



Twenty Four

The Magazine of 24 Squadron Association



Issue 8

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Editorial



"All change" seems an appropriate quotation for this edition of *Twenty Four* in view of what is happening with 24 Squadron at the moment. By the time of our next visit in October 2001, the size of the Squadron will be down to 60% of what has been regarded as normal for four engine military aircraft operation. Since the 30's and 40's, pilots, co-pilots, navigators, engineers and loadmasters have all been airborne together on the heavy aircraft fleet flying many thousands of miles crewed up.

Over fifty years is a long tradition to break with and so it is now a race against time to try and enlist all those navigators and engineers to keep the Association numbers on the up each year. Spread the word to one and all and make 24 Squadron Association the one to be reckoned with. After all "Nothing changes" each Reunion in the way the New and Old unite to still talk the same language. Being part of the Squadron, whatever the size is still a unique experience not to be forgotten.

The Year 2000 Reunion

Friday evening turned out to be a surprise celebration in more ways than one for the hardy advance party making up this years Reunion at the Hilton Hotel, Swindon. The hotel management, recognising they had such a distinguished band of younger and older flying veterans in for the evening, turned up trumps by presenting us with a superbly iced cake especially for the occasion. This was immediately placed under the armed guard of Dennis Keogh and Ron Hastings for safe delivery, unsliced that is, for all to enjoy at Lyneham the next day.

This act of kindness was uncannily similar to the story told by Jock Hannah about his trip from Waterloo Station to the RAF Club only the day before. On hearing about Jocks determination to make this years Reunion and seeing the difficulty he has in getting about, the cabbie flatly refused to take the fare. It would appear that all is not in vein these days. With such warm and friendly feelings being in the air, it should be no surprise that the evening was a great success.

Our monopoly on good weather nearly came to an end this year. The sky may have stayed overcast but it was out of phase with nearly 60

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drink or two and to catch up on all the gossip and news that was buzzing around the crew room. Just like old times.

The highlight of the afternoon was a guided tour around the new Hercules "J" model, which was powered up and impressed all those lucky enough to sit up front. Now with such features as Head up Display, map and world wide airfield database information and a wealth of onboard processing power. Most of these features seemed second rate in the light of the most critical No Go item, a FLUSHING LOO. What price progress!

Unfortunately the afternoon flashed past all too quickly before the memorabilia was packed away and farewells said once again. The message to pass on is that not many Associations have the pleasure of joining up with a front line Squadron with so many years of unbroken service. Make it a must for 2001.

For those lucky enough or the stamina to finish off the weekend in style, the Evening Dinner awaited us in the comfort of the Sergeants Mess. This was of a slightly different format than previous years, formal in dress and setting but a buffet style service for main course and desert. This arrangement, under guidance from the Mess staff, ensured that the meal and the occasion was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and our thanks to all those involved. Keep a look out for next years arrangements as a change of night is planned for this event

to encourage more Members and Squadron personnel to attend.

In Omnia Parati

supply of electricity, coal, food and milk to the western sectors of the city, causing an immediate problem for the western allies. A limited airlift of supplies had been envisaged but no plans had been made for the supply of the whole population by air alone - suddenly the only possible peaceable option other than surrender.

The RAF involvement in the Berlin airlift, under the code-name Operation Knicker, started on 28 June using two No 46 Group squadrons (16

Flying Machines of 24 – York Pt 2

BERLIN AIRLIFT ARTICLE TAKEN FROM THE AVIATION NEWS MINI-MONOGRAM SERIES BY CHRIS ASHWORTH

No 1332 CU, which had moved to Dishforth in November 1945 was renamed No 241 OCU on 5 January 1948 to continue its training task using 18 Yorks and it was very fortunate that the unit had been able to keep No 47 Group squadrons well up to strength because a crisis was brewing - one which was to cause the virtual suspension of all route flying. The trouble started early in 1948 with the harassment of German passengers aboard trains transiting through the Russian sector, the pressure escalating sharply in March and culminating in June with the cutting of all surface links - rail, road and canal - between Berlin and the American, British and French sectors of Germany. On 24 June the Russians stopped the

aircraft). Two days later Knicker was replaced by Operation Carter Paterson and on 1 July the first 12 Yorks arrived at the main RAF base at Wunsdorf near Hannover. The despatch of more aircraft was delayed by the state of the airfield but after PSP tracking had been laid additional Yorks flew in on the 5th and operations commenced on the 10th when a No 59 Squadron crew took 7,695 lb of dehydrated potato into Berlin aboard MW173. To begin with Yorks operated at a maximum landing weight of 60,000 lb, some aircraft having all unnecessary equipment stripped out, which increased the payload of the LRF variant by 635 lb and 1,457 lb for the PCF. In order to standardise the loads of all Yorks while maintaining it as large as possible, special clearance was given on 14 July for the landing weight to be increased to 65,000 lb, which meant a maximum take-off weight of 67,000 lb. With a fuel load of 800 gallons the

payload was 16,500 lb (7,484 kg), usually coal or flour, the combination of which coated the interior in a thick grey dust which proved almost impossible to remove under the conditions of the 'lift'. The turnaround time at Wunsdorf, originally planned for two hours had to be increased to two-and-a-half hours, while the average time on the ground at Gatow was 45 minutes, though on occasions as little as 15 minutes.

As soon as the size of the task became apparent the operation plan was revised again and on 4 August the RAF commenced Operation Plainfare - the plan destined to remain in force for the rest of the airlift. During the first month the Yorks carried 637 tons into Gatow in 90 sorties, figures soon surpassed as the force built up to a maximum of 43 aircraft from Nos 38 and 47 Groups. The former supplied ten aircraft from No 241 OCU, the latter the remainder from Nos 40, 51, 59, 99, 206, 242 and 511 Squadrons. Only No 24 Squadron remained 'on the route' for special flights. The plan called for 30 Yorks to be operated daily flying 120 sorties, but unserviceabilities and poor weather which often restricted the landing rate at Gatow quickly reduced the realistic target to 100 sorties and this was rarely met in practice during the early months. The unserviceabilities were largely caused by the type of operation. The aircraft had been developed for long duration sorties on the 'route' but was now carrying out one hour sorties with frequent landings at a much higher weight than hitherto. This imposed a heavy strain on tyres, brakes and undercarriages and it was failure

of these items which caused most of the accidents on the airlift and together with engine problems, expended much of the servicing effort. The fitting of hoppers so that coal could be air-dropped and thus reduce general wear and tear was considered but wisely rejected.

The standard route from Wunsdorf to Gatow consisted of a climb to 3,500 ft en route Walsrode, then at 160 knots fly to Egestorf, Restorf and Frohnau, where there was a holding beacon. Twenty miles short of the beacon clearance to descend to a nominated height was usually given and from Frohnau further descent was authorised en route the Grunewald or Huston beacon depending on the runway in use at Gatow. The final approach was always under GCA control. On the return flight the aircraft flew via Plutzke and Volkenrode. Crews and aircraft were pooled which caused some problems but solved more, personnel soon settling into a 24 day cycle which included four days leave in Britain. The Yorks from No 241 OCU were withdrawn at the end of September to allow the resumption of flying training, the number of aircraft being maintained by No 47 Group units at around 40. By October 1948 technical failures prior to take-off were accounting for the cancellation of approximately ten per cent of all sorties planned but the rotation of the Yorks back to the United Kingdom for both routine and special servicing every 150 flying hours helped to keep the problem within acceptable limits. The special servicing, which included a much-needed cleaning of the

interiors, was carried out by Armstrong-Whitworth at Baginton, Fairey Aviation at Ringway and Air Service Training at Hamble. It usually took about six days but at the peak of the airlift, Yorks were being turned around in just three days during which the aircraft was stripped, cleaned, disinfected and serviced, including a change of engines if required. Operation Plainfare continued to operate at full stretch throughout the winter of 1948-49 during which new problems manifested themselves as the aircraft reacted to the gruelling task. One of the most obvious was the break-up of the cabin floor around the door. This was fixed by introducing a false floor to spread the load and the aircraft retained its reputation of being one of the easiest on the airlift to load and unload.

On 17 December Flight Lieutenant Beeston and crew aboard MW232 flew the 100,000th ton into Gatow and two months later another York took the airlift's millionth ton of supplies to Berlin. Despite bad weather which severely restricted operations in March it was becoming obvious to the Russians that the airlift could and would be maintained and on 12 May 1949 the blockade was lifted. Eight days later, however, the East German railways went on strike and the airlift had to continue, albeit at a steadily reducing scale for another three-and-a-half months. In June, No 46 Group was renamed No 47 Group and took over the task and assets of both organisations, which still included 39 Yorks at the end of the month. During July the personnel of Nos 40, 51 and 99 Squadrons were withdrawn

with some of the aircraft, the rest following from mid-August with 12 Yorks (nominally of No 206 Squadron) leaving on the 15th, ten from No 59 Squadron on the 23rd and the remaining ten of No 511 Squadron on the 29th, the honour of making the last of over 29,000 York flights into Berlin having been given to Flight Lieutenant L.A. Mather three days earlier. It was his 404th 'Plainfare' sortie - a record number! The Yorks had carried some 233,145 tons of supplies into the city, more than half the RAF contribution to the airlift and had maintained an average utilisation of 1.69 sorties per day, against an average for all aircraft types of 1.37.

On return to Lyneham Nos 99, 242 and 511 Squadrons immediately commenced conversion to Handley Page Hastings, while No 206 Squadron was disbanded. Nos 40, 51 and 59 Squadrons, the headquarters of which had all been transferred from Abingdon to Bassingbourn on 25 June 1949, regrouped and with eight aircraft each restarted route flying with Yorks, mainly transporting personnel and supplies to Malaya where a military build-up was under way following an outbreak of terrorist activity in the country.

