



Twenty Four

The Magazine of 24 Squadron Association



Issue 10

Summer 2003

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Editor

David Burgin

Association President

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Squadron Liaison

W/C Rick Hobson – Going
W/C Kevin Groves – Arriving
F/L Phil Whitworth

Twenty Four is the Newsletter of 24 Squadron Association and issued once a year to all members.

Contributions to Assoc. Sec at :-

15 Birch Grove
CHIPPENHAM
Wilts SN15 1DD

email

the24secretary@royalairforce.net
data on disc most acceptable

Editorial



Once again, in a time of crisis, the countries assets are almost sold off like the family jewels. The tactical and strategic importance of a base like Lyneham is only seen in pure financial terms by “the men in suits”. It was a similar tale just before the Falklands with the RN’s carriers. We await our visit to the Squadron this October to learn the full facts and no doubt hear how yet again, aircraft and crews have exceeded all the demands that have been placed on them in times like these.

The Association, in contrast, has had a much quieter year and disappointingly not been able to participate in any of the “100 years of Flight” events being staged around the country. To all those involved in the flying game, it is a truly remarkable saga of accelerating progress in a relative short time. We will have to turn to science fiction writers to guess what will be at the end of the next episode.

The Year 2002 Reunion

The theme of this years Reunion was very much that of Tradition, proven by the fact that even after 87 years, the Squadron was an entity that was still making its mark on the social calendar.

A warm welcome greeted all those who turned out for the Association Ladies Guest night in the Sergeants Mess on the Friday evening. Experienced hands behind the scenes of the Mess Staff made the evening a memorable social occasion that accompanied the fine food and wine for around 50 members and guests.

As always, the evening

flashed by with only a fraction of the news and gossip covered before carriages arrived to whisk everyone away as a perfect warm up before day two.

Saturday’s Met conditions were near perfect to allow us all to meet up in the new combined 24/30 Squadron HQ and Ground Training School. The station looked ready for action as always with a variety of C130's lined up on the dispersal in the livery of more than one country. After a welcoming coffee in the crew room it was time to press on with the AGM, which turned out to be a lively and interactive affair, see Minutes sent out earlier in the year.

ground and parked, aircraft and crews were placed far away from other areas, the crews often sleeping under canvas.

The Squadron also dropped the Falcons free fall parachute team with such accuracy due to the superb navigation suite, it became a mandatory requirement by the Falcons to request a J model. Co-ordination between the Squadron and the Association played a big part in the Commemoration Service held in memory of the Pisa crash. Time is still found for charity work helping Burton Hill House School, local community work in and around Lyneham and helping the Air Training Corps.

XXIV Squadron are affiliated to HMS Cambletown and the Worshipful Company of Carmen, located in the City of London. We saw slides of the annual Car Marking ceremony, which in the Squadron's case involved the only official vehicle they own, a trishaw, which was used with great amusement for the event.

With such a varied and active calendar, it would be fair to say 'the future is Red and Black' for XXIV.

Flying Machines of 24 – Skymaster pt 2

The following article was far too good an opportunity to miss for inclusion in the Flying Machines series, especially as we covered the Skymaster in Issue 9. We do have a little bit of feedback on the Valetta, Memory Banks 1 and the Anson Mk X is listed as being on the books briefly in August 1944. It will be the turn of the DC3 in the next issue, so without further ado, it's the C-54.

Inside Churchill's flying palace

The plane came from America an empty shell, was built into the most luxurious aircraft in the world and ended on a scrap heap

[This article was published in *John Bull*, 28th April 1951, as the last of four in which "NORMAN PHILLIPS concludes his series on the passengers and pilots of V.I.P. SQUADRON"]

THE IDEA that Very Important Personages (or V.I.P.s) should have their own personal aircraft probably originated with the late President

Roosevelt. The President adopted for his own use a four-engined C-54 transport, a Skymaster, which he aptly named *The Sacred Cow*.

The Sacred Cow remained the biggest thing in personal planes until Winston Churchill obtained a C-54 himself. Some say Roosevelt presented the Prime Minister with this aircraft; others claim it was wangled on the highest level "old boy" network. Whatever its origins, the transaction became part of Lend-Lease, and British aircraft furnishers transformed the American-built machine into the most luxurious aircraft the world has seen.

It was named after an Athenian galley that was kept in a continuous state of readiness for the exclusive use of Greek statesmen who wished to row over to Egypt to consult the oracle at the oasis of Ammon.

The aircraft was also kept in a continual state of readiness by the R.A.F. 24 Squadron, a unit which specialised in the transport of V.I.P.s. The official name for the plane was never used — partly for security reasons and partly because the crew found it simpler to refer to it as the "Old Man's Skymaster."

"Make It Look British"

It arrived in Britain in the summer of 1944 as an empty shell. Its transformation into what

was later described as a “flying palace worth more than a king’s ransom” was the work of 24 Squadron, the Ministry of Aircraft Production, the General Electric Company, the L. A. Rumbold aircraft furnishing firm and Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft Company.

An American columnist, whose eyes popped when he first saw the interior of the Churchill Skymaster, declared the interior was “decorated like the drawing-room of an English castle with walls finished in dark-brown panelling.” The tribute indicates that the designers had been able to achieve the Churchillian directive to “make it look British.”

Churchill had one other specific request, and that was for a second berth in his stateroom in case his wife should accompany him on any of his flights. The berth was fitted over the Prime Minister’s desk and built to conform with the bedroom’s colour scheme of pale beige and grey Wilton carpet, leather upholstery, and leather wall covering. The woodwork was sycamore. The curtains and bedspreads were in turquoise.

Beds were furnished with sheets costing twenty-four guineas a pair. The room had a private oxygen tank and the sound-proofing was so effective that the Prime Minister complained that the ticking of the bedside clock kept him awake. The clock, an exceptionally quiet model, had to be sent back to the factory and further insulated so as not to disturb Churchill’s slumbers. The stateroom was big enough to accommodate two swivelling and sliding chairs, bookshelves and a built-in wardrobe with a full-length mirror.

What the columnist considered the drawing-room of an English castle was, in fact, the conference room. The colour scheme there was walnut woodwork, nigger brown curtains and a light beige roof. The eight chairs were upholstered in blue leather and could slide back and forward or revolve. The table itself was cunningly constructed of walnut veneer so as to look like solid and handsomely carved wood. It was eleven feet long, three feet wide and appeared to have solid, five-inch thick legs. Actually, it was lighter than if it had been made from the plastics and light tubing which are usually used in aircraft furnishing.

Nightcap For The Guests

The conference room was also used for dinner parties and there was a serving hatch connecting it to the galley. The kitchen was the

preserve of Jock Duncan, an Edinburgh chef, who had at his disposal an electric stove, an electric griller, numerous hot plates, a huge refrigerator and a cocktail cabinet in case the guests should wish for a cocktail, which, according to Duncan, was not unusual. The plane’s wine stocks even ran to iced champagne, as well as the more usual drinks. As flights usually started after dark, a nightcap was always provided before the guests retired.

In the galley was a signal control panel for the guests to summon the stewards; a two-compartment hot cupboard; a lightweight kettle for the specific purpose of heating the soup Churchill frequently requested in the middle of the night; and a two-gallon lightweight urn for heating the dishwater. The urn, like the stove, refrigerator and numerous other refinements known to the trade as “electrical comfortisation,” were designed by G.E.C. specially for the Churchill Skymaster.

G.E.C.’s masterpiece was found in Churchill’s washroom. This compartment was fitted with a half-gallon water heater for washing and a lavatory which was the first in the world to have an electrically heated seat installed. This was added immediately following the Yalta conference. After returning from this meeting, which took place in the Crimea during the mid-winter of 1945, Flight Lieutenant “Jack” Payne, the Skymaster’s engineer officer, called the General Electric Company and asked cryptically whether they could provide a “hotseat for the Old Man.” G.E.C. could. The firm’s designers inserted a sheathed wire element, using fifty watts at twenty-four volts, into the lavatory lid. When the lid was down, a plunger switch was turned on and the seat kept warm. When the lid was opened, the current was switched off automatically.

There were three other washrooms aboard, one for the crew and two, fitted with electric razors, for passengers. Inspection of these washrooms was one of the duties that fell to Payne, a thin, wiry man of medium height with sharp features and inclined to be dapper. Payne is responsible for the story of the admiral’s false teeth — a story which Churchill later helped spread through the Admiralty. The scene was in one of the Skymaster washrooms, which were fitted with opaque plastic glasses. One of the stewards, while tidying up, emptied a glass without noticing its contents. A few minutes later, an admiral bustled in and in somewhat slurred tones, asked if anyone had

seen his set of dentures.

Recovery of the admiral's false teeth was carried out with the tact and expedition to be expected from 24 Squadron. The incident might have been closed had it not come to the attention of the Prime Minister, who subsequently repeated it to his naval cronies.

To fit out the Skymaster to Churchill's requirements, the entire layout of the plane had to be rearranged, the ventilating system modified, the radio and electrical systems altered and the oxygen supply extended. Partitions were installed to change the interior from its original purpose as a transport capable of carrying forty-four to sixty passengers. From nose to tail, the sections were: pilots' compartment, crew's quarters, passenger compartments and toilets, then the conference room amidships, and, at the rear, Churchill's stateroom and toilet. More than three tons of special fittings and furnishings were added to the plane, along with half a ton of emergency equipment and catering appliances. The soft furnishings alone were valued at £10,000.

