

# **THE CHINTHE**



**656 Squadron Association  
Journal  
Spring 2007**

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# EDITORIAL

Since taking over as Editor of our Journal in 2002, I have never seen a need for an Editorial until now. In this edition however, I need to let you know about a few things that are happening or that have happened, which do not fit neatly into other parts of the Journal. I do not intend to have a regular editorial page as we are nearly always tight for space when it comes to publication time.

I have had many calls about the award of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal. The latest state of play is that the Malaysian High Commission in London has received the application forms from MOD and have now passed them on to Kuala Lumpur to arrange for the issue of the medals. The medals should be ready for issue in April or May. Arrangements for the distribution of the medals have not been finalised but most likely they will be posted to applicants. I will keep you informed when, and if, more details become available.

You may remember that I was promoting the concept of 'Comfort' parcels for the Squadron when it was away on operations. I was quite disappointed that only a few members offered support for the idea. Your committee agreed to send a bone china mug, with the Association logo on it, to each member of the Squadron serving in Afghanistan. These were well received and were christened at Christmas by all ranks (*see photograph on page 9*) The total cost of the mugs to Afghanistan was £474.00. Committee members and one other member contributed £200.00 towards the cost. Further contributions from members would be appreciated, please send your cheque's to Mark. The mugs are available to members from the Association shop (*see page 29*)

You will notice that there is no report from the OC of the Squadron in this edition. The new OC took over before the Squadron moved back to Afghanistan and has been tremendously busy with operational tasks. It was difficult for him to get our report to the top of his priority list. Piers Lewis has sent in his 'Baptism of Fire' article in lieu.

You will find various return forms for the Summer Association reunion, Wallop 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations and the Borneo Tour enclosed with this edition of your Journal. It is vitally important that you get these back to Maurice as soon as possible. All the events are numbers limited and tickets will be allocated on a strictly 'first come first served' basis.

Once again, I appeal to you all, young or old, to send in your stories, reminiscences, memories and accounts of your time with the Squadron or, indeed, with Army flying elsewhere. We want to hear from the ground crew as well as the pilots. Our President, in keeping with the tradition of the Association, reminds us that we are a 'rankless' organisation and wishes our Journal to reflect this. The rankless status of the Association was never better manifested than on our last tour to Malaysia where a retired Major General was on Christian name terms with all ranks.

*John Heyes*

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am writing this Report on Boxing Day from Banja Luka, Bosnia where I am currently undertaking a six month operational tour in the Balkans. While Iraq and Afghanistan remain major news items, the Balkans receive little publicity. In many ways this is a shame, because we are fast approaching campaign closure after nearly 14 years of commitment to the establishment of a safe and secure environment. We have achieved operational and political success, and leave a firm legacy. It speaks volumes for the human spirit, that after a long bloody civil war, the people of this region are positive about their future, and grateful for the contribution of the international community. Serving here, specially over the festive period, is a humbling experience. The community, as a whole, is financially poor but culturally rich, warming and welcoming to any stranger.

As I look back on 2006 I can reflect on a year of operational success for the Squadron and comradeship, remembrance and reunion for the Association.

Many of you will have seen that we have updated our website, and I thank John Bennett for the vision and energy to see this through to completion. I commend it to you all. I also commend the various reports about the Squadron's service in Afghanistan. The performance of the Apache and the professionalism and fortitude of the Squadron personnel has been widely, and justifiably recognised by many within the Services, including CGS and CDS, and by the media. This is a clear indication that service and dedication to the task transcends the generations.

2007 has a number of highlights, with two anniversaries of specific interest to the Association. In June the Nation will commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Falkland Campaign, where the Squadron served with distinction, and in September the Army Air Corps celebrates its 50th Anniversary. You can find details of these events in the Journal.

As a consequence of these major events, I envisage that our attendance at the Cenotaph Marchpast in November 2007 will be especially poignant. I therefore commend the event to you, and details will be available in the Summer Journal. I wish you all a contented 2007, and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at our various events.

Finally, I wish the Squadron continued success in Afghanistan and wish them all a speedy and safe return.

*Andrew Simkins*

# SECRETARY'S REPORT

2006 has been another successful year for our Association. Netheravon again provided an excellent venue for the reunion dinner, AGM and Auster flying. The November Remembrance parade in Whitehall saw members attending, an experience which everyone should make the effort to do at least once.

2007 sees the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Falklands war and also the 50<sup>th</sup> of the formation of the Army Air Corps. Falkland's veterans are marching from Horseguards Parade to Buckingham Palace, where there will be a flypast of aircraft from the war. 656 Squadron should be taking part in this, providing they are in UK!! Details of this can be found on the Falklands website.

The Association has a new website which I hope you will look at. One new feature is where new visitors can now enrol directly from the site to become members. This has so far produced several new members. I hope many more will join when they find us from search engines. Overseas members who have difficulties paying the subscription can now also pay on line, as can anyone who would like to make a donation to us.

*John Bennett*

## KEN MATTOCKS ADIEU

Ken has now got his final departure date to become an antipodean. He leaves the UK on the 15th January to take up residence in Australia. We wish Ken and his family all the very best for the future and hope to see him perhaps at a future reunion.

Once again on behalf of the Association, we would like to thank Ken for his sterling work as our treasurer and valued committee member.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Congratulations once more on a really first class Journal. You are setting new standards which are surely going to benefit the Association, and it is most pleasing to witness the results of all the hard work and commitment that our Committee is putting in.

I was disappointed not to be present at Netheravon, but very glad to hear what a great success it has been. All being well, I shall be at the Duxford gathering in August, and looking forward to it.

Your suggestion regarding "Comfort" parcels for our lads in Afghanistan is excellent, and you have set out the way forward very soundly. I fully support the idea, and will look forward particularly to hearing what the suggestions for the contents are. I am sure that you will get a good response. Good Luck.

*E.W. Maslen-Jones. MC DFC*

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Sir,

I refer to your comments on page 4 (*Summer 2006 Journal*). I think it would be an excellent idea to send "Comfort" parcels to members of the Squadron who are located in Afghanistan.

When I was in India with the Squadron, I went through the Khyber Pass to the frontier of Afghanistan. It is indeed a wild place!

Whilst writing, I would like to compliment you and your helpers for producing such an interesting Journal.

*Capt. Bob Henshaw*

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*The following comments were received after the Reunion at Netheravon which included an Auster 'Fly-in':*

As Secretary of the Auster Club I should just like to thank you for a very enjoyable day at Netheravon last Sunday. I hope we did our bit in return...

Hope you and the Committee are well and taking a well earned rest after organising the 656 Sqn. Netheravon reunion. Thanks again for a lovely day out...

Thanks for a great day on Sunday. I flew from Eggesford. Your Committee did so much to organise a successful reunion for your Association, with such a great bunch of people to meet - it was special to talk to so many interesting people. Well done...

I was delighted to be asked to join your Association's reunion and fly-in. It was a perfect day, with perfect weather and although we are not Association members, you colleagues made us feel very welcome as soon as we had landed. Please thank all your members for their hospitality, and a terrific day out. We look forward to the next one!...

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## 656 Squadron Apache: A Baptism of Fire.

In May 2006, 656 Squadron embarked on the first operational tour with the new Apache AH1 aircraft, again, paving the way for the Army Air Corps.