As more Hastings became available the Yorks were withdrawn. No 40 Squadron disbanded in March 1950 and Nos 51 and 59 at the end of the following October. The remaining York squadron, No 24 moved to Lyneham in November leaving its Valettas at Oakington for No 30 Squadron and receiving its first Hastings. The Yorks, however, continued in service with the squadron for special flights, officially until Decem-

ber 1951, though it would appear that two remained until March 1952 to cover the VIP commitment while the Hastings C.4s were settling in.

With the rundown of the squadrons No 241 OCU ceased York training during 1950, although refurbishing of aircraft continued. Some of the Yorks serviced by Fairey Aviation at Ringway during 1951-52 are said to have been fitted with flight refuelling equipment but it seems more likely that they were equipped as bulk fuel carriers, presumably as equipment for the proposed Auxiliary squadron at Bovington. This failed to materialise but three of four Yorks were used by a reformed No 1310 Flight which operated from Mellala, Australia, in support of nuclear weapons trials from May 1953 until the end of the year, though nominally based at Upavon. Another, fitted with parachute pylons was operated from Abingdon and the Ministry of Supply also used the York for transport duties at the A&AEE Boscombe Down, mainly to support overseas trials work and they were not finally replaced by Hastings until 1955.

However, it was the Far East Air Force that was able to claim longest usage of the aircraft for Ascalon, transferred to the FECS at Singapore in 1946, was not withdrawn until 1954 and its replacement, MW295 Ascalon II, flew a further 30,000 miles on VIP work before finally retiring in March 1957 supplanted by a Hastings CA.

Memory Banks 1

ARTICLE FROM JOCK HANNAH

Now to try and give you some Squadron history which rather few know today. Starting by your remarks on Chris Regan's queries. I joined 1359 flight at Lyneham on the 9th February 1946 as Jock Gallagher had slipped out the back of a Skymaster and broke his arms. He was the Wop on Wingco Bill Fraser's crew. That same night I joined Bill Fraser's co-pilot S/ldr Tod Slaughter DFC at Lyneham to fly the second of the 4 Skymaster's to Norfolk Naval Base, USA on their return under the lease-lend agreement which you report in 24 Sqd. Tod Slaughter and crew had returned Churchill's Skymaster previously. We did an 18 hr trip from Prestwick to Dorval, Canada the next night and thence down to Norfolk, USA (where we were told we shall likely push our Skymaster delivery into the sea. We returned via Dorval in one of the BOAC Liberators. Then up to Bassingbourn and a couple of weeks later picked up Skymaster No 3 and back to Norfolk via Lagens in the Azores to Washington and Norfolk again. The 4th Skymaster was delivered by S Ldr Nash and crew. So much for that.

On arrival at Bassingbourn I was supposedly on Bill Frasers crew but, the Lancastrians had arrived.

Now for Chris Regan's enquiry. I do not remember his father but as a fill in for Flt Johnay Goddard (WOP RNZAF) who went sick, I was put on S/Ldr Brad Bradley's crew to fly as I reported in 24 to take the V.GAS Sir William Dickson around the Middle and Far East. Bradley's crew was one of the two Lancastrians on the record breaking training trip to New Zealand. The crew: S/Ldr Brad Bradley, Navigator, Flt Lt Ross Hill, Co pilot, F/Lt Eric King, Engineer, F.O. (I forgot the name). Ross Hill ultimately became a Wingco in the RNZAF training as a pilot. He was a friend of Alf Drew and when I was in Kiwiland 2 years ago we spoke to Ross Hill's widow (Ross had passed on), and I sent her photos of our trip to ME and FE. I do not have her address but Alf Drew could give you it. Alf's address is: A S Drew, 4 A Beach Road, Milford, Auckland 9, N.Z.

Lost contacts: I knew several Poles on 24 Sqn, but remember only two. First, George Barcewski (F/Sgt) who in early 1942 crashed in a Hudson on take off at Belfast. The aircraft caught fire and the navigator Bats Battersby (F/Sgt) rescued passengers, was scorched around the face etc. and later awarded a BEM for his rescue work. Bats stayed on 24 (was commissioned), but in 1944 was lost over the Bay of Biscay in one of our Dakotas which disappeared. The next was F/Lt Joe Tysko. My brother Jack and Joe Jones and myself all flew with Joe Tysko. He came to 24 in 1942 after having made the fastest escape of the war at that time from occupied Europe. He

was shot down over Belgium on a Polish Wellington. He later told me (he had really white hair and was only 22/23 years of age. That his hair turned white the night he jumped out over Belgium. He made the return in 6 weeks from Belgium and thence to 24 Sqn where he was well known and popular. He became a test pilot at the Empire Test Pilots School and after the war became Chief Pilot for Cessna in Europe. After I had settled here in Sweden around 1970-80 I picked up the paper and it reported Joe Tysko had iced up near Bromma (Stockholm) demonstrating a Cessna to two Swedish engineers and had picked up clear icing and spun in and was killed. He married a WAAF Officer at Hendon in the war and she is still alive as Penny Slaughter (see Skymaster, 1359 Flt etc) met her in Regent Street not so long ago. So much for the Polish enquiry.

You say no mention is ever made about Hendon's D4 Flamingo. I did over 100 hours flying in Flamingos mostly with Flt Lt (then W/O) Paddy Altman. It was a cosy aircraft to fly in but underpowered plus the fact that the throttles were controlled by hydraulics and if the hydraulics broke on one side or the other, the a/c was left with one operating engine, as we found out in one at West Malling which wound up with Paddy Altman doing a ground loop on the wet grass and the windscreen becoming covered with mud but the undercarriage OK, and we returning to Hendon by train and became war heroes to the public when in the tube etc who had abandoned their

aircraft. Originally there was five (perhaps) four Flamingos when I joined 24 in March 1942. A few weeks after arrival a Flamingo was sent to Prestwick, the crew was F/O Ramsay (ex civil airline pilot). Nav. Sgt Jock Smith DFM and WOP Sgt Alan Strip DFM. They picked up a Russian delegation of 19 (Remember this was mid 1942). This delegation had flown from Archangel in a Russian 4 engined bomber to Prestwick. If I remember air gunners were turreted in two positions behind the engine nacelles on this bomber. The delegation was to be ferried to Hendon and London. On the way an engine caught fire in the region of Drifffield or Dishforth. The wing fell off and all aboard were killed. (Was this the first sabotage?) We were later assembled in B Flight crew room and told a piston rod had gone through a cylinder causing the fire, but we were sceptic about that even then. So much for that and Flamingos although Tich Lee (now departed) had a shaky do in one at West Freugh (I think going to collect Mr Churchill. I also had a shaky trip at Hendon in QBI at Hendon then the undertruck stuck down and we wound up flying a hundred feet above Harrow School at Harrow-on-the-Hill and sending an urgency signal to Hendon MF/DF stations, getting a string of QDM's to put us on the runway.

Now to the Operations Record Book 21.9.1939. Wg Cdr Anderson, S/Ldr Lee, Corporal Laver. When I arrived at Hendon in March 1942, Cpl Laver had risen to Warrant Officer and was in

charge of all signallers (wops). Several were straight sergeants and were slowly supplanted by WOP/AG. One was Robbie Robinson, an Association Member today in Australia Robbie took an AG course and returned to the squadron.

In 1942, the Malta shuttles had started on Hudson's and a special trip was ordered to take three to four officers of the three services top brass to Cairo. W.O. Bill Laver was the wireless operator. On the trip at Porthreath to station the trip and passengers for the trip to Gibraltar at night on the approach at Porthreath, the Hudson flipped over crashing and killing all on board including Bill Laver. The pilot was a Canadian called McIntyre. Within 5 or 6 hours a crew of S/Ldr Don Highan AFG, Nav. Dickey Richards and WOP Bill Griffiths were despatched with a similar group of top brass to these lost in the crash and were on their way to Cairo. Dickey Richards and Bill Griffiths AFC were killed in 1944 when they left Don Highan and had a new pilot called Clements who had just joined 24. They hit the top of the Pyrenees near Perpington and are buried close by. But back to the Hudson crash and the top brass, was this sabotage? Who knows? In May 1943 when S/Ldr Graeme Conald (Assoc. Member), Ray Avery as navigator, I remember security men searching the aircraft, i.e. was the first time I had seen this at Hendon. We were taking Lord Trenchard on a month's tour of the Middle East!

Let us turn to your piece

labelled Mystery Flight and Sir Edward Gents. On the 3 July 1948, I was a radio officer with British European Airways out of Northolt. On this Sunday morning we had stayed overnight due to engine trouble in Renfrew and were returning to Northolt. Conditions at Northolt were QBI. The Captain was very senior but had spent most of his career on Dominies in the Middle East and had just recently come to Northolt. We had a lousy trip due to his poor instrument flying, came out of cloud near Northolt and charged across country on radio compass to land in low cloud. (Next day the First Officer and I reported to the Flight Captain and said we would not fly with this Captain again.) When we landed at Northolt we were told that a York had collided with a DC6 of SAS. This was Gent's York. Having stayed in Scandinavia many, many years I have never heard of SAS losing a DC6 so I reckon it was the York of RAF Transport Command which crashed. In these days of 1948 there was only 500 feet separating aircraft on let downs. So much for your mystery.

Forgetting the Graham Greene query. Someone may be interested in the Flamingo loss with the Russians and the Top Brass on their way to the Desert War and Cairo.

Sorry my piece at times is of sadness, but of course it was the war years and a different era.

