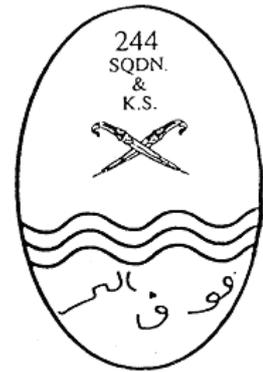




244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 15

Third Reunion held at The Scarisbrick Hotel, Southport. on Friday, Saturday 6/7 October 1995.

Members present were:-

Bob Aindow - Southport
Les Batty Keston
Tom Booth - Lickfield
Ken Bovington Shoreham
Jim Bradley - Antrim
Cohn Bates - Sheffield
David Blackadder - Glasgow
Terry Collier - I.of Wight
Harry Dawson - Doncaster
John Edwards - Egremont
Jack Lightfoot - Winsford
Peter Lyons - Stourbridge
Jim Leyland Ormskirk
John McCormack - Formby
Bob McDonald - Runcorn
Alan Summerbell-Sevenoaks
David Temple - Chepstow
Bill Westwood London
Alan Wilkinson - Crosby

Jack Earnshaw Blyth
Ralph Godden Christchurch
Cyril Grant - Harpenden
Jim Haggata - Bexhill
Jack Hill - Weybridge
Bert Hartley - Bolton
Don James - Formby
Mike Kerrigan - Beaconsfield
Gerry Leach - Maidstone
Jack Maiden - Newmarket
Tom Millen - Christchurch
Bob Norcott Otley
Bill Quick - Wakefield
Frank Sheppard - Wallington
Joe Showell - Sutton C'field
Jim Swann - Wolverh'pton
Bob Topping - Liverpool
Ken Whittaker - Bridlington
Bob Whittall - Telford

Bill Goddard - Durham City
Norman Gould - Hayes
Geoff Hammond Peterboro'
D'ary Huntriss - Mold
Jim Heslop - Southport
George Hughes - Wirral
Bill Knatchbull - Leigh-on-Sea
Bill Kelbrick - Liverpool
Eddy Leicester - Stoke
Langton Moore - Fylde
Dr. Chris Morris - Walsall
Ben Nunn - Stroud
Colin Richardson - Grantham
Harry Savage - Dover
Jack Sharing - Seascale
Ken Taylor - Bolton
Ron West - Northallerton
Charlie Wakeford Bexley Heath
Bill Williams - Meikshcun

"Gentlemen of 244 and Kindred Spirits now abed, will curse the day they were not here.
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."
(Apologies to Shakespeare. Henry V, Act IV)

Jim's Reunion Report.

Friday 6th October (1400hrs) Sterling work by our Committee (John Edwards, Bert Harley, Langton Moore, plus Don and Jim) has resulted in the Isherwood Suite being ready for the arrival of our members. All our exhibits of Association nostalgia are in place. It must be noted that we have reached the zenith of our items on show. There is no more room for further exhibits!

Members and their ladies commence arriving from 1730hrs onwards. They were met by a sherry reception. The bar opened at 1800hrs, and from then on, the sound of conversation increased. Members old and new, were renewing old friendships, and in some cases, were meeting for the first time in over 50 years.

Welcoming speeches were made by Don James and Jim Heslop. Much interest was shown in our displays, and between these, and the talking over of old times, it could be seen that things were going well, and no encouragement was needed. An excellent buffet was served, and the local press photographer arrived for a group photograph. The Association shop was open for business, and over £300 was taken.

Later in the evening (2100hrs). Dr Chris Morris (Walsall) gave us a well prepared illustrated talk on Habbaniya, which was most well received. Also, our usual Aircraft recognition contest was held (no one got it right !) After a tie-break, David Blackadder (Glasgow) won a bottle of Scotch !

In addition, a competition ("Find the Wimpey wreck on Masirah") was won by George Hughes (Wirral) who received a large Association plaque.

Talk and chatter went on until after midnight when 85 persons dispersed happily to their beds.

Saturday 7th October (1000hrs) Biennial General Meeting. See Don's Report below.

After the Meeting, S/Ldr Cohn Richardson (Grantham). gave his long awaited talk on Masirah Island - us old islanders (from way back) were most impressed. Also, by popular request, Chris Morris gave more excerpts of his history of Habbiniya.

Saturday 7th October (evening) - 99 members, wives and guests were welcomed by a sherry reception. This was followed by the usual well praised meal. The Loyal Toast was given by Don James. The Toast "244 Squadron and Kindred Spirits", was given by Jim Heslop, who also proposed the Toast "Absent Friends", mentioning those who could not attend, but including the lads who died out there. After dinner, our usual sing-song commenced. As is now traditional, at our Reunions, we led off with "Sweet Somersetshire", followed by the Squadron anthem, "Shaibah Blues" (Music and words provided for members). The evening was most marked by the number of volunteers who came to the floor. Apart from our regular contributors, (Peter Lyons, Gerry Leach and self), we had many members who gave their 'party piece'. To name a few:- Mike Kerrigan, Jim Haggata, Dave Temple, Eddie Leicester (She's my little Gyppo Bint"). Bob Morcott gave his recitation of "The Siege of Habbaniya". in addition, many 'ditties' were sung (specially cleaned up for the ladies). Also, Chris Morris kept things moving with his guitar, backing popular choruses.

