

The Chinthe

Summer 2005

CONTENTS

President's Report	2
Secretary's Report	3
Minutes of AGM 2005	4
Assn. Reunion Report	5
Letters to the Editor	6
Remembrance Sunday	7
Members' Contributions	8
Assn. Tour of Malaysia	28
National Memorial Arboretum	29
Notices	30
Committee Members	32

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am writing this less than a week after our Annual Reunion in Dishforth. Yet again I can happily report that we have had another highly successful event. We were blessed with sunny weather, and the Squadron pulled out all the stops on our behalf.

The weekend started with a Dinner in the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess of 9 Regiment AAC, where we had excellent service with wonderful company. The Sunday started with our Annual AGM, which I will mention later. After a buffet lunch we moved to the Squadron Hangar where we were shown around the Apache aircraft and its simulation system. A quite amazing and privileged experience, and a clear demonstration of the professionalism and dedication of the current Squadron personnel. Two Austers (Mark 3 and 9) and a Cessna had flown up especially, and the aircrew gave members and friends flights throughout the day. An extraordinary juxtaposition of aircraft spanning 60 years.

I wish to express our thanks for the effort that the Squadron members took to ensure an interesting and pleasant weekend. This was at a time when the Squadron was just completing the most intensive programme of Apache training and assessment in preparation for a possible operational deployment. I would also like to thank Maurice Haynes for putting the whole programme together, and arranging the myriad of details. Without his persistence the weekend would not have happened.

At the AGM we discussed future events. The next Association gathering is for our Burma Veterans, who have been invited to a Lunch in the Officers' Mess, Middle Wallop on Friday 2nd September. We have invited Major General Gary Coward, an ex OC of the Squadron as well as Brigadier Ian Thomson, Director Army Aviation.

Given the success of last year's Association Contingent at the Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, Whitehall, we intend to form a Contingent at this year's service. If you wish to attend please return the slip to me by the end of September.

In the New Year we aim to organise an Association visit to Malaysia. The proposed date is May 2006. Details can be found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

Finally I thank the Committee members who have worked tirelessly on our behalf. We would not be in such good order without their efforts. We are always looking for new blood, so if you have some spare time please get in touch with one of us.

I wish you a contented summer and hope to see you sometime in the near future.

Andrew Simkins

SECRETARY'S REPORT

As all of you will know immediately after the last AGM I emigrated to France, but this did not mean I had lost touch with the Association. The Secretaryship was taken on by Maurice Haynes, but owing to other commitments it proved impractical. I then reassumed the position after consulting with other committee members. Maurice moved sideways to become events organiser, a task in which he excels. The reorganised committee is on the proposals list.

Since the last Newsletter we have recorded 11 deaths.

See page 32

There were 3 resignations : Pat Brighton, Lt.Col Shield and Mr. Wearmouth.

We had 7 new members : *See page 31*

The committee had one face to face meeting to discuss this years Reunion and the budget. Owing to the distance involved I was not present. Your committee, although spread over great distances work well together by means of E-mail, or when the matter dictates a phone call.

I would ask all members to carefully consider taking a spell on the committee which, although the Constitution allows only a 2 year appointment, is invariably longer! I would like to see younger blood arriving to give other views to our Association.

The committee is in need of a Deputy Treasurer as Mick Smith has had to resign his post due to other committments and Ken Mattocks is intending to emigrate to Australia as soon as the formalities are in place.

I hope to see you all again next year, provisionally intended to be held at Netheravon.

John Bennett

MINUTES OF THE 2005 AGM

Present were:

Chairman Maj Andy Cash, o/c 656 Sqn.AAC

President Lt Col Andrew Simkins

Secretary John Bennett

Treasurer Ken Mattocks

Also 58 Association Members

Apologies were received from Ted Maslen-Jones and Mick Smith. The meeting opened at 1100 hrs with the President welcoming members and their guests followed by a minutes silence for departed comrades.

1. The minutes of the previous AGM were read and were accepted as true copy, they were proposed and accepted, then signed by the Chairman.
2. **Secretary's report:** The Secretary then gave his report.
3. **Chairman's report:** Maj. Cash gave a report on the Sqn's arduous training conducted to achieve the current state of fully capable and on 5 days readiness notice.
4. **Treasurer's report:** Ken Mattocks gave his report. It was Proposed and Accepted.
5. It was Proposed and Seconded that the under mentioned are elected to the committee for the following year:

Secretary & Webmaster	John Bennett
Treasurer	Ken Mattocks
Events Co-Coordinator	Maurice Haynes
Newsletter/Correspondence	John Heyes
Deputy Treasurer	Vacant (Volunteer required)

Carried
6. It was proposed and Seconded that the sum of £300 be donated by the Assn. towards the VJ celebration luncheon on 2nd Sept., which is being held for our Burma veterans at Middle Wallop.
Carried
7. Being no further proposals the President then made announcements about the VJ luncheon, the contingent for the Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph and the visit to Malaysia planned for May 2006. A request was made for anyone with Internet expertise to assist in the updating and improvements to our web site. There were no volunteers.
8. Date for next Meeting: At this stage there was no firm date set and it would be announced to members via the Newsletter/e-mail/web site. The venue will be Netheravon once more.
9. Being no further business the meeting closed at 1156 hrs.

ASSOCIATION REUNION DISHFORTH 2nd - 3rd JULY 2005

With the kind permission of the Regimental Sergeant Major, 34 Association members along with their guests attended a dinner in the Wos' and Sergeants' Mess on Saturday evening. Our guests included Lt.Col Felton, Commanding Officer 9 Regiment, and the R.S.M.

A very pleasant evening was had by all, with many a story being rehashed in the bar afterwards.

Sunday again saw us in the Wos' & Sgts' Mess to hold our AGM and have a luncheon, with approximately 125 people in attendance. Despite the heavy training obligation of the Squadron and their hangar being under four feet of fire extinguisher foam the previous week, they laid on a splendid programme. All servicemen volunteered to help and guide us as we were taken to see the new battle simulator. This is a very big 'boys toy', rather like a giant play station, but with a more deadly purpose. The pilots carry out mission training flying a simulator in realistic conditions, monitored by an instructor.

We also had 2 Austers in attendance giving flights to anyone who wanted to. My thanks go to Maurice Haynes for organising the function, hotel and transport. His efforts have resulted in excellent comments being received from members. I look forward to seeing you all (and many more) at our next gathering in 2006 at Netheravon. Details will be published in the newsletter and on the website.

John Bennett

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thank you for the most interesting Spring Newsletter. I was particularly interested in the two articles describing 656 Sqn's arrival in India in 1943 which brought back many nostalgic memories.

At the time I was attending a gunnery course at Deolali which involved a lot of hot and tiring work in the jungle. Seeing how the Squadron worked made me realise that there was an easier and better way of viewing a target than slogging ones way to the top of a jungle hill top! At the first opportunity after this, I volunteered to become an Air OP Pilot. Little did I guess that I would end up joining the same 656 Sqn. Flying over similar and equally inhospitable jungle in Malaya.