Jock Hannah

**Article from ex Wg.Cdr.
P. J. Pugh O.B.E.
Auckland New Zealand**

I would like to express my sincere thanks to you for the excellent presentation and contents of the Twenty Four Squadron Association magazine and thought perhaps I could contribute a little nostalgia to the publication.

I joined 24 Commonwealth Squadron in July 1949 as one of the RNZAF crews which would replace the tour expired New Zealand crews due or repatriation. My crew consisted of F/Lt Larry Siegert {pilot} F/Lt Ron Wilson-Walker [Navigator} F/Sgt. A. L. Chapman F.Eng. and myself as wireless operator. After a short refresher course at Waterbeach we moved on to Lubeck to join the other Commonwealth Dakota crews. At the end of the Airlift we returned to Waterbeach just in time to move with the Squadron to Oakington. As the two pilots had no experience on York aircraft the two crews were posted to Topcliffe for conversion training. The two wireless operators did not go to Topcliffe as at that time I had over one thousand hours on York aircraft and Alan Jacobsen the other wireless operator had over six hundred hours on Mosquito air craft we opted to do our categorisation exams on the Squadron. Wg Cdr Pat Lombard supported our cause and was surprised at the end of five weeks Jacobsen and I both obtained "X' categories on York aircraft and for good measure "X'

categories on Lancastrians and Dakota air craft.

By the time our two original crews returned to the Squadron with "9' categories Jacobsen and I had completed trips to Canada and the United States, South Africa and New Zealand plus a couple of trips to Singapore and Australia. I left the Squadron at the end of January 1951 to attend the Specialist Signals Officers Course at the R.A.F Technical College.

Having flown operational tours in both Bomber Command and Coastal Command to me a tour on 24 Squadron was the icing on the cake and with a mixture of Commonwealth personnel it had a great team spirit which I am sure still prevails

with the "Black Cock Rampant" Squadron.

As you know the Berlin Air

lift Gratitude Foundation invited members of the Commonwealth Air Forces who took part in the Air Lift and their wives to an all expenses paid week in Berlin to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the end of the airlift. The RNZA17 veterans consisted of Air Vice Marshal Larry Siegert [ex Chief of Air Staff, Wing Commander Butch Pugh [ex Director of Communications and Electronics] and Sqn.Ldr Keith Smith ex Senior Training Captain Royal Brunei Air Lines]. We managed to get the Foundation to include ex patriot members of the R.A.F including a couple of ex ground crew in our party plus F1t.Lt. Ted Edwards ex RNZA17 and ex RAF 24 Sqn.

The programme was full and varied and the German hospitality knew no bounds. and although we fully intended to make contact with the Association on our return to U.K. time and ill health worked against us. I am enclosing a couple of snapshots of the New Zealand team that went to Berlin. In the front row, Sqn Ldr Keith Smith and Wg Cdr Butch Pugh, F1t.Lt Ted Edwards Back row from left to right Sgt Alan Prior ex RAF, M. Eng. David Abercrombie ex RAF ex RNZA17, Air Marshal Larry Siegert ex CAS RNZAF, Wg.Cdr Ken Miles ex RAF ex RNZAF, Cpl Alan Bolam ex RAF.

Smith, Siegert and Pugh were members of the RNZAF on 24 Sqn, Edwards an expatriate member of the RNZAF serving with the RAF.

We live quite close to Alf Drew ex 24 Sqn Navigator and we were honoured with a visit by Jock Hannah and had many sessions re-living old times.



The New Zealand team that went to Berlin :- Prior, Abercrombie, Siegert, Miles, Bolam, Smith, Pugh, Edwards

Feedback

FROM GROUP CAPTAIN W M WATKINS OBE

I was intrigued by your notice in the 24 Squadron Association magazine about the accident which claimed the life of Sir Edward Gent, so I decided to investigate. Having studied registers and journals and consulted the Air Historical Branch I can shed a little more light on the event.

The accident occurred on 4 July 1948 when York aircraft MW248 was inbound to Northholt in poor weather conditions on a flight from Malta. It was involved in a mid-air collision with a DC6 Skymaster of Scandinavian Airlines which had made an unsuccessful approach to Northholt and was diverting to Amsterdam. Both aircraft fell to the ground in woods near Ruislip. There were no survivors from the 32 aboard the Skymaster and the six crew and one passenger on the York, which was a 99 Squadron aircraft. Further details, including the identity of the York crew, may be found in The Times of 5 July 1948, together with an obituary of Sir Edward Gent. He was Governor and CinC of the Malayan Union from 1946 and in February 1948 became British High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya. I have no information on the reason for his journey to London but the day after his death was hardly the moment to publish any adverse comment.

By coincidence this issue of The Times also contains a reference to the first jet crossing of the Atlantic by the Vampires which you also mention in the magazine; the

paper reports that the aircraft had been delayed at Stornaway by bad weather. It is a sad reflection on the incidence of air accidents in those days that the same issue also gives the names of the crew of a Lincoln killed on Salisbury Plain. There is also news of the arrival in Buenos Aires of a high-level RAF team sent on a two-year mission to help build up the Argentine Air Force!

RULES OF THE AIR

This appeared in a recent issue of Australian Aviation Magazine (June 2000)

1. Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory.
2. If you push the stick forward, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. That is, unless you keep pulling the stick all the way back, then they get bigger again.
3. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.
4. It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.
5. The ONLY time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
6. The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can actually watch the pilot start sweating.
7. When in doubt, hold on to your altitude. No one has ever collided with the sky.
8. A 'good' landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great' landing is one after which

they can use the plane again.

9. Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself.

10. You know you've landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi to the ramp.

11. The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival. Large angle of arrival, small probability of survival and vice versa.

12. Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier.

13. Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction. Reliable sources also report that mountains have been known to hide out in clouds.

14. Always try to keep the number of landings you make equal to the number of take offs you've made.

15. There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately no one knows what they are.

16. You start with a bag full of luck and an empty bag of experience. The trick is to fill the bag of experience before you empty the bag of luck.

17. Helicopters can't fly; they're just so ugly the earth repels them.

18. If all you can see out of the window is ground that's going round and round and all you can hear is commotion coming from the passenger compartment, things are not at all as they should be.

19. In the ongoing battle between objects made of aluminium going hundreds of miles per hour and the ground going zero miles per hour, the ground has yet to lose.

20. Good judgement comes from experience. Unfortunately, the experience usually comes from bad judgement.

21. It's always a good idea to keep the pointy end going forward as much as possible.

22. Keep looking around. There's always something you've missed.

23. Remember, gravity is not just a good idea. It's the law. And it's not subject to repeal.

24. The three most useless things to a pilot are the altitude above you, runway behind you, and a tenth of a second ago.

From Jock McWicker

Subject: Airplane Talk

The item is from the Daedalian Foundation and are excerpts from a Royal Flying Corps monthly safety report of December 1917.

INTRODUCTION

Another good month. In all, a total of 35 accidents were reported, only six of which were avoidable. These represented a marked improvement over the month of November during which 84 accidents occurred, of which 23 were avoidable. This improvement, no doubt, is the result of experienced pilots with over 100 hours in the air forming the backbone of all the

units

RESUME OF ACCIDENTS

Avoidable accidents

1. There were six avoidable accidents this last month.

a. The pilot of a Shorthorn, with over 7 hours of experience, seriously damaged the undercarriage on landing. He had failed to land at as fast a speed as possible as recommended in the Aviation Pocket Handbook.

b. A B.E. 2 stalled and crashed during an artillery exercise. The pilot had been struck on the head by the semaphore of his observer who was signalling to the gunners.

c. Another pilot in a B.E. 2 failed to get airborne. By an error of judgement, he was attempting to fly at mid-day instead of at the recommended best lift periods, which are just after dawn and just before sunset.

d. A Longhorn pilot lost control and crashed in a bog near Chipping-Sedbury. An error of skill on the part of the pilot in not being able to control a machine with a wide speed band of 10 MPH between top speed and stalling speed.

e. While low flying in a Shorthorn the pilot crashed into the top deck of a horse drawn bus near Stonehenge.

f. A B.E. 2 pilot was seen to be attempting a banked turn at a constant height before he crashed. A grave error by an experienced pilot.

Unavoidable accidents

2. There were 29 unavoidable accidents from which the following are selected:

a. The top wing of a Camel fell off due to fatigue failure of the flying wires. A successful emergency landing was carried out.

b. Sixteen B.E. 2s and 9 Shorthorns had complete engine failures. A marked improvement over November's fatigue.

c. Pigeons destroyed a Camel and 2 Longhorns after mid-air strikes.

COST OF ACCIDENTS

Accidents during the last three months of 1917 cost 317 pounds, 10 shillings sixpence, money down the drain and sufficient to buy new gaiters and spurs for each and every pilot observer in the Service.

ACCIDENT BRIEFS

No. 1 Brief

No. 912 Squadron 3 December 1917 Aircraft type B.E. 2C, No. XY 678, Total solo - - 4.20 Pilot Lt. J. Smyth-Worthington, Solo in type - - 1.10

The pilot of this flying machine attempted to maintain his altitude in a turn at 2,500 feet. This resulted in the aeroplane entering an unprecedented manoeuvre, entailing a considerable loss of height. Even with full power applied and the control column fully back, the pilot was unable to regain control. However, upon climbing from the cockpit onto the lower mainplane, the pilot managed to correct the machine's altitude, and by skilful manipulation of the flying wires successfully side-slipped into a nearby meadow.

Remarks: Although, through inexperience, this pilot allowed his aeroplane to enter an unusual attitude, his resourcefulness in eventually landing without damage has earned him a unit citation.

