



THE CHINTE



656 Squadron Association Newsletter

Spring 2000

From the Secretary

I hope you all had a good Christmas and have now settled down in the New Millennium. Since our last newsletter things have been fairly quiet. The membership is slowly building up, the main recruits now coming from the Internet. The web site attracts people and ex 656ers usually write an Email to me, or put something on the guest pages for all to read. It was through the Website that one elderly gentleman contacted us, via his son, and now Nobby and Arthur Windscheffel have been reunited with a colleague of Burma days. 'Pop' Reading advertises us on the channel 4 teletext under the old comrades pages, whilst we also have an entry under the Associations section. Our membership at present is 409 actual, with another two that I know about sending applications in. Unfortunately we have members who are no longer with us, and the latest deaths are listed elsewhere. In February Nobby and I had a meeting with one of the companies that manufactures flags, to 'feel the water' so to speak. The cost for the flag alone from that Company, (which would be a *simpler* design than the one shown on the back page), appears to be about £4,000, which still leaves a pole, finial, sling and gauntlets to find money for. We also have another two companies looking at the costing, and as we have sufficient time to plan and organise it properly, we can choose who gets the business. Needless to say we will select the best quality and price we can obtain.

The suppliers we are looking at are: *Toye Kenning & Spencer; Flags & Standards Ltd; and Potter & Co.* If any member is aware of another Company that manufactures Flags and Standards then please tell us, as we wish to get the best value for your money that we can. On the back page you will see a suggested Flag, but which has options for you to choose what YOU would like to see on the flag. We are also open to any other suggestions for the design. Since the back page was printed one comment has been made in that the lower two badges could be left off to; a) save cost; b) avoid any complaints that any Regiment or Corps was not represented, and c) as most people know the current make up of 656 it could be irrelevant. It is also suggested that on the sling we have bars (in silver if we can afford it!) or stainless steel engraved with the names of all the primary stations where 656 have served. We say primary for if we were to put everywhere, ie all the flight locations in Malaya over the years, then the list would be almost endless. I'm sure members would not be too put out if their own particular location was omitted, for the sake of clarity and cost. Once again can I appeal to all members to please notify me of any change of address. I get a number of newsletters returned each printing as 'gone away' and as the member is still paying his dues he is missing out on what is going on. If you have a mate who no longer gets a newsletter, this may be the reason!

Good Friday 21st April 2000

Greetings to you all from a not very sunny Somerset

Another splendid year with 26 new members joining. A good number of these were current Squadron personnel. Our Web site is also paying dividends and recently 2 old Burma comrades have found us, Roy Tomey and Leo Page. We welcome you all into this unique Association and look forward to meeting many of you during the year.

December was not the most opportune period to launch the appeal for the Flag Fund. What with Christmas being but a few weeks away and the added expense of the Millennium celebrations looming, also having previously been asked to donate towards the presents for Claire and myself, I am not surprised, response has been slow.

Your generosity towards those unexpected gifts, for which we are most appreciative, justifies my belief that we can and will reach the target figure of £4000. To all those who have already contributed by cheque please accept my grateful thanks, your Bank statement will indicate that I have received and banked it.

Whilst we are looking to present the Flag to the Squadron during the early months of 2003 it is essential that we have the money available prior to commissioning its manufacture. The making time will be spread over a period of 6 months. I hope to have all the money in hand by the end of 2001 – so if possible, please send your donations soon. A Reserve A/c has already been opened and currently stands at £475.

From the enclosed un-audited accounts, you will see the Association finances are in a healthy state, and our £2 annual subscription appears to be sufficient at the moment. We will need to purchase 500 more Membership cards and 100 Lapel badges before the year end, at a cost of approx £600. Adequate funds are available for both. Austers are on a cash on ordering basis, therefore we have no outlay. The remainder should be self explanatory. The accounts will be available for viewing at the AGM.

Claire and I will be present at the AGM / Luncheon here at Langport on Sunday 11th June, also at Middle Wallop on both Sat and Sun 9/10th September. It is also our intention to attend Dishforth, should anything materialise. It was a pleasure meeting so many of you again at last years events, we look forward to meeting many of you again this year.