Churchill Showed Off To Stalin

The Skymaster was stationed at Northolt, and Churchill occasionally dropped in on his way to or from Chequers just to cast a loving eye over his personal aircraft. He liked to show off his Olympian scale toys and, during his flight to Moscow in October 1944, even persuaded Stalin to come down to Moscow Central Airport and look over the York *Ascalon* which was the forerunner of the Skymaster and also luxuriously equipped. Stalin boarded the York and eyed the comforts on board rather sternly. Previously, the Russians had photographed every inch of the plane's interior and exterior, but still the crew expected Stalin might be suitably impressed by the luxurious fittings. "I think," says one of the pilots, "Stalin thought it all rather sissy."

President Roosevelt's staff, however, was quite awed by the interior of the Skymaster, and readily admitted that it outdid the President's *Sacred Cow* in design and appointments. Roosevelt's and Churchill's personal Skymasters first appeared together in an aerial cavalcade that left Malta in January 1945, picked up an escort of fighter planes over Rhodes and landed at Saki in the Crimea. The occasion was the Yalta conference, and, to impress their Russian hosts, the British and American crews

flew at precise intervals so that the guard of honour had no sooner saluted one group of V.I. P.s than the next planeload touched down. The planes came in exactly two minutes apart and in the same order that they left Malta.

When The Vodka Flowed

The conference place was a two- or three-hour drive through the mountains, and the Russians mobilised 2,000 sweepers to keep the road open to the airport. The weather was so bad that, rather than leave Churchill's cherished Skymaster out in the open, the crew flew it back to Cairo, where they waited for Churchill's summons.

When the Skymaster's crew was at Saki, the Red Air Force gave a party for visiting American and British airmen. Seats at this gargantuan banquet were arranged so that there was a Russian, then a Briton, then an American. In front of each place was a bottle of Russian champagne and a bottle of vodka. After the third toast, the lack of interpreters went unnoticed, medals and insignia were exchanged, and some of 24 Squadron's men returned home with the Order of the Red Banner pinned to their chests. The Yalta conference was attended in force by 24 Squadron Yorks and Dakotas as well as the Skymaster. Because of the large number of V.I. P.s attending the meeting, several aircraft had to be detailed to do nothing but carry luggage. One British unit was even sent in by ship to organise a base camp for the delegates and their staffs.

After Yalta, the Skymaster's next important flight was taking Mr. and Mrs. Churchill to Brussels in March. The Prime Minister then loaned the aircraft to his wife for a trip to Moscow, where she was honoured for her work as head of the Aid to Russia Fund.

The Skymaster went back to Moscow at the beginning of May to bring Mrs. Churchill home, and the crew found themselves in the midst of the Russian victory celebrations. "Bill" Fraser, the Skymaster's captain, and Mitchell, the navigator, had wandered into Red Square on the Russian V-Day when they were recognised. by the crowd. "The excited Muscovites threw us in the air," Fraser recalls. "It was all good fun but it was rather frightening. We made our escape as soon as we could and hailed a lorry flying a Union Jack. It took us to the Embassy."

At the Press office, the two airmen told

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their adventures to the B.B.C. correspondent, who happened to be desperately in need of a broadcast subject. "That's just the thing," he told Fraser and Mitchell, "You go back and do it again while I record the scene." Neither took kindly to the suggestion, but agreed on condition that a car would be standing by to rescue them after one toss in the air.

"We went back," Fraser says, "but the crowd seemed more interested in the Dean of Canterbury, who was being chaired around the square. It was some time before we were recognized. Then the fun began again. The B.B.C. man told us to say something in Russian, which is not the easiest thing in the world to do while you are being lifted off your feet. They tossed us up five times before we escaped."

Valet Left The Medals Behind

The Skymaster returned Mrs. Churchill to Northolt, and, just before the elections in 1945, took the Prime Minister to the south of France for a holiday. From Bordeaux it flew Churchill to Berlin for the Victory Parade and the Potsdam meetings, a flight that was made memorable by the fact that the unfortunate valet left the Churchillian collection of medal ribbons behind.

Potsdam was the occasion of a reunion with one section of 24 Squadron which had split off and gone east to join Lord Mountbatten's command. This flight was built up around Mountbatten's personal York, which was fitted as a flying office rather than as one of Churchill's flying yachts. Mountbatten's pilot was Squadron Leader Matthews, veteran of the Malta Shuttle.

The most remarkable feature of the Mountbatten York was its colour, a delicate duck-egg green. Matthews had it painted in that shade, instead of the usual tropical camouflage, and as a result the aircraft was ten degrees cooler while standing on the ground. Mountbatten's duck-egg green aircraft carried him from South-East Asia to Berlin's Gatow Airport for the Potsdam conference, and there the S.E.A.C. commander learned that the atom bomb was going to be dropped on Japan, a fact that Mountbatten discovered before MacArthur,

After Potsdam the next big international conference was the Foreign Ministers' meeting in Moscow during December 1945. To keep the British delegation in close contact with

London, 24 Squadron flew a daily non-stop courier service between Russia and Britain. During this period, Soviet navigators and wireless operators were attached to the squadron. The Russians insisted that one of their navigators be in charge of the flights over Soviet territory.

While the Lancastrians were keeping the Moscow mail flying, the rest of the squadron at Hendon was enjoying a Christmas pantomime. The star was a large and amiable walrus of a pilot named James Keith O'Neill Edwards. A London critic was a guest at the show, and he told Edwards he could make a living out of being funny. The forecast proved correct, as any listener to *Take It From Here* can testify.

Jimmy Edwards's Disreputable Tunic

"They never let me fly any V.I.P.s," says Jimmy Edwards, who actually was a brilliant pilot. "They put me on the Belfast mail run. I was the only man who refused to carry the mail four days running." Edwards cancelled the run because of unusually bad weather. The record also shows that he was entrusted with the safety of such distinguished passengers as the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

What Edwards did rebel against was a squadron order compelling aircrew to wear their best blue uniforms while flying V.I.P.s. According to his R.A.F. pals, Jimmy's best blues were the most disreputable in the squadron, and there wasn't a button on his tunic that did not dangle from a single thread.

Since the war, 24 Squadron has left Hendon and Northolt for more spacious accommodation, Princess Margaret made her first journey by air in one of the postwar squadron's Dakotas². She flew to Belfast in October 1947 and was only prevented from taking a turn at the controls by the fact that an equerry was afraid she might soil the dress in which she had to inspect the guard of honor.

Viscount Montgomery is probably the squadron's most regular customer. He has been flown by 24 Squadron crews since June 1945. Monty's personal aircraft, KN628, was characteristically decorated with 8th Army and 21 Army Group patches, the Union Jack on nose and tail, five stars on the tail to denote a field marshal and a flagstaff projecting through the roof,

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Air Chief Marshal Tedder has frequently flown with the squadron and has been known to come on board accompanied by a group of high-ranking air officers and cheerfully tell, the pilot: "Better not prang today. There'd be too many promotions if this load of passengers were lost."

Tedder, according to 24 Squadron pilots, always tries to remember faces of even the lowliest airmen. Once he has spoken to a man, he will greet him on the next occasion and do his best to recall where they first met. Soon after the war Tedder flew overseas investigating conditions of service at R.A.F. stations. This mission meant inspecting three or four stations a day. Everything went without incident until the party arrived at a Palestinian unit. The Air Chief Marshal went off to inspect the guard of honour. The navigator of his personal plane went into the station office to check some information.

While the navigator was looking over some local maps, the inspection party arrived. The navigator stood to attention. To his surprise, the Air Chief Marshal came up to him and asked, "Why, how are you? How long have you been here and where did I last see you?" The navigator gulped and finally stammered, "I—I brought you here, sir." Tedder blinked and then broke into laughter at his own discomfiture.

Clement Attlee is another distinguished passenger who has been somewhat startled by a 24 Squadron pilot. It was during a flight to the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 that the captain of a Dakota was obliged to tell the Prime Minister to put his pipe in his pocket. On this day, 24 Squadron had sent an aircraft to Paris to pick up Attlee. The plane took off from Paris at 8 a.m. and landed the Prime Minister at ten thirty, in time for him to attend a Cabinet meeting and speak in the House of Commons. By 2 p.m., Attlee was back at Northolt. He boarded the Dakota and pulled out his pipe.

The flights had been organized at such short notice that the pilot had been unable to obtain from Transport Command the customary release from the order that no smoking is permitted on board service aircraft. The captain spoke to the Prime Minister and the pipe went back in his pocket. "Halfway through the flight," the pilot says, "I felt rather badly about it and went back and told Mr. Attlee he could light up. And he did." At four thirty, the Prime Minister was back in Paris and at six he was speaking at the Peace Conference. It was probably the longest

and hardest day a Prime Minister has ever spent.

The Squadron also flew Ernest Bevin to the Paris conferences when he was Foreign Secretary. He was reported to be a cheerful passenger, but the pilot noticed that when Bevin changed his seat from one side of the Dakota to the other, it was necessary to retrim the controls.