After an uncertain lead-up to the deployment, it was almost with a sigh of relief to finally have the Green Light to go. The first shock to get to grips with in Afghanistan was the heat. The temperatures would rise up to, and occasionally exceed, 50 degrees in the shade! This was OK for the aircrew in their air-conditioned cockpits; however, the groundcrew, strapping Hellfire missiles and rockets to the side of the aircraft, found the temperatures a real challenge with their thick protective clothing requirements.

The Squadron was based in Kandahar for the first month as Camp Bastion was not ready to receive the Apache. This didn't seem too bad with the creature comforts of the 'Green Bean Coffee House', the gym, Welfare centre and other attractions, however, with a severe lack of transport, it soon got wearing having to walk everywhere (Kandahar, or KAF is a big place). For aviation operations, things soon heated up, with the Apache getting its first taste of action on 17 May. This was a one way range, with the crews unable to 'return the RPG favour'. The first engagement was on 20 May, and was an equipment denial task (by the author) of an abandoned French vehicle. This naturally spawned comments like:

"The first time the British Longbow has been used in anger against the French since Agincourt!"

It was not long before Apache was conducting engagements every week ranging from Troops in Contact (TiC) reaction (utilising the very high readiness AH task line) to various deliberate operations throughout Helmand province. The crews were particularly rewarded on hearing comments from the guys on the ground such like:

"Thank god you were there, you saved our lives."

Comments like that are not easily forgotten. Brigadier Ed Butler, 16 Brigade Commander, pointed out that UK Apache was a "Mission essential piece of equipment".

It wasn't long before the emphasis switched from operations based out of Kandahar to operations from the brand new Camp Bastion in the middle of the desert. Most of the Squadron much prefer it there due to the proximity to, and focus on, pure operations and the big team spirit. Unfortunately, there are no coffee houses at Bastion, only dust, dust, and more dust!

The Squadron took part in a number of deliberate operations alongside the Chinooks of 1410 Flt, and members of 3 Para Battlegroup (and their attached elements), not least, two notable operations called Op MUTAY and Op AUGUSTUS. The first marked the real emergence of the Aircraft on the scene when a 'non-kinetic' operation went against the grain and turned 'fully kinetic', proving the old adage that 'the enemy always have a vote'. AH supported elements of 3 Para, notably the Ghurkas and the 3 Para Patrols Platoon as they became decisively engaged even before the H Hr had arrived. The result of the AH being on station was that a number of Taliban, who had ambushed the ground forces, were engaged by AH, and no British lives were lost. This was incredibly

fortunate considering the weight of firepower the ground forces were subject to. The only losses suffered were to two small areas of ZJ173s tail boom where, upon return, bullet holes were discovered.

Op AUGUSTUS, on the other hand, was predicted as being fully kinetic, and epitomised the essence of 'Air Assault' with the sheer number of aircraft involved in the Operation. The spirit of Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) with the Chinooks and Apache found eight aircraft airborne at the same time inserting a sizable force into an area close to Sangin. This included a number of other air assets including Predator, AC130 gunships, and A10s to name but a few, and constituted a full, multi-national COMAO (Combined Air Operation). This operation saw the Chinooks take their first battle damage as they inserted members of 3 Para. The AH fired 30mm and a number of Hellfire Missiles.

The first tour for 656 Sqn AH lasted 3 months, when the mantle was handed to 664 Sqn to continue the good work. This, in turn was handed back to 656 Sqn, this time, without Andy Cash (now Lt Col) in command, but with Maj David Amlôt, who, now having flown various types of AH over the last 10 years slotted in quickly at the helm. This was quickly reaffirmed with the fact that, by the end of week two, he had fired every weapon the aircraft sports. One of his early contacts appeared on Sky news the following day! David has joined with another four new pilots who have fitted in seamlessly into the Squadron. Of course, it hasn't only been aircrew who have changed over, we have taken on board a whole host of new faces from the REME and groundcrew alike, and again, they all have found themselves quickly at home in 656.

We certainly foresee that the Apache shall remain in Afghanistan for quite a while yet, and 656 Sqn will return on a regular basis to the theatre. For 2006 though, we remain proud of what we as a Squadron and Regiment have achieved, and the effects we have made in Helmand Province. There are certainly British soldiers only alive today due to the actions of the whole Squadron in the first Operational tour of UK Apache.

*Piers Lewis AAC*

## **Keith Frost - Bridges**

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Keith Frost – Bridges . He died in hospital in Paphos on 20th December 2006. Keith never became a member of our association but will be remembered with affection by those who served with him in Malaya and Borneo. Our sincere condolences go to his family.  
*Ed.*

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

Once again, the Association was represented at the Cenotaph for the Remembrance Day Parade. Twelve members took part, though there were more tickets available. Maurice's arrangements went well, as usual. He even managed to organise fine weather for the day. Sylvia Heyes volunteered to push Vera Deacon round in her wheelchair. Vera asked if she should wave and was told that it was quite acceptable provided that it was a 'regal' wave. Vera took us at our word and waved 'regally' to all and sundry all the way round. Our wreath carrier this year was Maurice.

Ross Skingley kindly invited us all to the Naval and Military ( the 'In and Out' ) club for lunch after the event, which was much appreciated.

*Below: Some of the members on Horseguards Parade prior to forming up for the march past.*



## CHRISTMAS CHEER



*Association mugs being christened by the lads and lasses at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan*

You'll be pleased to know that the Squadron Christmas event took place last night, and was a superb success. 'Tac Callsigns' (nicknames!) were handed out to most of the Sqn (including REME), skits were completed, and 2Flt put on a viewing of their Top Gun spoof in the AH - fantastic! Everyone was also very happy with their mugs, with all pleasantly surprised by the kind level of generosity from the Association as they opened the present. We all raised the mugs charged with a little beer (2 can rule in force!) and drank cheers to the Association and the Squadron. Photos were taken, and I shall get one to you (*see above*)

Other than that, a particularly quiet day yesterday. The evening bash certainly had the effect of washing away any Christmas blues from the younger soldiers and those with families.

Anyway, from all the Squadron members, the OC, and myself, thank you once again for such a kind and thoughtful gesture.

*Piers Lewis*

# Apaches in action

The Army's Apache attack helicopters have delivered devastating firepower in Afghanistan's Helmand Province



*With temperatures soaring to 50 deg. C, hot refuelling the aircraft takes on a whole new meaning for the ground crew.*

As neighbourhood watch schemes go, they don't come any better than that provided by 656 Squadron AAC for Camp Bastion in Helmand Province. Keeping a close eye on whatever might be going on around the base, are Apache helicopters; part of the Joint Helicopter Force, a tri-service unit that has already proved its worth in Iraq. To perform their eye-in-the-sky role these state of the art snoopers have night vision systems, CCD TV target trackers, thermal imaging and radar that can spot vehicles as small as a motorbike - the Taliban's preferred method of getting around.

The helicopters can also swiftly deliver a powerful punch when the forward operations bases or patrols need it. Apache's defining weapon is the 30mm cannon which can put down pinpoint accurate fire at a rate of 625 rounds a minute. When larger area cover is called for, or when enemy buildings need to be knocked out, there are Hell Fire missiles and CRV7 rockets. Which means that the apaches can destroy targets up to 12kms away.

Officer in charge, Major Andy Cash, (now Lt. Col.) works from an operations tent just a 30 second stroll from that of 3 Para command in Camp bastion. The proximity has made a huge difference in terms of battle planning and briefing. "It means that when we go out we are fully aware of the battlegroup's plans," he said.

