



# 244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



## Newsletter No. 27

From Don & Jim, Summer dawns! Why not have a day out (especially our Midland members) at the National Memorial Arboretum. Our Association badge can be seen attached to its own Silver Birch tree (in the RAF plot of course).

How to get there? From Lichfield take A38 towards Burton-on-Trent. Just before Alrewas turn right on roundabout to A513. Car Park is immediately on left.

Things are going well towards October, although bookings are slightly down on our last 'do'. 1997 was a record for attendance (115). Presently, we have 102 bookings. Still, four months to go, and the laggards still to come. As regards annual subscriptions, thirty of you have still to pay. Curiously, the majority of these non-payers have already paid their deposits towards the Reunion. Come on lads, wake up and settle up! (still £5). The second instalment of Reunion payments are due to Don by 30th June next. As preparations go forward for our 'do', I find I have mislaid or lost Christian names of our member's ladies and guests. When replying with your Reunion instalments (or in any case) could you let us know the names. I know our regular attenders, but please remind me.

We now have two new items of stock for sale. These both will be sold at cost price plus postage. (They will also be available at our Reunion shop).

Aerial photo of RAF camp on Masirah (circa 1944). This is 10" x 8" and is priced at £10 (inc. postage).

Our Association badge (in colour) mounted on shield (7" x 4"). The shield is made of light coloured (sand?) wood. Cost is £21.50p (inc. postage).

Finally, copy for future Newsletters. We are extremely short of items for publications. Let us have some of your experiences on paper. What about "A day in the life of Rigger/Fitter/Armorer?WopAircrew etc., etc.. Let's hear from you!

N.B. If you are a non-payer of current subs, a notation appears above.

### **BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMORIAL Capel-le-Ferene, Dover, Kent**

Our squadron badge has now been installed as one of the first six squadron badges to be displayed in the "HUNTING LODGE" conservatory windows at the Caple-le-Ferne memorial site. The "HUNTING LODGE" is a new feature at "Capel" and houses the Coffee Shop, Souvenir Shop and other facilities. The Memorial site is open from APRIL 1st until the beginning of October, admission is free of charge, but a one pound charge is made for car parking. Coaches and passengers are admitted free of charge. The Memorial site is a seven acre cliff top site donated by the Dover District Council. With magnificent views across the English Channel to Cap Gris Nez.

About three miles away at the old Battle .of Britain museum which is open from Easter to September. Twenty miles or so along the coast behind the seaside resort of Ramsgate at Manson Airport is the Spitfire and Hurricane museum. Well worth a visit, entrance is free of charge, but you won't be able to resist buying

something. It is open all year round from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. during the winter months and 10 a.m. till 5 p.m. during the summer months.

Apart from the above, there are some other minor attractions in the area, such as Dover, Deal, and Walmer castles, and of course the beautiful city of Canterbury.

Finally don't forget the "Booze cruising" from Dover & Folkestone to Calais, Boulogne and Ostend.

If you have any questions, ring me any evening on 01304-822650, if I don't answer I shall either be on holiday, booze cruising, or drunk. Cheers.

Harry Savage (mem. No. 83)

**ISSUED IN SOLEMN WARNING THIS 25th DAY OF JULY 1969**  
**DESMOND TREVOR LARCOMBE WILL BE HEADING WESTWARD ON 2539 VC10. FLT.**  
**"YIWKIN"**

Very soon the above mentioned will once again be in your midst, dehydrated and demoralised. To take his place once again as a human-being with freedom and justice for all. To be engaged on the somewhat easier pursuit of happiness and liberty.

In making arrangements to welcome him back into organised society you must make allowances for the crude environment which has been his lot for some time. In a word, he may be a little Eastern in his habits suffering from Masirahitus, or a little too much sun.

It should be realised that although he is still basically the same sweet natured, loveable, even tempered bloke from former days, superficial changes have inevitably taken place. Therefore, show no alarm if he prefers to sit on his haunches instead of sitting in a chair, insists on removing his shoes before entering the house, or has a tendency to bow when meeting or saying goodbye to friends. Be tolerant when he takes his mattress off the bed and puts it on the floor to sleep. Do not worry if he persists in sleeping in the (Ahem) nude. If, on being wakened, he uses strong expletives, treat it as normal, which in fact it has been for some time. The habit will gradually die.