The Minister of Civil Aviation, Lord Pakenham, has been a frequent passenger in 24 Squadron aircraft. A very devout man, he frequently studies a breviary while in the air. "It is something of a surprise," says one of the men who has flown him, because it looks as if the first thing Lord Pakenham does on boarding a plane is to open a Bible. Actually, he is a very easy passenger, and his reading has nothing to do with the flight."

Most of the Squadron's flying today is done in Yorks and Dakotas. The last of the Skymasters were returned to America by the R.A.F. at the end of Lend-Lease. The luxurious EW999, Churchill's personal Skymaster, was last used by him to go to the Potsdam conference. Before Churchill's defeat at the polls in 1945, it had been decided to send the plane to California, where the Douglas Aircraft Company had offered to overhaul it, remove the long-range fuel tanks from the fuselage and install them in the wings. It was a major repair job that could not be done in Britain at the time.

Attlee Refused To Pay

The election resulted in the choice of Attlee as Prime Minister. The aircraft companies said the price of the overhaul job would be 100,000 dollars. The Government decided that the dollars could be spent to better advantage in aiding national recovery rather than in maintaining the most luxurious personal aircraft in the world.

The Churchill Skymaster had been classified as Lease-Lend material and, as such, returned to the United States Government. The Americans overhauled it at Wilmington, Delaware, and flew it to Washington. There, invitations were sent to every aircraft manufacturer and every airline operator in the United States to visit it and see how expert and comfortable were British standards of aircraft furnishing.

Then General George C. Marshall took the

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plane and flew in it on his mission to China. There, it was involved in a minor accident. The flying palace was a cripple. There were so many surplus Skymasters that the Americans did not consider it worthwhile repairing EW999.

They left it on a Chinese scrap heap. THE END

¹Bassingbourn

²Monty's KN628, with W/O Buckingham as AQM

Memory Banks

Major L G Hawker still holds a special place in the history of XXIV Squadron. A previous secretary, Bob Osborne found the following article by Chaz Bowyer in an Aircraft Illustrated Extra, price 3/6d, date unknown, but certainly pre decimal.

HAWKER Pioneer of air fighting

Lanoe George Hawker, VC, DSO. [Lt-Col T. Hawker, MC

WITHIN the minor mountain of aviation literature published during the past 40 years much space has been devoted to the glorification of the fighter pilots of 1917 and 1918. It is usually forgotten that most of those unquestionably courageous men began their fighting careers as inheritors of many lessons hard-won in the "school" of sheer experience by the early pioneers of air combat during the years 1914, 1915 and 1916 had been learned in conditions without precedent, in aircraft of extremely fragile construction powered by engines of minimal reliability and designed without thought of armament.

From within the Royal Flying Corps it would be invidious to single out any one man as the prime example of the early pilots who literally formed the basic "rules" and tactics of aerial fighting, but there was one whose influence and personal example was undoubtedly responsible for a large proportion of the RFC's fighting efficiency in later years - Lanoe George Hawker, VC, DSO. His outstanding contribution to formulating the future pattern of air combat and his personal creed of the offensive

spirit alone would have earned him a distinguished niche in RAF history. Added to an instinctive genius for creating and fashioning myriad inventions and ideas-most of which became standard fittings and practices to the point of devotion in all with whom he came into contact; and the name of Lanoe Hawker has become rightly regarded as the epitome of the RFC's earliest fighting Pilots. His death in November 1916, while in single combat with the man destined to become Germany's greatest fighting "ace" of that war, robbed the RFC of its foremost contemporary fighting leader and a potentially great future commander.

Lanoe Hawker was born in Longparish, Hampshire, on December 30 1890, the son of Lt H C Hawker, RN, and descendant of many generations of military ancestors. At the age of 11 years he entered Dartmouth's Britannia College as the start of an intended naval career but, soon after, ill-health forced his withdrawal from training. Imbued with a natural desire to give service to his sovereign and country of birth, Hawker next donned uniform as a Gentleman Cadet of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, in February 1910. In June of that same year, along with his younger brother Tyrrel, he joined the Royal Aero Club-an indication of his growing interest in flying. Commissioned in the Royal Engineers on July 20, 1911, Lanoe's interest in aviation had already led him to commencing flying instruction at Hendon, but a course at the Chatham School of Engineering occupied him fully for just over a year and it was not until March-4, 1913, that Lanoe finally passed his pilot tests, on a Deperdussin, gaining Aero Certificate, No 435.

Promoted to Ist Lt in October 1913, Hawker was then posted to 33rd Fortress Company at Cork Harbour but his request for attachment to the RFC finally resulted in his reporting to Central Flying School, Upavon, on August 1, 1914 where, in D Flight, he underwent military flying training. Graduating on October 3, 1914, Lance immediately joined 6 Squadron, RFC, at Farnborough. He was one of several pilots drafted to 6 to replenish its officer establishment following dispersal of the unit's original pilots to other RFC squadrons which moved to France on the outbreak of war. On October 6, Hawker piloted Henri Farman 653 to Dover and on the next day 6 Squadron flew to France to join the fighting. Based on Ostende racecourse, 6 despatched its first reconnaissance patrol on October 8 when Capt A. C. E. Marsh, with Lanoe Hawker as his observer, BE2a over the advancing German armies. During many similar flights in the following months Hawker's instinctive fighting spirit was

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evidenced by his early attempts to carry a variety of bombs, steel darts or any other form of crude armament calculated to discomfit enemy troops. Like most other pilots Hawker usually carried a Service revolver with him on sorties and on October 31, during his first "solo" encounter with a German aircraft, he instantly attacked, firing all six shots from his side-arm. It was a completely natural desire to come to grips with an opponent, without thought of personal safety a trait which he was to display throughout his fighting career.

Through the winter of 1914/15 Hawker found little opportunity for air combats, enemy aircraft being seldom seen. By March 1915 Hawker's regular aircraft was a BE2c, 1780, in which he normally carried a Service rifle for "offensive armament". His main routine comprised reconnaissance and artillery during he constantly subjected to increasingly accurate anti-aircraft fire. His attitude to such perils was mainly one disdain and indeed at one period of seeking out German artillery positions, he deliberately flew low over suspected sites inviting fire from the enemy guns in order to pinpoint the batteries! On April 18, 1915, Hawker set out alone to find and bomb a reported Zeppelin shed at Gontrode. With only three 20lb bombs, Hawker supplemented this load by carrying several hand grenades. Finding his objective, he spiralled down to attack, throwing his grenades at the crew of a captive balloon-sentry who kept up a machine gun barrage at him during the descent. Sweeping low over the huge hangar, Lance released- his bombs, scoring two hits. Unbeknown to him the hangar, which normally housed Zeppelin LZ 35, was empty its "resident" having crashed some five days earlier. Hawker's complete disregard for personal danger over many months of war flying culminating in this latest exploit, brought him a well-deserved DSO award and promotion to captain as commander of 6 Sqn's "A" Flight.

Six days later Hawker's luck ran out during a patrol over the Langemarck area. Flying low in his customary style, he was hit in the left ankle by a bullet. Despite his pain, he completed the patrol and, on landing, had local medical treatment. On the following day he had to be lifted into his BE and during the sortie he attacked a German two-seater with his rifle, driving it down. On April 26, with Lt Wyllie as observer, he attacked and drove off two more Germans while a third, armed with a machine gun in the back cockpit, was eventually driven off by rifle-fire. After two weeks sick leave, Hawker returned to 6 Squadron and continued the daily routine of flying his BE2c and (from the beginning of June) FE2b on low-flying reconnaissance sorties, but on June 3 he was delighted to receive a new aircraft, Bristol Scout C, 1609. With the practical assistance of Air Mechanic E. J. Elton (later Flt Sgt E. J. Elton, DCM, MM, of 22 Sqn),

Hawker designed a mounting for fitting a Lewis gun to the tiny scout. With no synchronisation gun gear available; the gun was affixed to the left side of his cockpit, its barrel pointing forward and to the outside of the propeller arc. It -meant that in combat Hawker would need to fly "crabwise- to any enemy, but on June 7 he made his first flight in the Lewis-equipped Bristol and promptly attacked the first German machine he met, forcing the enemy two seater to spin away to earth. June 21 saw him attack another two-seater which was last seen descending, trailing smoke; although no claim was made by Hawker for this "victory", being unable to see its finish. On the following day after three inconclusive engagements with enemy machines, Hawker's petrol ran out and in the subsequent forced landing his Bristol hit a wire fence and overturned. Escaping the crash with minor bruises, Hawker was soon allotted a second Bristol Scout, 1611, in place of his damaged 1609. The new "beast" was immediately fitted with Hawker's "crab" Lewis fitting (the backsight for which was clamped separately to the left rear centre-section strut) and Lanoe continued his valuable combat sorties in between normal reconnaissance patrols.

Flying Machines - The Valetta

Thanks to Roger Jay of Bexley for the following feedback on the Valetta.

"Originally, 24(C) Squadron had operated the VIP element of the UK Valetta force at Oakington, receiving its first two aircraft (C2, VX577 and C1, VW849) in February 1950. The Squadron proudly participated in the 1950 RAF air display at Farnborough when it flew VW849 in the flypast which comprised or more than 200 aircraft. The Transport Command contribution included a York, Dakota and Hastings. In six months operation, mainly VIP work, the Squadron flew senior Army and RAF personnel on tours of the Near East, the Canal Zone, Germany and the UK.