Leslie Addington

The recent newsletter was most enjoyable and I do congratulate all concerned. I did have one unusual experience in Malaya in 1947, which I wrote up for Royal Artillery Journal. Returning from a photo recce I had an engine failure at about 8,000' over the jungle. By great good fortune I noticed a small green area among the trees and forced landed in what turned out to be Sungei Buloh Leper Colony!

I do wish the Association continued good fortune. It's high standards give a lot of pleasure to the many members.

Brig. Mike Webb

Thank you very much indeed for sending me a copy of 656 Squadron Association's Newsletter, which I enjoyed reading from cover to cover.

I especially appreciate the prominence you gave to my 'Wings Over Westley'. Several members have contacted me with orders for copies of the book.

Although I'm no expert in such matters I do congratulate you on the quality and interest achieved in it's contents and production: despite the headaches it might give you, at times, I'm sure the publication does great service to your members and other readers.

Frank Whitnall

All three of my party would like to pass on a big thanks to you, the Squadron and all involved (in the Dishforth Reunion) we had a really great weekend. The food was excellent and the displays on Sunday impressive, and we met old and new friends. It was Sarita and Alison's first taste of the Association and the Squadron and they can't wait for the next one, badgering me all the way home about it (the journey seemed much longer than going!!)
Again many thanks.

Neil Maher. (sent to Maurice Haynes, Events Co-Ordinator)

**SQUADRON ASSOCIATION CONTINGENT AT ACT OF
REMEMBRANCE, SUNDAY 13th NOVEMBER 2005**

The Association formed a Contingent at last year's Act of Remembrance at the Cenotaph, Whitehall. Although we were a small contingent we all found the event very moving and felt that we had benefited greatly from the experience. An added bonus was the good coverage of the Squadron history by the BBC.

The general consensus was that this was an event that every veteran should aim to attend at least once in their lifetime.

We intend to form a contingent this year, on Sunday 13th November 2005, so long as there are at least 6 of us 'on parade'.

We ask that members are able to get to Horseguards Parade by 1000 hrs, and be aware that they will be required to stand for a long period and then march (at a slow pace) for about 30 minutes.

If you wish to attend could you please send the enclosed return slip to the Association President by the end of September. Administrative instructions will be issued by Mid Oct.

Andrew Simkins

MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The continuing saga of a Sprog in Malaya..... By John Heyes

A Sprog goes to 7 Flight, 656 Squadron in Taiping

At the squadron workshops at Noble Field we completed our continuation training and were at last allowed to sign in the Form 700. Having now gained experience in the various servicing bays and spent some time on major servicing crews, we now had exciting things like flying on our first air tests under our belts. The Auster Mk 9 air test I remember as being fairly simple, involving monitoring of engine performance and the thrill of our first clean and dirty stalls followed by spins.

Political events at the time demanded that 28 Commonwealth Brigade be put upon immediate readiness to go to Laos. 7 Recce Flight supported the brigade and had to be brought up to maximum strength in personnel and to have aircraft with long hours to next major servicing. As part of the personnel reinforcement I was sent, post haste, by the night train to Taiping in farthest north Malaya. Why were we always sent by the night train? It would have been far more interesting to go by day. In the event, the mobilisation was cancelled soon after my arrival but the posting to 7 flight was confirmed.

One of the first things noticed on being collected from the station and en route to the camp was the large sign at the side of the road northwards. It said, in large white lettering on a black background, 'You are now entering a black area'. It really brought home the fact that the emergency was not over by any means.

The flight accommodation was at Trincomalee camp, which was a forgotten corner of the large cantonment, north of the town, that housed the brigade. Access to the camp was down a rough, narrow track bordered by tertiary jungle. The first building to be seen was a black corrugated iron shed which housed the cookhouse, more of which later, an open sided dining area and the NAAFI. The flight offices and armoury were breeze block type buildings, behind the black shed. The sleeping accommodation consisted of three long attap bashas. Naturally, the Char Wallah had a small basha for his business. The ablution block was 'interesting' to say the least. It was an open ended nissen hut housing showers, latrines, a long galvanised urinal and a number of wash basins. The hut was situated some forty or fifty meters from the sleeping bashas, at the edge of the secondary jungle, and was accessed via a well worn footpath through rough grass and scrub. Lighting consisted of one dim bulb for the whole building. Great

caution had to be exercised when visiting the place after dark as the nice warm wet floors tended to attract snakes and other wildlife.

Our cook was provided by the Australian regiment currently with the brigade. Generally, the most that anyone ever got to see of him was a pasty white arm. In the corrugated iron wall between the kitchen and the dining area was a black hole, about two feet square, at stomach height. The routine for meals went something like this. Take a plate from the clean pile. Thrust plate into black hole. Pasty white arm snatches plate and disappears. Pasty white arm emerges with loaded plate. Find seat and eat. No choices were involved and conversation with, or questions to, the pasty white arm were discouraged. On one occasion someone had the temerity to ask 'What do you call this?' The immediate reply from the black hole was 'I'm only paid to bloody cook it, not to give it bloody names!' There was one cook sighting that was memorable. A visitor from another flight, on receiving his loaded plate, asked pasty white arm what he was serving. On being verbally abused, the visitor threw his plate back into the black hole suggesting that pasty white arm should attempt something indecent with his comestibles. Our visitor was last seen fleeing down the track to the main road, pursued by the pasty white arm waving a meat cleaver.

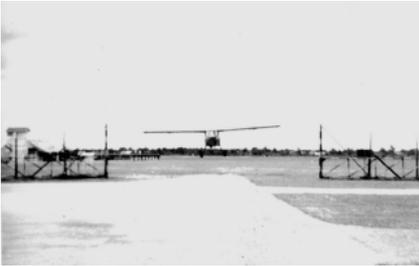
The airfield, which was generally unused except for the flight, was about five miles from Trincomalee camp. At one side of the airfield was a dilapidated terminal building, which was used by Malayan Airways on the rare occasions that they visited, usually by Dakota. The flight was accommodated in a small, wire fenced, compound in the corner of the airfield. In the compound were a number of small bashas, char wallah, crew room and a sort of ops room. In the ops room was a picture of a First World War pilot, which ended up in my possession when we left for KL and Kluang. I don't know its origin but it was left behind when we had packed up to move so it was saved for posterity by me. Does anyone know the origin of the picture? If it is significant to the flight or the squadron I shall donate it accordingly.



Who is he?