Regards and best wishes to you all. Nobby

Condolences

Condolences are passed to Brig. Sibun, DAA on the recent loss of his wife Mimi Also to the families of :

315 D.T.Adey RA died Jan 00
337 B Rhymes RA died Jan 00
027 RG Cottam RA died Jan 00

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NEWSLETTER DELAY

This newsletter was due to have been sent out in early May, as the observant ones will have noticed from the date Nobby wrote his column. The move of the Squadron to Bosnia meant that there was no time to spare for the Squadron Report to be done until they had established their new base of operations. When this was overcome the master was sent to Dishforth for printing. I was unaware at that time that there were only a handful of people left in 9 Regiment, the rest being on various operations. Consequently the remaining clerk had to allocate only 2 hours each day to each Squadron. This then took longer to print our total copies. Sods Law states that if something starts to go wrong, it can only get worse..... The printing was finally completed and posted to me in two parcels. After 14 days the sheets had not arrived with me. I suspect the pony express must have met up with a highwayman somewhere. An executive decision was made to re-write parts of the original newsletter and try again. We have been promised it will be brought to the AGM. This only reinforces my conviction that where we can, newsletters are sent by Email. Your comments please.

FUTURE EVENTS

July 8—9 Duxford

Flying Legend Week-end.
'Forgotten War' museum. Flying displays with veteran aircraft etc. This is a very memorable day and helps keep the Far East war in the public eye.

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September 8/9

Middle Wallop International Airshow

See the first public showing of our new bird of prey (Apache Longbow), the mass helicopter approach, unique to the AAC displays, as well as a full flying display from all three services and International display teams. A good family day out

Nobby, Claire and I will be there to greet you and your friends, with the Journals and photo albums on display, but please do not take them away from the table as they are priceless artefacts.

We will be in the AACA tent as usual.

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DISHFORTH MEETING

With the Squadron in Bosnia until October there can be no reunion in Dishforth in September. The Squadron have offered to host us sometime in December, or early 2001. As this is a season when outdoor activities are severely restricted I suggest we leave it over until September 2001. The Squadron have always made us feel very welcome, and it is always an enjoyable day. Date to be arranged.

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Malaya Revisited.

The visit that John Heyes was trying to lay on for September 2000 had an unfortunate hitch when he came to place the final booking. The travel firm upped the price by £90 a head, and quite rightly John told them to go pedal their trishaws. John is now planning a trip for September 2001, lasting 14 days with probably a similar itinerary as before, or, go as you please, so those who wish, can be independent and meet up again for the return flight. John will get the very best prices for flights and hotels, and details will be given when they are known. There will be many things to sort out and arrange,

and I am grateful to John that he has taken on this task. It is a shame all his last efforts were thrown in his face at the eleventh hour, but I'm sure everyone would like to pass on their many thanks for the effort he made on our behalf. Any members and partners who wish to go in September 2001, please call John (01352-770391) and make the reservation. The larger the party the better discount we should get. I will publish more details as they become known, in later newsletters, but don't let this stop you booking a place! *There will be no final commitment until a deposit is requested and paid.*

Mistakes can, and DO happen!

For the observant ones reading this who have seen my wrong spelling, please don't write/phone, I have been firmly put in my place by Nobby, and I don't think it will happen again. For those that missed it, on the front cover our emblem and title should read 'Chinthe'. However, as I have already printed out 410 copies in colour, the cost of reprinting cannot be justified. Please accept my apologies.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

The Association keeps all details about a member on the Association Database. This database is used for historical records as well as members personal details. Members subscription payments records are also kept on a computerised list, separate from the Membership list. The list of members published on our web site contains only names and service locations with dates.

To conform to the requirements of the DPA, and to avoid the costly registration of the Association, there is a statutory need for members to agree to these databases being kept.

If **YOU DO OBJECT** to any of the categories listed please mark the relevant box, sign and date the form (centre page), and return it to the Secretary no later than 30th July 2000. Your name can then be omitted (but it doubles our workload) Note: on the third item, it is very doubtful if we would ever send lists to outside bodies.

If a reply is *not received* by this date it will be assumed that
YOU HAVE NO OBJECTIONS. Thank you

656 Squadron & Association Shop

PRICE LIST

| | |
|---|-------|
| 656 Squadron Lynx Mk 7 print (unframed) | 3.75 |
| 656 Squadron Lynx Mk 7 (Framed) excludes P & P | 18.00 |
| 656 Squadron Plaque excludes P & P | 18.00 |
| Association Pewter Auster Mk6 (Members Only) | 68.00 |
| Bronze Chinthe, Cast from the same mould as our Silver Presentation one. Great value for money (excludes P & P) | 85.00 |
| 656 Sqn Cloth blazer badge | 5.25 |
| 656 Sqn Tie (Poly/Silk) Burgundy | 12.25 |
| 656 Sqn Tie (polyester) Burgundy or navy | 6.25 |
| Association metal/enamel lapel badge | 3.25 |
| Signed copies of "Fire by Order" | 12.95 |

The photo of the Chinthe on the cover is from a bronze, and shows the fine detail. The Chinthe and the Auster are made to order only, cash with order please



656 Squadron Report

From Capt Marcus Brown, Bosnia.

