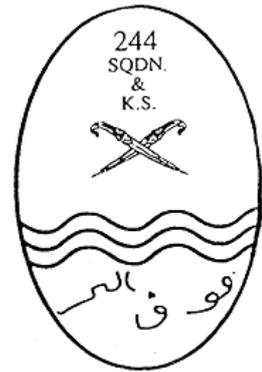




244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 29

The Fifth Reunion at Southport 8/9th October'99.

WHO WAS THERE:-

Alec Alder - Weston-Super-Mare, Bob Balton - Sheepwash, Tom Booth - Uckfield, Ken Bovingdon - Shoreham, Jim Bradley - Antrim, Colin Bates - Sheffield, Fred Cropper - Southport, Peter Culshaw - Warrington, John Duckworth - Southport, John Edwards - Egremont, Ralph Godden - Christchurch, Norman Gould Hayes, Jim Green - Oakham, Bill Greenwood - Dover, Bert Hartley - Bolton, Jim Heslop - Southport, George Hughes - Irby, D'arcy Huntriss - Mold, Jack Hill Weybridge, Harry Hardie - Bearsted, Ken Igglesden - Bexhill, Don James - Formby, Bob Knox - Alva, Eddy Leicester - Tunstall, Eric Luckner Lymm, Jim Leyland Ormskirk, John McCormack - Formby, Ron McDonald - Runcorn, Hector McKinnon - Southport, Or. Chris Morris - Walsall, Alec Martin - Plymouth, George Newman - Formby, Bob Norcott Otley, Roy Naylor - Llanelli, John Purcell - Dingwall, Colin Richardson - Grantham, Jack Sharing - Seascale, Frank Sheppard - Wallington, Joe Showell - Sutton Coldfield, Jim Swann - Wolverhampton, Eddy Seymour - Surrey, Dave Temple - Chepstow, Alex Taylor - Llanleilo, Phil Watson - Australia, Bill Westwood - London, Dave Walker - Arbroath, John Kendal, Charlie Wakeford - Bexley Heath.

NOW WHAT HAPPENED?

Wednesday, 7th October, Don, Frances, Audrey and myself repaired to the Scarishrick (Baron's Bar), to welcome in the early arrivals. A party of RAF regulars were sitting in a corner. They were night stopover at the hotel. On seeing our blazer badges they showed much interest, and before long had joined our party. After a while the strains of 'Sweet Somersetshire' could be heard. A very convivial evening developed. It was great that these present airmen could enjoy the company of the veteran members of 244 & K.S.

Friday, 8th October. A most successful opening to the week-end. Most of the evening was taken up by the meeting of our members old and new. The hub-bub of lively conversation could be heard. After our usual photocall, an excellent buffet was served. Later in the evening Chris Morris gave his usual well received still picture show. This time, Shaibah, Sharjah and Muscat were featured. No other entertainment was necessary, as members were content with recall of the old days. (And that's what Reunions are all about!).

Saturday, 9th October. - The morning was taken up by our bi-ennial General Meeting. See full report elsewhere.

Evening. 99 people attended. We would have attained the 100 mark, unfortunately Harry Dawson and his good lady were involved in a 'shunt' on the M62. Both were shaken up and had to return home. Commiseration's to them both. Harry had attended all previous reunions.

After the usual excellent meal and the toasts, the entertainment commenced. A figure dressed in full Arab attire entered. It was Bob Norcott in full make-up, complete with moustache. Bob then gave us 'The Siege of Habbinya'. This was followed by our Squadron songs, 'Sweet Somersetshire', and 'Shaibah Blues'. The evening got into full swing. Members came to the floor with their 'party pieces', and on this occasion excelled themselves. Why didn't they perform like this at previous Reunions? All this was mingled with dancing on the floor. The evening drew to a close with 'Now is the Hour', and 'Auld Lang Sync'. Another successful Reunion, but mixed with sadness. This is the last Southport event.

From all the letters and 'phone calls we have received it seems the Reunion was enjoyed by one and all. We are very pleased as this will be the last using the Southport formula. We both feel that we have done enough. With the fall in Membership and the passage of time, it's now time to call a halt.

However, we have had discussions with Chris Morris who runs the 'Habbaniya' Association. He and his committee are happy for us to attend their annual Reunion. This is held each year at RAF Cosford (near Wolverhampton). It is a one day affair held each October. This is a good way of keeping up the meeting of our membership. Anyway, more about this in future Newsletters.

The Reunion balance sheet is below. As you can see, we made a loss of £71.15, which will be taken into Association funds. We knew we would make a slight loss, as we tried to keep the overall cost down, and this amount was well within the figure we had allowed for.