The workshop was a narrow open sided building with an office at the end for the 'Tiffie'. The design of the workshop was such that only one end of the aircraft would fit in, so that if work was required on the engine then the rest of the aircraft, aft of the mainplanes, was outside and vice versa. Other buildings constituted the OC's office, stores, battery shop, control tower, open sided aircraft shelters and the avgas store. The gates to the compound gave three feet clearance for the Auster 9 wingtips. One of our pilots, not

having too firm a grasp of reality, was given to flying through the gates as the accompanying photograph shows. I was in the right hand seat when this was taken.



Demented pilot

The infantry occasionally used the airfield for IS training and on one occasion were training with tear gas when an aircraft landed through the cloud of drifting gas, much to the consternation of the pilot.



Taiping compound ,then...



Old hangar at Taiping compound, now.

Activities at a flight were very different from the work at the squadron workshops. Light Series Bomb Carriers were fitted from time to time usually loaded with parachute flares. On occasions the orders were to remove the parachutes so that the pilot could release them in a dive and use them for target marking. The flight was sometimes tasked to drop emergency supplies to the troops on the ground. Fourteen foot supply drop parachutes were used and generally were dispatched by whoever was available to fly the sortie with the pilot. On one famous occasion, an Aussie patrol were short of food and a Kiwi patrol were in need of jungle boots. The parachutes were duly made up to the loads and both dropped on the same sortie. We were a long time being forgiven for dropping boots to the starving Aussies and food to the footsore Kiwis. Searches for downed aircraft or lost patrols were most demanding as the aircraft tended to be detached with a pilot and an A&E tech each. Very often the tech would be needed to fly as the observer and would fly the sortie, refuel, turn round the aircraft and if lucky grab a cup of coffee then jump into the

aircraft for the next sortie. Most of our Gunners also flew as observers but they were needed on the ground as signallers most of the time. Leaflet dropping was another task that required a second person in the aircraft again, quite often a technician. Some wild ideas for the offensive against the Communist Terrorists were rumoured to have been tried but I did not witness the following schemes being tried, if they ever were. The first consisted of six empty fifty cigarette tins screwed to a short plank. Into the tins went six 36 grenades, primed with the pins in, and the release levers held down by the tin. The purported technique was, on discovering a CT camp, passenger removes the pins, fly over at low level and on instruction by the pilot, the passenger shoots his arms out of the door ejecting the grenades from the tins, releasing the levers and thus bombing the camp. The second idea was to have a grenade taped to the top of a four gallon flimsie of Avgas. Similar technique but dropping the bomb over the sago fields in the CT clearings. Both ideas seem to be a recipe for disaster and I would be interested to hear if anyone was insane enough to try them.



Air drop label

Water buffalo grazed on the airfield and could be a real problem for arriving and departing aircraft. The technique for clearing the animals was, in theory, quite simple. On demand for clearing the animals, shouted by the Gunner radio operator in

the tower, jump into the Morris Commercial one tonner that was permanently loaded with a large foam extinguisher minus wheels, several hand held extinguishers of various types, crash axe and other emergency kit. One minor but significant defect in this vehicle was that the gear selectors were worn out and if one selected reverse, then the only way to get out of reverse was to take the gear lever and gearbox cover off, poke the gears into neutral with a long screwdriver, then refit the cover. Assuming that one had forward gears and armed with two, 1½ “ very pistols loaded with ‘White smoke puff’, drive out onto the airfield and circle the buffalo into a compact group, western style. When the group was nicely bunched up, get behind them and fire a very pistol behind them to drive them towards the edge of the airfield. The water buffalo, not noted for their intelligence, were not fully compliant and seemed to be unable to grasp the concept that they were supposed to leave. Some of them could be quite aggressive and here the problem with the gearbox came into play. If an old matriarch charged the truck then there was often no option but to get into reverse and back off. The net result was the sight of the crash truck weaving crazy patterns around the buffalo in reverse whilst the driver

tried to keep one eye on the charging matriarch and the other eye looking over his shoulder to locate the herd and fire off his very pistol. On one occasion I enhanced the picture by hitting a small ditch, in reverse, bouncing all the fire extinguisher in the air and setting most of them off. Naturally, the Tiffie elected me as the person to refill the extinguishers, a very smelly job due to the oxblood used in the foam.

All the avgas was delivered to the fight in four gallon 'flimsie' cans. As the cans were supposed to be non reusable, a local market was found for them and the resultant monies paid into flight funds. The cans only had a local value if they were in good condition and only had one hole in the top. The funds usually paid for the drinks at farewell parties and a Selangor pewter mug for the departee. The RAOC realised that they were missing out and asked for the flimsies to be returned. In the interests of economics, we lined the flimsies up on the airfield and drove a three tonner over them to flatten them and so were able to load more into the truck. The next message from the RAOC was that they didn't want any more returning.

Taiping town housed a large notorious prison, which is still there today. The towns only two redeeming features that I can recall were, first, The Paris Hotel Bar where, a certain short statured Tiffie and I were at the bar, somewhat worse for wear, surrounded by Aussies who all seemed to be seven feet tall and the Tiffie saying, in a loud voice, 'Can you hear their chains rattling?' Immediate strategic withdrawal implemented The second being the road up to Maxwell Hill, the oldest hill station in Malaya. Alas The Paris Hotel is long gone but the Maxwell Hill bungalows are still there. They are no longer a government establishment. They have all been sold off to local entrepreneurs and are in a very poor state. My wife and I went up to Maxwell hill a few years ago, the tale of that disastrous visit I will recount at a later date.

As the emergency wound down, more exercises and training were undertaken. The flight would be detached to support the brigade exercises near the East Coast. We would drive as far south as Bentong to cross the central mountain range, overnighing at the disused airfield at Bentong. The drive took us over the Bentong Gap, the road over which has a section of about forty miles with roughly thirty hairpin bends to the mile, through spectacular primary jungle. A favourite stopping place for a brew up and to top up the vehicles was the Government Rest House at the top of the gap. It is still there to this day and is largely unchanged. It was very close to here that Spencer Chapman made his base camp when he stayed behind during the Japanese occupation. On the second day we would drive on to Kuantan and further up the coast, crossing the small rivers by crude ferries. The second night was usually spent at Kampong Kijal, a delightful

spot close to the beach with enough space between the palm trees to land an Auster. Today the whole area is five star hotels. There was a simple formula for selecting an airstrip. It involved driving the proposed strip at forty miles per hour and allowing so many yards extra for every foot of estimated height of obstruction on the approaches, I have forgotten the exact formula but I do remember the occasion when one of the techs selected the strip but managed to apply the formula in reverse, allowing one extra foot of strip for each extra yard of obstruction. The net result was a pilot landing and almost running into the trees. The aircraft was recovered by removing the mainplanes and being towed out to the nearest stretch of clear straight road before being reassembled and flying off. It was not unusual for a stretch of road to be blocked off and used as a temporary airstrip.