Since our last entry in the Newsletter the Squadron has been very busy with its pre-Bosnia training. This has included the regulation UNTAT (United Nations Training Advisory Team) course and a highly successful week spent mountain flying in Wales.

Our move to the Balkans was spread out over several weeks, but all personnel had finally arrived in theatre by Saturday 22nd April. Bosnia experiences its rapid change from Winter to Summer over the month of April and those in the first move were lucky enough to experience temperatures in the 20 to 30 degrees Celsius range, whilst still having large pockets of snow on the ground!

The Squadron has been working exceptionally hard since its arrival in Bosnia. There was much to be done on handover, from inventory checks to driver familiarisation and of course theatre qualifying the pilots. We are now operating one

(Continued on page 7)

See page 5 for details

656 Squadron Association
Data Protection Act 1998

- I object** to personal data being held on computer by the Association
- I do not wish** my contact details to be made known in a published membership list
- I do not wish** my contact details to be disclosed to affiliated clubs & societies.

Name _____ Number _____

Signature _____ Date _____ 2000

Please return to : John Bennett, General Secretary,
656 Squadron Association,
Holywell House, Patterdown,
Chippenham, Wilts SN15 2NP

656 Report (Continued from page 6)

Lynx in support of MNDSW (Multi National Division (South West)) and a second to DCOMOPS (Deputy Commander Operations). Our Gazelles are both working out of Banja Luka. Ever resourceful, the Squadron has also made opportunities to have a little fun. Last Sunday the Gornji Vakuf swimming pool was cleaned and filled. So far it has steadfastly refused to warm up and hence only a few brave (or stupid) individuals have so far been for a swim!

Many of you will be aware that we are raising money for Action against Breast Cancer with an event known as the Burma Challenge. The idea is to cover the distance between Dishforth and the squadron's first operational tour in Burma, by logging our combined running and rowing efforts. The challenge is so far progressing well with nearly twelve hundred pounds already raised and we would like to thank all those who have contributed to this total. Early last week we had covered enough miles to reach France, our first port of call en route. Naturally we held a French night, with numerous persons attired in hastily improvised fancy dress. In addition to the characters, which ranged from the Musketeers to French Maids, our fantastic chefs, the 'Rue Brothers' pulled out all the stops to produce a typically French platter. Although a few connoisseurs tucked

(Continued on page 8)

This
Part Page Deliberately Blank
Because Of Submission Sheet On
The Other Side!

**BUT— Your advert could appear here
(for a very minimal donation to the Associations funds)**

Enclosed there should be a loose sheet with the Statement of Accounts of the Association, and on the back the latest additions to the Membership list.

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656 Report*(Continued from page 7)*

in heartily, for many it will be both the first and last time they will try snails! Bosnia is much changed from its turbulent days in the mid-nineties. Although there are numerous uninhabited villages and many parts of the country are still mined, the general attitude seems to be one of rejuvenation. On the drive up country from Split, new plastering and fresh paint are gradually replacing the once familiar bullet ridden houses. In Sarajevo, where one of the Lynx is normally based there are houses with satellite dishes, but no windows. The once proud Television building now stands ruined in the centre of a thriving metropolis. The local people are generally friendly towards SFOR (Stabilisation Force) and though troop levels are being reduced, there is a feeling that we have achieved much and are still doing a worthwhile job. Anyone interested in keeping a more regular update on the Squadron should feel free to access our website - www.carl-evans.clara.net - where you can both read about our most recent activities and leave a message of the squadron. And, if you would like to make a donation to the Burma Challenge you can leave a message for the attention of Capt Paul Hayhurst on this website or write to him direct.

Can YOU Help ?? MT 438

I have had a request from Mr James Stock, the current owner of an Auster MKIII which had the original registration of MT 438. He is trying to find the history of this veteran aircraft, and so far the known facts are: Arrived in Bombay 31st Dec '43. Aboard SS Fort Simpson. Its next appearance is in the ACSEA census of August 1945 and ACFE census 30st May 1946. But, what happened and where was it between arrival in India and then?