The Valetta's association with 24 Sqn was short lived and later in the year the Squadron moved to Lyneham and its Valetta's were transferred to 30 Sqn at Abingdon.

The full listing of Valetta's is as follows:-

C1 – VW849 to 24 Sqn 23/4/50, to 30 Sqn 1/12/50.

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C2 – VX576 to 24 Sqn 8/2/50, Cat3R flying accident, 16/9/50, repaired on site by Vickers, 19/10/50, returned to service 13/11/50, to 30 Sqn 1/12/50.

C2 – VX577 to 24 Sqn 8/2/50, to 30 Sqn 1/12/50.

Keeping in Touch

RECENT LOSSES

Wg Cdr Tempest Haigh Archbell DFC passed away peacefully at home in Durban South Africa on 25 March 03, where he had lived in retirement for many years. "Archie" as he was known by everyone, was 88 and had been married for 57 years. He is fondly remembered by his wife and family, who kept in regular contact with the Association despite the distance and were generous benefactors to the Association funds. Archie was Commanding Officer of XXIV from September 1944 to October 1945 while the Squadron was located at Hendon.

Cyril George 'Cy' Squires passed away on August 26th 2002 in West Wales. Cy was a MALM operating Hastings out of Colerne between 1962 to 1965. He received various commendations, including AOC Air Support Command Commendation 1965 Task Commander's Commendation Christmas Island 1959. His wife of 41 years has donated his log book to the Squadron records.

Cyril Joe Jones It is my very sad duty to inform the Association that my father mentioned above died on the 30th September 2002. I know how much he and my mother enjoyed the reunions that they have attended in the past few years, and will miss them greatly. Please could enter this in your records as I am sure there are some people who will remember him. Jennifer Davies daughter.

Joe was an ex Flt Lt Wireless Operator who flew with XXIV between 1943 and 1944 out of Hendon on Hudson's, Dakota's and Flamingo's.

Joe Millar an ex Air Radar Fitter on Hercules with the Squadron died from cancer on 18th February

2003. Joe had moved back to Wiltshire after running a boarding kennel for some time. Still very keen on all things airborne to the end. His ashes were scattered over the White Horse which overlooks Westbury. (Informed by Colin Townsend)



A Good Read

S for Sugar

A Tribute to the Life of
Kenneth Roy 'Tich' Regan

Chris Regan is a keen member of the Association, attending most years and an aviation enthusiast. At our 2002 Reunion, Chris brought along the finished product of many hours of hard work and no doubt pleasure, a handsome booklet, a tribute to his father Tich, who was an Air Gunner, then Signaler. The link with XXIV squadron was when No 1359 Flight was disbanded in June 1946 and amalgamated with 24 Squadron. If you knew Tich or are interested in a copy of the life story, contact the Association Secretary.

THE POEMS WE WROTE

(Anthology of Air force Poems). Compiled and edited by Eddy Coward. Priced £7.50

The book was brought to our attention and has over 100 pages with a forward by Max Bygraves. For copies write to 5 Brocksford Avenue, RAYLEIGH, Essex, SS6 8RH

RAF FLIGHT ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION

If you are eligible to join this Association, you may like to contact their Hon Sec, Terry Hulme for more details. The address is 15 Walcot Road, SWINDON, Wilts, SN3 1BH or Tel 01793 613936. A web site has been set up at the following url <http://mysite.freemove.com/raffassociation> or e-mail Terry on raf@feassociation.freemove.co.uk



(Continued on page 11)

Observers and Navigators: and other non-pilot aircrew in the RFC, RNAS and RAF
By C.G. Jefford

Airlife Publishing, 101 Longder Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9E8, UK 2001. 274pp. Illustrated. £35. ISBN 1-84037-275-0.

Most of us who at some time have served as nonpilot aircrew have worn our badges with well-justified pride. There can also be no doubt that we have also railed against the 'Pilot Mafia', which always seemed to be there to keep us in our place. Even with our badges, they kept our wings 'clipped', leaving only one.

This impressive book traces the way in which the RFC/RAF came to appreciate that the crewing of aircraft did not only involve pilots but also observers, gunners and wireless operators, and that their functions could not necessarily be undertaken by the driver. As time progressed there was a further realisation that some of these functions would be better served if some training were introduced.

The story of how the service came to terms with all this unfolds in great detail, touching on training policy, status, badges and promotion, detailing the failures and successes of various policies right up to the present day, where one is left to wonder, have they got it right yet?

As aircraft have become more complex we have seen the introduction of the flight engineer who, in turn, has metamorphosed into the air electronics officer and subsequently we have seen the rise of the weapons systems officer. It is also interesting to see the way in which that old chestnut 'flying pay' has been awarded, whether it is danger money or qualification recognition, and how it has varied over the years.

Perhaps most fascinating is the background to the short-lived 1946 aircrew scheme. At the time we all wondered whether they really knew what they were doing. Read this account and wonder no more!

Whenever or wherever you served, the story of your life is there in great detail, complete with

acronyms and Air Ministry Order references. But be warned; it is not bedtime reading, it is a large book (A4) and is printed in two-column format.

What can be said without doubt is that this book will remain a definitive reference, touching on every aspect of the aviator's craft while offering a rare insight into the administrative processes of the service.

Reviewed by David Gibbings, CEng, FRAeS

THE ASSAULT GLIDER ASSOCIATION

From: Major R.Conningham, The Manor, Streethay, LICHFIELD WS13 SLU
tel: 0 1543 418191 fax: 0 1543 418015 mobile: 077 53 600 165
e-mail ray@conningham.fsnet.co.uk

RAF TRANSPORT COMMAND AND ASSAULT GLIDERS IN WW2

I enclose background information about a project at RAF Shawbury which may be of interest to you and to members and veterans of your squadron. Group Captain Rob Bailey is a very good friend and he suggested that you may be able to find among your veterans association someone who flew the Dakota which we have been given.

It would be a wonderful thing if veterans who knew this aircraft when it was with your squadron could visit us to see it at RAF Shawbury. The aircraft is at present at Coventry Airport and we hope it will be moved to Shawbury sometime in March 2003. However, we can not be sure of this because everything on wheels or wings seems to be very busy for the time being.

It would also be a wonderful thing if your squadron would like to "adopt" this aircraft and help with the funds for its restoration.

BLANFORD to BAGHDAD

H W von Poellnitz is not a name that would readily be associated with the Lincolnshire

(Continued on page 12)

Regiment, the Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Air Force yet he was a member of all three, serving with valour and distinction. Nor would 66 Station Road, Sidcup be the likely first thought as the family home of Baron and Baroness Arthur von Poellnitz and their only son, yet the name of Herman Walter von Poellnitz is inscribed on the Sidcup War Memorial and on two other memorials in that area, Holy Trinity Church and St. John's Church.

October when he was confirmed in the position of Flight Commander which he had been occupying over the summer and also in the rank of Captain in the RFC. On 18th October he was posted to No.24 Squadron at Bertangles as the commander of "B" Flight. No.24 had been formed at Hounslow in September 1915 and after being equipped as the first D.H.2 squadron, had been operational in France since February 1916. Its Commanding Officer was Major Lanoe G. Hawker VC, the first British ace of the war. On 28th October 24 Squadron encountered Jasta 2. In manoeuvring to attack, Boeleke collided with another of his pilots and so plunged to his death. Just under a month later, on 23rd November, Hawker himself fell to the guns of a young member of Jasta 2, Manfred von Richthofen, after one of the longest single combats of the war. The squadron diary notes that throughout November, "the Squadron intensified its patrols, each pilot flying up to four sorties per day, nine enemy aircraft were shot down." On 17th December the squadron, now commanded by Major C.E.C.Rabagliati MC, moved to Chipilly, "and as winter had now arrived, a quiet period enlivened by only a few incidents began." The respite was, however, of brief duration.

Just a couple of extracts out of a very interesting little booklet sent in by Guy Warner about the story of No 72 Squadron's first Commanding Officer, with the odd reference to XXIV Squadron. Copy available from the Editor.

FORCES NICKNAMES

The British armed forces have long enjoyed issuing automatic nicknames to those with certain surnames. Thus, any Clarke is almost inevitably rechristened *Nobby*. Try a few more from "Schott's Miscellany."

Nickname	Surname
Bunny	Austen
Streaky	Bacon
Daisy/Dinger	Bell
Smokey	Cole
Nobby	Ewart/Clarke
Chopper	Harris
Granny	Henderson
Pincher	Martin
Dusty	Miller
Spud	Murphy
Nosey	Parker
Whacker	Payne
Jumper	Short
Smudger	Smith
Snip	Taylor
Chalky	White
Tug	Wilson
Timber	Woods
Shiner	Wright
Bringham	Young

Mailbox ☒ Your Letters

We do seem to have quite a lively bit of snail and e-mail traffic on issues featured in the Newsletter and long may it continue. So for your interest and comments, read on.

☒ ☒

Dear Editor,

I recently met a local lady who worked at the de Havilland repair unit at Witney during WW2, and because of my interest she subsequently lent me a scrapbook compiled by members of the DH Witney Association.