Apaches also escort the operation's aerial workhorses, the C130 Hercules transport planes and the huge Chinook transport helicopters.

So far the main threat to aircraft has come from small arms fire, but Major Cash is clear about the need to be alert for other weapons, "We have all the measures we need to counter the assessed threats," he said.

Before deployment there had been some doubts expressed about how well the Apache would be able to cope with the extreme conditions in Afghanistan. But

the helicopters have performed exceptionally well. Flying high and hot is always a challenge for helicopters as the engines have to work significantly harder.

Flying through dust like talcum powder at 120 knots is also a challenge. "One pilot said the other day he'd rather do another year in Iraq than have to do another heavy dust landing here," said Major Cash. "But the Apache copes a lot better than I imagined. They are carrying heavier loads longer distances than the US aircraft."

It seems that one of the few down sides of the Apache falls to the ground crew. "Its not so bad working in the cockpit with the aircon going," said Lance Corporal Martin Booker. "But we are so used to the temperatures being in the fifties now, 25 degrees C seems cold to us, so sometimes we have to put the heating on instead."



*It takes only a moment for the ground crew to reload a missile on the Apache, and in no time at all the attack helicopter is ready to go.*

## **Helicopters under attack**

There has been no shortage of small arms fire directed at the Apaches, as illustrated by one pilot's recent experience. Captain Peter X (we are not allowed to disclose his full name) of the AAC said: "We were called in to offer overhead support to protect a Chinook that was under fire while trying to pick up a casualty after three vehicles had been destroyed by rocket propelled grenades. It was nearly last light, but we decided to go in. We were talked into location by the guys on the ground. The tension and breathlessness in their voices is always apparent. There was a lot of tracer fire coming up around the aircraft, in fact so much we had to fly on instruments as we couldn't actually see where we were going. But we didn't get hit."

There have been a few occasions where an Apache has been hit, but so far nothing serious. "I have been shot at a few times, but haven't realised it until we got back," said the pilot. "Its quite strange. I don't know if it's the training or just stupidity, but it just doesn't seem that scary at the time."

# ARMY PILOTS PRAISED

## Chief of Staff commends professionalism of 9AAC personnel

Brave Apache crews received praise from top as they were given a heroes' welcome on returning from their first operational outing with the helicopter.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, the Chief of the Defence Staff, said the professionalism and dedication of personnel from 656 Squadron, 9 Regiment, Army Air Corps, during their three month tour in Afghanistan had placed them at the "cutting edge of British military power."

He added: "They have earned their spurs in the heat, dust and fire of combat, in the face of challenging and complex operations and often in the face of great danger.

"You do not need to ask them about their contribution - you need only ask those on the ground who depended on them, day after day, to provide the crucial edge over the enemy. They will leave you in no doubt about what the Apache achieved."

ACM Stirrup, himself an experienced pilot who flew fast jets with the Royal Air Force, was speaking after presenting their crews with their campaign medals at their base in Dishforth, North Yorkshire. He said that the Apache had proved itself a battle-winning weapon, which had excelled in its role despite facing a "stiff challenge" in southern Afghanistan.

"We might not have expected the degree of ferocity that the fighting would sometimes reach at its peak but we were ready for it - we were ready because of the quality, training and courage of our forces on the ground," Sir Jock added.

"But we were also ready because we deployed the best attack helicopter in the world and because it was crewed and maintained by people who are among the most able anywhere.

"We always knew that the Apache was a potent weapon system and that the people who operate and support it were brave and professional. But they have had to demonstrate these qualities - and more - in the most demanding circumstances."

*The above article was spotted in 'Soldier' magazine by Andrew Simkins. Ed.*

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## Correction

In the summer Journal 2006 we published an article from Capt. H.J. Groom wherein it said that Flt. Lt. Eaton RAF was the 'Equipment Officer'. Ted Maslen – Jones tells us that he was the much loved Squadron Adjutant from the time that the squadron was formed until the end of the operations in Java. We apologise for the error which came to us in the original text

## Re-Union Middle Wallop 14<sup>th</sup> September 2007

We have arranged to have the reunion on the same weekend as the Army Air Corps 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We need to have your intentions urgently. Could you please complete the enclosed form. This must be returned by **28<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2007**. You can telephone Maurice Haynes on 01264 738203 to confirm receipt of your application. Or ask via e-mail at [mauricehaynesuk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mauricehaynesuk@yahoo.co.uk) We would like to know if you wish to attend either one or both events. Please be aware that submission of this return will not guarantee a ticket.

### The Re-union

1. The allocation for the re-union will be on a 'first come first served' basis, so please do not delay.
2. The food has not yet been decided as I am waiting to confirm the caterers. There will be a veggie option.
3. The time of starting will be 1800 for 1830. If different you will be advised. Please ensure your contact details are included
4. The venue will be in the Museum at Middle Wallop
5. We have been over subscribed in previous years, as we anticipate the same this year it will be on a 'first come first served' basis. There will be a reserve list if necessary
6. We will supply transport if sufficient demand. Please enclose the necessary money £8 pp. Please ensure you advise us of the Hotel.
7. The cost will be £22:50
8. We have been unable to block book any Hotel this year but are able to recommend the following:- The Premier Travel Inn. Andover. 01264 321920 or 0870 850 6304. Also The Inn at High Post, 01722 782592 may be more to your liking.

*Maurice Haynes*

## Army Air Corps 50th Anniversary 15th September 2007

This will commence at approximately 10.00 to 10.30 am

Their Royal Highness's The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall will be in attendance.

Entrance to the event and the lunch is free to those with allocated tickets.

We believe that members with allocated tickets will be free to enter both the Army Air Corps Association and the 9 Regiment marquees.

There is a very full programme of events planned. The main event will consist of Drumhead Service, Meeting the Veterans (us), Parades, Awards, March Past and Lunch. At about 1630 Flying displays, Beating the Retreat followed by an evening programme of music. These events are in early stages, so items and times may change.

Please be aware that 656 Squadron Association are not involved in the planning and/or issue of tickets, we are collecting your names on behalf of the 656 Squadron Association and forwarding to RHQ. The numbers are limited so please apply as soon as possible; the sooner we can get our bid in the better.

Please DO NOT apply to the Army Air Corps Association if you have already applied with 656 Squadron Association, this will not improve your chances, but will maybe take another persons place.,and will possibly result in your name being deleted from both lists in error

**The criterion is ONE member, plus ONE Spouse/Partner or Carer. No children or friends.** However, if you require extra people to come, please apply on the form giving me as much information and help so that I can make a case to the AAC at RHQ.

*Maurice Haynes*

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# MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

## Memories

*by Cpl. L.A. Belsey MID*

My service career started in August 1951 at Catterick, joining the Royal Signals. After basic training I was posted to Ripon for my driving course, from there I went to Aldershot, then on to detachment to Bude in Cornwall.

After returning to Aldershot, I was then posted to Korea, sailing on the troopship 'Austarius' which took twenty eight days via the Suez Canal. On arrival in Korea, I was transferred to the Glider Pilot Regiment 1913 Lt. Liaison Flt.

The first airfield (name I can't remember) was where I had my first flight in an Auster aircraft.

From there we moved up to Fort George Airstrip on the River Imjin, just over the 38th Parallel. Captain Irwin was our commander, a big man with a large moustache.

I often got a call from the American Airbase in Inchon to go and pick him up as he had had one too many.

