



# 244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



## Newsletter No. 32

### ITS, BACK TO SOUTHPORT 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 01

Don & Jim's Report, RAF Cosford 14<sup>th</sup> October 2000. Joint reunion with Habbaniya Association. Approx 160 people attended, including 37, 244 & K.S. members and wives. We were made most welcome, the lunch was first rate, and the Reunion well organised. The Habbites took great interest in our memorabilia display. Many thanks to Chris Morris and his committee for an enjoyable day. Our AGM also took place (see below).

Jim met a lady whose husband had been a crew captain with 244 who had pranged in the sea off Perim Island (out of Khormasar) losing two crew. She had been researching the squadron for some years, and had some new information to impart (see future Newsletters).

### 244 Squadron Kindred Spirits A.G.M at RAF Cosford.

The following items were discussed:-

1. Balance sheets for the 1999 Reunion and for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1999 were agreed.
2. It was proposed and agreed that Subs remain at £5 per year and that, for the moment, Newsletter would be published three times per year.
3. Fully paid up membership stands at 141.
4. It was proposed and agreed that the existing committee carry on i.e. Jim Heslop (Secretary/Joint Chairman), Don James (Treasurer/Joint Chairman). Committee members John Edwards, Bert Hartley.
5. It was agreed that no balance sheet was necessary for the Cosford Reunion.
6. Members were thanked for their efforts re The Sharjah English School.
7. Members were reminded that Subs for 2001 were due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2001.
8. The main discussion concerned future Reunions. It was requested from the floor that future Reunions should be held in Southport. We explained our difficulties regarding numbers (100 to guarantee our banquet) especially with reducing membership. Also, the work required in booking various accommodation.

It was suggested we look for a smaller room. We explained the need to book early, and maybe we would have to change the venue. We would need a firm commitment to attend, i.e. a deposit very early On. Also, we could not arrange hotel accommodation. Members would book direct with the hotels. We agreed to see what we could do and report back.

### MEETING AT THE SCARISBRICK HOTEL ON 30<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2000

The following was arranged:-

- 1) Smaller room for venue on Thursday 20 September 2001, and Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001.
- 2) Same standard as before.

### COST Buffet (Thursday) and Banquet (Friday)

The cost of the Buffet and banquet is £34 inclusive. Banquet only is £21. This is only £1 increase on 1999. Cheques for Buffet and Banquet (payable to "244 Sqdn & K.S.") should be sent to Don at 18 Wicks Green, Formby L37 1PR. At the same time could you confirm at which hotel and how long you will be staying. On both nights there will be the usual sherry reception. On Friday, wine will be supplied at the table (cost included). IMPORTANT. We will need a deposit of £15 per person, for the Buffet and Banquet to be received by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2001.

**WE NEED A FIRM COMMITMENT!**

Also, the Hotel(s) will want a separate deposit by 31st December 2001.

HOTEL(s) TO BE BOOKED BY YOURSELVES.

SCARISBRICK HOTEL 'phone 01704 543000

Wednesday night (if required) £45 bed, breakfast & dinner per person.

Thursday night £40 bed breakfast per person.

Friday night £40 bed breakfast per person.

Saturday night (if required) £45 bed, breakfast & dinner per person

Sunday night (if required) £35 bed, breakfast carvery per person.

To be booked by members themselves with the Hotel (mentioning 244 & K.S.). We have negotiated these special prices and have reserved room. Cheques for accommodation paid direct to the Hotel.

BALMORAL LODGE (two star) Queens Road. 'phone 01 704 544298. Our members have used this hotel on many occasions.

CARLTON LODGE Guest House, Bath Street. Always used by our members in the past. phone 01 704 542290.

Some of our members prefer to find their own billets. If any difficulty, ring Jim, who will arrange a copy of 'Southport Tourist Guide' to be sent (out in February, 2004

PLEASE SUPPORT US BY BOOKING EARLY.

### **WHY WE WERE THERE. U.K. NEWSPAPER REPORT**

Extract from: The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post,  
Thursday, August 24, 1944

3,750,000 Tons for Russia Via Persia.

More than 3,750,000 tons of war material have been delivered to the Russians by the Persian Irak Command along the Southern supply arm from the Persian Gulf to the Russo-Persian border, in one of the greatest supply achievements in history.

The story of this impressive aid which played a vital part behind the summer offensive that has swept the Red Army to the borders of Germany, was told by G.H.Q. of the Command yesterday.

Initial deliveries to the Command amounted to 25,000 tons from September, to December, 1941. About 1,750,000 tons were handled in the first half of this year.

