



244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



Newsletter No. 42

From Don & Jim, a belated Happy, HEALTHY New Year to all our members from Audrey, Frances and our two selves. Also, many thanks for the large number of Xmas cards received. Much appreciated, but we couldn't possibly answer them all. Don hasn't been too well recently, and has endured another short spell in hospital. Consequently our 2003 balance sheet is still not complete. Sufficient to say that, financially the Association is still sound with a balance of £1189 as at 31/12/03. The balance sheet will appear in our next issue.

Talking about finance, as usual at this time of the year quite a number of you have not yet forwarded your 2004 subscription, which was due 1st January last. It is still £5, and should be payable to "244 Sqdn & Kindred Spirits Assn" and send to Don. To end on finance, very many thanks for the amount of donations received in 2003, much appreciated by your officers.

Membership shows a steady, but slow decline for obvious reasons. We now number 142 members which, surprisingly, includes two new members this current year.

I now come to an important but CRUCIAL appeal. I am awfully short of decent copy for future Newsletters. Please lads! "Thinking caps on", and forward your efforts to Jim.

Sad to say that two of our stalwarts have passed on, Tom Booth (mem. No.59). Tom attended every one of our six reunions, despite having to travel from Uckfield (Kent) up to Southport. He was a great supporter of our Association.

During the "Great Oil Mystery" of 1944, Tom had the humiliation of (together with the other NCO fitters) having his toolbox removed. It was later discovered that the ancient lubricating oil was to blame. Also, Joe Showell DFM (Mem. No.90). Joe was, like myself a Wop/Ag with 244. He attended all but the last Reunion. Joe and I knew on another through most of our RAF careers, having met up at Radio School, OTU, and finally the Squadron. On his return to UK in early 1945, whilst on a second tour, he was awarded DFM.

Now, on a lighter note we come to the result of our competition which was advertised in our last Newsletter 41. We asked for details (in 100 words or over) of the best/worst. weirdest meal you had in your overseas service. The funniest entry was received on an Xmas card sent in by Ken Bovindton (mem. No.25). Sadly we had to disqualify – less than 100 words. Ken's entry was brief -

"To enter your competition my starting point can only be, very old goat and dehydrated spuds; mecaprin for starters (anti-malarial) and salt tablets for afters. All that in 140F in W/T shack".

The winning entry was sent in by John Broadbent (mem. No.335) (A cheque for £10 is on its way to you John).

BULLY FRITTER – THE EXOTIC TASTE OF SALALAH

I never did like bully beef!

Hadn't we in England as the song says, been "The dumping ground of Old Chicago" But then in 1944 I was posted to Salalah, and that's when I first met Ted, a West country man who was the head cook. Ted could make bully beef stews, minced beef cottage pie and serve it cold with salads. However, his piece de resistance was on Wednesdays when he served up "Bully Fritter".

For the uninitiated, bully fritter looks like Harry Ramsden's fried fish with the bully in place of the fish.

We always looked forward to Wednesdays in Salalah, and it was there I changed my view of bully beef; maybe Chicago isn't too bad after all.

There has however, since those days been one 'snag', I've never met anyone who could make 'bully beef fritters' like Ted.

So wherever you are Ted, I'm toasting you with a glass of Chardonnay whilst I get stuck into my Marks and Spencer Lasagne!

MORE ON THE 'LIFEBOAT' (see Newsletter No. 41)

To begin at the beginning, my father John Allistone — then, I think, a Flying Officer — was one of the four people who swam out to the lifeboat at Masirah, as related by Jack Heap in Newsletter No. 41. Sadly he died in 1996 just one week short of his 90th birthday or he too would gladly have joined the Association and much enjoyed reminiscing with members. He often regaled us with his account of the 'shipwreck'. The name of the medical officer is not known (but could doubtless be discovered from the Station Diary at Masirah, which might also establish the dates when the escapade took place). In correspondence with Jack Heap, I have learned that the name of the other airman involved was Reg Frampton, but I have not been able to trace his address. All I can add to the story is that my father had been, in civilian life, a clerk with the National Provincial Bank in Newport, Monmouthshire. He joined the RAF (VR) in 1941 at the age of 35 and was commissioned at RAF Uxbridge into the Administration & Special Duties Branch as a Cipher Officer. Shortly afterwards he was posted abroad, first Habbaniyah — where remember we used to write air letter to him at "HQ PAIFORCE" — and then to Masirah, probably in 1942/43. He was always a strong swimmer, having spent much of his boyhood by the sea at Ventor, Isle of Wight. On the occasion in question he said that, having swum out to the lifeboat, they had managed to get the sail up but when they turned round for the rudder there wasn't one — all they has to steer with was a piece of old packing case. So the only thing they could do was to run before the wind, which (fortunately) was blowing towards the mainland. A search was started when their clothes were later found on the island and they were eventually located on the mainland beach by a Masirah-based Bisley (aka Blenheim Mk V), which returned to free-drop their clothes to them, together with the Very pistol and cartridges. My father's Rolex wristwatch was in his trouser pocket and survived to tell him the time for many years thereafter. The pistol was later stolen by some wandering bedu who encamped themselves near where the boat had landed, presumably with the intention of acquiring some loot. The MO managed to convey to their headman, largely by sign language, that the thief would be liable to lose his right hand if the pistol were not returned PDQ and, by the following morning, it was back in its place by the boat. A few days later, the party were taken off by dhow and returned to Masirah, where they where told they had been exceedingly stupid and were invited either to pay for the hire of the dhow or face court martial — they wisely chose the former.