The A. G. M.

1. Future Reunions (see above).
2. Annual 'Subs' to remain at £5.00
3. Disposal of our exhibition boards etc. The following ideas were floated:-
 - a. The Old Fort at Sharjah is now a museum, they may wish to take over some items.
 - b. The RAF museum at Hendon have expressed a desire to take over a part.
 - c. We are hanging onto our collection and hope it will be a long time before we have to decide.
4. Looking into the future, the question of disposing of any cash left when we finally have to wind up our Association. It was decided that any monies left should go to the RAF Benevolent Fund or other RAF Charities.
5. The Committee were elected en bloc.
 - a. Secretary/Joint Chairman - Heslop
 - b. Treasurer/Joint Chairman - D.E. James
 - c. Committee - John Edwards, Bert Hartley.
6. Newsletters will be continuing with three issues a year whilst membership remains at present levels. If membership falls dramatically, issues could be reduced to two per annum; on the basis of keeping Sub at £5.
7. A balance sheet for year ending 1999 will appear in our next issue.
8. We would like to thank all members for their donations which have helped immensely, and long may they continue.
9. Copy for future Newsletters. We are moving into a desperate situation as regards copy. S.O.S.!

STOP PRESS

We have just had sad news. John Duckworth who had attended Southport recently passed away. John died suddenly whilst on a cruise in the Med. John was a long serving Regular. He was there during the 'panic' at Habb. John was a fitter, and went on to attain warrant officer rank. Our sympathies go to his family.

SHARJAH ENGLISH SCHOOL

Mrs Bedford
Sharjah English School
PO Box 1600
Sharjah
UAE
25th October 1999

To the 244 Squadron and Kindred Spirits Association

Dear Editor,

As you will have seen from the enclosed letters Sharjah English School is doing a topic about the history of Sharjah from 1900. We would be interested in hearing from anyone who was living here in the past as there are very few books on the subject. Would it be possible for you to print our request in your next newsletter? This is a wonderful source of living history that the children can enjoy and learn from, but we need the experiences of some of your members to help us. Please could you ask anyone who writes to us NOT to enclose photos if they value them, as sometimes they go astray and don't reach us. Of course I am willing to return any to sender, but I would feel dreadful if they were lost in transit.

Please feel free to edit any of the children's letters or to simply list some of the questions that they would like to be answered. I have not corrected spellings as we were in a hurry to send these off to you, hoping to be in time for your next newsletter.

Many thanks for your time and help.

Paula Bedford (Class teacher of Year 6B and 6P).

Could members help? The type of questions they are asking are detailed below. We have received 19 letters from the pupils, which we have distributed to members whom we know were stationed at Sharjah. Obviously we would like anyone with Sharjah experience to reply to the address above.

THE QUESTIONS THE CHILDREN ARE ASKING

- 1) Did you like it there and what was your job.
- 2) How did you manage to stay alive with hardly any food
- 3) Was it as hot as it is now, 40° or hotter.
- 4) Where did the water supply come from.
- 5) Did you have air conditioning, fridges, freezers.
- 6) Did you have cars or camels, and any roads to get around.
- 7) Do you have any ex RAF friends living in Sharjah. If so can we contact them.
- 8) Were there any buildings and what were they made of
- 9) Did you enjoy your job, and what did you do in your spare time.
- 10) Where there any wind towers. How did you find the heat.
- 11) Do you remember the NAAFI.
- 12) Were you in the football team.
- 13) Which year/years were you in Sharjah and for how long.
- 14) Were you ever in action.
- 15) Did you have supermarkets and fast food restaurants.
- 16) Did you like the weather, what did you do to keep cool.
- 17) Did most people survive.
- 18) Were there many Europeans in Sharjah.
- 19) How did you get to Sharjah.
- 20) What was the main income to the country
- 21) When was electricity and drainage installed. What was used before.
- 22) Did you make any friends and do you keep in touch.
- 23) How big were our planes. What did they look like.
- 24) Where was the airfield.
- 25) What kind of food did you eat. Could you buy fresh fruit, veg and meat.
- 26) What was the cost of petrol.
- 27) How long was the war.
- 28) Did food ships get shot at by the German Subs.
- 29) Were all the buildings single storey.
- 30) Where there many ships in the ports.
- 31) Did you get any leave, and how long.

N.B. Copies of the Nominal Roll with addresses can be obtained together with copies of Aviation News articles for a cost of £1.50 each. Post Free. Don and Jim wish all members a very Happy Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous New Year.

Jim Heslop

W/Cdr Ron Rotherham

Don James