At midnight our 'soiree' ended with "Now is the Hour", followed by "Auld Lang Syne". The third Reunion had come to a close, and enjoyed by all present.

Footnote Apart from the lads who did great work to make the 'do' a success, we must thank Alex Alder (Weston-super-Mare), who designed and produced all the song sheets, enjoyed, and taken as souvenirs by members. Also, grateful thanks to those friends of our Association, responsible for the Nominal Roll, lapel badges, and place cards.

Appeal The relatives of Robert Scott Newton are searching for information. Robert was a Navigator. M.O.D. records show that he served with 244 from 30/1/43 to April 1944. This means he flew both Bisleys and Wellingtons from Sharjah and Masirah. Which crews did he fly with? Any info' write or ring Jim (Robert hailed from Glasgow).

Also, which of you departed Southport in possession of the black turtle shell? Ring Jim. Also, we have two spare group photos of the recent Reunion. These are £6.50 each (inc. postage). Selling on a first come, first served basis.

The Great Oil Mystery

Masirah 28th May 1944 (evening) Usual 'shindig' in Sgt's Mess. Spirits were high on such concoctions as 'Fine Old English(?) Brandy' Johnny Presland (crew captain) climbed up onto one of those small round tables, to give us a song. His head immediately came into contact with the ceiling ventilation fan. Down goes John! Carted off to M.I. Room with contusions to scalp. Seen next day with head in a turban of bandages!

Masirah 1st June '44. (0230hrs.) Poker 'school' break up in Sgt's Mess. Debts to be settled. Taffy Lewis (flying as 'spare' Wop with Johnny P's crew at dawn take-off this morning) has broken the 'school', having won over 2000 'chips' (Rupees to you !). As he gathers his cash together, his parting shot is, "I bet you guys hope I go for a s---t today".

1st June '44 Presland and crew take off on anti-sub patrol in Wellington XIII (JA210) but no word or signal received. After due interval, five aircraft are dispatched to square search the area where the Wellington may have ditched. Amongst them was our crew (Len Peacocks - Capt.) in Wimpey XIII (JA151)

After take-off it became obvious that our task was near impossible. The monsoon had arrived and cloud base was down to wave top level. Also, our crude Radar equipment had little chance of locating a rubber dingy.

Nearly three hours into the trip things started to happen. Temperature readings on both engines started to rise. Len said, "We're going home". Course was set for base. As we had been flying at less than 1000 feet, we had

no height in case of emergency, so Len managed to coax the aircraft up to around 3000 feet. Engine temperatures continued to climb, and "Maydays" were transmitted. It was a welcome sight when the letters 'MA' came up on the radar screen at 90 miles (SE Beacon on the island). Darkness was now upon us as we made our approach, and we landed with little preamble. As we taxied to dispersal there was a loud 'bang' - the starboard engine seized solid. We now discovered that another of the aircraft dispatched on the search (F/O Adcock) had already returned - with the same trouble we had experienced.

Next day the whole squadron was grounded forthwith. Rumours were rife! Sabotage mentioned! Sugar in the oil? Complete engine change for the squadron. Who remembers the old Halifax with pannier underneath ('Pregnant Priscilla!') This aircraft landed regularly from Middle East, with four 'Herc' engines as cargo.

Air Tests commenced. Not your 20 minute job, but nine hour tests. All taking place within sight of the airfield. We hear eventually that the lubrication oil in use was of 1918 vintage! Could any member (who served on the Island during this period) throw any fresh light on what was the actual cause of this trouble and near disaster?

Jim (mem. No.50)

Don (sour Treasurer) says

Who can believe the Reunion has been and gone? Judging from your letters - what a success ! Thank you for all your support. We had around 120 firm bookings, but sickness etc., meant we ended up with 99 - a fantastic effort!

You will see from the 'Reunion balance sheet, that we made a loss of £37.68. If I could have been that precise in my business life, I would have been made managing director (who am I kidding?).

The above loss was after transferring £133.25 from donations to the Reunion (the donors had said, "buy some wine, or put towards expenses").

The £37.68 loss is more than made up by further general donations, which for this year amounted to just over £160. Thank you all!

Details of our Biennial General Meeting.

1. All officials *were* re-elected (What a surprise !)
2. The annual Sub will be held at £5 (47 already paid).
3. 1996 Sub due 1.1.96
4. It was decided that, owing to the work involved, and the shortage of copy, that there should be three Newsletters per year, instead of four as at present.
5. A Reunion to be held in 1997 (end of September/early October). Venue the Scarisbrick. Hotel, in the Isherwood Suite (where we need a minimum of 100 bods.)
6. Deposits (£10 per head) for 1997 Reunion, to be paid by 30/9/96.
(This gives us a firm idea of how many members may attend).

N.B. Copies of Nominal Roll with addresses can be obtained from Jim (£1.50 post free).

Don and Jim (and their ladies) wish all members a very merry Xmas, and a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Hon. Secretary: Jim Heslop Hon. Treasurer: Don James