If at mealtimes his method of using his knife and fork is reminiscent of a navvy with a pick and shovel, pay no attention. Keep cool when he pours his gravy on his dessert or mixes peaches with mashed potatoes. Take no notice if he yells "Mungus" or asks for "Bukshees chips". He will soon realise the fact that he is once again in the ranks of human-beings, and not a collection of nameless ranks and numbers. If, after the evening meal, he furtively takes tea, bread and butter to his bedroom, to be consumed hunched over a magazine, ignore it. Ignore also his constant use of 'Yimkin' or 'Barden'. He will soon forget them. If, whilst out walking in the street he howls like a demented dog at the sight of shapely legs, or even emits a piercing whistle and commences to leeeer horribly at this sight of a pretty girl, pay no attention, he is merely love starved.

Whenever he tells a perfectly respectable shopkeeper that he is a "Black robbing @\*%£-...." explain the situation to the shopkeeper and get him out of the shop with the minimum of fuss.

If, at odd moment, he drops off to sleep wearing only a towel, and wakes up muttering comments about the climate and flies, or bed-bugs, fear not, the tendency for him to do these things will soon pass. If he requests your help in the operation of de-bugging his bed, or asks for a little Vim to de-caffeinate his cup, treat his wishes with respect. It must be remembered that habits of ages die hard.

Never ask him if he is going to sign on in the RAF, and make no flattering remarks about the Army or Navy in his presence.

Keep a strong and restraining hand on him in the presence of women, particularly young, attractive women. His intentions will be sincere even if dishonourable. Keep in mind that beneath his tanned and rugged exterior there beats a heart of gold. Treasure this, it will be the only thing of value left. Treat him with kindness and tolerance, and an occasional pint of Best Bitter, and you will be able to rehabilitate that which is the hollow shell of the boy you once knew.

## THE SHAIBAH SUMMER RACE MEETING

### FIRST RACE - THE RASHID ALI CLOSING STAKES.

<u>OWNER</u>		<u>BY</u>	<u>OUT OF</u>
1. LAC. Johnstone's	Croucher	Rigger	244
2. Cpl. Moore's	Bulls. .t	Shaibah	Uxbridge
3. LAC. Watkins	Brassed Off	D.T.G.	Boat
4. LAC. Kelly's	Winning War	National Savings	Py
5. Cpl. Hider's	Won	Neck	Breath
6. Cpl. Ridgeon's	Intention	Departure	Shaibah

### SECOND RACE - THE SHAIBAH "PURSUIT" PLATE

1. LAC. Crutchleys	B.A.	Erk	Camp
2. A.C. Neaney's	"Ring Up"	Jug up	Barclays
3. LAC. Taylor's	Browned Off	D.R.O's	Order
4. A.C. Woodhouse's	Sparklers	Smash and Grab	Shop
5. LAC. Neal's	Tubby	Two-Six	Windows Up.
6. LAC. Shankland's	31st October	Nevassa	Basrah

### THIRD RACE - THE BASRAH CREAK HURDLES

1. A.C. Davis'	Anything Goes	Adolf	Hind
2. Cpl. Henry's	Pessimistic	Boat Chart	Date
3. LAC. Hudd's	Dah-De-Dah	Goons	W.T.
4. LAC. Willer's	Connor	Cookhouse	Marlish
5. Cpl. Chamber's	Injection	Dope	Syringe
6. LAC. Bruce's	Embarrassed	Bottom	Trousers

### FOURTH RACE BLOODS HANDICAP -OFFICERS RACE

#### THE N.A.A.F.I. PLATE

1. LAC MacArthur's	Boozer's Gloom	Taps	Tips
2. LAC. Bums'	Lack-a-Knacker	Goolie Grabber	Swimming Pool
3. LAC. Jeyes'	Rafadain	Abadan	Dapper Dan
4. AC. Olver's	Petrol	Jeep	Bowser
5. LAC. Nichol's	Folly	Nose Down	Wet Going
6. LAC. Food's	Markoo	Fishing	Ashar Creek