I remember most of all the terrible accident to Captain Harris of 1903 Flight, who was killed by a jet crash landing at the end of our runway. It happened on Coronation Day 1953.

I had many a flight doing reconnaissance over the enemy lines. On my last day in Korea, Capt. Irwin took me up on a flight and on returning to base did a loop-the-loop and then a corkscrew before landing. To his surprise I thoroughly enjoyed it.

I was then sent to Japan for a week before joining the troopship 'Devonshire' to take us to Singapore.

On arrival, I joined 1911 Lt. Liaison Flight at Seremban, from there we moved up to Benta.

I was MT. NCO to Captain John Phillips who was an excellent pilot, but also a very daring one, taking off and not climbing until the last minute.

I did quite a lot of flying over the jungle, taking pictures of clearings to find out if the Communists were growing crops.

Our last move was then down to Singapore at the Royal Navy Air Station at Sembawang, nice clean barracks, plus swimming pool. I played football and cricket and also scored my first century, 104 not out, against the Navy.

My three years overseas tour was now up and I returned to England, flying on a Hermes Hercules aircraft, taking us three days and arriving at Stanstead Airport which was covered in snow.

I was demobbed in 1956 after serving 5 years in HM Forces. It was, to say the least, an enjoyable and marvelous experience.

I now belong to the Glider Pilot Association, also 656 Squadron Association. I am now, of course, retired, and spend a lot of time bowling and cutting our bowls green.

My wife and I enjoy cruising with P & O whenever we can.

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## **'The Duty Crew'**

*by Geoff Mansfield*

I joined the army on 1960 and became an Aircraft Technician in the Army Air Corps. In 1964, having spent three years on active service in Malaya and Borneo, I was posted to the Army Air Corps Centre at Middle Wallop in Hampshire. One Saturday night four of my friends and I were at a dance in the NAAFI. We were being entertained by a local group called The Troggs, who were later to turn professional and find fame and fortune. At the interval they kindly allowed us to use their instruments, and although we had never played together before, we gave a rendition of 'Under the Boardwalk' that would have shamed many a professional group. And so the rock group 'The Duty Crew' was born. We spend two very happy years together, playing at NAAFI dances and local gigs, but all good things must come to an end. Our lead guitarist was posted to Germany, the rhythm guitarist went to Borneo, the bass guitarist went to Cyprus and the singer hid away on his little den at Middle Wallop for the rest of his army career. As for me, I was demobbed in 1966 and went home to Mum.

Forty years later, whilst surfing the web, a name I recognised cropped up. After five e-mails, labeled return to sender, and several 'phone calls later, I was contacted by a person with a rich Irish brogue. I has found Sean 'The Fenian' Kearney, rhythm guitarist. Fired with enthusiasm we set about tracing the rest of the group. Two weeks later, having discovered a likely address, I knocked on the door of a house in Reading, Berkshire, which was answered by John 'The Nose' Balague. Our bass guitarist had been unearthed. A few days later John contacted Sean and myself with the news that he had made contact with Mick 'The Broge' Brogan, vocalist with 'The Crew'. This left only Les Kehoe (Keogh?) our superb lead guitarist and we would be ready for our comeback. However, finding Les has been much more difficult. We have tried all the likely avenues and some unlikely ones, such as Liverpool FC fan club, all to no avail. We appeal to you as a last resort. We believe Les came from Birkenhead. He was probably born between 1940 and 1945. Les was a Vehicle Mechanic in the REME, and was stationed at Middle Wallop 1964-66. He was a short lad, about five feet six inches tall, and had bulging eyes. He had a big quiff of dark hair that hung over his forehead.

Please help us find our old friend, you will make four of Her Majesty's Old Soldiers very happy, and eternally grateful.

Me? I'm Geoff Mansfield, nicknamed 'Killer', but used my second name Alan, whilst in the Army, as there were too many other Geoffs around. I played the drums.....

*Just before we went to print, we received the following:*

..... The good news is that we have found Les. Back in March 2006, among many other attempts, I 'phoned the Army Historical Records Department in Scotland. A very helpful young lady suggested that I write a letter to Les and send it to him at his last known address. If she could find a match for the small amount of detail I was able to provide.

We always knew Les as Les, but in fact his first name is Bryan, which made tracing him more difficult. I sent the letter to her, but several months went by without any news, so I gave up on that line of enquiry. On September 2nd the 'Missing' article was published in the Daily Mail. No news for over a month, when I got an e-mail from the Daily Mail, saying that they had received a letter and if I would give them my postal address they would forward the letter to me. I immediately responded and then composed an e-mail to Sean, Mike and John to tell them the article had had one response and to keep everything crossed in the hope that it was Les. Just as I hit the 'send' button on my computer my mobile 'phone rang. I didn't recognise the number, so I answered rather cautiously as few people knew my mobile number. Imagine my feelings when a rich Liverpudlian voice said "I think you are looking for me" Half an hour later, after a long conversation with Les, I rang the rest of the gang with the good news. Mr. Vodaphone must have made a lot of money that day. The letter I sent to the Army Historical Records Department had finally caught up with Les.

The letter from the Daily Mail, it was from Marie Chew (nee Cooke) who remembered us at Middle Wallop. Marie married another Wallop chappie, Vince Chew, who was stationed there at about the same time. Marie and her husband are keen to trace their old friend, Patrick Lundy, also at Wallop.

As for the Duty Crew, I met up with Les and John Balague in December, when Les came down to visit his family in Winchester. We plan to reform the group for a bit of fun, and maybe busk at the 50th Air Corps Anniversary celebrations next September. Mike is tuning up his vocal chords, I have borrowed a set of drums and lent my guitar to Sean. Les has dug his guitar out of the loft and dusted it off and John has bought himself a bass guitar and amplifier for Christmas, so we are well equipped.



*The Duty Crew , Left to Right:  
Sean Kearney, Mike Brogan, John Balague and Geoff Mansfield.*



## **A sprog goes on his Military Training Class Two course**

*by John Heyes*

I suppose that after spending about six months in Taiping, I was now, technically, not a sprog, but sprogishness is a perception, a state of mind. I still considered myself a sprog in many ways and I'm certain that the 'tiffie' did too. I had also come to the realisation that I had made a serious mistake in choosing 'Airframes and Engines' as a trade. It is fundamental to being a mechanic that necessitates getting fairly dirty from time to time and I had a severe aversion to being dirty. I particularly disliked working on engines, dirty smelly things. By dint of various subterfuges I managed to take over the running of our small stores, the POL accounting, the battery shop, when we had no 'Greenie', and anything else that avoided picking up a spanner. Naturally I was still on the duty crew roster and performed Before, Turnround and Afterflight inspections but since these mostly involved kicking the tyres and counting the wings, no dirt was involved and I didn't mind too much. I quite liked the fabric and painting work and there was plenty of that as the fabric on the Austers would rot quite quickly in the tropical conditions. Our area of responsibility had many landing grounds, from disused airfields and village padangs to straight stretches of road that were unobstructed. Auster paint and fabric seemed to be both attractive and tasty to the local cattle. Leave an aircraft unattended on a village padang or remote field for a few minutes and on return one would find the cows contentedly grazing on the fabric.