R.F.C. Lundsford-Magnus is investigating the strange behaviour of this aircraft.

No. 2 Brief

No. 847 Squadron 19 December 1917 Aircraft type Spotter Balloon J17983,
Total solo 107.00 Pilot Capt. * * * , Solo in type 32.10

Captain * * * of the Hussars, a balloon observer, unfortunately allowed the spike of his full-dress helmet to impinge against the envelope of his balloon. There was a violent explosion and the balloon carried out a series of fantastic and uncontrollable manoeuvres, while rapidly emptying itself of gas. The pilot was thrown clear and escaped injury as he was lucky enough to land on his head.

Remarks: This pilot was flying in full-dress uniform because he was the Officer of the Day. In consequence it has been recommended that pilots will not fly during periods of duty as Officer of the Day.

Captain * * * has requested an exchange posting to the Patroville Alps, a well known mule unit of the Basques.

No. 3 Brief

Summary of No. 43 Brief dated October 1917

Major W. de Kitkag-Watney's Nieuport Scout was extensively damaged when it failed to become airborne.

The original Court of Inquiry found that the primary cause of the accident was carelessness and poor airmanship on the part of a very experienced pilot.

The Commandant General, however, not being wholly convinced that Major de Kitkag-Watney could be guilty of so culpable a mistake ordered that the Court should be reconvened.

After extensive inquiries and lengthy discussions with the Meteorological Officer and Astronomer Royal, the Court came to the conclusion that the

Keeping in Touch

RECENT LOSSES

W R (Dusty) Miller, DFM Feb 2001 at Pinner & Northwood Community Hospital.

Ron Auty Aug 2000 at home in Ashford Kent. Ex Ft. Lt. Navigator with 24 Sqn Aug 1944 to Aug 1946 at Hendon and Bassingbourn flying in Dakota's Previously on Ferry Command and Transport Command.

Colin Braithwaite ex Sqn. Ldr. Navigator RAAF. of Canberra, Australia. Was with the Squadron Mar 1961 - Mar 1963 at Colerne on Hastings. Died Sep 2000, notified by wife Jean. Colin offered to organise 75th Anniversary celebrations in Australia.

Fred Taylor Nov 2000 an ex fitter 2 who left service life to be a Clerk of Works. before retiring to Portslade, in E. Sussex. Fred was with 24 Sqn 1941 - 1945 at Hendon working on Anson Hudson Dakota & other aircraft.

Peter Gainsford, aged 60 on 6th April 2001. Peter was a co-pilot on 24 Sqn at Colerne flying Hastings before going on to join British Airways as a civil pilot.

LETTER OF THANKS

Dear Group Captain Bates

On behalf of us all at Burton Hill House School, may I thank you for your kind donation of £50.00 which was sent by Mr K Rayner, through our Chairman of Governors, Mr Monk.

We are most grateful to the 24 Squadron Association for their kindness and continued support. In the past, your donations have been passed through the Squadron itself, and we have corresponded accordingly. We are delighted on this occasion to be able to thank the Association itself, directly, for its continued support of Burton Hill House School. We are most indebted to you. It must not go unsaid that your kindness and support of Burton Hill House School really does make a difference, and helps us to help these VERY SPECIAL young people to gain confidence and self-esteem, maximise their independence and fulfil their potential as is their entitlement.

We would like to put this gift towards a very special gift to our pupils, the acquisition of a Gauge One model railway. This is something our pupils have wanted for a very long time, and would give them a great deal of enjoyment and pleasure. We hope that you will be happy for us to allocate this money towards this.

We would also like to extend an invitation to the members of the 24 Squadron Association, to visit Burton Hill House School. It

(Continued on page 16)

Memory Banks 2

24 Squadron in the Falkland Islands: 1982 - 1999 by Fit Lt Andy Sell

No 24 Squadron have a long association with the Falkland Islands going back to the end of the conflict in 1982. Indeed, amongst the first Hercules crews to be found in the 1312 Flight Hall of Fame, are pictures of a youthful Fg Off Oborn and a downy Sgt Cole. Initially, crew's from the Squadron were deployed at RAF Stanley living in tents and later a ship [since condemned as unfit to house convicted criminals!], but in 1986 the detachment moved to purpose built facilities at the newly completed airfield, RAF Mount Pleasant.

Before proceeding to the Falkland Islands, crews were trained in the new skills they would need in theatre, Air to Air Refuelling [both as Tanker and Receiver], low level flying and Fighter Affiliation. Once qualified, they would become one of the three crews on 1312 Fit and serve a four-month detachment.

A typical week at Mount Pleasant would see the crews flying a number of different tasks; Maritime Radar Reconnaissance involved an aircraft using its radar to search for Warships and Fishing vessels within the Falkland's exclusion zone. Once found, the Hercules would then descend to low level [250 ft] to take photographs and get a visual identification. Whilst this was happening, the second of the Flights two aircraft would be sitting on the pan at Quick Reaction Alert. A crew was always available, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to scramble a Tanker in support of the Station's resident Fighters. This crew

would also fly on a daily basis to give the jets AAR practice and experience in attacking large, slow, but agile targets. The small turning radius of the Hercules at low speed made it a difficult target in the hands of a good crew and normally at least two Fighters would be needed to shoot it down. Fighter Affil, the sport of kings!

One of the most demanding jobs in the South Atlantic was the routine re-supply of the garrison in South Georgia. This involved a 3 1/2 hr transit east of the Falklands [approximately 1400 miles] before descending into low level at Cumberland Bay to Airdrop harness packs to the Troops Gemini dinghies at the Gritviken IDL. This kept them resupplied with essential spares, fresh food and morale boosting mail in an otherwise desolate and very remote location. The DZ is surrounded on three sides by high mountains and the turbulence this sometimes produces, coupled with the low speed of the aircraft for dropping, has combined to produce some quite "interesting" moments over the past years. In addition to this, every 3 months, the aircraft would Air to Air refuel after the airdrop and continue South East to do a visual reconnaissance of the South Sandwich Islands. These long sorties would often take in excess of 12 hours, but were vital in showing the flag and making sure this flashpoint for the 1982 conflict remained clear of Argentines.

Occasionally, the Flight would be called on, to take compassionate or medical emergency cases to the South American mainland in order to expedite their evacuation home to the UK, via the scheduled airline services. These flights were always highly sought after, for as well as the obvious satisfaction in giving a helping hand, they generally involved a night stop in either Rio de

Janeiro, Montevideo or Santiago. It was a very welcome respite from the barren Falklands Islands to see such things as trees, cars [non 4 wheel drive] and of course 5 star hotels.

The final role for the aircrews was providing long range Search and Rescue cover for ships and aircraft in the South Atlantic. To do this all the Hercules in theatre were equipped with two sets of life rafts which could be, and indeed have been, dropped to survivors on a number of occasions. The aircraft is also routinely used to provide "Top Cover" for the Sea King helicopters as they carry out their search and rescue tasks, being able to locate vessels in distress and then direct the helicopter to the scene. Superior altitude and an extensive communications suite then enabled the Hercules to act as the vital communications relay between the Sea King and the Stanley Rescue Co-ordination Centre.

Alas, age and fatigue finally overcame the Hercules tankers and the two aircraft in the Falklands were replaced by a single "normal" Hercules and a VC] 0 aircraft from RAF Brize Norton in March 1996. The manning on 1312 Fit was changed to reflect this and No 24 Squadron, in rotation with No 30 Squadron, now provided one crew in turn every six weeks. With the exception of the tanking, the flying remained the same and a Squadron crew could now expect to do two detachments to the South Atlantic during their time at Lyneham. Not everyone wanted to go, but there never was a problem finding volunteers as the flying and social life were still consistently good fun. Many a beer was drunk in the Queen Vic pub, that infamous home built Flight club, worked off by some at Huffers and Puffers circuit training, but perhaps more importantly, crews who volunteered to go "down South"

had the incentive of keeping their low flying and AAR skills current on return to the UK.

The end came for No 24 Squadron in April 1999 when the final crew consisting of Flt Lt's Sell, Colman, Beaumont, FS Pickles and Sgt Morgan returned home. It had been decided that all low level and air to air receiver training should cease on the Northside of the airfield and that in future the Falklands task would be taken over by 47 and 1XX Squadrons. We hope they enjoy it as much as we did!

With thanks to "24 Squadron into the Millennium" magazine in which this article was originally published.

From: Clive Russell Subject Memories of 1950/51

I was most interested to find your excellent Web-Site, and thought that perhaps you may be interested in some of my reminiscences/ramblings regarding the period when I was involved with 24 Sqn. (-Please excuse any lapses of memory in the details!)

My National Service began in Oct. 1949, and by mid-1950 I had completed the usual 'square-bashing' at Padgate, as well as a six-month 'Wireless' course at Yatesbury (having turned down the offer of aircrew training if I would 'sign-on') - This led to my being posted to Topcliffe as an Air Wireless Mechanic, and working initially servicing Hastings. (of 297 Sqn.soon to be deceased).

The introduction of the dreaded shift-working servicing-pool system, however, had the happy effect of allowing me to also work on other Squadrons' aircraft, i.e. No's 47, 53 and 24. (Also to have to hold down the Tiger Moth when the hangar doors were opened during a gale!)

So as well as carrying out D.I's, which mainly consisted of changing the intercom battery and testing the VHF, I was roped in to help polish the V.I.P. York! I can remember sitting on the wing with a collection of rags and a mammoth tin of metal-polish, but I don't think that the metal gauge was reduced very much by my efforts.