Britons, Americans, Indians, Poles and Russians have shared in this supply triumph. And day and night, in temperatures in the 120's or of 40 below. Field Security Police and men of the C.M.P. keep constant vigil on these convoy lines, protecting them from theft and sabotage.

It is officially estimated that nearly 50 per cent of the total aid to Russia given by Britain, Canada and the United States, has gone by the Persian-Irak Command.

In the last three months of 1942, the monthly average was 40,000 tons. By the beginning of 1943 this figure had soared, and in July more than 150,00 tons were delivered. By December the monthly figure has risen to nearly 250,000 tons, and in July this year to 300,000 tons.

More than 4,500 planes were assembled, mostly by the RAF and flown to Russia by Russian Pilots.

From the beginning of June 1943, to the end of June this year 13,204 vehicles were assembled at British Army Installations.

In the early days the convoy men suffered great privations, but soon the authorities organised recognised staging points, with hot baths, showers, canteens, mobile cinemas and .E.N.S.A. Concerts. (Did any member experience such comforts Ed?).

Famous infantry regiments have played a big part in guarding this vast road to Russia and the pipe-line, 200 miles of which have been laid. (Also, 244 and K.S. were present • Ed).

Doug Hutchinson (Australia) Men. No. 98

I was never actually based in Iraq, but I have flown in and out several times. I was based in Aden at Khormaskar on the Aden Communication Squadron of Valetta's.

I remember well Masirah, we used to fly in with supplies twice a fortnight from A. Those days in 1952-1954 it had a complement of one Officer, one S.N.C.O. and about 15 men. The C.O. at the time was an Irishman (a Flying Officer) and as soon as we established contact on the R/T he would request the names of the crew so that he had a cold drink waiting for us on arrival. A Heinekens (Jungle Juice) for me, an Allsops for the Skipper and a Whitbread for our Signaller. I must say I enjoyed trips to Masirah, it was a good life. At that time it was a 6 months posting but half of the bods opted to stay on for another couple of tours.

The flight started out from Aden with a stop at Riyan for morning tea and then to Salalah for lunch, arriving at Masirah at 1600.

There was one thing that intrigued me at Riyan and that was the mural on the wall in the mess. It showed an aircraft bombing a whale (I think the aircraft was a Wellington), could be that it was mistaken for a submarine. Can any member throw more light on the subject?

Another place I remember well was Sharjah. I spent 3 months there at the time of the Burami Oasis business. Once again a very small complement of troops but never the less a great crowd.

Got myself into a bit of bother there. We had taken a Winco Political Officer there for negotiations on Burami and on this particular day we were running late as usual so decided to fly direct from Sharjah to Masirah instead of via Ras El Had. Anyway, to cut a long story short we had hardly touched down at Aden when our crew were called forward to the A.O.C.'s Office. It seems someone dobbed us in for flying over Oman without permission, he delivered us a rocket then invited us over to his place for drinks. What a nice man.

Moss Coulthard (Australia) Mem. No. 321

### **'AND NE'ER THE TWAIN SHALL MEET'**

One of the functions of Comm. Flight's airborne ground crew was an unofficial cabin crew duty expected of fitters and riggers after loading freight, refuelling, and inspecting aircraft in between flights. Catering to the needs of passengers was a task that most pilots left to the erks while they got on with flying the thing, the 'thing' being an ancient Valencia that looked as if it has escaped from a museum, a bone-shaking Bombay that had, or if you were lucky (or not in some cases) a Hudson or Lodestar. Crews had their favourite skippers, and some pilots were known to specify certain crews, but in general it was a lottery, with numbers taken from a mixed bag. The outcome was often expressed with typical RAF vocabulary, such as "Who the hell sent me that lot? Or "Oh God, not Biggles again!"

Someone had called a top level Paiforce military conference in Cairo, and we sent a Hudson to Teheran to bring back seven assorted Iranian top brass. It went wrong, however, and they all perished, including the Comm, Flight crew. A replacement Hudson made it the next day, and after a stopover at Habb another crew was assembled to take them to Heliopolis. Our wireless Op. was Wally Colvin, Harry Edgington and I were flitter and rigger (and cabin crew), and I cannot now remember the navigator, but the pilot was --- well, let's call him Flying Officer Q (not his real rank nor his initials). A week ago Q had nearly killed me as I was securing a panel under the nose of a Valentia when he drove it forward without waiting for a marshaller. I wound up in sick bay after diving for my life and skinning knees and arms as the old warbird ran over me. So I was reasonably unimpressed when turned up to fly us and the Iranians to Cairo.