In those days, the OC could test ones driving abilities and issue the 'Pink Slip', which was sent off and thus gained a full driving licence. I had been nagging the OC to give me a driving test. Having gained just about all my driving experience chasing water buffalo on the airfield and therefore considered myself competent to drive anything anywhere. I had been sent on a detachment to the east coast with one pilot, one driver signaller and one aircraft when the driver, on the last day of the detachment, was bitten by a snake. The pilot told me to drive the Landrover and trailer back to Taiping whilst he flew the driver out to hospital. I told him that I had no licence and not very much experience, to which he replied ' You will have by the time you get back.' I safely negotiated the three hundred miles back, over several ferries and the Bentong pass. Two days later the OC asked me to drive him to the Officers' Mess and then back to the airfield. On arrival at the airfield he presented me with my 'pink slip', I'd just passed my driving test.

There were times when the devil made work for idle hands. On one occasion when all the aircraft were flying, the Tiffie had gone off to the mess for lunch and the duty crew were just passing time waiting for the aircraft to return when one of the techs discovered that the twelve bore Auster starter cartridges fitted into the jack handle. He clamped the handle into the vice and inserted a cartridge. Then, with very little thought as to the consequences, gave the cartridge a clout with his trusty hammer. The contents of the cartridge ignited, flying out of the other end of the handle and across the compound towards the open brick construction avgas store. Had it gone another few feet, six thousand gallons of avgas would have ignited.

Our time at Taiping came to an end when the brigade moved south to Terendak near Malacca and the flight moved to Noble Field en route to Kluang but that is a story for another day.

“JOINING THE COLOURS”

by Ted Maslen-Jones

I had left school at the end of the autumn term 1938, just a few weeks after my 18th birthday. Had things been straightforward, I would have spent the next nine months preparing to take my place at Brasenose College, Oxford, the following autumn.

My father, who had served throughout the First World War, felt different. He was already convinced that there would be war in Europe before very long. Therefore he counselled me to acquire skills that might become helpful in such an event. One of these was the ability to ride a motorcycle. He used his influence with the Wolverhampton Fire Service, and before long I became a despatch rider for them. I also enrolled with one of the local Territorial units. This was known as the ‘Dudley Battery’, which was part of the 119th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. In effect I had volunteered!

As the year 1939 progressed the threat of war increased and in August we went on what turned out to be our last family holiday. We spent three wonderful weeks in Conimara, on the west coast of Ireland. The timing was such that on our return home, we landed at Liverpool at the precise moment when Neville Chamberlain announced that war had been declared. Needless to say this cast a deep shadow over the rest of our journey. A great deal of meditation by both my parents and my two brothers. The silence was not often broken.

On returning home I found that my application to join 119th Field Regiment as a commissioned officer proved unacceptable following a decision by the Government that all officers would in future join the Ranks and subsequently undergo training at one of the newly formed Officer Training Units (OCTU’s). Consequently at the end of September, I went up to Oxford and awaited Call up. It was not long coming, and I returned home on the 16th October with instructions to report to the Royal Artillery Depot at Kimmel Park, North Wales.

My mother dutifully and with great care, packed a suitcase for me. Together with my father we proceeded to Wolverhampton ‘High Level’ Station, unfortunately my train was due to leave from ‘Low Level’ Station, which resulted in our arriving just in time to see it pulling out! The determination with which my father drove us to Stafford in order to catch up with it was a characteristic well known to all that knew him. He was, of course, successful and I bid farewell to my parents on Stafford Station with a high degree of trepidation as to what the future held for me.

I changed trains at Crewe and arrived at Rhyl Station in the mid afternoon. As I stepped out on to what was in fact the ‘up’ platform it appeared that I was to be the only person to leave the train. I stood in

contemplation for a moment or so until I heard, for the very first time, the cry of an Army Sergeant. "All those for Kimmel Park over 'ere" With some relief I grabbed my suitcase and crossed the bridge to the 'down' platform. As I descended the steps I saw below a line of a dozen or so men with what appeared to be brown paper parcels under their arms. In front of them the Sergeant was pacing up and down. As he caught sight of me, he exploded once more. "'ullo, 'ullo, what 'ave we 'ere?" and as I dragged my suitcase down the steps, "I think we 'ave got one who 'as come to stay!"

939738 Gunner Maslen-Jones E. had Joined the Colours.

The recruits that I had joined had all come from the Valleys of South Wales, as had the majority of the others in my unit. It was to be an educational six weeks before I was posted to 123 OCTU at Catterick. A steep learning curve in how to survive in a barrack room! By far the most enjoyable time was in the NAAFI, or the local pub, when the evening turned into song. Without exception, these men all had great voices and they loved singing. I derived huge pleasure from joining them. It is one of those memories that do not fade.

One other recollection is that Pay Parades were always on a Friday. Each time I attended during those six weeks as a Gunner I was handed a Ten Shilling note (50p).

Ted Maslen-Jones was commissioned 134644 2/Lt in the Royal Artillery on 5/7/40. He was posted to 119 Field Regiment Royal Artillery in Northern Ireland. He spent 25 months there, before volunteering to be trained as a Pilot for the newly formed Air Observation Post Squadrons. He was posted to 656 Air OP Squadron in February 1943 and they sailed for the Far East in August that year. 656 was the only Squadron to be sent to the Far East. It supported the 14th Army throughout the Burma Campaign and the reoccupation of Malaya. The story is told in his book "Fire by Order"

He returned to complete his course at Oxford in March 1946.

AUSTER Mk 9 - MONOLOGUE

by L.A. Leetham

Now I'll tell you a tale about Rearsby, where folk who make Austers reside
They were tired of the moans about 6's, so to make a new type they applied.
They showed all the brass hats what could be, with a privately built model 'S'
And said if boffins would stay in t' office they'd keep clear of Mark 6 sort of
mess.

Now Army were really delighted, and contract was written and scanned,
But Ministry said 'Cum Cum lads - tha knows this must be planned!'
The Army today's not on rations - of steak, cake and ale there's a glut
From private up t' Marshal they're fatter - widen the fuselage by a foot!
Riding with backs to the engine makes some chaps poorly 'tis found
Lets do the job right and proper - make the back facing seat to turn round.

Also if pilot was from "Artillairy" and used to a saddle on t' horse
And wanted to change his seating- he'd have to dismount first of course!
So that's how we'll have seat mechanism- simple and awkward- no pranks
And if Brown jobs kick up a clatter we'll bung 'em all back into tanks
So designer got out his rubber, and wiping the tears from his eyes
Walked sloooooowly back to his office and worked out a neat compromise

First one was built quite quickly, by welder and fitter type bods,
Then smartly 'twere taken to pieces, and rebuilt more slowly, plus mods!
'Cos stressmen had heard about Army - how they were mad keen, and strips
rough.
'Steel's safest for they" the lads muttered, and added tons and tons of t' stuff.