We had a Model Aircraft Club hut, which came in very handy as a hideout/refuge, and where a couple of us built a seven-foot span Radio-controlled Sailplane, intending to fly it off Sutton Bank, but it came to a sticky end after a terminal dive onto the airfield and was never rebuilt. A good friend and fellow aeromodeller was one of the 24 Sqn.

navigators, a New Zealander, but his name escapes me. Maybe it is in your records.

Detachment to Abingdon with one of the 297 Sqn. Hastings for a few weeks was a welcome change, and I was able to go on a night flight over Salisbury plain to drop a bunch of Army Para's. The Sergeant went out first, intending to signal the drift from the ground, but the weather closed in and we never saw him again! Equally memorable was sitting in the aircraft back on the ground in order to listen to Mr. Shinwell (Min. of Defence) on the Radio making "an important announcement about National Service". - We had to do an extra six months! That must have been about April 1951.

Also at Abingdon was a Demo. of vehicle drops from the Fairchild Packet, the most amusing being a jeep on a pallet whose 'Chute failed. The resulting impact caused all four wheels to come off and roll away in opposite directions.

I flew home to Topcliffe in the C.O.'s Armstrong - Siddeley. He had insisted in proving that it could be carried in a Hastings, rather than have to drive it by road, but we had a hard job to get it in. A couple of us sat in it for the journey and enjoyed eating the sweets out of the glove-compartment, but the springing made it rather bouncy.

In about July 1951, with only about 2 months of my service still to go, the balloon went up in Iran when Dr. Mossadeq decided to take over the Oil-fields etc.

Aircraft and personnel were ordered to Fayid, and all involved were rapidly given the necessary "Jabs" and flown out P.D.Q. We were billeted at Clyffe Pypard, before leaving Lyneham and stopped over at Luqua, Malta, for one night before Fayid next day.

A vivid memory is of an intense draught of hot air that swept in when the large door in the Hastings Fuselage was opened!. We were still dressed in UK garb, and were very glad to be given K.D. shorts etc.

The Egyptian Authorities refused to accept our inoculation certificates, and we had to have the whole lot over again !

We were billeted in tents, pitched between the barrack-huts, (see photo, I'm in the middle), and only worked until mid-day due to the heat, after which most of us went down to the Bitter-lake. I rapidly learnt to swim as the water was so salty and dense. There was a marked out swimming area using sunken barges, to keep the sharks out, we were told. We did see what looked like miniature swordfish, though.

As I recall, there were about 200 aircraft, mainly transports, parked outside as well as inside the normal perimeter, each with a couple of soldiers on guard all night. There were rumours of much pilfering, even to the extent of towing away a

complete aircraft.

Part of the task was to fly ammunition on to Shaibah, which was reputed to be even hotter than Fayid.

We used to wander around the 'shops' at the village, where we had to learn to haggle, and I eventually came home with a watch, a suitcase, and a leather wallet. It took me all of three weeks to persuade the C.O. that I shouldn't be there due my impending demob. and attendance at Bristol University to study Aeronautical Engineering.

The flight home to Lyneham passed over the wreckage of a preceding Hastings, which we could see below us, and included a stop at "C.B" (Castel Benito) airport, previously one of Mussolini's air bases near Tripoli. I had an enjoyable swim in the large swimming-pool, which was otherwise deserted, and was introduced at the NAAFI to a 'John Collins' by one of the Aircrew. (My knowledge of drinks being very rudimentary, I had previously been persuaded to ask for a glass of 'Maiden's-Water', being told that it was the local name for lemonade.)

After Demob. I kept up my

RAF Lyneham's first squadron to be trained on the updated, state-of-the-art new Hercules is ready for take off. DEAN VALLER reports on the new technology now at the pilots' fingertips and looks back at the proud history of the service's Fat Albert of the skies

THE foot-and-mouth crisis forced RAF Lyneham to cancel a fly-past and ceremony to mark the launch of its first squadron of the new Hercules, but the celebrating still went on.

With a no-fly zone enforced over and around the base, the first squadron to exclusively man the new state-of-the-art plane had a private celebration indoors but the significance of the occasion was not lost on anyone.

"The Hercules has had a very prestigious history and I have no doubt we will crown that with the new aircraft," said Wing Commander Rick Hobson, 38, in charge of Number 24 Squadron, the first crews to exclusively take control of the Hercules C-130J and stop using the old C130K.

So far eight crews from the squadron, comprising two pilots and an airloadmaster, are trained in the new aircraft. That will in-

crease to 22 crews by the end of next year.

"The new plane does not look too different from the outside but you get on to the flight deck and it's a whole new world," said Wing Commander Hobson.

"It is a quantum leap in technology. Where there used to be four people on the cockpit, now there will be two operating a fully computerised glass cockpit, and the crew has lost its flight engineer and navigator, putting more responsibility in the hands of the pilots with the aim of increasing liaisons with the airloadmaster.

"This is a special time for the squadron operating a level of technology we have never had access to before.

"The role of the airloadmaster has been elevated and, he will be working closer with the rest of the crew.

"There will be no redundancies because of these changes and navigators and flight engineers have been found positions elsewhere in the RAF.

"The planes are equipped with a sophisticated computer backup and state-of-the-art software.

"Of course this will not mean a drop in the standards of the crew, no matter what the computer backup, we have the people who know how to use it correctly and handle any situation."

The freight bay of the new Hercules is easier to reconfigure for different loads and the performance of the new model is a significant improvement on the old one.

"The new aircraft can go higher, faster and perform even more efficiently than the old one, here



"Under canvas at Fayid in 1951 from Clive Russell

(Continued on page 15)

we have a brand new plane which will in time be more capable than the old one which had more people in it," said Wing Commander Hobson.

"Crews will be able to deal with any situation and have a range of technology at their fingertips should they need to, use it."

Recollecting the performance of the old Hercules, known affectionately as the workhorse of the RAF and Fat Albert, Wing Commander Hobson points out the missions it has carried out transporting supplies to the likes of Ethiopia in 1979, the Falkland Islands in 1982 and more recently the Gulf and Sierra Leone.

"You cannot put a figure on the number of lives which have been saved by the RAF being able to call on the old Hercules," said Wing Commander Hobson. It has been all around the world supporting the RAF in conflicts and acting as an aid carrier."

Last May, as the airbase celebrated its 60th anniversary, the Hercules was still in the thick of the action, 33 years after it was commissioned. The planes were transporting hundreds of people between Freetown in Sierra Leone and the safe haven of Dakar, the capital of Senegal, 200 miles away, as feuding factions waged war in the former British colony.

"Lyneham has always had an important part to play in the RAF mission and the new Hercules will continue to honour the traditions of the old Hercules," said Wing Commander Hobson.

Aircrew have been trained over the past four years to ensure Lyneham has a full complement of expertise to choose from now

that the age of the new Hercules has arrived.

"Because we are the first Squadron to be trained up to use the Hercules does not mean we are an elite, in time another squadron, Number 30 Squadron, will also be trained, but we are privileged to be the first entrusted full-time with the new Hercules," added Wing Commander Hobson.

Number 24 Squadron will be flying the new Hercules mainly to the Middle East. RAF fighters are providing policing of the no-fly zones in Iraq for the UN from bases in Saudi Arabia and Turkey, and the Hercules keep them resupplied.

Number 30 Squadron is expected to start flying the new aircraft next year, bringing the number of trained crews up to 50.

Lyneham is retaining 29 older Hercules, which have been refurbished. They will be replaced in 2007.

There appeared an article on Page 17 of 24 Squadron Magazine, Issue 7, regarding an enquiry about the death of Sir Edward Gent in a York over London MY recollection of it is as follows

In May, 1948, I was newly arrived as a Captain on Yorks from Disforth Conversion Unit, and posted on to 511 Squadron at Lyneham. there I knew a fellow New Zealander Reg Coates DFC, who was a Captain on one of the other Squadrons.

The story of his death, as we heard it, was as follows.

Reg was returning as Captain of a York from a route-scheduled flight, with a mixed load. Some freight and a few passengers. I have no details of his aircraft number, or departure point of his

last flight to the U.K.

He was flight-planned to land at London presumably on account of his passengers, instead of the usual arrival at Lyneham, which was a Customs drome, and normally used by the squadrons returning from an overseas schedule.

The weather over London was murkey and poor, and Reg was instructed by Control to orbit at 4000 feet in a holding pattern, until further instructions. A Swedish airliner, apparently in a hurry, disregarded the holding pattern and came down through it, colliding with Reg Coates and his York on the way. Both aircraft crashed, killing all crews and passengers.

The official finding of the Enquiry Board was that the Royal Air Force Captain was at fault, and the Swedish Airline Captain was exonerated. This of course, closed a costly and delicate international incident except perhaps for the compensation issue.

The crews at Lyneham, who regarded themselves as having a good reputation for safety and efficiency, were incensed over this, particularly the New Zealanders, who felt it much more keenly on account of him being a New Zealander.

Reg Coates had the reputation among his fellow Captains, of being a very competent, steady and reliable Captain, and it seemed very much to those who knew him, as being a case of justice tailored by expediency.

Perhaps some research would bring to light which Squadron he was on. I trust that this will of some interest. I think that this incident and the accident that you referred to would be one and the same.

Ted (E. F.) Edwards.

(Continued from page 11)

really is a truly wonderful school, which we are very proud of - but more importantly, we are extremely proud of our VERY SPECIAL young pupils. Please give us the opportunity to show you how your help and support has helped us over the years. Should you wish to visit, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01666 824614, and I would be more than pleased to arrange everything.

Again, many thank for your kind gift, it is much appreciated.