As per custom, I swept up the dead flies once we met cooler air, and settled down on the floor. Most S.N.C.O. pilots were happy to have the ground crew fly up front, from where we could go back to check on the passengers as necessary, but when rank prevailed the erks sat on the floor. The Iranians were a smart lot, with belted greatcoats down to their black jackboots and vertical peaks to their caps. But when after three hours out came the chocolate, then the oranges, Harry and I cast skyward glances at each other, fearing the worst as Q picked out every weather pattern on the chart. One by one they came back to use the Elsan, and each time I dutifully drew the curtain behind them and showed them how to depress the goolie grabbers (sorry, but how else can you describe a pair of stainless steel louvers that opened when you sat down and snapped shut like a hungry alligator when you stood up?). I advised them also to hang on to the lid, which had become unstable with the pitching of the tail and threatened to come crashing down, which is acceptable if you are sitting down but not if you are bending forward with your face in the firing line.

We had christened one of them Goebbels, being of similar stature as the Nazi, lean of features and long in the tongue and it was his turn as we circled Cairo. I showed him how to disarm the grabbers and left the scene in a rush. Not a pretty sight, was Goebbels, as he juggled with the seat, the lid, and his cap while pretending he was a born aviator who could hold his chocolate and his oranges, which he obviously couldn't by the noise he was making. The lid crashed down on his nose, broke his glasses and shot one of the lenses into the Elsan. He had just managed to save it when Q made a controlled crash on the sandy Heliopolis runway, and he was recovering his composure when Q spun the tail and Goebbels went base over apex. Not his day at all.

Outside a reception committee had assembled and an ocarina band struck up "Up your pipe King Farouk", or something, as 1 opened the door and fixed the ladder to allow the once magnificent seven to alight, Goebbels bringing up the rear. You had to feel sorry for them, as their predecessors had all perished and they had just endured one of the most uncomfortable flights I could remember. But at least they would make it to the conference in one piece.

The landing had flattened the tail oleo, and I declared the aircraft U/S. "Ring me. I will be in the Officer's Mess," said Q. I fixed the tailwheel and checked the undercarriage while the duty crew refuelled the tanks and coolies cleaned out the rear end. Harry rang Q and told him the plane would be ready in the morning, leaving us the rest of the day to ourselves. I went to Abbassia to visit my old school pal and rugby rival who was stationed there at an army camp. In the morning Harry rang Q again to arrange a take-off time. "Is he ....?" I asked. "As a newt" replied Harry. We waited with some trepidation after loading aircraft spares aboard, including a three-bladed prop that proved a bit awkward.

One could only wonder at the self-control and skill of the man as he yanked us up into the wild blue yonder, set course, set George, and fell asleep. Harry and I held on to the prop for five hours, after which Wally came back and announced that we were totally lost, George having taken us off course. We finally broke sandstorm somewhere east of Fallujah and sneaked back to Habb from the wrong direction, which apparently nobody noticed. Q had recovered and left without a word nor a glance. "Thank you" would have been nice.

Jimmy Rigger

Imagine my 'phone ringing at home.

"Are you Jimmy Rigger?"

"That depends. How can I help?"

"This is Q"

If it happens, I just left for Mongolia, heavily disguised as a Russian aristocrat.

Anon Mem. No. 26

## **I REMEMBER WHEN (2)**

In January 1942, we were quite pleased to learn that a detachment was to move to Sharjah. I think it was just three aircraft initially together with a small supporting ground crew whom I was one. We were busy getting prepared, assembling spares and equipment and quite enjoying the diversion. As usual in those days we were in the dark as to the purpose of the trip and heard all sorts of rumours, none of which were accurate.

We were billeted in the B.O.A.C. fort, it was quite comfortable and the initial change from Shaiyah was a welcome break. The accommodation was good, we were two to a room. They were not palatial but clean and airy with a ceiling fan and electric light, items we were to miss when we moved out later.

We had no cooks with us so relied on volunteers. I was talking to Tich Grimson last year about it as he was one of the 'cooks', and recalled how they attempted to make a spotted dick. Using hard tack biscuits beaten to a powder mixed with fruit, the result was a solid lump that defied all attempts to reduce it to slices or even lumps. At least they tried. The meals were taken in a large Marquee, apart from being hot, it was alright. The food was as good as could be expected. What made it better was the extras plenty of butter, jam, sugar, cereals and of course tea, much more than we were used to. The reason came to light when the C.O. arrived, he was not amused. Our fitters, riggers cum cooks had been feeding us on rations intended for considerably larger numbers than just our small detachment. It would probably have helped if the right hand had told the left hand, but everything was hush hush.