### SIXTH RACE - THE SPROGS STEEPLECHASE

#### SERGEANTS RACE

### SEVENTH RACE - THE OVERSEAS HANDICAP (No promotion)

1. LAC. Eridge's	Cold Solens	Ice	Photo' Section
2. Cpl. Williams'	Leaky Pipe	Plumbers Mate	Ex-Fitter 11 (E)
3. LAC. MrGuire's	Lost Squadron	244 Squadron	'S' Squadron
4. Cpl.. Barrett's	Mespot	Introduction	Kindness
5. LAC. Unsworth's •	Bohia	Pnumonia	Business
6. LAC. Hurrel's	Boy Blue	Seven Dwarfs	Snow White

### RACE GOERS DON'TS

1. Don't bribe the Toe, we've already tried it.
2. Don't collect the manure off the course, as it's wanted for salvage.
3. Don't shoot yourself if you lose, shoot the sh-t.
4. Don't slam the door as you go out.

Thank-you

## **NOTES FROM A SMALL ISLAND (CIRCA 1944)**

The bedding arrangements on Masirah were primitive, to say the least. There were two types of 'Slumberland'. First of all, the old Indian charpoise, a wooden frame with legs, with a cross lattice rope. The second type was the three wooden planks lying on two wooden cross members. The whole supported by the ubiquitous four gallon petrol cans (one at each corner). Both these items were subject to the fact that they were the home of myriad bed bugs. Who were possibly attracted by the tasty meal on offer of the sleeping occupant.

Continuous efforts were made to keep this infestation in check, to not much avail. The choice of many was the ritual 'the burning of the beds!' This involved dragging your 'charp' outside the hut and dousing it with 100 octane. Stand well back, throw the lighted match, and whoosh! Through the flames thousands of the little creatures could be seen leaving the cracks and crevices of the planks before being consumed by the flames. One had to be very hasty, and after a few seconds the pyre had to be doused, otherwise you could be left with a much charred, unfit to sleep on ruin. In a previous Newsletter, Phil Watson (mem. No.38), described such an incident when his bed was reduced to a carbonised wreck. He had to go cap in hand to the Station Warrant Officer, (Bill Goddard mem. No.16), for a replacement.

For myself, Like many others, opted for the three plank arrangement, all surmounted by a mosquito net. This last was also a cosy home for the bed bugs, as they nested in the corners and folds of the net. To illustrate this, we ran a test. Someone stood by the light-switch in the hut. "Lights on"! Bugs who had left their hiding places in the net when light was off could be seen scurrying back to their homes when light returned to the hut.

I decided on a new method of attack. On sale in the Mess were small bottles of "Sappo-death to all bugs". (An Australian concoction). A bottle was purchased and both bed and 'skeeter' net were liberally sprayed. This seemed to have no effect, so the exercise was twice repeated Still, no effect, in fact the creatures seemed more lively. in desperation, I filled the metal cap of the 'Sappho' bottle with the liquid, caught a bed bug and dropped it in the cap. It swam around for a considerable time before we drowned it in the 'Sappho'.

This caused much merriment in the billet. I can remember Pat Pattenden (mem. No.159), being doubled up with laughter at my chagrin. Also, Tommy Hazell (mem. No.6) seemed much amused. I decided to return to the defensive with the tried and trusted 'arson' method (The bugs kept on enjoying their 'rations')

Jim (mem. No.51).

## **MESSAGE FROM AMERICA**

Hi Jim and all the members of the 244 Squadron and K.S.!

Although 50 plus years have passed , I will try to furnish you with a little history of my tour of duty on Masirah Island.

I was in the U.S. Army Air Corps, Air Transport Command, and my first assignment overseas was to report to the ATC Headquarters in Accra, British West Africa on the Gold Coast. After a short briefing, I was transferred to Masirah Island which was supposed to be for six months. However, this turned into a two year assignment.

As an administrative specialist, I reported directly to the First Sergeant and Commanding Officer. The C.O. was a top notch flying Officer and the First Sergeant was regular army, who knew very little about administration. So I decided to make the best of the situation and took over all the duties of the office. Evidentially the headquarters was satisfied with my performance as I kept getting promotions from a Private First Glass to Technical Sergeant.

When the war ended, I was transferred to the North. African Division of the ATC, where I processed the men going home.

You asked if there were any interesting stories about life on the Island, and I can remember several.