In it I found one picture that may be of interest to you - a DH95 Flamingo in the repair hangar. The caption is not clear on whether it *is* or *is like* one used by Winston Churchill, but having discovered your web pages and the connections to 24 Sqn, I thought you might like to see it.

I do not know the copyright holder, if indeed there is one at all. Should you choose to use it, I suggest crediting "the de Havilland Witney Association".

Best wishes, Adam Middleton

Sir

I read in issue 7 of your squadron newsletter (<http://www.24sqnassociation.royalairforce.net/issue7.htm>) a comment that "No mention is ever made about Hendon's D/H Flamingo". I thought you may be interested in a small web site I have prepared on the type. It can be found at: <http://www.geocities.com/ctyoung57/DH95.html>

The site deals with the development and production of the transport and has pages dedicated to individual aircraft, including those operated by 24 squadron. I would welcome any memories, information or comments from your members on the RAF operation of the DH95 Flamingo.

Regards Chris Young

☒ ☒

Dear Sir

Kindly would I like to ask you for your help, I already place a small add in the squadrons guestbook, but as probably not all your members are on the computer, I wonder if you could help me out with the following

I am in the progress on writing a small booklet about the so called "Rupert" dummy parachutists dropped on different places during the war, I found out that during the Sicily Operation in July 1943, 10 Bostons of 24 Squadron also dropped a number of these dummy's above Sicily, I would like to ask you if you maybe can tell me if there are any members in the Squadron association who took part in this operation and whom I might could ask some questions about this.

Already much thanks for your help,

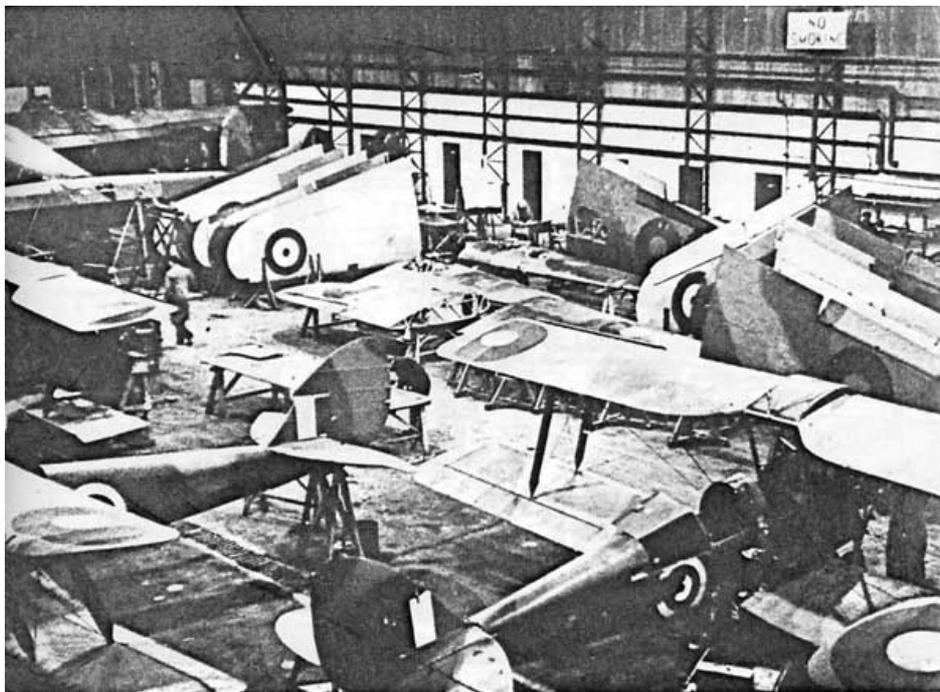
Yours Sincerely

Philip Reinders, Arnhem Battle Research Group

<http://www.arnhembattle.com>

☒ ☒

To Derek Linder from John Mitchell,



13. General overhauls - Tiger Moths, Hurricane wings and, in LH corner, a DH 95 Flamingo as used during the war by Sir Winston Churchill.

24 Squadron 1943 to 1945. Your piece in the latest Newsletter. The Grumman Goose was certainly at Hendon, in 'A' Flight, I think, for the years I was on the Squadron. It was flown almost exclusively by S/Ldr Bob Reid, MC., (WW I) the Flight Commander and it was reserved for the exclusive use of the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, for his journeys to his Constituency (Thurso). No doubt, he flew into Wick and I notice there is a Castle Sinclair nearby - ? the baronial home of the MP. Sorry I can't add more.

It would be interesting to know how it was disposed of after the war was over - and from whom it had been 'requisitioned' in the first place. As a matter of interest, a retired FAA Observer living near me, was trained on the Goose at Piarco, Trinidad, during his nav. training. These were probably USN aircraft, as I think the school came under the Arnold Scheme for training UK entrants on US units. I shall ask him.

Yours aye, John.



Dear David

Thank you very much for your prompt response. To answer your question I attach herewith an article from the RAF News dated back in 1975.

I am investigating this accident in the last 8 years and oiled up hundreds of pages of documents. The RAF crew never had been interviewed by the so called ICAO Committee. The whole thing is very very dodgy. To my astonishment they never got in touch with the crew of the C-130 neither with the SU 280.

If you are interested in more details I am more than happy to send you a CD with a lot of information, but for me it is essential that I do find these people and can talk to them. I found already Peter Norcross one of the navigators on the plane.

I appreciate your time effort and advice Dr Laszlo Nemeth England Coach Visit my web page: <http://www.coachnemeth>.



If you are wondering what Dr Laszlo is asking about, here is the extract from the RAF News, retyped as the scanned image is just not good enough to reproduce.

HERC FLIERS PINPOINT CRASH SCENE

It all began as just another routine flight from Akrotiri to Lyneham for Flt Lt Mike Dixon and his Hercules crew of 24 Sqn. But shortly after take off from the Cyprus base late at night, they were diverted to search for an Hungarian airliner which was believed to have crashed in the eastern Mediterranean near Beirut.

As the transport aircraft flew low over the reported crash area, it was not long before the keen eyes of the crew, including the co-pilot Flt Lt Ted Harlow, Navigators Tom Norcross and Dave Skinner, Engineer Sgt Ian Blanford and Loadmaster Sgt Dave Ferries sighted wreckage floating in the sea.

The Hercules crew dropped flares to guide rescue craft to the scene, but there was no sign of life among the debris.

The plot thickens, tell us more or contact Dr Laszlo if you can help.



Hello David.

I just want to confirm whether you are able to pick up attachments so I am enclosing Picture of my Father taken in 1922 in Flying Kit when with 24 Squadron. One little detail I would like to add. On your site under past Squadron Commanders for 1922 is Squadron Leader O. T. Boyd. In my possession I have two references my Father received, I think they are signed by the Squadron Leader, either him or by Squadron Leader Robb who was also with 24 Squadron. They are written on a Canvass type Parchment. In 1926 and subsequent years, unemployment was awful and my Father was trying to get work, and these references are about my Fathers Character. I will look them out.

The other detail is this. My Father Christened my Brother Edward BOYD Evans because of his connection with the Squadron and its Commander, subsequently my Brother has now Christened his Three Sons with the same middle name BOYD. Just shows what influence our Service life can have doesn't it. What a Pity we don't have National Service so we could instil some Character in some of the

Morons that are out and about today. Hopefully will have Photos next day or so now.

Cheers Des Evans



From: Basil Lofthouse



Sent: Tuesday, August 20, 2002 2:34 AM
Subject: Memories

I have looked through your web site with interest but I think you should make reference to its unique status around 1950. I joined it at Bassingbourn in Feb 49 when it was titled 24 (Commonwealth) Squadron and Pat Lombard (a very charismatic officer) was the CO.

It was unique because its complement included 4 RAAF crews on exchange, 2 RNZAF crews and 2 or 3 SAAF crews. There was also a Canadian crew, who had their own Dakota and seemed to do pretty well as they liked when not required by their High Commission staff. In due course Pat Lombard left to be replaced, on a rotational basis, by Charles Read. You show this in the list, but not the fact that he was Royal Australian Air Force, just as Major Robbs was South African Air Force, both commanding an RAF Squadron in their turn - probably unique. Charles Read, incidentally went on to become the RAAF Chief of Air Staff.

There were 3 flights, Dakotas, Yorks and Lancastrians and some "other aircrew" held Transport Command categories on more than one type. Several aircraft were, in effect, personal e.g. CAS's, and several VIPs had, in effect, their own personal pilot and crew. These Dakotas usually had an extra special internal fit and were highly polished, though what that did to the rivets, I shudder to think!! We had to hold Transport Command A categories to be employed on VIP duties so had to keep clued up.

I left the Squadron to go to Australia on exchange in Aug 50 and found myself back on VIP duties with some of the crews who had been with me on 24 Sqn - it's a small world! I moved out to Perth WA, 7 years ago, so cannot take any part in the Squadron Association but I thought you might be interested in these gabblings from an elder citizen.