I Morley, Appeals Co-Ordinator

Aviator Honoured

Aviation pioneer, Cecil Lawrence Pashley, MBE, AK, Hon CRAeS (1891-1969) has been honoured by Brighton & Hove Bus Company with a bus named after him. He is in good company, as others recently honoured include Sir Winston Churchill and Charles Dickens. Cecil was awarded the Royal Aero Club Silver Medal in 1949 and the GAPAN Award of Merit in 1961. At his death, Cecil was md of Southern Aero Club at Shoreham, which he founded in 1911. Among those he taught to fly was John Alcock and Micky Mannock, VC.

From Sep 2000 issue of Aerospace

The Pashley brothers played a big part in the early years of 24 Squadron's history. One of our associate members Sylvia Adams has done extensive research over the years on their achievements

(Continued on page 22)

Diary of a Navigator Pt 4

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

A ROYAL FLIGHT

Two days after our return to Northolt (7th June), the Liberator Commando AL 504) was flown in from Dorval, Montreal, by Wing Commander Willie Biddell, and parked alongside the York. This was the aircraft the PM had first used on his visit to Moscow in August 1942 and later to the Casablanca Conference in January 1943. Then, who should turn up but Group Captain 'Mouse' Fielden (Air Equerry to HM the King and now a Station Commander in Bomber Command). With him came Group Captain J Jeffs, evidently an old friend and, as we knew, Senior Air Traffic Control Officer at HQ Transport Command. We drew our own conclusions, for there was talk of a comparison being made between the aircraft for Royal use. In fact, Commando was to leave Northolt ahead of us (8th June) with the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, plus Group Captain Sir Louis Greig (his ADC) and Mr R H Melville (PS), as the vorlager. It was expected they would be in the greeting party at Gibraltar.

The King's Flight had existed as an RAF Unit at Hendon, under Wing Commander 'Mouse' Fielden from 1936 until the War broke out. HRH The Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, was a keen flyer and from 1929 had owned various civil-registered aircraft which were

garaged first at RAF Northolt and later, when 24 Squadron moved its main base, at Hendon. They were housed in the Home Communications Flight hangar, later called the King's Hangar. Adjacent, an annex to the Officers' Mess had been built as a Royal Suite for the privacy of passengers using the Flight. In 1936 the aircraft became the financial responsibility of the Air Ministry supported by 24 Squadron. The first RAF purchase for the Flight was the Airspeed Envoy, a light twin-engined executive aircraft chosen by Fielden, the forerunner of the renowned Oxford trainer and, in 1939, followed the D.H. Flamingo, a mini-airliner, named the Hertfordshire by the RAF, after the location of its factory. Both the Envoy and the Flamingo carried civil registration up to the outbreak of the war, to facilitate flying abroad by members of the Royal Family.

A Lockheed Hudson was added to the Flight in August 1939 and when the war started, all these aircraft assigned to 24 Squadron, Hendon, for communication duties, along with many other civil aircraft, but the Hudson (N7263) was to remain at RAF Benson, the balance of its crew (which included a rear-gunner for its hydraulic rear turret) under Wing Commander Fielden, was to be found from the squadron, that is co-pilot, navigator and wireless operator. It retained the long-range fuel tanks in its fuselage, which had been fitted for its delivery across the Atlantic, and rumour had it that it was to be kept at a certain readiness in case of the German invasion to ferry some of the Royal Family to Canada, perhaps the two Princesses. The Flight was disbanded in 1941 when plans were being made to extend RAF support for SOE operations in Occupied Europe beyond the range of the

Lysanders working from South Coast airfields, this Hudson was the first multi-engined aircraft to be used in this role, Wing Commander Fielden then commanding 161 Squadron at Tempsford. Bomber Harris had objected to any diversion of aircraft to SOE, but for some grudgingly spared Whitleys, but he had no jurisdiction over the Royal Hudson.

So on 7th June that there was no King's Flight in existence when HM wishes to visit North Africa and review his victorious Eighth Army in Tripoli. As Mr Churchill later put it: "I have lent His Majesty my aircraft", forgetting perhaps that the whole of the Royal Air Force was nominally His Majesty's! The flight that was about to take place was, according to the AOC in C of Transport Command (Ginger Bowhill) was the first time in history that a reigning British Monarch had left the United Kingdom by air, either in peace or war. Hitherto, the honour of carrying the King overseas had been given to the Royal Navy. He said to us later at our briefing: "It is up to you to show the sailors we can take on the task with equal efficiency".

11th June 1943. Our strong suspicions as to the identity of our VVIP were confirmed by the arrival early that evening of Palace vans with mountains of luggage labelled 'General Lion' and two Guardsmen batmen, Sergeants Jerram and Evitts, respectively HM's Chief Valet and Deputy Sgt Footman. After what was to become our usual routine of weather and route briefing, plus communications instructions, we planned our route to Gibraltar well out into the Atlantic. With a good weather forecast, the plan was to land there for refuelling and breakfast on the ground, before proceeding to Algiers where HM would be met by the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower. We took off from

Northolt at 2300 hours into the new moon with His Majesty, accompanied by General The Hon Sir Harold Alexander, Lt Col The Hon Piers Legh and Sir Alexander Hardinge, Private Secretary. In addition we had with us Group Captain Fielden, the Air Equerry plus Mr Cameron of Scotland Yard. Wing Commander Slee (from A & AEE Boscombe Down) again joined the crew: he later took command of 511 Squadron - Yorks - in July 1943.

As forecasted the weather was fine and smooth. HM came forward to the flight deck once we had settled down at cruising height and took a great interest in my astro-navigation methods. Clearly, he remembered his star identification from his days in the Royal Navy. HM Ships had been positioned in the vicinity of our two main turning points on the route to act as rescue vessels in the event of a forced landing in the ocean. Nothing would be seen of these blacked-out warships from 10,000 feet, even in clear conditions. For security reasons our communications plan was similar to other RAF aircraft in transit from the UK to Gibraltar that night; only our route was different, to minimise the risk of hostile interception. In dire emergency we were instructed to make for neutral Portugal.

About twenty minutes flying time from Gibraltar we received a general diversion message, sent to all RAF aircraft in transit that because of fog at Gibraltar we were to land at the USAF base at Port Lyautey (near Casablanca). This was followed very shortly by an order countermanding it. Foggy conditions evidently existed there, too. The new diversion for all aircraft was to be Ras el Ma (near Fez) some way inland and free from coastal fog. We queried these instructions using our allocated call-sign for the night, for we were only permitted to use the

Royal Flight call-sign in emergency. Since landing in the fog at Gibraltar would be impossible, we had no option but to obey the instructions, along with all the other aircraft flying that night between the UK and Gibraltar.

Ras el Ma was a small RAF Staging Post, only recently taken over from the Americans, with none of the accommodation and handling facilities available at a base such as North Front (Gibraltar). Neither did it have the communications capacity in the local control to handle the sheer number of aircraft in the landing circuit at the same time. We had strict instructions not to disclose by RIT the identity of our VVIP. Evidently the secure radio link between Gibraltar and Ras el Ma was so overloaded with cypher traffic that no warning of His Majesty's imminent arrival had reached the CO. Furthermore, 'Commando' which should have reached Gib or Port Lyautey ahead of us was not on hand to alert the local RAF. After circling several times with many other smaller aircraft, and notwithstanding our ample reserve of fuel, we were obliged to request priority landing, for HM could not be kept waiting while the RAF sorted itself out. The Air Traffic Control Officer had never seen a York before (neither had many others) and he drove up to 'Ascalon' now parked on the temporary hard-standing with the intention of speaking his mind to the Captain for barging in. He was somewhat taken aback on seeing our passenger and did his best to alert his commanding officer.

With that touch of humour that the RAF seems often to embellish a high level 'black', the Staging Post Commander had had a particularly heavy party in the Mess the night before. He did not react very fast to his batman's cup of tea and urgent message that the Royal aircraft had landed, and HM was actually

standing on his airfield. Indeed it was said that he thought the whole thing was a legpull. There is a variety of versions of what panic went on, but the Staging Post Commander eventually appeared, having cut himself shaving in his haste, to find HM and his aircraft parked on the crowded hard-standing amid a variety of aircraft coming and going. As there were no arrangements for HM's reception, he took breakfast on board the aircraft, after stretching his legs outside. We left for Maison Blanche (Algiers) after a stop-over of three quarters of an hour, having been refuelled. We arrived after some three more hours of flying, circling Cape Tafaroui en route, to rendezvous with our escort of six USAF Aerocobra (P 39) fighters. This time HM was properly met by the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham and ACM Sir Arthur Tedder.

14th June 1943. After two days in Algiers, visiting Allied HQ, HM was flown to Oran (La Senia) where he was met by General Mark Clark, USA. The Royal Party had now been joined by Colonel Dermot Kavanagh (Crown Equerry) and Sir James Grigg, Secretary of State for War. A part of the American Fifth Army was drawn up on the tarmac for HM's review. We were standing in the shade of the aircraft's wing waiting for our next instructions (the VIP party had already walked over to the reviewing stand) when we were approached by a smartly dressed US Colonel draped in cameras. He enquired the identity of the 'Big Shot'. After being told it was HM King George of England, there was a long pause for thought, after which he solemnly said "Gee, I guess that makes all you folks Dooks and Oils". We had to admit with some regret that we were but the crew of the aircraft.

The Royal Party enjoyed an alfresco lunch at the airfield with their American hosts; we returned to Maison Blanche mid-afternoon, in-flight catering being limited to tea, which Corporal Shepherd and the royal batmen handled satisfactorily. On the flight to and from Oran we were escorted by six Lockheed Lightnings (P 38's) of the USAF.