At same time Bombardier crowd were ordered 'make engine work on M. T.
sort of stuff'.
So they did and fifteen of the horses went off in an 'L' of an 'uff'
Performance chaps tried to coax figures to where they were at the start,
But with gills, fins and strakes also added it fair broke the poor laddies'
hearts.

At last to Malaya went first lot ('twere furthest away from supplies)
And with them they had to send some clot - so chose' ruddy nuisance that
flies'
Troubles have often vexed us - but live and let live is the rule!
We know now about ambient temperature if we hadn't learnt it at school.
I am not quite sure how you will like them, but on one point I must say I'm
proud
That I've met the ones to fly the 9's to it's limits, for 656 is that crowd.

**Submitted by Alfred Howard in response to the article from
Ernest Smith (Spring Newsletter 2005)**

I was very happy to receive the last newsletter, and with the article from Ernest Smith, it brought back happy and hard memories of our participation in the Burma campaign, and I wish to add a few memories to continue from our departure from the Arakan.

I remember very well the bombing and strafing machine gun fire at the bridge. We had been ordered out and were told to drive up to Assam and Manipur in the region of Dimapur, Imphal and Kohima. The enemy had attacked in force and we had to do our part in stopping them from breaking out into India. We stayed there until the monsoon started and then had to leave. My friend Derrick Beard and a few others left to travel by boat on the Bramaputra River that took us down to Calcutta and our final destination, Ranchi in Bihar Province. Derrick and I were the first RA to join the Squadron at Bury St. Edmunds, and we had spent two weeks at the Taylor craft factory in Leicester and we had to work on construction of the planes from start to finish.

At Ranchi, there was a modification change to the 'Wings', that the ribs were to be reinforced, as many cracks were found.

After many weeks of work, we were told that we were going for a rest to a hill station, a place called Musoori, North of New Delhi, and just in the foothills of the Himalayas. At eight thousand feet, it was high enough, as it was very cold at night.

Upon returning to Ranchi, we were both promoted, I was sent to 'C' Flight and he went to 'A' or 'B' Flight, I am not sure which one.

I ended up back in the Arakan again, the enemy was everywhere, so it meant that everybody was at a stand to, at dawn and dusk and plus guard duty. It was very trying. I had to get one of the planes ready for a dawn sortie. I detailed two of the crew to do an inspection, and instructed the engine mechanic to get into the cockpit and make sure the switches were off and I would turn the prop. I put my right hand on the prop and just started to turn when it fired. It cut across my hand and my fingers were just hanging on and I was in extreme pain.

I was taken by the plane to a casualty clearing station, where I was operated on and placed in a plaster cast.

One of the aircraft landed on the beach everyday and brought me news and reports. On one occasion, one of the planes came in and I was told that this was the last trip, as they had been ordered to join in the landing on Ramree Island.

I said I would speak to the Medical Officer, and I told him that I would like to leave, to which he replied that it was OK, but I should check

into the C.C.S. that would overpass them when all was clear and I would have to report there.

We flew into Ragabil and from there we loaded everything onto a Landing Ship Tank and set sail.

We landed with the planes on the trailers. The first crew off, drove up the beach. There was a small bridge over a dried up stream. The Pilot got off the jeep and called for the others to drive over. As soon as they hit the bridge, there was a tremendous explosion and everything was blown into the air. It was with great sadness that we lost three of our men. There was not a dry eye amongst all of us.

After being there a number of weeks I was notified that a C.C.S. had landed and I was to report in, so they could remove my cast. When I arrived I reported to a Major Crawford, who was the same doctor who took care of Rex Boys – a small world. The doctor removed the plaster and told me it was not good and that he would have to operate again. He did so and put another cast on. After a number of weeks I returned to remove the cast. He informed me that it did not work out and I would have to leave on a hospital boat that would be there the next day. I left on the boat, stopped at Akyab and then went to Chittagong in Bengal and reported into a RAF field hospital.

I went through many tests and then was told nothing could be done for me and I was to be sent back to the UK.

We left Bombay and were listed as invalids and we stopped at the middle of the Suez Canal on VE Day.

On arriving back, I went to hospitals and medical rehab and was based at Brize Norton RAF Research and Development in the engineering office where I stayed until my release in October 1946. I returned to finish school and left in 1948, for Montreal, Canada, where I have lived with all my family, ever since.

I have returned to the UK many times for business and reunions. I stayed with Derrick Beard and Nobby Clark, and Derrick and Joan spent some time with us in our winter home in Florida, and Nobby and Claire stopped at our place in Montreal.

Great people, we miss them all.

In search of Fort George

A journey to Korea - Summer 1992 - by Peter Harris

By the time I turned forty, (a few years ago now,) I realised that I was becoming increasingly preoccupied by the loss of my father. It is something I have difficulty in explaining. At the time of his death he had been overseas for six months, a long enough period in my four year old time scale for me not to be unduly upset at his loss. There was no funeral to mark his passing and for quite a while I recall half expecting him to turn up one day just like the father in E.A.Nesbit's 'The Railway Children', which was being serialised on children's television only a few years after we had moved up to Newmarket in 1955. For my brother it was quite different. He was eight and had just gone away to school in Worcester. He describes his sense of loss quite simply, "I lost my hero."

I think I remember him well, although with the passage of time my memories have become overlayed with stories and other peoples recollections. I certainly continued to feel his presence very strongly. My mother kept a hand coloured portrait of him above the mantelpiece in the living room - the last photograph taken of him - sitting on an old aircraft seat outside an army mess tent against a barren hillscape. From time to time there would be visits from old army friends.

The end of WW11 left my father, at the age of 28, an extremely experienced army officer. He was a Major in the Royal Horse Artillery, with an MC to his credit having seen service in Greece and the battle for Crete, North Africa including Tobruk and El Alamein and, following the D Day landings and Normandy campaign. With the war's end he tried to rejoin the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, but in those days the bank's somewhat archaic rules prevented him from doing so as he was now married. So he applied for a regular commission with the Gunners, and became a gunnery instructor at Larkhill. He was posted to the Gunnery School at Deolali in India for a while, returning just after Partition. By 1951 he was in search of new adventures and decided to learn to fly. So early the next year, he found himself at the RAF Light Aircraft School across the plain at Middle Wallop.



Maj. W.G.Harris

I was then only three but well remember his regular low passes over our house in Fargo Road "bombing" us with messages from the cockpit of a Tiger Moth, an aircraft for which I have to this day retained a

very soft spot. He progressed to Auster Mk V's in June and got his Air O.P. Flying Badge on 1st October 1952.

At the end of November with three years of his commission still to run he sailed for Kuala Lumpur to join 1907 Flight at Benta under the command of Major H.B. "Warby" Warburton.

As with all of my father's overseas postings he wrote long letters home and took photographs, writing captions on the back. These he sent back home for my mother to make up into the albums which we still have.

According to his letters he had a pretty good time at Benta despite a rather unfortunate landing in which he wrote off a propeller, an incident Warby dismissed in a wonderful letter he wrote to me shortly before his death a few years ago.