With best wishes, Basil Lofthouse (Wg Cdr Ret'd, 13370)



Dear David,

I have just received the Summer 2002 issue of the magazine. Congratulations on another very interesting read - and on the quality of the photographs printed on pages 22-23 - I hope John Mitchell will not be embarrassed at being shown in full song at the Mess Party! I'm sure that Evert Rijkhof will be moved to see his father's face in the pictures. He has an enlarged copy of the photo taken in the Hudson cockpit displayed in the entrance hall of his house in The Netherlands.

A couple of points that you might find of interest:

(a) The Grumman Goose: This amphibian was an extraordinary aircraft - a small flying boat with a pair of wheels tucked up on the side of the fuselage! One was based at Hendon for some of the time I was there - probably 1942-43. My recollection was that it was part of the collection of aircraft flown by the Metropolitan Communications Squadron (along with the Flamingo, DH Rapides, etc.) It was certainly housed in the hangar on their side of the airfield (the east side). I don't think it was used very often. I don't know if this info will be of interest to Derek Linder. Jock Hannah may well have clearer recollections of it than me. I will mention it to him when I e-mail him.

(b) Raimund Puda and Eddie Prchal: I was sorry to hear that Raimund Puda had died. I

remember him as a serious, thoughtful man. By the way, I think you will find that the spelling is PRCHAL. We knew him well when he was flying from Hendon. He was in hospital in Gib recovering from his injuries after the crash and Jan Rijkhof and I visited him there. Am I right in thinking he was the only survivor? The mystery of the incident has never been solved. They took off to the east and Prchal said that he found it impossible to gain height. They ditched a short distance off Gib. There have always been rumours of sabotage because General Sikorsky was on board.

Best wishes, John White



Dear Sir,

I believe my father Flight Lieutenant Patrick Smith *Navigator* was assigned to this squadron at Hendon. His log book shows hours logged in Dakota and then Wellington, B24 and Lancaster aircraft flights are logged too. He met my mother Lillian, a WAAF Sgt, whilst serving at Hendon and they married after the war. He then flew with Aerolinias Argentines commercial passenger planes until 1962. This was followed by a return to the UK to work for the Ministry of Aviation (as was), the DTI then eventually for the CAA on the Directorate for Licensing and Special Exemptions.

He died in August 1980 aged 63 years, having held a glider's licence - which was as close as he could get to flying in his latter years, although I feel sure that he still has wings wherever 'he' is; his whole life was consumed with his love of flight.

One of his fifteen grandchildren, my nephew, also called Patrick, is 'inflicted' with this same obsession and had gained his PPL by 19 yrs and will join the RAF after university.

My father rarely spoke of his missions, or of his crew members, but if he did - emotions welled up far beyond our grasp, so I know he never forgot *'the boys'*.

Yours sincerely,
MaryAnn McVean (nee Smith)
Daughter of Pat Smith



Dear Sir,

I came across your Royal Air Force newsletter which had a reference to my father George Girardet. Since you asked for feedback, I thought I would drop you a line. My father died over 10 years ago of a heart attack. He was living in New York at the time. He emigrated to Jamaica after the war, and I was born there in 1953. We subsequently moved back to the UK where I was educated. I currently live in Geneva Switzerland where I work for a UN agency.

All the best, Guy Girardet



Dear Mr Hannah

I am writing to thank you for taking the time and trouble to write to me concerning the No 24 Squadron Wellington crash. It was very much appreciated, and your recollections have added to my appreciation of the event,

You might be interested to know (if you didn't already) that the Wellington crashed into the edge of Plashes Wood, which is on some high ground near the village of Standon in East Hertfordshire, about 8 miles north of the town of Ware. The crash is still remembered locally, and there are some rather gruesome legends which are still doing the rounds! According to the accident report, the cause of the crash was given as engine failure during bad weather. The pilot and crew seem to have been rather unfortunate in that they had the misfortune to lose height over perhaps the highest ground for many miles around. I understand that the aircraft exploded and burnt out after impact. I have visited the Wellington's crash site, but there is nothing left to indicate what happened those sixty years ago other than a number of trees which are still showing the effects of the crash.

A number of other aircraft crashed in the locality during the war, including two Spitfires from No 71 (Eagle) Squadron at North Weald, and a P51 D from the 339M Fighter Squadron, based at Fowlmere.

Again, many thanks for writing to me. I'd also like to add my thanks and appreciation for yours and your comrades' service in the RAF during the war. We all owe you so much.

Yours sincerely David Ashley



Hello.

I am currently assisting the creator of www.97-squadron.co.uk Website.

I am ex RAF Flight Mech Engines 77 years of age. My reason for contacting you is that my Father was in RFC and the RAF. He was Air Mechanic. I have two Photos { Copies of the original} of 24 Squadron. Aircraft in flight over the KENLEY district One is called " THE BREAK" which shows 4 Bi Plane Aircraft in Ariel practice for Air Pageant 1922. Winners of Duke of York Cup. 1920-10921 and 1922. I have the names of the Pilots flying these Aircraft and the Air Mechanics flying with them, which includes my Father.

Bristol Fighter F4341 Pilot F/Lt. L Lismore
Passenger Air/Mechanic Brown Bristol Fighter
H1426 " F/Lt. Jenkins

Passenger Air Mechanic Forbes
Bristol Fighter H1400 F/Lt Hamilton
Passenger Air Mechanic Standwich
Bristol Fighter H 4385 F/O Le Roy
Passenger Air Mechanic Chic Evans { My
father }

I have also the names of Pilots flying these machines and with Air Mechanics names including again my Father. All Aircraft are numbered.

My Brother is 80 years old ex RAF and a Flight Mech Engines like me. He has the original Photographs which are in excellent condition. I do believe he intends to leave the to your Squadron to put in your Archives. Please advise if you would like me to proceed.

For interest sake, why not look at our site and sign the guest Book.

Best wishes Des Evans



Diary of a Navigator Pt 6

John Mitchell's account of his VIP flying with the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill in 1943 continues in this sixth instalment.

The PM had ordained that his York was not to be used for other purposes without his express permission. Early in August, the PM had taken his planning team, said to be over 200 strong, to Quebec and Washington for the QUADRANT Conference in the RMS Queen Mary. The PM's party returned from Halifax in HMS Renown arriving at Greenock on 19 September. We had had no knowledge of this voyage, nor had we any inkling of the Big Three Conference in the Middle East for the coming November and December.

Meanwhile, we had a busy October. One of the results of the Quebec Conference was to install Lord Louis Mountbatten as Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief in South East Asia (SEAC): from having been in charge of Combined Operations in the UK, a very rapid promotion to Admiral. The PM's aircraft was to take him out to Delhi to set up the headquarters of his new command. We looked forward to a flight to India. At the last moment, orders from No 10 came that we were to proceed no further east than Tunis and to return to Algiers at once in order to pick up Field Marshal J C Smuts. Mountbatten and his staff of four were to continue in the Liberator, 'Marco Polo' (AL578) one of the Dorval fleet.

2nd October 1943. We left Northolt at 2330 hours and took our usual precautionary route into the Atlantic, though not as far west as for His Majesty and landed at Gibraltar eight and a half hours later. Rather a bumpy flight

at first and the two WRNS on Mountbatten's staff were ill, but we settled down to a smooth run for the rest of the flight at 10,000 feet. We left Gibraltar two and a half hours later for Tunis (La Saballa), a clear run in fine weather flying, with lunch being served. We remained on the ground there for only twenty minutes, needing no refuelling and returned to Algiers (Maison Blanche), getting there in two and a quarter hours at 1800 hours local time. A long night and day for us.

Not having the PM with us this time, and not being able to pull a fast one for accommodation at the Hotel Aletti, we accepted quite comfortable RAF transit quarters on the east shore of the Bay of Algiers, leaving Jack Payne and the cabin staff on board for one night. We were ordered to return at once to the UK with our next VIP.

Janny Smuts, as he was affectionately known, was en route to London for a conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers and had been flown as far as Algiers in a Lockheed Lodestar of the SAAF, via Cairo. He was accompanied by Lieutenant General Van Reynveldt, his Chief of Staff, Captain Smuts Mr, the ADC, the Rt Hon Harold Macmillan, then Minister to the Allied Forces in North Africa, and Mr John Wyndham, his number two.

4th October 1943. Although we had staged through Gibraltar outbound with Lord Louis on board, shall we say for naval reasons, our latest instructions (after the inadequacies of Ras el Ma) were to use Rabat on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, a former French airfield at Sale just outside the town and now in RAF hands. This was well away from habitation and secure in its isolation: it had good wireless communications with the UK and the other transport bases in North Africa. As it happened, the RAF Station Commander was then Group Captain J J A Sutton, my

first Squadron Commander at Linton-on-Ouse in Yorkshire in the summer of 1940.

The airfield was relatively empty, air traffic light and the weather briefing good. We preferred to use this base in future, whenever we were staging homeward from North Africa.

The Field Marshal was a charming passenger, appreciative of everything done for him and interested in everything. We left Algiers after lunch and made Rabat in three and a half hours, via the Straits of Gibraltar instead of over the Atlas, flying westward as the sun was sinking fast. We then followed down the coast of Morocco to land in the dusk.