HM spent 15 and 16 June in and around Algiers itself, visiting units of the Allied Forces and those ships of the Fleet which were in harbour. I still have the invitation card which admitted me to a Royal Reception at the Villa Germaine where the Royal Party was staying. All the officers of the crew were included amongst the 170 guests for this cocktail party in the lovely gardens.

17th June 1943. The Royal Party, less the Secretary of State for War, but this time with Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, left Algiers for Bone to visit units of the Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Forces under AVM Sir Hugh P Lloyd, a flight of one and a half hours only. Here HM also visited a number of units of the 1st Army under General Anderson, the GOC. After lunch on the ground we took off for Tunis, landing at La Saballa, another wartime strip, north-east of the city on the Cape Bon peninsula. The flight was of three quarters of an hour only, and we continued with an American fighter escort, Aircobras again. Two nights were spent in Tunis with HM visiting more British and Allied units in the area. We learned later that HM had a terrific reception from the civilian population of Tunis and the small towns of the Peninsula wherever he drove.

On 18 June, when HM was visiting RAF units of the North African TAF, under Air Marshal

'Maori' Cunningham, the York was flown over to another desert airstrip at Gromballia, to be conveniently situated for HM's departure the following day.

19th June 1943. We left Gromballia at the comfortable hour of 1020 for the two and a quarter hour flight to Tripoli where we landed at Castel Benito, the ex-Dictator's showpiece, badly damaged by the RAF. We learned that the plan was for HM to visit Malta by the cruiser HMS Aurora on overnight passage, and there to present the Island's George Cross. After his return to Tripoli the following night, he would review the Eighth Army in a big military parade. The York was thus to remain at Castel Benito for four days.

The Captain (Collins) and Group Captain Jeffs (the latter had flown ahead of the York to each destination so far, in a 24 Squadron Hudson to clue-up ATC arrangements and to ensure that there were no more shambles like Ras el Ma) went off to stay in the Senior Officers' quarters of the RAF Mess. The rest of the crew, left standing in the shade of the wing, were waiting for MT to take us to our allotted quarters. But after the departure of the VIP's, one of Monty's ADC's took mercy on us and invited us there and then to stay at the Eighth Army Headquarters Mess at Zuara, some ten miles west of Tripoli, a tented camp right on the shores of the Mediterranean. We were very well rested in this good but simple accommodation and had the pleasure and honour of being invited to tea (!) at Montgomery's own Mess one afternoon. Whilst lecturing us on how to beat Rommel, he asked if we should like to witness the Victory Parade which was to take place as soon as HM returned in the cruiser from Malta. Obviously the answer was 'yes', so with no further ado an extra car was written into the

operation order for the day and we rode round the whole of the royal route in the thirteenth vehicle of the cavalcade.

22nd June 1943. We left Tripoli at 1130 hours with the Royal Party for Algiers and lunch was served on board. We had the same passengers, less Sir Archibald Sinclair who travelled in his own 24 Squadron Hudson (FK 482) to visit various other RAF units in North Africa. Weather was very bumpy and we were obliged to climb to 12,000 feet for a short time to clear the cloud tops, so missing a view of the Mareth Line. The route took us over Gabes and then inland to Biskra, and so back to Maison Blanche. Unfortunately, our ETA did not reach Supreme HQ, and our landing at 1530 hours, was unexpectedly early for General Eisenhower, causing some embarrassment.

24th June 1943. Two days later we left Algiers late in the afternoon for Ras el Ma and home. After discussing the use of Gibraltar with Air Marshal Tedder and the Air Equerry, it was decided to use Ras el Ma again for security reasons. HM's tour had had wide publicity in the regional press, and having had involuntary experience of Ras el Ma, it was decided to give Gibraltar a miss and keep right out of Axis sight. We made a smooth tea-time flight and this time HM was met with due courtesy. The RAF had replaced the unfortunate staging post commander who had been caught out by our unexpected arrival twelve days earlier. We were on the ground for less than three hours for re-fuelling, weather briefing and flight planning, while HM was taken by the CO for a light dinner at the Palais Jamaï Hotel in Fez.

On forecast winds our flight plan time from Ras el. Ma to Northolt by a similar route to the outbound one was just on nine hours. As HM had no wish to

hang around at this rather desolate airstrip with few creature comforts, we took off at 1930 hours GMT which would have given us an estimated time of arrival of 0630 hours Local at Northolt: early enough in all conscience, but a bright sunny morning was forecast. Our planned route took us far into the Atlantic, to 13 W Long, as on our outbound journey. En route it became clear that the winds were much more favourable than those forecasted, and by the time we turned from our northerly track towards Southern Ireland on to a north easterly heading up the Bristol Channel to Lundy Island and so home by the back door, as it were, I calculated that we should be an hour early.

I had therefore suggested to the Captain that we should reduce speed (and at lower engine revs, make the flight that much quieter) and if need be, make a dog-leg to lose time. This would give the VIP welcoming party more time to assemble at Northolt, nearer the 0630 programmed. However, the change of engine note brought the Air Equerry hastening to the flight deck demanding to know what was afoot. Although we were well past the area of any risk of interception by Luftwaffe longrange fighters, the Air Equerry said forcibly that HM did not wish to add to his time in the air merely for the convenience of the welcoming dignitaries. (I understand that HM did not in any case like flying very much and found the noise of the aircraft very trying, comfortable though it was for that era.)

Thus we resumed our former course and speed and landed at Northolt earlier than expected. The Chief of the Air Staff and the AOC in C Transport Command, along with the AOC in C Fighter Command (AM Leigh Mallory) were in time, but Mr Churchill arrived later, when

the party were taking coffee in the Officers' Mess. He was somewhat irate. The Spitfire escort which should have intercepted us in the Bristol Channel caught up with us as HM was being driven across the airfield, dipping their wings as they swept over the airfield.

We were somewhat tired out, not just by the long hours of flying, but perhaps by the nervous exhaustion from the sheer excitement of it all. Barely out of a hot bath in the Mess at Hendon (where we were still based) we were told that all the crew had to be at the Palace at noon. I did not have my 'best blue' to hand, and had to be smartened up by my batman as best he could. We were summoned to an audience with HM in a small drawing room in Buckingham Palace. HM The Queen was present and the Air Equerry in attendance. We were all presented in turn. I noticed a small pile of boxes on a side table and immediately recalled that one of the 24 Squadron pilots who had flown the Princess Royal had been given a pair of cuff links engraved with her crest, as a souvenir. My hopes rose, though there were no means of communicating them to my colleagues.

After a few words about the flight and the tour in general, and charming enquiries from HM The Queen, the King said I want to give you all a souvenir of this memorable flight by making you members of the Victorian Order". He then gave each one of us our insignia in its box. In my case this was the MVO Fourth Class, now re-titled Lieutenant of the Victorian Order (LVO). The Air Equerry received the CVO Thus a slightly bemused and weary crew filed out to be photographed against the Victoria Memorial, and so to the Royal Aero Club in Piccadilly for a celebratory drink.

24 Sqn – Report for Honorary Air Commodore – 2000

INTRODUCTION

The first year of the new millennium has been as busy a year for 24 Sqn as any other, with the added excitement of the imminent arrival of the new 'J' model Hercules. The first postings to the 'J' model OCU began in May, and aircrew of all trades have been departing the sqn ever since. July saw the departure of Wg Cdr Oborn to STC and October the arrival of the Sqn's first 'J' model qualified personnel, headed by new OC, Wg Cdr Hobson. Against this backdrop the Sqn has maintained a high profile as a force for good, both in world-wide air transport operations and the local community.

OPERATIONS

24 Sqn has been involved in all the world's trouble spots this year. In the Balkans, support for OP PALATINE, landing supplies at Split, Croatia was superseded by OP AGRICOLA, and the provision of vital equipment to British forces in Kosovo. The Sqn was involved in a number of casualty evacuations and repatriation of compassionate cases during the op.

Although deemed less newsworthy nowadays, a large proportion of the Sqn's routine effort is directed towards the Gulf, in support of OPS BOLTON, JURAL and WARDEN. A regular schedule is established to supply spares, personnel, mail and armament to our forces in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. The schedule also provides R and R runs, enabling 'in theatre' personnel to enjoy the cooler climes of Cyprus for a few days.

Throughout the year, troop rotations in Northern Ireland continued; the Sqn's passengers on OP BANNER sorties including 7th Royal Irish Rangers, 49 and 51 Fld Regt, RA, The Scots Guards and the Coldstream Guards.

When hostilities broke out in Sierra Leone during April, crews from 24 Sqn were the first in theatre, carrying out many shuttles from Dakar in Senegal, to Freetown, the Sierra Leonian capital, in support of UN forces on OP TURNER. The shift from a UN peacekeeping force to a British training force led to a large deployment from the UK. The continuing Sqn involvement with OP PALATINE began in May with no fewer than 31 shuttles to Freetown.

EXERCISES

In addition to all these operational commitments, 24 Sqn has flown the world in support of the numerous exercises of all 3 services. In North America, Sqn crews have deployed and recovered such exercises as RED, GREEN and MAPLE FLAGS, ASCIET, HIGH RIDER, WESTERN RHUM and VORTEX, RUM PUNCH, ROVING SANDS and COMPUTEX. This has involved flights to places as diverse as Las Vegas, Savannah GA, Cold Lake, Cape Canaveral and Belize.

Last winter, as every year, arctic exercises such as ARCTIC EXPRESS in Norway have kept Sqn crews cold, while in Africa, Exercises KENYA SURVEY, DIAMOND CUTTER and ARGON MERCURY saw Sqn crews warm, in Nairobi, Cape Town, and Accra respectively.