'What', I hear you asking 'has all that got to do with the second class military training course?' It soon became obvious to me that the senior NCOs did not get nearly as dirty as the ORs and that the further one looked up the pecking order, the less close involvement in grubbiness pertained, therefore, get promoted!! The only way to get promoted was to obtain the requisite qualifications. I already had the necessary education certificates. I was too inexperienced to get the first class trade test qualification. The only other thing that I could do was to get the 'regimental' bit out of the way. So, off to 40 Base Workshops in Singapore (On the night train again!!) for three weeks of Regimental training. Oh joy!!

The first morning of the training set the scene for the next three weeks. It is an established fact that Sergeants Major regard anything that is slightly different to their conceptions of uniformity as a personal affront. The CSM was, I believe, from Malta and of a definitely Latin temperament. Pale blue berets were rarely seen in those days and the CSM let it be known, by his first order on the morning parade, that they had no place in his world.

'You, in the pouffy blue hat. Fall out and take the parade!!' He barked out.

This gave me a bit of a clue as to how his Latin temperament would react to anything different from his norm. I came smartly to attention and marched out to the front of the parade. Now this was at the time before the issue of DMS boots. (Moulded rubber soled boots). The potential for damage to the aircraft, from size ten boots with studs and heel plates, had been recognised early in the formation of AAC, as had the potential for conflagration caused by the combination of boot studs, sparks and one hundred and thirty octane avgas. In an attempt to avoid these disasters, all aircraft mechanics boots had been resoled and heeled with

rubber. Having avoided being singled out for anything on the first parade, the other nine people on the course were now breathing sighs of relief and struggling to control their mirth.

'What have you got on your feet?' A purple faced, twitching and quivering CSM bellowed. He seemed to be hovering about six inches off the ground.

'Boots, Sergeant Major' I replied in a weak voice.

'They.... are....not....boots,...what are they?' He barked, enunciating each word in a way that only a Sergeant Major can. (I seriously suspect that, at Pirbright, they have secret instructor, from RADA, to teach this manner of speech.)

'Boots, Sergeant Major' I replied in an even weaker voice.

'They.... are....not....boots, they are carpet slippers!! Get off my square!! Gettoff now'. he bawled.

I marched smartly to the side of the square and waited in sweating trepidation as he detailed another smirking innocent to take the parade.

The roll having been called and the parade stood at ease, the highly polished, bristling and purple faced CSM marched over to within feeler gauge distance of my nose and roared,

'Go to the quartermaster, at the double, and draw a pair of proper soldiers boots then get back here in ten minutes wearing same. I never want to see those excuses for military foot wear ever again.'

I doubled away towards where I thought that the quartermaster's stores might be. 40 Base Workshops was a very large camp on both sides of a fairly busy road. I asked directions from a number of people who were met along the way and was rapidly coming to the conclusion that I had either entered some kind of time warp or an establishment for the mentally deranged. Everyone asked either had no idea of what a quartermaster's store might be, or they directed me to strangely seedy, apparently disused huts, in disparate parts of the camp, containing the detritus of long forgotten tenants.

I eventually found the stores but my ten minutes grace had long gone. On explaining my dilemma to the corporal in the stores, I once again became convinced that an alien culture existed at 40 Base Workshops. I was told that exchanging the boots was not an option as mine had been improperly modified. Only pristine boots complete with a full set of studs and heel plates could possibly be exchanged. Pleas that the modifications to my boots had official sanction fell on deaf ears. He took my plea to the CQMS who surveyed the offending footwear and declared them proscribed for exchange. The only solution was to purchase a new pair. Naturally, I was broke, having applied the 'Heyes First Law Of Posting or Detachment for Soldiers', i.e., 'Never arrive at any new location with money in the pocket'. I then went through the process of having the cost of the boots deducted from future pay and left clutching stiff new boots. Back at the barrack room, quick application of polish, unwind miles of khaki puttees from ankles, remove laces from old boots, lace up the new boots, don same, rewind miles of puttees and return to the square at a fast hobble.

On arrival on the square, the squad were being marched off to be introduced to the new army rifle, the SLR, which was just being issued to operational units. Unfortunately, 40 Base Workshops training unit was not at the

top of the priority list for the issue of the new weapon and had been issued with part of a trial batch of the Belgian FN Rifle. The SLR had been based upon the Belgian design and had been made in the UK but with some significant differences. The cocking handle on the FN was a knob rather than the folding handle on the SLR. The SLR had only two positions on the selector lever, safe or single rounds. There was no position for firing bursts of automatic fire. I can only assume that Belgian soldiers are rotten shots and need to fire bursts. I suppose British soldiers are expected to hit things with a single shot. There were other differences but they were of no real significance at this point.

The rest of the morning was spent learning our way around the new weapon, stripping, cleaning, clearing malfunctions etc. The afternoon was dedicated to learning how the experts at Pirbright had evolved drill for the new weapon. It was at this point that the significance of the non-folding cocking handle began to manifest itself. At Pirbright, they did not go in for wearing shorts on parade too often and the drills had been designed around the SLR with the folding cocking handle. The sergeant drill instructor, highly polished, purple and twitching, (He must have been taking lessons from the CSM), demonstrated how to throw the rifle up the right hand side of the body to get to the Shoulder Arms position. The significance of the fact that he was wearing very nicely tailored long OG trousers and that we were wearing shorts was soon to manifest itself.

OG shorts that had been washed and starched a few times tended to become fairly fragile at the seams. New shorts were considerably tougher. When we attempted the same evolution, throwing the rifle sharply up our right sides, the first thing that happened was that the cocking handle caught in the hem of our shorts, cocking the rifle. Those with the newer shorts lost control of their rifles and sent them clattering to the ground, whilst those with the older shorts found that, whilst their rifles were in approximately the correct position, the transit had been accompanied by the sound of ripping material and their shorts were split from hem to pocket. When the drill instructor finally calmed down he somehow managed to get us all to the 'Shoulder Arms' position. He now demonstrated the 'Order Arms' movement. When we tried it, the significance of the non-folding cocking handle again came in to play. Those with the newer shorts found the cocking handle firmly caught in their pockets, again causing the rifles, once again, to clatter to the ground. Those with already tattered shorts now found that the cocking handle had caught in their pockets and had completed the job of ripping it out, depositing loose change, keys, pocket knives and sundry other unmentionable objects onto the square, leaving their right legs completely exposed. The remainder of the afternoon was taken up in learning the rest of the drills with the new rifle. Half of the squad prancing about with their lower bodies partly covered with what appeared to be a jungle green split skirt and the other half trying to drill with the rifle held about a foot away from their bodies. The evening was dedicated to sewing up our tattered shorts.

After the fiasco of the first day, things could only get better, so I thought. The second day began on learning about the Mills 36 Grenade and how to care for it, prime it, and throw it. The morning was spent in the classroom and all went well. In the afternoon we were taken out to an area of the camp, close to the car park, where we were to take practice throws with an inert grenade. I was about the

fourth to throw. Now I have never aspired to being a cricketer and hurling cricket balls had never been my forte. This lack of this fundamental schoolboy expertise chose this moment to manifest itself. I adopted the requisite pose, (My wife tells me I'm an inveterate poser), and hurled my grenade at the stick which represented the target. As we were in Singapore, the humidity was high. My hands were very sweaty, which caused the grenade to exit from the side of my hand. My grenade described a beautiful parabola in the direction of the adjacent car park. It didn't make too much of a dent in the bonnet of the car that it struck and I wasn't too concerned. Let's face it, who in their right mind would let a load of sprogs throw practice grenades in close proximity to a car park? The Sergeant who was supervising the training now adopted the purple visage and the vigorous twitching which had been manifested by the CSM yesterday. I think that he had realised that we were throwing in an area that had been unwisely chosen by him. It was only when the CSM exploded onto the scene, foaming at the mouth and threatening dire consequences, that we eventually understood the true significance of the errant grenade.