We had a relatively relaxed stop-over, time for briefing and supper in the mess. Take-off was set for midnight UK time, with a flight plan of eight hours. It was a fine warm evening and the crew were undertaking their pre-flight chores before the passengers arrived. I took the opportunity to walk into the shadows (no brilliantly-lit tarmac here at Rabat) to make myself comfortable in the open air: a figure came and stood abeam of me - I thought it was Jack Payne with obviously similar ideas. I made some ribald remark on our activities to which I received a prompt reply in that rather clipped South African accent: "Yes my boy, and a very good idea too! Do you know what the Duke of Wellington said to his Officers before the Battle of Waterloo?" I had to admit ignorance. It is, I believe, a well known remark, to take all precautions before battle lest there is not another opportunity. We left as planned and had a smooth run home, picking up a ceremonial fighter escort of Spitfires in the vicinity of Shaftesbury. The weather was poor with low cloud over the airfield. As soon as we had landed, Smuts made a point of thanking the crew before

being driven off. We were warned that we should be required again in three days' time, not the PM but someone high up in the Cabinet.

9th October 1943. This time our passenger was Anthony Eden en route to Moscow, via the Middle East for a Foreign Ministers meeting. The Americans were sending Cordell Hull. Other passengers were General Ismay from the Cabinet Office, Mr (later Sir) William Strang, Messrs Harvey and Pierson Dixon, Colonels Price and Dunn, and two others. With our experience now of the York's fuel consumption, and bearing in mind that we had good weather forecasted in the Western Mediterranean (indeed throughout the Mediterranean) with plenty of landing alternatives, the Captain elected to fly non-stop to Algiers, a trip of about ten hours or a little less if the Atlantic sector winds were in our favour. Breakfast could be served on board and it would make one less landing with all the hassle of meeting parties etc. In the event this flight took nine and three quarter hours, and we had ample fuel reserves.

Our departure from Northolt was in very poor visibility, timed for 2130 local time. For the first time, the RAF Police had been ordered to provide a security guard for the aircraft before its departure. They arrived mid-afternoon in their heavy boots just when Jack Payne and the cabin staff were at their busiest, loading stores and domestic items. Jack, never short of a sharp tongue when he was under pressure, was told he would have to open everything and have it examined for bombs. This was a foretaste of what it would be like if a jumbo jet had to have its floorboards taken up before each flight and all the in-flight catering examined. There are limits to security precautions! Beneath the floor of the York we carried not only special items of spares, certain oils and greases in tins not obtainable overseas, but we also had stowage for emergency rations such as tins of

bully beef, peas, etc and even water.

Jack fobbed off the inquisitors and got on with the jobs whilst the police took their tea break. However, just before take off or rather start up, the police seemed to have had their revenge. The battery cart for the starter motors needs an airman on duty who also primes the Merlin engines from the undercarriage bays. In the interests of security, the police had forbidden anyone near the aircraft once the doors were closed. So, no battery power to turn the starters, no priming, no one to pull the chocks away! Jack got out to locate his ground crew who were being kept back from the aircraft by the police. Some language was exchanged.

Take off thus slightly delayed, we climbed away towards Hartland Point out of the fog and onwards towards our first turning point. It was a lovely flight with all the navigational stars I could want in clear smooth air at 8,000 feet. We still carried no exotic navigational radar and were limited to a radio compass working on ground beacons. Jack Gallacher, our wireless operator, could only get RAF DF bearings from stations when and where WT security procedures allowed it, which was not often, except in the close proximity of an RAF base. We entered the Straits just as dawn was breaking and made a comfortable run to Algiers, landing half an hour after sunrise after an uneventful flight. We stopped one night in Algiers and I remember we used the aircraft itself for our own accommodation as we were to be prepared for an early start for a non-stop leg to Cairo the next day.

11th October 1943. With a less than V-VIP, and on loan from the Owner as it were, we were able to make our own timetable and stick to it. so we moved off promptly at 0800 local time for an eight and a quarter hour daylight flight to Cairo, untroubled by fighter escorts or any significant weather. We set course inland to the south of the Algerian

coastal range of mountain to Biskra, cruising at a comfortable 9,500 feet; then just skirting the Mediterranean and flying south to Tripoli we headed for El Agheila (Marble Arch of Eighth Army fame) and so along the parallel of 30 North, way south of Tobruk and Sollum, to LG 224 or more colloquially, Cairo West. This was the main RAF transport base for the Cairo area with large scale maintenance facilities. The Americans had established themselves to the East of the city at what they called Payne Field, a new strip between the old pre-war civil airport of Almaza and RAF Heliopolos, now the site of Cairo International. We landed in the gloaming - late dusk, warm and smelling of Cairo.

At the time of leaving the UK we had high hopes of going all the way to Moscow with the Foreign Secretary, but we heard that the Commander-in-Chief did not wish the aircraft to be seen, yet, by the Russians. We thought optimistically that our VIP passenger would press to be allowed the comforts of the York to his destination, but no, we were ordered back to Algiers four days later to pick up a friend of the Prime Minister's, Sir Henry Craik, who was ill in hospital and who would require nursing attendance. The Foreign Secretary and his colleagues were to proceed to Moscow via Teheran in the RAF Liberator Commando (AL504). They returned later to the UK in another Liberator of BOAC (G-AGJP) under Captain Willie Armstrong on what proved to be the last flight of the civil air link which we had been trying to establish for urgent passengers and diplomatic freight between the UK and Moscow, via the Middle East. The Russians simply would not have a regular air service, even though it was to their advantage to improve communications with the UK and America. Their excuse was that if we would operate to Teheran, their Dakota service from Teheran to Moscow which had to refuel at Baku and Kuibyshev, was adequate. Our diplomats knew from bitter experience of delays that

this was not so.

Thanks to our friend, Head of the RAF Air Movements Organisation in the Addle East, Wing Commander Teddy Smouha (whose father was millionaire cotton broker, knighted in World War I), we were lodged in the Swiss-owned Hotel Metropole in the centre of Cairo, complete with skittle alley! So it was after three hilarious days in Cairo, visiting Shephards, the Turf Club and Groppi's, not to mention shopping in Mouski (Souk) we were ordered back to Algiers empty but for some diplomatic mail to pick up our passenger.

14th October 1943. We left Cairo West in a relaxed frame of mind. After reaching cruising height I remember the Captain, 'Dad' Collins (he was so much older than the rest of us) retired to the Owner's cabin and slept soundly for the first three hours. In the vicinity of Marble Arch, the starboard engine had a valve failure which gave us a minor engine fire of burning glycol. The

propeller was feathered and the fire blew itself out. We had little option but to return to Cairo on three engines. We were not even half way (a nine hour flight plan) and RAF facilities at Cairo West were far better than at Maison Blanche. We just hoped for a spare Merlin engine to be available. We turned North East towards the coast instead of flying direct across the desert, then we should have EI Adem available, Mersa Matruh and other landing strips if we were to have further trouble. In the event we landed back at Cairo West an hour after sunrise in a further three and a half hours flying at a reduced speed. Dad Collins made a smooth landing and Jack Payne had to set to work immediately with the help of the local engineering staff to locate a spare Merlin and change engines. Of course it would have been easier to change the complete York power plant, but none were then available and we had to be content with a different

mark of engine from the RAF Maintenance Unit, with the extra work of transferring all the ancillaries.

The aircraft was ready for an air test on 19 October which was accomplished satisfactorily and we made ourselves ready for departure, this time with some local VIP passengers. The Rt Hon Oliver Stanley, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, plus his ADC, Rear Admiral Bromley (retired) were waiting passage to England. Evidently he was allowed to take passage in the PM's aeroplane only as far as Algiers were the invalid, Sir Henry Craik, was still awaiting us.

19th October 1943. We set the same time for take off as before, leaving Cairo West with our passengers at 2230 hours GMT or 0230 local. This time all was well, though we had an unmatched engine which needed different power settings to keep in synchronisation. But the York flew as well as ever - a smooth nine hour flight.

During the night when all was relatively still, if not exactly quiet, Jack Payne would often walk aft just to check for any smouldering cigarette ends or other oddities and have a word with the steward. He heard a rattle which annoyed him and tracing it to a tooth mug in one of the forward toilets, he found that it was not stowed properly in its holder. He flung the contents in the Elsan can with no more ado and stuck the mug firmly in its stowage. Some hours later, about two hours out from Maison Blanche, the passengers were woken with tea and invited to dress for breakfast before landing - always eggs and bacon. The steward was accosted by a somewhat agitated Admiral: "I've lost my false teeth". Jock Duncan, the chef, reported the loss to Jack Payne - everything except the navigation was referred to Jack (even when Churchill's Elsan became blocked with too much paper - "Am I now the Sanitary

Engineer?") Jack immediately realised what was in the tooth mug when he threw the contents into the can - with a rattle!

There was nothing for it but to search in the can of Elsanol, and other fluids, with his sleeve rolled right up: Jock Duncan the steward keeping the Admiral occupied with more tea. "Have you found them yet?" Was the Admiral more concerned than poor Jack? Anyway, they were quickly retrieved from the can, hustled to the galley under a towel and then 'treated' under the tap etc. "Here they are, Sir, just dropped on the floor behind the basin". The Admiral snapped them into place and quickly realised from the expression on his face where they had been. No more was said, but the story did reach the Owner's ears, via Tommy Thompson whom we told. We were not popular with Admiral Bromley, of course, but he was left behind in Algiers. We stayed the night in Maison Blanche and made ready for our invalid on the return flight to the UK via Rabat, arranging to leave at 1300 hours local time. This would give plenty of time at Rabat for our invalid to be off-loaded and cared for in comfort before resuming our flight at midnight for Northolt.

