



244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 9

New Members Since Newsletter No.7

D. Surtees - Spain; G. Newman - Formby; R. Pratt - Bristol; R. Short - Axbridge; C. Stone - Exeter;
E. Pattenden - Blandford; C. Hall - Bristol; A. Hunter - Leicester; V. Severs - Broadstairs; J. Lyons - Stourbridge;
T. Collier - Ryde; W. Knatchbull - Leigh-on-Sea; F. Smith - Buenos Aires; B. Nunn - Stroud; G. Pert - Canada;
V. Richards - Australia; S. Milbank - Fowey; V. Lovell - Selsey.

Jim Says Many thanks, on behalf of Don and myself, for the many Xmas cards we received. Also, for the letters of commendation for another Reunion which went off so well. As you can understand we could not reply to each and everyone of you. May we both wish all our members a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

As can be seen from the list above, new members are still coming in. We have now reached 171, of this number 125 are presently active. At this rate the figure of 200 will be reached in the current year.

Requests for copy Nominal Rolls have reached 24. These have been of great use in tracing old Gulf mates. Copies can be obtained (via Jim) for £1.20 (inc. postage). Also, there is quite a demand for back numbers of our Newsletters (still available at 35p (inc. postage).

Don Says. With reference to plaques, ties, badges, these were all sold at cost price, and therefore were not included in the balance sheet. I would like to thank all those members who made donations, and sent stamps and S.A.E's. These all help a lot. There are still 31 of you out there who have not yet paid 1994 Subs. Please take this as a kindly reminder to pop your £5 in the post!

Mid-Air Refuelling 1942 Style!

All aboard, leaving Sharjah for Shaibah in a Vickers Valentia, with 15 airmen plus Kit. Pilot strolls up from the Central Tower. He states that, owing to strong headwinds, we will have to leave some passengers and their Kit behind, and take on extra petrol instead. This entailed loading about 15 to 20 of the disposable four-gallon cans (same as the Masirah building blocks!). Make sure you loaded full cans, as some could only be half full!

After about 2 1/2 hours flying, a small door opened behind the pilot, and a note was passed to me. It had one word on it - "Refuel"! I then moved the passengers forward, lifted a flap in the floor, and behold, there was a filter cap to the belly tank! Cap removed, funnel with chamois leather filter (always carried) inserted. Cans then punctured with the ever ready ice-pick, and in goes the fuel. There was a small aperture in the main cabin door, which opened inwards, through which the empties were dispatched to ground level!

From 'Lofty' mem. No. 114

Air-Sea Rescue (Umm Rasass 1994)

The bods in the dinghy were not a genuine pick-up. A flying boat (a Catalina) took them well out to sea on the ocean side of the Island (Masirah), dropped them, and disappeared. We then left Umm Rasass to rescue them. They were using a 'Gibson Girl' hand cranked transmitter for us to home in on. It was no problem at all, but when we arrived, I was called up on deck by the Skipper.

We used to catch sharks at night from our motor launch, and thought we were pretty clever! But the Skipper said "look down there!" on the port side a shark's tail sticking out about two feet, on the starboard side the head stuck out another three feet! This was just ahead of the wheelhouse, so you can imagine the size of it!

Apparently, when we came alongside, they were out of the dinghy and up the scrambling nets almost too fast for our crew to lend a hand. It seems that, no sooner had the Catalina left than the Shark arrived, and spent the rest of the time under the dinghy, now and again rubbing its back on the underside of the dinghy! We thought it was hilarious, but, needless to say, they didn't see the funny side of it. Needing a lift home, they had to put up with it! (Editors Note:- This was one of Hankin's training schemes). After this incident, similar exercises were confined to the mainland side of the Island (just off the jetty and no A.S.R. required!) I can well remember our attempts to inflate the dinghy, and also the trouble with the balloon which carried the radio aerial.

Many thanks to G.E. Chambers for above anecdote. (mem No: 123)

Random Memories by Padre Bill Kelly (mem. No: 94)

The transition between the calm of what had been my earlier assignment of Teacher and Chaplain at an East Anglian Private School, and the Active Service station of Khormaksar could not have been greater!

I well recall the impression of being within an oven when the aircraft doors were opened upon arrival late at night. It was so far beyond my experience that the temperature could be so high, that I surmised that the aircraft must somehow have taxied into a hanger - not so!

My ALKIT tropical Kit was relegated to the bottom drawer on my very first day, because it had the RAJ look ie. the shorts knee length, the material terrible. Within 24 hours, I was wearing a very smart outfit, which I still have today.

Apart from station visiting, my main job was looking after the Khormaksar Beach Hospital, to which many of the service casualties were taken. Ministering to wounded soldiers not long out of school themselves (reminding me very much of the sixth-formers I'd recently left behind) I found to be both fascinating and demanding. Monthly I left Aden for about a week to take the RSM (Riyan/Salalah/Masirah) schedule, at each of which I mixed, took a service or two and maybe broadcast a Padre's Hour on the station radio. The Welcome was anything but cordial, however, if I (as mail-bag carrier) arrived without the said bag, which sometimes happened because of the security situation back in Aden. I particularly liked Riyan, a small station of 32 people, about 10 miles from the still important town of Makullah, where the sheikh's waterside palace looked like a stage set!

Shopping was quite an adventure, inasmuch as this had to be done in pairs, for the fear that one would be the victim of sniper fire. There was an 11p.m. curfew, but, even so, it was possible to have a meal out. The Fiat 500 I then owned was ideal transport for these conditions, ie. air-cooled, no wiper (no rain!!) It was always left in the care of the restaurant's night-watchman, the reasoning being that if he was nowhere in sight upon leaving after the meal, the chances were that a bomb had been placed under the vehicle, at the behest of the terrorists.

I became chaplain at Sharjah shortly before the pull-out from Aden, which of course happened with lightening speed. Lots of equipment and not a few personnel from Aden came to Sharjah, and conditions were decidedly cramped until the PSA got off their a...s and provided new facilities. It was odd switching from a place with high security to a remote spot where there no such problems. Like the even higher daily temperature of 125°, this took some getting used to.

My atap hut/church doubled as a club and cinema, because NAAFI facilities were overstretched. This however, didn't stop the visiting SKC manager from Muharraq noticing I was advertising one of his films at my church the following Sunday! I duly received a gentle slap on the wrist from my C.O!

Christmas brought out all the British servicemen's skills at improvisation in the setting up and running of section bars. Because for reasons I can't recall, I'd declared myself not available to partake of spiritual refreshment at the Fire Section Bar. After the open-air Midnight Mass at the Astra, I was Kidnapped, and conveyed to the said Fire Section Bar, and not released until 4.30a.m on Xmas morning!

I'm not being the least romantic when I say the comradeship I experienced, could not be repeated elsewhere. Sure, there was homesickness, a yearning for bright lights and married bliss. I reckon that my colleagues and friends, at that time and in those places, gave me a lot to be thankful for.

Copy required for future Newsletters.
Any interesting anecdotes to Jim