My father left Benta just four months later on 16th March 1953 flying to Kai Tak airport, Hong Kong where amongst other things he made time to visit the



Target practice at Benta – Warby & Don Browne

grave in the Happy Valley Cemetery of my mother's brother Tony, who had died at the age of five of dengue fever in 1924. At the end of this brief interlude he flew on in a Dakota to Seoul via Okinawa to take over command of 1903 Independent Air Observation Post, and 1913 Light Liaison Flights - 656 Squadron from Major C.J. Hailes in the last few days of March 1953. By this time the war in Korea had pretty much reached stalemate. There was still sporadic activity around the 38th Parallel though and 1903 was kept on its toes making regular, though for the most part uneventful, sorties. The one exception, however, which had a profound effect upon everyone in the flight, was the death of Leading Aircraftman L.A.C. Goodfield. In his last letter home my father recounted the episode. Goodfield had gone up with Major Ken Perkins on a regular sortie but on their way back experienced some engine trouble. They limped home but did not quite make the airstrip. They came down in the Imjin River swollen by winter floods and the aircraft flipped over onto its back. Ken Perkins managed to get clear but Goodfield got tangled up with some flotsam, was carried swiftly downstream and drowned.

June 2nd 1953, barely a fortnight later, was a day for celebration in the Messes. It was Coronation Day and news of Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing's conquest of Everest was announced. My father, as C/O

was busy organising celebrations and, having got them underway in the Officers Mess, jumped into a jeep to drive round to the Sergeants' Mess to do likewise. This entailed crossing the airstrip. It is not altogether clear what happened but it seems that two American fighter aircraft came in over the strip wagging their wings. Whether my father thought this was some kind of acknowledgement of the celebrations going on we shall never know. It appears now that they were in fact trying to warn of the imminent approach of a badly damaged Thunderjet which had suffered a flame-out. Evidently upon touching down, the undercarriage, or what was left of it, collapsed and the aircraft slewed, careering off the runway and into the path of the jeep. It was completely destroyed and my father died instantly. He was 36. He too was buried in the Commonwealth Cemetery in Pusan.

Now (1992), with three weeks long-service leave from the BBC, and with my future wife's encouragement and my mother's blessing, I decided to go to Korea. My itinerary would include a few days in Bangkok and Hong Kong so I began to lay plans.

* * * * *

As well as his letters and campaign medals, my mother kept a number of photographs and documents: the notification of my father's death from the War Office, a hand written letter of condolences from 1903 Flight in Korea signed K.Perkins, photographs of my father's grave at Pusan, his Flight Logbook with a letter from Lionel Wheeler his C/O, a copy of the HAC News containing an Appreciation, and a four page typewritten appraisal written by my father of the Air O.P. operation in Malaya and its (un!) suitability as a training ground for pilots destined for Korea. Tucked into the Flight Logbook there was a "team photo" of the pilots and crew of 1903 Flight. My father had recorded the names of the pilots on the back.



*middle row:- Bill Nicholls, John Hoare, Ken Perkins, **Self**, Peter Rodwell, Mitty Tees, Don Browne*

Although the H.A.C. at Woolwich were most helpful in providing last known addresses most of my enquiries drew complete blanks. However, the day before I flew from Heathrow I received a reply from Ken Perkins. Recently retired as a full General and with a remarkable service career behind him, this much decorated Officer wrote to wish me well in my endeavour and generously enclosed a copy of his memoirs which included a whole chapter on Korea. I also visited the museum at Middle Wallop and discovered, with the help of the then curator Colonel Armitage, some useful photographs taken at Fort George in the early 50's one of which, a composite panorama, bore a six figure reference number in the caption. I remembered this as, from another file, he turned up a well thumbed map. We carefully unfolded it. The only recognisable feature was the river which wound this way and that over the page. It was clearly marked - "*Imjin-gang.*"

On a large loop in the river, someone had drawn a thick black pencil line which had been highlighted in purple. The map reference on the photograph fitted exactly. We had located Fort George. Armed with copies of map and photograph I returned home realising just how close my journey might now take me.

I confess to making free use of the BBC (my employer), and the Bentley Drivers Club in respect of contacts. Being an international motoring club, the BDC has a world-wide network. So I wrote to Michael Thornhill, of the Hong Kong branch (there being no members in South Korea) with a brief explanation of the purpose of my visit. Two days later to my surprise, I received a phone call from him wondering if I would like an introduction to Brigadier Hammerbeck, the British Forces Liaison Officer in Hong Kong. I naturally accepted his offer and also his kind invitation to lunch at his club, the name of which I promptly forgot.

On arrival in Hong Kong I made immediate contact with Brigadier Hammerbeck at HMS Tamar and arranged to meet him two days later. Meanwhile I made for my lodgings which had been arranged through BBC World Service producer Mike Popham, with a chap called Jonathan Braude. He was a leader writer with the South China Morning Post and we had arranged to meet at his office at Quarry Bay. Before heading for his flat in the Mid Levels we went for a drink or two at the enormous polished mahogany bar in the opulent Edwardian splendour of the Foreign Correspondents Club. This building had once been the Ice House in the Colony's very early days but today, fittingly, it is where most of Hong Kong's journos and broadcasters can be found, out of hours and very often in them, chilling out. Later that evening over dinner we discussed my plans.

"The Hong Kong Club" ?!?, he enquired with a slightly raised eyebrow as I told him of my lunch date the next day. "You realise that's the *Royal Hong Kong Club*..." I hadn't. "...I hope you've brought a jacket and tie."

Next morning I telephoned Michael Thompson to confirm our meeting but was told he had already left. I was given the club's phone number and spoke to a receptionist.

" thank you Mr.Harris -" the voice said charmingly, "I will let the Chairman know." Jonathan's face was a picture.

"Crikey!" he exclaimed, "You've certainly landed on your feet!"

At HMS Tamar next morning Brigadier Hammerbeck was sceptical of my chances of finding Fort George but when I produced the map and the map reference, his manner changed altogether. "You've obviously done your homework," he remarked as he immediately picked up the phone to contact his opposite number in Seoul, Brigadier David Morgan. After the briefest of explanations he handed the phone to me.

Thus I found myself one week later standing by the statue of Korea's most celebrated naval hero Admiral Yi, on Seoul's principal thoroughfare at 7.am on Friday 11th September looking out for Major John Martin and his wife Pam who were to take me in their Land Rover first to Gloster Valley and the Imjin, and thence with luck to that six figure map reference.

All of Korea was out that day. Every vehicle imaginable, packed with people young and old, jammed the streets and main roads out of Seoul. For, unbeknownst to me, this was the great National festival of Chusok, the most important day in the Korean calendar for both North and South Koreans alike. It's the day when everyone visits the graves of their ancestors and not only were the roads full but every railway seat or berth and every plane seat has been reserved for months.