Shortly after, I was sent to the hospital at Habb for tests that turned out to reveal a kidney problem that required six weeks of treatment and diet. On release I boarded a Valencia to Shaibah arriving in the mid afternoon.

When I had travelled to Habb from Sharjah, I had gone first to Shaibah and left all my kit in the billet, carrying just a small case of clothes etc. So on that afternoon I went straight to the billet which of course was in darkness it being siesta time. However, I made my way to my bedspace as quietly as I could and dumped my kit on the bed. There was a shout and very shortly the whole billet was awake, I was not popular, and to my horror I couldn't recognise anyone. After a short and noisy inquest I learnt that the whole Squadron had moved to Sharjah and no-one had thought to tell me.

Next day I enquired and learnt that my kit was in store. A visit to the store was another shock, I was told that as my whereabouts were unknown to the stores staff my kit had been labelled missing and despatched, "probably" to Sharjah. I hitched a lift to Sharjah, rejoined the Squadron and still haven't got my kit. So I lost all my blue uniforms, webbing (not much of a loss), and my personal items, camera, photo albums, etc.

A few weeks later I was posted to 119M U. Shaibah. Anyone who was unfortunate enough to be posted there will know what it was like, but that is also another story. I requested a posting to the Desert Air Force and to my joy it was granted, there started another saga. My travel document was a small chit stating the undermentioned Airman is posted to another theatre of War and should be given every assistance to complete his journey. I was deposited at Shaibah junction to await the train for Baghdad. After the usual uncomfortable journey I managed to get a lift to Habbaniya which seemed a good place to get a lift to Egypt. It wasn't so easy. After a few days trying to get an air passage, I gave up and left on an army convoy to Rutbah wells. Progress was slow, it took me six weeks by road and rail to reach the transit camp at Al Hamra. The last leg was a train from Cairo to Kasfareet in the company of a draft of Canadian aircrew en route to UK. for advanced aircrew training. We arrived at the railhead and on to lorries arriving at the camp gates at Al Hamra at about 0200 to be met by a Warrant Officer dearly upset at the unearthly hour. There were mutterings in the ranks from the aircrew when he impersonated a drill sergeant especially as a fair number were officers. When calm was restored he gave instructions, "Officers that way, S.N.C.O's that way", that left me the only airman, so I asked, "where do I go sir?". He had had enough by then and was clearly unable to cope with any more, so said, "go with the S.N.C.O's". I caught up with them and settled in a bunk with three Sgt pilots. In the morning they got ready to go to the Mess for breakfast and one of them gave me a set of brass chevrons. I put them on and went with them to breakfast. After which I considered my position and decided to extend my stay in the Mess for a few days to enjoy the relative comfort and good food. My new found friends encouraged me and offered to pay me to act as their batman. Being short of cash I agreed. Such was the chaos in the camp and so many transient. I considered it a fair risk especially as I wasn't expected to any hard and fast arrival time, given my vague travel orders.

I spent a few days in the Mess enjoying the meals and the facilities. Seeing the difference to my normal existence, but it had to end. So I reported to movements, handed my chitty in and told to come back next day, since I was not a new arrival from UK, I could have a bed in the home posting tent. As it happens, bed was a space in the sand under cover. Since I had travelled in style complete with bedroll and ground sheet it presented no problem

Having reported next day I was paid back pay and was in funds again. I was also posted to the Middle East Airframe Repair Depot, I think it was Fayid. I say think because it was cancelled. At this point I was spotted by the S. W. O. who grilled me for a few minutes because he thought I reminded him of someone but couldn't place me. I could have helped him because he had seen me in the Mess, after that I kept out of his way.

I was then posted to 216 Sqdn Heliopolis and worked on Blenhiems. After a couple of weeks I was back in sick quarters with a painful recurrence of kidney trouble, which seemed difficult to treat. After discharge from SSQ I was sent back to Al Hamra for re-posting and to my surprise and delight I was posted to U.K. So ended a journey. Sequel was that I was on the same draft as my friendly Canadian Aircrew.

Eddy Rose Mem. No. 29

May we wish all members compliments for the coming Festive season, and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Jim Heslop  
(Secretary & Supplies)

W/Cdr Ron Rotherham  
(President)

Don James  
(Treasurer)