***The dented bonnet belonged to the OC!!***

I found that standing at the back of the squad, adopting the demeanour and look of a tree, didn't protect me from the verbal attentions from the Sergeant and the CSM. It was a pity that the instruction in camouflage was yet to come. That blasted blue beret gave me away I think. After casting a few aspersions on my ancestry and my potential lack of longevity, most of the verbal reaction from our Maltese Sergeant Major was directed at the Sergeant. The majority of his tirade is unrepeatably in polite society.

The next few days went by relatively incident free. We learned the nuances of interpretation of maps, contours, identifying dead ground from the maps and studying features that are generally unhelpful to those trying to pass over them. We were taught how to teach and instruct lesser mortals in the finer arts of drill and weapon training. We studied camouflage but this lesson came too late. I could have done with it before the grenade throwing farrago. I managed to get through the instruction and handling of the Bren gun without reducing my clothing to tatters or damaging any passing or stationary vehicles. I didn't understand why the instructors were reluctant to let us fire the 3.5" rocket launcher or the inerga grenade. They had spent a great deal of time in teaching us how to use and care for them. I suppose the OC was concerned for the safety of the general public passing through the camp on the public road. Perhaps he was worried that his car could be a target again.

The last training morning was spent learning about the .38 revolver, which was still in standard use, and the Browning 9mm pistol. The CSM was the instructor for this part of the course and we learned the safety drills for both weapons as well as how to strip and clean both. Lastly we were taught how to hold, aim and fire them, dry firing them in the classroom. Our CSM was insistent that if one was firing a pistol at the enemy then one must be relatively close to him. Firing had to be reactive as natural instinct would make one hesitant to fire at another human being. We were lined up in two rows, facing each other, and were made to snarl at the man opposite before dry firing the pistol at him. After lunch, we went onto the pistol range again under the direction of the CSM. He loaded a

.38 revolver and demonstrated how to fire it in the manner laid down in the training manual. Having emptied the gun at the target he then said,

'That is how the army says how to use this weapon. I will now demonstrate the most effective way to use it.'

He emptied the six rounds into his hand, threw them one by one at the target then threw the pistol after them.

'That is the most effective way to use this 'weapon' he declared, 'but you didn't hear that from me.'

The rest of the afternoon was spent firing the 9mm pistol from both the approved stance and what the CSM described as the FBI stance i.e., hold in both hands, both eyes open and bend the knees in an unseemly crouch. I found this very satisfying as I cannot hit a barn with a shotgun, even if I'm standing inside it. With the Browning pistol I had great success in actually hitting the target.

At last we came to the testing days and the end was in sight. We were tested in the classroom on all the subjects that we had been taught and I felt confident that I had done reasonably well. The last test was for each of us to take charge of the squad on the parade square and to demonstrate some aspect of rifle drill as an instructor. The CSM's eyes glinted as they alighted on my pale blue beret. He called me out to undertake the first rifle drill instruction.

'Carpet Slippers! Fall out and instruct this shower in the art of shouldering arms with the SLR'

I thought that he might mean me so I marched smartly to the front and took position to instruct. I was a little nervous to say the least. After describing the drill, I then went on to demonstrate with accompanying commentary. Unfortunately, Doctor Spooner had taken charge of my brain and my first instruction went something like,

' With your right hand, fling the rifle up the right side of your body, swing the left arm across and grip the forestock then take a firm grip of the *gristol pip* with your right hand'

I had no idea why the parade had collapsed into fits of mirth, the Spoonerism went unnoticed by me. The CSM reverted to his purple twitching mode and quieted the parade. I was allowed to finish my demonstration which I achieved without ripping any of my lower garments or dropping the rifle. It was only after the testing was over and we had left the square that I was told what I had said.

Unbelievably, I passed my second class military training course and returned to Taiping. I still wonder what the criteria were for passing the course.

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## Beer Bottle Bombing in Borneo

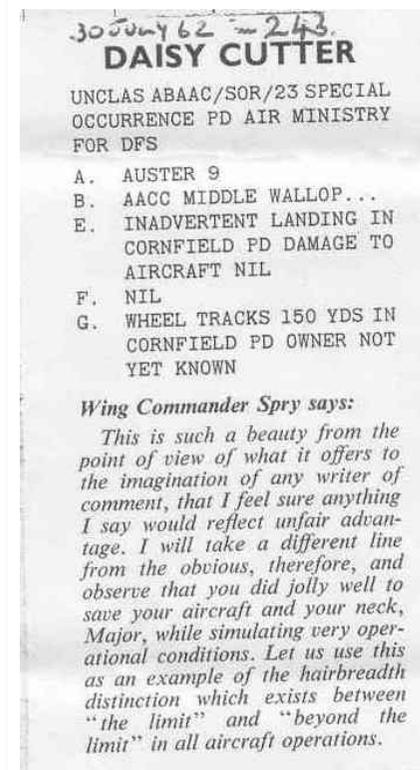
by Simon Salter Maj. (Ret)

I passed out of 155 Course (2 Jan - 28 Sept '62) probably having achieved the bare minimum standard. On Chipmunks it took me 15 hours to go solo and, but for the fact the CFI was away playing golf, my chop ride would have preceded my first solo! Soon after going solo I managed a spectacular ground loop which was to stand me in good stead later. I was trained on the Auster 9 initially by John Coles and later in advanced fixed wing by Mike Badger. On one occasion we finished up in the middle of a corn field during a demonstration of a CATO over high elm trees ( see Daisy Cutter attached). I joined 656 in Kluang in

November 1962 where my theatre conversion proceeded slowly with Red Meaton until the Brunei revolt took place and the requirement for pilots increased. After a jungle survival course and a check out by Jack Elston I found myself in joining 14 Flt commanded by Bill Duthoit. The Austers were used for ADS, leaflet dropping, and various reces. On one occasion I saw the leader of the rebels, Azahari, on a clear hillock. However at this stage the only helicopter available in Brunei was an RAP Sycamore flown by John Weaver the Navy 846 Sqn R N with piston engined Whirlwinds having returned to their ship so no action could be taken.

Flare dropping became a major requirement as the rebels were on the run and believed to be holed-up on a mangrove island in Brunei Bay. In order to reduce their chances of escape nightly missions were flown to drop 3.5 inch parachute flares over the islands.

As the technique of flare dropping had not been covered in training, my Flight Commander, Bill Duthoit, sent me off with the



AQMS, Len Edgecock, on my first night mission and he would brief me as we carried out the sortie. For the benefit of those who have not flown Austers on flare drops, the loading was as follows: 3 flares were fitted under the fuselage on a light series carrier (the fourth being omitted as it sometimes caught fire in the slipstream) 4 flares were placed between the co-pilot/dispatcher's legs and a further 4 were strapped to the rear facing seat.