It took over five hours to make the 15 mile journey and although the new Gurkha recruits were still dutifully awaiting our scheduled 11 am arrival, the American party we were also supposed to meet on Castle Hill had pushed off.



Gloster Valley and the Imjin

One of John Martin's tasks as the new Liaison Officer was to give guided tours of the main battlefields of the Korean War and Castle Hill is the high point. This particular tour was something of a dress rehearsal as the Prince & Princess of Wales were due on an official visit the next month.

Gazing over this fertile green valley in the warmth of late summer it was hard to imagine the battle that raged back and forth over this hill. Such was the state of play over forty years later between North and South that Castle Hill was still honeycombed with observation posts, and gun emplacements, wired up and ready to go at a moment's notice. In fact every strategic point along the road back to Seoul was guarded, every bridge wired up with high explosive charges, in case.

With the lecture over the four of us boarded the Land Rover once again and headed up river to the little hamlet of Munak close to the Imjin and the site of Fort George airstrip. I tried to follow our progress on the map but nothing seemed quite what it should have been. The tension rose and we all fell silent as suddenly we bumped off the road and into what appeared to be a field of maize, and then - there we were, driving up the main runway of airstrip Fort George, home until July 1953 of 1903 Independent Air O.P.Flight, 656 Squadron, otherwise known as "Imjin Airways".

John stopped the car and said, "...have a walk. Take your time...." but I could not answer. I just stumbled out onto the dusty deserted strip.



Fort George airstrip today - main runway looking S.West

This is the place, for so long just imagined but now today a reality. Deserted, but still after fifty years recognisably an airstrip. We found whitened stones, arranged to form some kind of identification code which could be seen clearly from the air. Half way up the runway a rope barrage had been strung across between two stout posts, along with some simple timber trestle barriers. Further exploration in the infield revealed the existence of earth embankments forming enclosures, presumably the remains of the blast revetments for the Austers.

It felt eerily unreal to be in the place where luck had run out on Coronation Day 1953



I found the remains of an underground bunker perhaps an AA post, the timber lintel over its half buried entrance almost rotted through. I did not venture inside. John Martin discovered an old windsock in a remarkably well preserved state. Could this have dated back to the war? Who knows, but he generously gave it to me to bring home. Pam walked with me to the end of the runway with me desperately scanning the horizon hoping to pick out that line of hills so familiar from the "team photo" but they were now tree covered and nothing quite lined up. I contented myself with some shots of the strip itself.

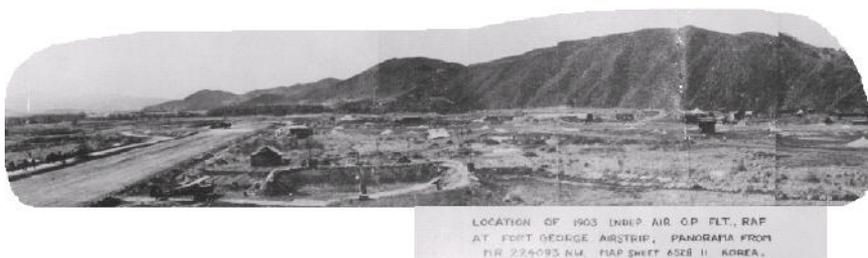


John Martin produced a bottle of champagne and we drank a toast before heading into the village to look for "Pintail", the Bailey Bridge over the Imjin.

In the village of Munak there was the rusting hull of a pontoon bridge by the roadside, a covered with red chilli peppers drying in the autumn sun. Of the bailey bridge however there was no trace. The road ended in a sandy clearing beside the river. There were two families camped out by the riverside and a couple of women doing their laundry. This must have been the place my father mentioned in his letters, where they used to come to relax and bathe. It must also be close to the place where LAC Goodfield had met his untimely end. It is a beautiful stretch of river and the late afternoon autumn sunlight is casting a deepening glow over the cliffs on the opposite bank. It was getting late and time to return to Seoul.

It was only when studying my photographs some time after my return to England that I discovered quite how close I had been.

I was there in late summer but on closer inspection and allowing for a slightly different camera position, those green tree-covered hills in the background were unmistakably the self same hills. In the middle distance is evidence of a revetment wall, quite possibly the same revetment in which the "team photo"(page) had been taken almost fifty years before, and on a subsequent visit to the Museum at Middle Wallop I managed to copy the panorama of Fort George I had glimpsed on my earlier visit.



my shot makes for interesting comparison



A few days later I was due to travel south to Pusan to visit my father's grave in the United Nations Cemetery. I had earlier managed with great

difficulty to obtain a return ticket on the Seoul - Pusan sleeper express, and so found myself amid a throng of fellow travellers on the concourse of Seoul Railway Station. Although the train was crowded I had a compartment to myself and slept fitfully until awakened by the Guard at dawn as the train drew into Pusan. I booked into the railway hotel and had a bath, a rest and breakfast before taking the bus to the north eastern suburbs.

The Cemetery is laid out in about six acres on a gentle slope looking south towards an opening in the hills and the sea beyond. I went armed with a faded photo of the grave taken in 1953 and an aerial photo taken at the same time. In the Memorial Building, Mr. Chung the Curator of thirty years welcomed me and showed me the register. We found the entry without difficulty. He pointed out the plot and then left me to discover for myself what I had travelled all this way to find.

Bronze plaques on simple plinths now stand in place of the bare white crosses, each separated by rose bushes and box hedging. Otherwise it is just as it was in 1953 apart from the blocks of flats!

I walked around looking at other headstones, and discovered that of LAC Goodfield, next to my father's.

It was profoundly moving to find myself here in this place at last.

That evening was spent, somewhat surreally, in the company of a Russian businessman and his Korean boss (originally from the North) who were also staying in the Plaza Hotel. At dinner we attempted to learn something of our very different backgrounds and experience aided, after a protracted and detailed search of Pusan's commercial centre, by innumerable toasts in warm Korean champagne..... Soon after my return I made contact with 656 Squadron Association and Nobby Clarke who invited us join and to attend the Drumhead Parade and Luncheon at Nether Wallop. We met a number of my father's contemporaries and my mother gave the visiting Brass a dressing down after the Luncheon speeches for failing to mention 1903 Flight and Korea, ever the "forgotten war".

Recently I have also been in touch, thanks to the good offices of John Bennett, with the wearer of the only REME cap badge in the team photo. His name is Mike Outridge and as far as either of us can tell he was probably the only member of 1903 Flight who actually witnessed the accident. Although we have not actually met face to face it is typical of his compassion and thoughtfulness that he wrote to us the other day, "... *no June 2nd ever passes without my thinking of your father, a fine officer and a kindly C/O.*"

ASSOCIATION TOUR TO MALAYSIA. MAY 2006

There is still time to register your interest in the tour to Malaysia

I stress that there is no commitment on your part by registering your interest. We will need to finalise numbers before the end of November but would like indications of interest by end of October.