21st October 1943. We were becoming familiar with this route. This time direct from Maison Blanche via the Tara Pass in the Atlas Mountains, and so over Fez and Ras el Ma of Royal Flight fame, to Rabat Sale. The airfield was relatively empty of transit traffic, so security was not a problem. There was a reasonably good weather forecast homebound as far as the latitude of Lisbon, thereafter well-developed cumulo-nimbus tops meant climbing to 16,000 feet for a short spell and then down to 14,000 feet until 46 North, after which we were able to remain in the clear from bumps and icing at 12,000 feet. This we had to maintain until we reached Hartland Point when we could slowly let down to Northolt. It was a case of giving our patient a

smooth run even at a height at which he required oxygen for breathing rather than a bumpy ride all the way at say 10,000 feet with no need for oxygen. Our patient had Colonel Richardson RAMC in attendance, who was also on HM the King's tour of North Africa in June, and Sister Phillips of the QARANS. There were three other passengers, Major General Kerr and his MA, Major Waterfield, and Mr Dick Crossman, the Minister of Economic Warfare. We landed at Northolt half an hour after sunrise, a flight of 6 hours and fifty minutes.

October had been a busy month. The aircraft now needed a new engine. After being offered one from the nearby Maintenance Unit, a second-hand ex-Bomber Command engine rebuilt by the Rover Shadow Factory, I think, which Jack Payne declined to install, a new Derby-built engine was delivered, fixed by a quick telephone call to Bill Lappin, in the London Office of Rolls Royce in Conduit Street. This created a row with the Transport Command Engineering staff over the paper work, for daring to seek a replacement engine had been supplied direct to us from the manufacturers. Jack Payne, as ever, referred his tormentors to 10 Downing Street. The aircraft was ready again for an air test on 4 November. Already rumours were going around of a big transport lift being required in mid-November for a conference overseas; rumours I might say emanating from RAF Command gossip and not from instructions from No 10.

24 Sqn – Report for Honorary Air Commodore – 2002

ANNUAL REPORTS AND AWARDS 2002 - XXIV SQN CONTRIBUTION

It has been another busy year for No XXIV Sqn that has included the continued integration of the C-130J into front-line service, the movement of personnel across to No 30 Sqn to form a new J Sqn and the introduction of a new quarterly training system for aircrews. Additionally the Sqn has led the first large-scale operational deployment of the J into an operational theatre and the constant high level of tasking has ensured that the year has passed by eventfully and quickly.

The most notable event for the Sqn was the deployment of 8 crews and 6 aircraft from across the J Wing to the DOB Thumrait in support of Op ORACLE/JACANA, in Afghanistan. XXIV Sqn took the lead by organising the deployment of aircraft and crews, and providing the first 2 detachment commanders. The Deployment gave crews the opportunity to prove the superior performance of the J over the K model. The success of the Deployment exceeded all expectations. Air and ground crews worked tirelessly to achieve over 100 sorties flown, over 1000 hours flown, over 1000 tonnes of freight transported and over 100% of the tasking completed during the 2.5 month detachment. The crews enjoyed the challenges offered by the operational theatre and the potential of a very capable aircraft was made readily apparent.

The majority of the Sqn's other tasking was for Op RESINATE in support of the reinforcement of units in the Gulf and Mediterranean. In addition, crews have supported continued operations in the former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, various military exercises have resulted in crews flying as far away as Australia, Brunei, Hawaii and the USA. The variety of destinations and operating conditions has allowed crews to extend their experience base; however, the Sqn is currently slightly undermanned due to the posting of crews to No 30 Sqn in Feb, and subsequent postings of training personnel to prepare for tactical and continuation training.

In the Spring of this year the J was selected by the RAF Falcons Display Team as their drop platform for the 2002 season. This occurred following training jumps with the J Operational Evaluation Unit earlier in the year. XXIV Sqn provided one of the 2 crews for the season. Crews and aircraft yet again proved their professional effectiveness and were subsequently awarded a trophy by the Team

at the end of the season in recognition of the excellent services provided.

Due to the high operational tempo the Sqn has been unable to enjoy as much socialising as normal; however, Fit Lt Morton enjoyed an excellent 3 days aboard HMS CAMPBELTOWN as part of the Sqn's long-term affiliation with the Ship. In addition, OC XXIV attended a dinner in London early in the year, which was held by the Carmen Livery Company to celebrate the formal affiliation of the Sqn with the Company. Subsequently the OC represented the Sqn at The Guild Hall in London for the annual cart marking ceremony during which the Lord Mayor of London branded a Sqn vehicle with the City's Coat of Arms. The Sqn's trishaw was on the back of the vehicle but avoided the branding process. On 3 Dec 02 liverymen of The Worshipful Company of Carmen will attend a ceremony at RAF Lyneham where they will formally adopt a J as a part of "The Carmen's Flight".

The Sqn has continued its support of Burton Hill House, a specialist school for severely handicapped children. The Sqn Tombola, organised by Sgt Tracey Butler and held at the School's annual Summer Fete, raised over £300 for the School. In addition, FS Dex Mann raised £1200 for the school by running the 2002 Flora London Marathon. Again on the sporting front, Flt Lt Rich Berry was awarded his RAF Colours for cycling. Notable visitors to the Sqn included the Secretary of State for Defence and the CAS, who commented on the lively nature of the aircraft.

Throughout a very busy and challenging year the motto and ethos of the Sqn has remained true and strong; 'In Omnia Parati' (in all things prepared).

LATEST NEWS of XXIV SQN **INVOLVEMENT IN OP TELIC – GULF** **WAR 2003**

XXIV Sqn has been involved in supporting Op TELIC since its inception. The success of the Afghanistan deployment resulted in the C-130J being deployed to the Middle East (ME) in early Mar 03 to support the ongoing operations against Saddam Hussein's regime. During the conflict, 6 XXIV Sqn crews were deployed for 6 weeks at a time and were engaged on Combat Air Support Missions in the 'Hub and Spoke' role to many

(Continued on page 24)

The Photo Album - a selection

airfields in the region. Post conflict, regular re-supply missions are flown to Basrah, with several crews being deployed to Basrah itself

At least 2 XXIV Sqn crews per day depart RAF Lyneham to join the various slip patterns. Crews are amassing 80 – 100 flying hours per month. The average crew duty day at the moment is approx 14 hours. Although the workload is high and crews are away from home for much of the time, moral is high and crews are enjoying the chance to highlight the effectiveness of the C-130J as a modern Tactical Transport aircraft.



Cy Squire receiving his warrant

Wanted Editor

To allow the current Editor to concentrate on the Association Web Site's development, the job of Newsletter Editor is up for grabs. Ideally suit anyone with reasonable IT skills, e-mail access and keen on Aviation research. You will enjoy this opportunity to give the current Newsletter a make over and reach a readership of 300 members each year.

You would work closely with the Secretary and Web Site Author to ensure a seamless end product. Full details and background from:-

The Secretary and Editor



Scanned image from a stamp received by the Asso-

The Photo Album – continued

Maurice Kirk the Flying Vet with his replica DH2 at Farnborough

LATE NEWS

SUMMER SOCIAL

7th June @ Cabinet War Rooms LONDON

MOST SECRET

In August 1939, one week before war began, the Cabinet War Rooms became operational in a former government storage basement. In the twenty-one rooms of the cramped and Spartan refuge, the most senior figures of Britain's government and its armed forces worked and slept and survived the ferocious air attacks on London during the second World War.

The rooms have been kept exactly as they were before the lights were finally extinguished after six years of war. Visitors can now step back in time as they walk through the actual rooms, experiencing the atmosphere and conditions of those times and witnessing where Winston Churchill took decisions crucial to the survival of the nation.

And who better to advise him on policy; none other than a determined and resourceful pathfinder party from XXIV Squadron Association, who despite many obstacles laid in their flight path, made it to Horse Guards Road on that Saturday morning. It had not gone

unnoticed in the press that a ring of concrete had been laid around Parliament, but extra supplies appeared to have been dumped on most of the main access routes on our day out, obstacle number one. Secondly, almost every police officer in London was in the area, reason, practice for Trooping the Colour. We would like to think this was an informal tribute to XXIV, as every where the eye could see it was the Squadron RED and BLACK, very similar to Coldstream Guards uniforms as it happens.

Our party only numbered eight in total and were able to keep pretty much in-step during the very absorbing hour long tour round the basement rooms before re-grouping at the entrance to St James Park for a relaxing stroll in the summer sun to the RAF Club in Piccadilly. Our visit had been pre-booked with the Club which meant we could enjoy a welcome rest and informal lunch in the Running Horse Tavern. In such a haven from the rest of the world, the memories flowed as freely as the minutes. All too quickly it was time to disperse to all points of the compass.

Once again, this mid year social managed to attract a couple of members who for various reasons had not made it to the October Reunions. Another mission completed for the record books.



A snap of the Association Members at the Cabinet War Rooms, 7th June 2003