On 16 May 1963 at 0400 we taxied out in a heavily laden door-less Auster which seemed to absorb the entire length of Brunei International runway before becoming airborne. Slowly we climbed to 3000ft over the target area

where the 3 flares under the aircraft were dispatched at random intervals. 'Q' then explained that from now on he would dispatch the remaining 8 flares one by one on my orders. He prepared the first flare by pulling out a short length of static line and tying it to the door jettison handle. To my surprise, in the dull cockpit lighting, I then noticed him pull out the second flare's static line and also attach it to the jettison handle. At this stage he placed the first flare on the doorsill and said he was ready. I told him to dispatch it and, as is normal when throwing an item out, he raised the flare and threw it downwards. To my horror, I noticed the static line whip its way round the static line of the second flare, pulling the two parachutes down the side of the aircraft and firing the flare between his legs! At this stage we had a million candle power cockpit lighting. 'Q' complaining of burnt feet and me saying 'Get the bloody thing out! Why we didn't catch fire I don't know. As he dispatched the burning flare there was a clunk and the elevator was jammed. In the tail light the parachute could be seen streaming astern. .. The remaining flares were dispatched free fall as I contacted ATC and explained my problem. When one is on the ground it is easy to give advice. I was told to free the flare chute either by forcing the stick forward or back. My guardian angel thought otherwise and said 'You're still flying - don't do anything'. I didn't and by throttle and flaps made a safe if not dramatic series of landings back at base. After the ground crew had cut the chute from between the tailplane and the elevator horn I was made to taxi the aircraft back to dispersal. I don't think 'Q' wears nylon socks any more!!

In June 1963 I started a Beaver conversion course at Kluang with Jack Elston and back to Brunei by July for the start of Indonesian confrontation along the Sabah and Sarawak border. Flying in the main was to and from the BEM (Borneo Evangelical Mission) strips in the interior; being Long Pasia, Long Semado, Bario, Ulu Tomani, Sepulot and others.

Whilst the initial deployment of 7 and 14 Flts involved flying from Singapore to Borneo the later preferred was to fly on to HMS Albion or Bulwark and enjoy the cruise out or back. For flying on there was a strict pecking order Austers first, Beavers second, Single Pioneers last. I remember after my first landing on HMS Albion awaiting for the Single Pioneer to land its pilot obviously twitched and in his downwind checks switched off his fuel cock and the engine stopped, fortunately he rectified the situation just before ditching with the SAR Whirlwind in close attendance and on landing was taken to the Ward room to overcome his fright.

Normal practice was to spend three months in Borneo and three months in Kluang but this was frequently changed. On one of my Kluang periods I had to go and stay overnight in KL and took Cpl Goodie to service the Beaver. The next day we took off, with a Major as passenger in the back, bound for Singapore, half way into the flight in the cool at 10,000ft I thought my ears had popped so I turned to Goodie and nonchalantly said 'Do you think the engine noise just changed? To which he replied with an emphatic nod. We made a controlled decent to Segamet Where I ran up the engine and carried out the normal MAG checks - nothing wrong, however, I decided to shut down the engine for a period of thought and as I cut off the fuel it seized solid and I still recall both myself and Goodie pulling ourselves off the ground on the prop, 30 minutes later the engine had cooled and the prop turned easily. The engine was changed in the field.

Sometime in May 1964 the Beavers of 14Flt transferred to 30 Flt RASC under John Riggall, at the same time a Scout arrived in theatre. On July 15/16/17th I was involved in the sad search for WO2 Hutchins and Capt Jacot de Boinod who had disappeared near Kluang. The wreck of the Scout was eventually found by Capt. Bell flying an Auster.

About this time 30 Flt RASC was renamed 130 Flt RASC and subsequently 130 Flt RCT which moved from Kluang to Seleter.

Around this time I spent a long period based at Tawau supporting 40, 45 CDO who were at Kalabakan guarding the border crossing points. The Indonesian border shared the island of Sebatik and the Indonesian Force HQ was on Noenoekan island. As this area was made up of a number of islands and estuaries a guard ship was based in Tawau.

During the flying course at Middle Wallop we had a day at RM Poole to learn about maritime ops with a brief on Naval gunnery. I made a visit to the guard ship HMS Lincoln and we carried out the first of a series of NGFS shoots. A lot of time was spent registering targets on the border crossing points using the 105 pack battery based on Sebatik. It was during one of these flights I foolishly mentioned I was doing Naval shoots. Two days later a Captain RA arrived from Hong Kong - a real NGFSO. I pointed out to him that he would have difficulty carrying out his role without an aerial platform and if I was to fly it I was to do the first shoot - he left two days later. We also had an in shore minesweeper based in Tawau which I occasionally offered Bofors practice by dropping flares for them to shoot down. It is interesting looking at the tracer arcing towards one and hopefully aimed at the flare.

The greatest of all NGFS shoots was when the Australians arrived in HMAS Vendetta, a D Class destroyer carrying six 4.5 guns. After an initial 12 ranging shots I asked for four guns main armament six rounds gun fire to which the answer was 'negative' six guns six broadsides (three salvos were in the air at the same time). That night I visited the ship and was offered my gin and tonic in a tin mug, I always knew Australians were crude only to be told that they did not have a crock left on board. Dinner was swerved on tin plates!

Whilst at Tawau we modified flares to fit the under wing pylons of the Beaver by using a suitable series of jubilee clips. As there had been a series of civilian casevac's from Sempoma (30 Miles east of Tawau) hearts and minds were a priority. I flew to Sempoma and set up a night landings trip using crossed headlights of the only two vehicles there to mark the touchdown point. Having completed the practice I told the District Officer to keep the vehicles there, in case I returned, for a further 20 minutes and then go home. Fifteen minutes into the flight I could see the lights of Tawau, all seemed well but then they were shrouded out. ATC advised heavy rain, violent winds and that there was no hope of getting in. I turned back towards Sempoma telling the four passengers that they had better pray hard as our lives were dependent on the flare. By following a creek to the strip I landed in the light of my own flare.

On one of my flights from Brunei to Long Semado I had to fly Brig Harry Tuzo and a delegation from Canada who were there to see what aircraft would be suitable as aid to Malaya. After three attempts to get in to Semado we finally got

to the very wet laterite strip, half way along it I realised I wasn't going to stop, I resurrected my skill in ground loops, after four pirouettes we avoided descending down the ravine at the end of the strip. Harry Tuzo never forgot this experience and reminded me of it whenever I flew him in aircraft of my later units 131 and 132 Flts RCT and 6 Flt AAC.

As a final confession I used to play badminton very early in the morning with the Resident Harold George who was in a Sunderland Sqn during the war. He told me that he used to drop beer bottles from the crate over Japanese occupied islands which descended blunt end first, whistling as they fell, and as he had a cellar full of crated beer bottles could I assist in their disposal. This was done on a night flight in the Tawau area just before I left in October 1965.

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*Our apologies go to the authors of the following two articles, for the long delay in using them in the Journal. They were carefully put away for future use, but got overlooked when our General Secretary went to France and have only recently re-surfaced from our archives. Ed*

## **Jungle Patrol** **1914 Flight. Paroi Camp. Seremban 1957** by CR Smith

During 1957 our pilots were friends with a Major Hatch, an English Major who was with 17 Gurkha Division at a nearby camp. Major Hatch had indicated that he would like to make a film of a jungle patrol and supply drop. A sheet went up on the notice board asking for volunteers for the jungle patrol. Forgetting for the moment the old saying "Never volunteer for anything" I put my name on the list.