A U.S. C-54 plane crashed in the ocean just off the Island and the pilot ordered all personnel to leave the plane, which he figured would sink in approximately 3 minutes. All left except for one G.I. who was determined to find his medical records so he wouldn't have to take the shots over. As this plane was carrying a highly secret Naval

camera on board the British were summoned to fly over the wreck in a PBY and bomb the plane. The camera was never found, but the GI did find his records.

The average yearly rainfall for Masirah Island was one tenth of an inch a year, however, in 1944 we had a monsoon with rain that inundated us. As there were no provisions for drainage on the buildings, we sat in water in the mess hall up to our knee. To solve the problem we dug a drainage ditch to the ocean and worked around the clock

I made friends with several British airmen while there, and used to trade them cold American beer for warm Canadian ale. They had no refrigeration. Also, when I had occasion to fly to Karachi, India, I would bring them jars of hard candy for them to send to their loved ones at home. In turn they would develop film and print the pictures for us.

Clarence O. Pelham, T/Sgt USAF. ATC. (Mem. No.242)

### **S.S.ORONTES 1941**

We left Greenock in October, packed with Army and a fair number of RAF in the above ship, built in my home town. Barrow-in-Furness. It was rough in the Atlantic, lovely in the Indian Ocean, Cape Town, Durban (the singing lady), Bombay (by the light of the moon), Basra. We travelled to Baghdad in steel wagons, and tea was made by taking a bucket to the engine.

We lived in the bungalows at Habb, and I thought the facilities excellent, but didn't care for the Sh--t storms, or the Mepacrine which turned one green. I played lots of football and cricket for the M U and there were some strong teams - full of regulars. We played the Brits at cricket in Baghdad one week-end, and saw some of the 'delights' of the East!

I worked in the airscrew bay at the M.U., and went on a course to Alex, just three of us. Across the desert by Nairn coach to Damascus. We stayed a week in Haifa. Nobody missed us! I helped to make a mini golf course at Habb which had 'browns' not 'greens'. I wonder if it is still there. I've always hoped that political conditions would allow me to go back, but I think it's now gone for ever. What I can say is that my RAF service was the best period of my life.

Hugh Helm (mem. No. 251)

### **THE SEVEN HILLS OF SHAIBAH (another Shaibah tale).**

The day that 244 arrived at Shaibah, the outgoing C.O., who was an old friend of mine, showed me round the station. He took me out of the main airfield gates and turned right along the outside of the perimeter fence. We came to a screen of wire on very stout angle iron picquets, running out at right angles to the perimeter fence. It was about eight feet wide, four feet high, and roughly 25 yards long. It obviously had no defensive purpose, and anyone could walk around the far end.

At about three yard intervals underneath the middle line of the wire apron were seven mounds about three feet high. Dudley Lewis said, "These are never to be disturbed, because under one of them lies 'Stoddart's heart'. "Which one?", I asked. "I don't know", he replied. "I was never told", and continued, "It was some years ago, and it is said, because of some unfortunate experience, he did not like Arabs, and the bad feeling was mutual. It was thought if his heart had a simple grave and the locals got wind of it, they might dig it up. Having seven possible grave sights would lengthen the odds for any would be desecrations". I wondered if Dudley Lewis was pulling my leg.

Stoddart was an Air Force 'Character', and I have heard it said that in pre-war days he completed two full overseas tours at Shaibah, the last two as C.O. Before he died in England in the mid thirties, he asked that his heart should be buried at Shaibah.

About forty years after the war I discovered that Air Marshal Sir Dennis Barnett had retired to a village near to where I now live. Not long after learning of his whereabouts, and knowing that at one time he had been C.O. at Shaibah, I found myself sitting next to him at a dinner. This was the golden opportunity to find out the truth. I told him my story. "Was Stoddart's heart really there?", I asked. "It certainly was", he replied. "I buried it myself having received the heart from England in a screw-top preserving jar. Knowing how unpopular he had been in certain quarters, I had seven graves dug at night. I put the jar in one, and all were covered up". Curiosity got the

better of me, and I asked, "In which hole Sir did you put the heart?". He replied, "That, I have never told anyone".

Howard Alloway (mem. No. 309).

Jim Heslop

W/Cdr Ron Rotherham

Don James