The tour is not confined to association members only so if you want to bring Granny along please feel free to do so.

Proposed Itinerary based on a Tuesday departure from Heathrow:-

- Day 1. Dep LHR non stop to KL on Malaysia Airlines
- Day 2. Arrive KL. Stay six nights Renaissance hotel. Breakfast included.
- Day 3. Day tour by air conditioned coach, with tour guide, to Seremban and Kluang.
Visit site of Paroi camp and Kluang garrison. Hopefully Malaysian AAC will host us in Kluang.
- Day 4-7. At leisure in KL. Hopefully Malaysian AAC will host us to visit site of Noble Field, Armed forces Museum at Mindef and MAF Museum at old KL Main. Those wishing to visit the east coast may do so during this time by private arrangements. Car hire is relatively inexpensive and four sharing a car could easily make Kuantan and back in a day on the new roads. Same applies to the Bentong gap route.
- Day 8. By air conditioned coach with tour guide to Penang via Ipoh and Taiping. Also visit to Chinese and Indian temples in Ipoh. 5 Nights Grand Plaza Park Royal Penang. De luxe sea facing room. Breakfast included.
- Day 9-12. At leisure in Penang. Do your own thing.
- Day 13. Return to UK.

As you can see from the above, the tour is not over organised. There will be plenty of time to just enjoy a Malaysian holiday.

Total cost estimated as at today's date. GB£ 987 per person in twin sharing. There will be a single supplement where applicable so if you are going on your own, find a friend to share with.

The price does not include any meals other than breakfast. Travel insurance, laundry, drinks etc. are all extras.

The hotels quoted are absolutely first class and Malaysian Airlines have an outstanding reputation for service and comfort.

Let us know **NOW** if you are interested.

Tel No. 01352 770100.

e-mail: heyesjs@aol.com.uk

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

656 Squadron Association has dedicated a commemorative tree, with plaque in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. It is set on a 150 acre site and is situated within the National Forest. The site is a living and lasting focus of remembrance for people from all walks of life. It is a haven of peace and contemplation and is home to over 100 major memorials representing military and civilian organisations in addition to many individual dedications. The Chapel of Peace and Forgiveness plays a central role in the life of the Arboretum.

Opening hours are 10am to 5pm (or dusk if earlier) everyday. Please check for Christmas/New Year arrangements. Stout footwear is strongly advised.



The Plaque and tree can be found in Area 17, tree number 71

Admission is free, with large free car park. There are facilities for the disabled including toilets, single level Visitor Centre. Main paths suitable for wheelchairs. Electric scooters available. There is a Shop, a Restaurant and guided tours. The memorial aspect of the site and concern for wildlife means that only Guide dogs are allowed.

Address: Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire, DE13 7AR

Phone: 01283 792333

E-mail: nmainfo@britishlegion.org.uk

Website: www.memorialtreesuk.org.uk

NOTICES

We need more people to put pen to paper and to tell us of anecdotes or their memories of the Squadron past and present. You don't need to write a book, you don't even need to write a whole page, a short paragraph will suffice, for example, articles similar to The Readers Digest 'Humour in Uniform' or 'Life's like that'. Naturally, longer articles are most acceptable. We would like to see articles which span the gamut of emotion from humour to tragedy.
Ed.

John Bennett has produced a DVD of photographs of the last five reunions. If you would like a copy they are available for £5.50 inc. of P & P from the Editor, John Heyes, address on last page of the newsletter. Please make cheques payable to: 656 Squadron Association. Excellent value for such a wonderful keepsake.

Our website is looking rather dated and I have had to remove the guest page due to someone inserting undesirable links every week. I am self taught and would like anyone with knowledge of site building to help and assist me in remodelling our pages to make the site better, with more photos, news and ideas. E-mail me, John Bennett on: 656assn@talk21.com

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. A. Ruthven	Joined 13th June 2004
Maj A. Cash	Joined 13th June 2004
Lt Col W.G.R. Fleming	Joined 15th July 2004
Mr. H.G. Simpson	Joined 1st Feb 2005
Maj. S.L. Salter	Joined 9th Mar 2005
Mr. M. Meaton	Joined 8th Apr 2005
Mr. J.W. Harbour	Joined 8th Apr 2005

Can you help?

My name is Fiona Moore Shanks. I am hoping that someone might be able to help me. I am trying to locate the whereabouts of my father. His name is Gavin Seymour Shanks. All I know is he was a Captain in the British Army, number 23529054. He was stationed in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. I do not know what Regiment he was with.

I was born in Seremban in 1960. I have a sister, Heather Seymour Shanks born 1961. After our parents divorce in 1965 (not sure of exact year) Mom did not allow us to see our father. I now live in California and have been trying to locate him for the last several years but to no avail.

If anyone reading this could recall him, please contact me at:
ati26602002@yahoo.com

I greatly appreciate any information regarding my Father.

Thank you ...



My father (centre) on his wedding day

DEATHS

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

Capt. J.D. Butcher	RA	Died Aug 2004
Maj. 'Red' Meaton AFM	AAC	Died Oct 2004
Mr. D. J. Birch (Doug)	RAF	Died 2004
Mr. W.J. Ward		Died Nov 2004
Mr. N. Hilton (Len)	RA	Died Dec 2004
Maj. J.R. West	RAF	Died Sept 2004
Mr. E.M. Reverley	RA	Died Feb 2005
Mr. G. Tohey (Gordon)	RA	Died Feb.2005
Capt. I.N.R. Shields (Ian)	RA	Died Feb 2005
Maj. D.J. Brown e DFC	RA	Died Apr 2005
Mr. R. Tomey	RA	Died June 2005

COMMITTEE MEMBERS DETAILS

President:

Lt.Col. Andrew Simkins
Watersmeet, Lower Road, Edington, Westbury, Wilts. BA13 4QW
Tel: 01380 830454 E-mail: simkins@watersmeethouse.fsnet.co.uk

General Secretary & Membership Secretary:

John Bennett
'le Chataigneraie', La Mont, 71550 Anost, France
Tel: 00 33 385827049 E-mail: 656assn@talk21.com

Treasurer:

Ken Mattocks
15 College Park, Horncastle, Lincolnshire, LN9 6RE
Tel: 01507 522102 E-mail: laureken@varteonline.net

Deputy Treasurer:

Position vacant

Events Coordinator:

Maurice Haynes
Thatched Walls, Stoke, Nr. Andover, Hampshire, SP11 0NP
Tel: 01264 738203 E-mail: mauricehaynesuk@yahoo.co.uk

Newsletter Editor:

John Heyes
Ty Ni, Corwen Road, Pontybodkin, Mold, CH7 4TG
Tel; 01352 770100 E-mail: heyesjs@aol.com

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