On the day, the jungle patrol set off, led by the flight commander Capt. Rissik. My co Signaller, Gnr Hunt was carrying the 12 volt battery for the radio. We reached the drop zone with our water supply almost exhausted. While the rest of the patrol cleared the drop zone, Gnr Hunt and I set up the radio station and made contact with the control tower at Seremban. The tower advised us when the two Austers were airborne, one to make the supply drop, flown by Capt. Bell, and the other with Major Hatch on board, making his film. We changed frequency so as not to interfere with Squadron working. Capt. Bell told us he was going to drop three parachutes. The first one was not important but it was vital we recovered the second and third. The first parachute came down and got hung up in the trees (we never did get it down) the other two fell into the clearing and were quickly recovered. The parachutes had AV Gas tins on the bottom, and in the AV Gas tins, securely wrapped in sacking, bottles of Anchor beer, very welcome.

Filming completed, we packed up our equipment and returned to camp.

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## Stowaway

by Patrick Musters

It was 11<sup>th</sup> February 1955 and I was down to take VF 626, an Auster V1, from the Flight base at Seremban to Noble Field, KL, a 30 minute trip. It was a lovely morning and climbing out on a northerly heading to 1800 feet, the world looked its usual beautiful self at 0830hrs. Passing over the ridge that lay between Negri Sembilan and Selangor, I thought for a moment that I had seen a movement somewhere at the bottom edge of the windshield where two tubular struts ran vertically down behind the instrument panel combing – a cockroach perhaps, but no, nothing. Eyes back on the horizon again – but not for long! There was something behind the instrument panel – for a forked tongue flicked and flicked again, and disappeared – just where one of those struts went down through a hole in the combing. A moment later, waving slightly from side to side, a beautiful large snake came up before my eyes, about 3 feet in front of my face, wound around the left of those two struts, stopped and just looked at me.

The day's heat was yet to materialise, especially as I flew without the port door fitted in order to get better downward observation, but I realised that I was sweating. "Vhat to do, Mister?!" as my Indian Bearer used to say, in another age and another sub-continent. First cool thing down with altitude, I thought, so I put the aircraft into a steady climb to 3500ft and waited for Noble Field to heave into sight. From now on everything had to be done very slowly, and I began to close the throttle for an approach to land. Even half and then full flap had to be reached for as slowly as possible – and so we came to a sweaty rumbling landing on the laterite surface of Noble Field. The switches were off and the engine stopped in the middle of the strip as I escaped at a smart trot from what I thought had been a close run thing. The ground crew at Noble Field, were quick to spot something wrong and were out there in seconds with extinguishers, the lot, until I explained the reason for my sudden exit.

The upshot of this little adventure was that the snake, scared for its life, disappeared from view down the starboard wing-root inspection panel. As it refused to come out the wing had to come off to get it out.

A photograph appeared a year later in the Auster News from Rearsby showing the ground crew holding a six footer over two sticks with a suitable caption, but I could no longer get a round of drinks on that story when it was found that the snake was harmless!

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*Eleven people were dangling below a helicopter on a rope. There were ten Officers and one Sergeant. Since the rope was not strong enough to hold all eleven, they decided that one of them had to let go to save all the others.*

*They could not decide who should be the Volunteer. Finally, the Sergeant said he would let go of the rope since Sergeants are used to doing everything for the good of the Service. They forsake their family, don't claim all of their expenses and do a lot of overtime without getting anything in return.*

*When he finished his moving speech, all the Officers began to clap .....*

**Moral: Never underestimate the powers of a Sergeant.**

**Anon**

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*List available upon request*

\* Postage on all items at cost.

Contact: John or Sylvia Heyes details on page 32

# NOTICES

## NEW MEMBERS

Major D. Amlôt	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Mr. B.D. Hill	REME	Joined	July	2006
Mr. C. Warrilow	REME	Joined	July	2006
Airtpr. D.Wood	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Airtpr. S. Scrowston	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Airtpr. T. Mhute	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Airtpr. L. Cannings	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Airtpr. C. Hanscombe	AAC	Joined	July	2006
L/Cpl A. Mason	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Sgt K. Blundell	AAC	Joined	July	2006
S/Sgt C. Brooks	AAC	Joined	July	2006
WO1 D. O'Malley	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Maj. C. Hearn	AAC	Joined	July	2006
Mr. S.W. Walker	REME	Joined	Aug.	2006
Maj. W. Morgan	R. Signals	Joined	Aug.	2006
Mr. A. Miles	RAF	Joined	Sept.	2006
Maj (Ret) D. Oldershaw	RA	Joined	Sept.	2006
Mr. D.W. Hingley	REME	Joined	Oct.	2006
Mr. A.G. Hay	RA	Joined	Nov.	2006
Mr. J.E. Buckley	RA	Joined	Nov.	2006
Mr. N. Gardner	RA	Joined	Nov.	2006
Mr. J.R. Clark	AAC	Joined	Dec.	2006
Mr. J. Nicholas	RA	Joined	Jan.	2007
Mr. J. J. Hegarty	RA	Joined	Jan.	2007
Mr. I. Brown	RAF	Joined	Jan.	2007
S/Sgt J.P. Tyler	AAC	Joined	Jan.	2007

## 25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALKLANDS WAR

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Falklands War will be commemorated by a March Past at Horse Guards Parade in London on Sunday 17th June 2007. Families will be invited to attend. Anyone wishing to take part should contact : Falklands 25, Veterans Agency, Room 6108, Norcross, Thornton-Cleveleys, FY5 3WP or e-mail: [tracy.shepherd1@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:tracy.shepherd1@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk)

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## Association Bone China Mugs

High quality bone china mugs, as sent to the Squadron in Afghanistan at Christmas, are available from the Association Shop. (see page 29) These mugs would make a fine gift for anyone who has been associated in any way with the Squadron, or indeed, with Army Aviation in general.

## Can you help?

We have had requests for information of the following ex 656 chaps from their descendants doing family research:

OLD. (RAF supplies) called Bill, Den or Lofty. KL 54-57 time.

O'Hagan. (RA) Michael John (and wife Janet who died in KL 61)

Please reply to the Secretary initially.

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## More help?...

Hi, I am Hanim. I live in Taiping, Perak, Malaysia. I work as a Public Relations Officer in Taiping Municipal Council. I've met a group of visitors (ex-service 656 Squadron) in Tekah Airport, Taiping a few weeks ago and they told me about this Homepage. I wondered if you might be able to help. I am now collecting old photos of Taiping, any photos about the town and also about Kamunting. I'm planning to produce a 5 Years annual report on Taiping Municipal Council and wish to include a few pages of Taiping past history. Hopefully I might be able to get interesting and meaningful information and also photos from your Association.

My e-mail address is: [hanim@mptaiping.gov.my](mailto:hanim@mptaiping.gov.my) Thank you.

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## Association Calendars 2008

Association Calendars 2008 will be available for sale at the re-union in September and by post from John Heyes after the re-union. Each month will display a photograph from the Association Archive.

### DEATHS

Sadly , we announce the death of the following members and offer our sincere condolences to their relatives and friends.

Capt. R. Britton	RA	Died	Sept.	2004
Maj. I.E. Bell DFC	RA	Died	June	2004
Mr. C.W.L. Dengal	AAC	Died	Sept	2006
Mr. L.R. Bond	RA	Died	Jan.	2006
Mr. C.R. Ecott	RAF	Died	June	2006
Lt Col J. Nunn	AAC	Died	Dec.	2006

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\* Correspondence to the General/Membership Secretary, should be addressed to John Heyes at the above address, who will distribute accordingly. Thank you for your co-operation.



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