It is known that 'C' Flight favoured the MkIII, was it with them? Other options are that MT 438 could have spent a period with a communication flight, or operating from an Aircraft Carrier. It is also possible that it was requisitioned by a senior officer as a personal hack, in which case one can understand why it never appears in any Squadron records.

Ted Maslen-Jones and also the Museum of Army Flying are assisting James Stock in solving this mystery. If you have any recollection of this craft during 1944-45, maybe in your Pilots Log book, or remember servicing it somewhere, or have pictures of it please contact:

James Stock, Furze House, Rogate, Petersfield, Hants GU31 5DD.

Tel: 01730-821 278

CHANGES OF DETAILS

As I have stated elsewhere, and also in previous newsletters, it is *essential that members or their spouses notify me of **any changes** as soon as possible.*

We have found that some phone numbers have changed as people switch to another supplier from the original BT. (ie cable etc) and only this week Nobby has tried to notify members of the AGM, but failed to be connected.

This now applies even more so to EMAIL ADDRESSES, as when users change ISP's they get new ones. I am now communicating more by Email as it saves postage expense on the Association, (free in evenings and week-ends) I can bulk mail to all my known addressees in one shot taking less than 1 minute. I will leave you to calculate how long it takes to put 410 newsletters into envelopes, address and stamp and then seal them,then take them to the post box.

👉 Your Contribution is Needed 👈

Do you have an amusing or not so amusing experience you would like to share? Memories both good and bad of your time with 656? Unusual experiences ? Please put pen to paper and submit your articles to me so they may be shared amongst others of similar interest. This Newsletter is your journal, so please add your stories to it, as one newer Associate member has, Alain Henry de Frehan, in his short article below.

The Old Burma Road re-opened with a Willys MB

By Alain HENRY de FRAHAN,

A few years ago, North American military vehicle collectors “re-opened” the old ALCAN road (Alaska-Canada), driving hundreds of miles up to Alaska. Their next dream was to re-open the Burma Road. I was fortunate.. and obstinate enough to achieve it ! Last October, with two friends based in Rangoon/Yangon, I reached the Chinese border at Mu Se, starting from Mandalay, by the Old Burma Road with a 1943 Willys MB, an achievement that had most probably not been attempted by foreigners since Burma’s independence on 4th January 1948, or maybe the last combats in North-Eastern Burma between Mao Tse Toung’s victorious forces and Chiang Kai Shek’s defeated armies in 1949, vainly supported by the US.

It took a significant time for Hervé Flejo (French) and Olivier Gaiemet (Belgian-French) to prepare this adventure that I had initiated in 1998. Paperwork (travel authorisations, etc.) and technical work on Olivier’s Willys MB to make it reliable for such a trip took a lot of time. For our logistical support we hired a pick-up truck and its driver. We loaded it with tires, fuel, engine oil, spare parts and our luggage. Mandalay, Maymyo, Lashio, Mong Yu (junction between the Old Burma Road and the Ledo/Stilwell Road) and finally Mu Se, border post with China, and back, even down to Rangoon : what a journey ! We’ve been burnt by the sun, we were cold after sunset, we have pulled a pick-up truck from a ditch, we have driven through absolutely wonderful landscapes with steep multiple-S turns and we had to solve technical problems : because of the poor and changing quality of the Burmese gasoline our mechanic had to repeatedly modify the ignition advance and the carburettor, replace or work on the spark plugs, the engine overheated (a surge tank appears definitely indispensable), the alternator malfunctioned, the seal between the engine and the gearbox leaked along the 1,030 miles I did with the Jeep, but we made it ! If you are interested in learning more about this endeavour by reading the full report, please feel free to contact John who will print a copy for the price of 2 x 2nd class stamps, or Email a copy. The next trip is scheduled for November. My friends and I intend to drive farther westward to reach Bhamo, on the Irrawaddy River, which we shall sail down to Mandalay. You are fit and in form ? With some savings to blow up ? And willing to enjoy an unforgettable trip ? Then, join us ! (via Nobby or JB)

Computers and all that Jazz!