EX PACIFIC KUKRI involved one lucky 24 Sqn crew in an 18-day odyssey encircling the globe, the aim of which was to fly shuttles to Tonga from Fiji. Slightly less fortunate crews settled for trips to the Far East in support of exercises FLYING FISH and ATAP HURDLE. One crew 'had' to spend so long in Kuala Lumpur with a broken aircraft, that their captain and co had to return by civil airline, to fulfil important commitments!

HUMANITARIAN EFFORT

One 24 Sqn crew, led by Flt Lt Ray Evans, responded to a call-out in August to take a RN Diving team to Kirkenes, in an attempt to rescue Russian submariners believed to be trapped on board the stricken nuclear submarine, The Kursk. Diving equipment collected and delivered in timely fashion, the crew waited, intending to rush footage of the submarine to the UK for analysis. Sadly, this intention was thwarted by Russian bureaucracy, forcing them to return empty-handed.

PERSONAL AND SPORTING ACHIEVEMENT

Sqn Ldr Greg Cook earned his RAF colours in the unlikely pursuit of tobogganing. He competed on the world-famous Cresta Run in St Moritz at the start of the year.

On the Hockey field, Sgt Kim Morgan earned her STC colours, while on the athletics track, Sgt Tracy

(Continued on page 21)

Butler has represented the Stn. Also at Stn level, FS Brenda Hickinbottom is active in the world of sailing, and Cpl Steve Collins continues to dominate orienteering events nationwide. F0 Coffey and Sgt Flack represented the Stn successfully in Octobers STC Basketball competition.

Only one major expedition was mounted by 24 Sqn this year. Organised by MALM John Grimwood and MENG Tom Lee, it took in the majority of WW1 battle sites in Northern Europe. Meticulously researched, the expedition provided participants with the opportunity to visit many of the sites at which 24 Sqn were located during the war. Wreaths were laid at Ypres, Bertangles and Arras, in remembrance of our fallen comrades.

FUND-RAISING ACTIVITY

Burton Hill House School for disabled children has enjoyed its 48th year of support from 24 Sqn. The Sqn helps with the school's major fund-raiser, it's Summer Fete in June, as well as it's Christmas party, and hosts the children, both at Lyneham on bonfire night, and at the Stn pantomime rehearsal.

In June, Sqn personnel, organised by Sgt 'Jack' Paddon deliver and erect marquee-sized tents, tables, chairs and crockery to form the venue for the Summer Fete. Other Sqn members 'trawl' the stn's families' quarters, collecting fare for the Sqn's Tombola stall. The Sqn's participation helped the Fete raise £4000 this year. A voluntary monthly donation is made by many Sqn members on their mess bills. This enables Sqn personnel to donate around £1000 while helping at the School's Christmas party.

In addition to this physical help, the Sqn organises fund-raisers for the school. This year, a team of 30 runners, led by Wg Cdr Oborn began training for the Bath Half Marathon. Sadly, due to training injuries and numerous last-minute flying commitments, only 19 Sqn members were able to run on the day. Their efforts, however, raised £1500 for the school.

Sgt Rich Flack and his wife successfully completed the 3 peaks walk in 33 Hrs, starting on 14 Jun, and raising £700 for The National Meningitis Trust.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

During his time on the Sqn, Sgt Andy Barlex, continued to devote hours of his spare time to his work as a Lyneham Scout Leader.

The Wilts Ambulance Service benefits from the computer expertise of FS Derek Gray. Not only is he responsible for the installation and management of their computer system, but is also trained as a reserve ambulance person.

Sqn Execs took part in a walk, which this year raised money for local churches in addition to The Cancer Research Campaign.

SOCIAL OCCASIONS WORTHY OF NOTE

The Sqn Ladies Dining Society (LADS) began the social year in January with a dinner served in the Sqn crew room by certain Sqn members. Inexplicably, things got a little out of hand, and the evening culminated with the 'waiters' in various states of undress.

February saw a well attended 70's Disco and Karaoke, featuring hitherto unseen levels of style and singing. Finally the tone was raised with an all-ranks Sqn Ladies Guest Night at the Wessex Restaurant, in March.

In May, The Sqn Officer's Dining Society (SODS) hosted members of 12 Air Support Engineering Brigade, and a team of boffins from DERA, suitably attired in white coats and 'mad professor' wigs. Disaster was narrowly averted at the subsequent beer-call, when a valuable family heirloom, 'liberated' by one of our army guests, was finally returned safely to its fractious owner.

June saw 24 Sqn Ladies come a close second to 47 Sqn Ladies at rounders, before an enjoyable, if ground-bound Families Day in July. A recent policy change prevented Sqn spouses from taking to the air in Hercules aircraft, but the clement weather meant that all the other attractions were much enjoyed.

The 24 Sqn Association was hosted at Lyneham for their annual reunion and dinner on 7 October. As in previous years, ex Sqn members enjoyed the occasion immensely, and showed great interest in the Sqn's new aircraft, the 'J' model Hercules.

This year it was 30 Sqn's turn to host the joint 24 / 30 Sqn Octoberfest. The evening was well attended, and enjoyed by all, thanks to an excellent Oompah Band, and stong German beer!

Keeping in Touch

(Continued from page 16)

CHANGE OF LIAISON CONTACT

You may have spotted that Flt Lt Trevor Jarvis is no longer on the list as Squadron Liaison, this slot has been taken by Flt Lt Phil Whitworth. Trevor has retired from the RAF and working for Airtours and busy rushing around between home, Gatwick, Leeds and Bristol at the moment.

Another to follow in the same footsteps is the RAF's 1st female Captain on Hercules, Julie Gibson. Julie has joined the Association, so retains her link with 24 Squadron.



THE MEETING OF THE BIG CHEESES

If you thought that "The Pillars of Hercules" was a book by Paul Theroux, 10 out of 10. This title, or one similar has been hi-jacked by a gathering of ex OC's from Lyneham, affectionately called "The Pillocks of Hercules" and we have the evidence to prove it.

The photo below shows seven of the species at a gathering in November 2000 at Lyneham. The line up is as follows:-

Richard Bates, Mike Davis, Paul Oborn, Martin Stringer, Rick Hobson, Keith Chapman and Clive Evans.



The Pillars of Hercules gathering Nov 2000 @ RAF Lyneham

Classified

Holiday Accommodation.

Very well equipped, and furnished, self catering studio apartment to rent in rural Mallorca. Suit couple, but further double room, en-suite, with separate entrance also available in our own adjacent rustic house. Air conditioning/central heating, dishwasher, freezer, TV, hi-fi, barbecue, large gardens, swimming pool, shady terraces etc.. Laundry, telephone & fax by arrangement. Close to all amenities but in a quiet area. Flights and car hire (essential) arranged if required. Weekly rentals for 24 Sqn Ass. members from £325 including cleaning, electricity, starter pack, etc.

For further details contact Mike Lythgoe Tel & Fax 00 34 971 602410, or e mail lythgoe@jet.es

DO YOU RECOGNISE "TUBBY"? - Well he is the mascot of the RAF Air Engineering Branch

During World War II, when the air battle against Nazi Germany was becoming difficult to sustain owing to the attrition rate of pilots, the RAF Flight Engineer was born. His expertise with the aircraft systems and sometimes his handling of the aircraft owing to the pilot being wounded did much to advance the war effort and-therefore the ultimate peace on the allies terms -The year 2001 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the branch, and as the advance of time takes its toll on World War II veterans, coupled with the inevitable replacement of today's flight engineer with advanced technology, "one last round-up" was held in Cardiff on 17 March 2001. To celebrate this significant milestone in the history of the branch, a Formal Dinner was held at the Cardiff Intentional Arena & Conference Centre and was judged a great success.



The branch was formed on 20th March 1941 and the first official training course was held at No 4 School of Technical Training, RAF St Athan in May 1942. During the majority of the war, the schools only task was to train flight engineers and approximately 20000 were trained there. Over 350 individual awards for bravery were made, including one Victoria Cross.

Further details may be obtained by contacting Wing Commander C Reeves BSc MA RAF Plans 1 Headquarters Royal Air Force Strike Command HIGH WYCOMBE Buckinghamshire HP 14 4UE.

Tel: (01494) 461461 Ext 6420 Fax: (01494)496433 e-mail:



This photograph was sent in by Ron Backhouse, not an Association member and shows DH Flamingo N6246 at Hal Far in Malta in between 1938 -41's. If it rings a bell with anyone, let us know and we will do a feature on it.

LATE NEWS

SUMMER SOCIAL 6th June 01

It was to Cotswolds that the Association returned for a second time to crunch down the drive of the Bibury Court Hotel. The weather, which had been bright and sunny for the previous few weeks, held out just long enough for our party to enjoy a convivial day together. The reputation of the Committee was on the line for its ability to choose the best weather possible for this diary date and it just about stayed intact.

We managed a turn out of 23 in total, which was an ideal size to fit comfortably into the conservatory overlooking the gardens and trout stream. An overwhelming choice of appetising lunchtime fare was probably the most difficult decision of the day to be faced. Fortunately we were not disappointed with the look and taste of the end result.

Once again, our Summer Social allowed a few fresh faces to make an Association event other than the main Reunion. in October. It soon became apparent that although retired, the globe trotting nature of the membership has not worn off. Destinations such as Vancouver, Sydney, Florida and Rome had all been visited since last year, so the wonder lust still continues.

A mini recruiting drive was in force as we signed up a new recruit, Mike Sawbridge, ex Hastings pilot from the Colerne days, who was left with a mission to pass on the good word to others. The day was rounded off with a group panoramic photo shot that was digitised ready to be downloaded onto our Internet site by the time you read this article.

A great day out – look out for something a little bit different next year and make a date.



**A snap of the Association Members at Bibury Court, June 2001
by John Martin**