace Sgt. Melling and Cpl. Gerry. The following appear to have moved from the addresses recorded in my books and I would appreciate news of their whereabouts:-

Alexander, Atkinson, Norman, Oates, Greaves D.R.,
Walton J.G., and Woolley.

Gordon Twohey has again rendered yeoman service by assisting with the paper work at peak periods. Donations towards the cost of the News-Letter or of the Reunions have been received from Eric Southern, Frank Roe, Tommy Seaman, Horace George, "Nobby" Clark and Hugh Morrissey. The last-named, with whom I was put in touch by Russell Matthews, sent a generous donation of £3:10s. from Montreal and wishes to be remembered to all who knew him in Java and Malaya in 1946/47 or on No.44 course. He is trying to readjust himself to things Canadian after an absence of twelve years and misses most of all "Ye Pub", an institution unknown in Canada.

A word of thanks is due to C.T. Anderson (Helton-le-Hole) who made a successful recce to locate Jack Scollen in Durham.

Paid membership for 1951 is 111, against 117 for 1950. Those of you who have not yet paid your subscription for 1951 are asked to remedy the omission straight away, together with the current years subscription.

I have had several enquiries by letter and telephone for the addresses of old friends and colleagues. As I stated previously I have well over 300 names on my register and shall be pleased to supply any available address on request.

A word about our first News-Letter. Suggestions for improvement have been rather fewer than I had hoped for but several members, particularly those who are prevented from attending our Reunions, were good enough to express their appreciation and interest in the news of the present Squadron and of their old colleagues. I have increased the size of the "News in Brief" Section, which proved popular, and shall welcome items for inclusion in future issues.

Best regards to you all,

Yours sincerely,