A lot of people now are getting computers, and age does not seem to be a barrier any longer. Many are getting into the Internet or WWW whichever designation you prefer, to seek information and entertainment, but also use the 'Email' facilities with distant family members, or just rapid communication. Members who do not have their own machine usually have a family member who does, and who would not mind sharing it to the family advantage. As you are aware your Association has its own website at www.656squadron.org which gets a regular supply of visitors, and nice comments on the guest page. It is from this area that I cull new members! I try to keep the pages updated reasonably regularly with general interest as well as items particularly for members. I have recently put on about 25 photographs kindly supplied by Pete Biggadike, of 1911 flight in Malaya during the mid 50's. Pete has also made a photo CD for our archives of all his Malayan pictures, for which I publicly thank him. I will be adding more pictures to the web soon, for all to enjoy.

If anyone has recently started to use a computer and has an Email address, then please contact me at

656-sqn-assn@BTInternet.com

so I can add you to my list. I notify any members of any urgent or new matters that I think may concern them. I am going to ask all Email members if they would like the future newsletters sent to them by Email, this will have the benefit of being received so much quicker, have pictures in colour, enable

you to print it out should you wish, and save us a lot of time and expense on printing and postage.

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Squadron Journals

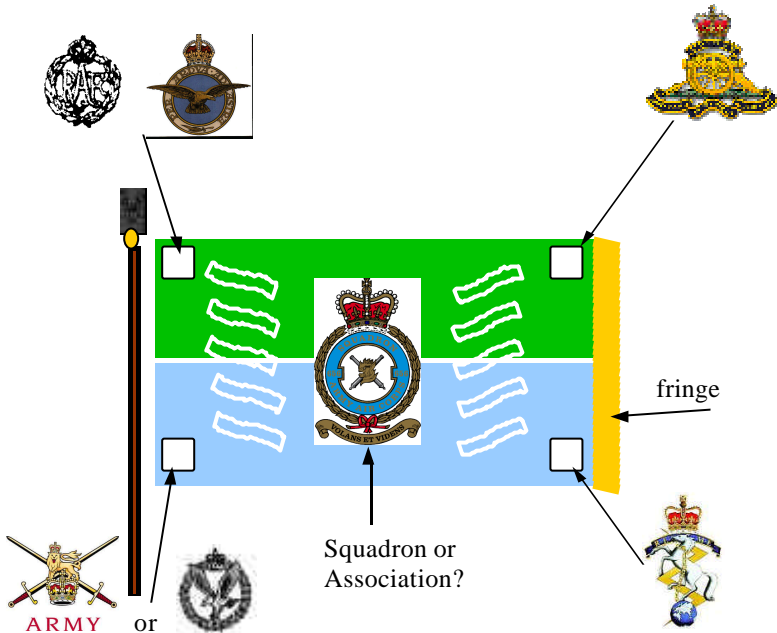
For some time now Les Rogers and Len Edgecock have been working in their own time at the AAC Museum going through the War records and Squadron diaries to compile a Squadron Journal. Les is laboriously typing the notes out into a more readable fashion before printing them. Hard copies are only made for the Museum, the Squadron and the Association. We display ours at all open functions and they are of great interest to most members.

A request has been made to see if they could be reproduced for members, however small print run costs would put them right out of the ball park for most members, whilst others would wonder if the cost was worthwhile. By the time you are reading this I should have the means to write to CD's, so not only can we make a more lasting copy of the hard work Les is doing, but I could also make CD's for members of the Journals, which one could print themselves or just read on screen. The cost would be about £7.00 each, and any profit made be put to the Association. To enable me to assess the possible demand, please let me know by post, Email or phone if you would be interested in buying a copy.

I must stress for those 'not in the know' that these CD's must be viewed on a computer, not music CD players.

Suggested design for the Squadron Flag.

We need to finalise this at the AGM so please study it, and let Nobby or I know your feelings by June 5th.



LEGEND

Top half Jungle Green to show origins, **lower half** AAC blue to show current colours.

Top left either RAF (King George VI) badge or 656 AOP Sqn RAF crest

Top right Royal Artillery badge. This then depicts the RAF unit with Gunner pilots and ground support.

Lower left. General Army badge, this would encompass all Regiments and p Corps now piloting and administering the unit; or A.A.C. badge

Lower right. R.E.M.E. badge representing the support for aircraft servicing.

Central crest could be either the Squadron or the Association crest. (The flag could be used on 656 ceremonial duties, so the Squadron crest would be more appropriate)

Battle Honours: Burma; Java; Malaya; Korea; Falklands; Gulf; ? ? ?
are there any others? The sling could bear place names of locations the Squadron has been stationed at.

YOUR comments and suggestions will be appreciated. Pass them to me on (01249 656-018) ; or Nobby (01458—250009) before June 5th please