Mike Allistone (mem, No.362).

Recently I had some correspondence with the brother of an old 244 Sqdn fitter. He was John McCartney, a Canadian lad from Saskatoon. John was one of the many ground crew who volunteered to act as air gunners during the Rashid Ali affair. He was shot down and captured by the Iraqis. The treatment he received caused him to dislike the Iraqi army very much.

He was posted to 244 after the break up of 4FTS with myself and another lad He came back to UK with me in the autumn of 1942. He was posted to 244 sqdn as a Flight Engineer, and awarded a DFM for action against a U-boat. He was then shot down and killed later on (see below).

If any of your members remember McCartney this will let know how his RAF service ended.

Liberator Down.

The KTB of Oberleutnant Wilhelm Brauel's U-256 recorded an attack in Grid BE4526 at 2312 hours on the evening of 19 March 1944.

"Aircraft attacking with Leigh Light, distance 1,500 metres, height 50 metres. Strafing from aircraft. Flak opens up, hits scored by the 3.7 cm on the fuselage. Aircraft passes over at 50 metres behind the boat releasing six bombs. As it passes over flames observed in the bomb bay and starboard motor. Plunged into the sea 500 m away. Heavy explosion, pillar of fire, and nothing remains but burning oil".

The lost aircraft would seem to be a Liberator – 'F' of 224 Squadron – which had taken off from St Eval on a Percussion Tere 4 sortie at 2105 and failed to return. Three messages had been sent out but the aircraft did not respond.

F/L R Dunn	Pilot	F/S H Penhale RCAF	WOP/AG
F/O A V Cormack	2nd Pilot	F/S H Thornton RCAF	WOP/AG
F/S W F Stockwell	Nav.	F/S A Sower RNZAF	WOP/AG
F/S W J Leahy RAAF	2nd Nav.	Sgt. G Jones	WOP/AG
Sgt. J McCartney	Eng.	W/O R H Cook	WOM/AG

Jim McKnight (mem. No.22)

REFLECTIONS OF SHARJAH 24.3.43. TO 19.11.43

This was a six month posting and one could not be posted back to Iraq until ones relief had arrived. The humidity was over 100'

We were in tents (no sides) and we had to sleep in our clothes otherwise they would be too wet to wear the next day. We could not leave a box of matches or cigarette packets by our bedsides otherwise they would be wet and soggy (as though dipped in a pail of water).

Water was brought in large tins on the sides of donkeys.

No fresh vegetables, we did have tablets.

We had prickly heat and it was not unusual to call at the sickbay on the way to the Flights to be sprayed back and front.

Our supplies came from Basra by boat on a three monthly basis. We had two boats, the Tononbo and the Barjara (not spelt correctly).

The messes were the only solid buildings.

We had no toilets; we sat on a round bar over a hole in the sand

We had no urinals. We did have a form of stand up in the open. These we called 'Desert Lillie's". We had a lot of trouble keeping the aircraft serviceable, many were u.s.

Dubai was then a landing stage extending into the gulf 10 to 15 feet wide.

There was sand, deep sand about everywhere.

Dead donkeys were left in the sand where they died.

Big, ugly Vultures could be seen sitting on their backs. They just glared at you as you drove passed in the 3 tonners on the way to the Gulf for a swim.

It was not unusual to see a hand dangling from the top of the Sharjah Fort wall. It was said that someone had been caught stealing.

I remember a ginger headed corporal who had to be carried out into the sun before he could walk. He had Rheumatism or Arthritis so bad.

At the moment chest covered with prickly heat which could be a continuance of that which I have whilst at Sharjah. I also have Eczema on the hand and a few spots elsewhere to which I have to apply ointment frequently.

Dave Kay (mem. No.41)

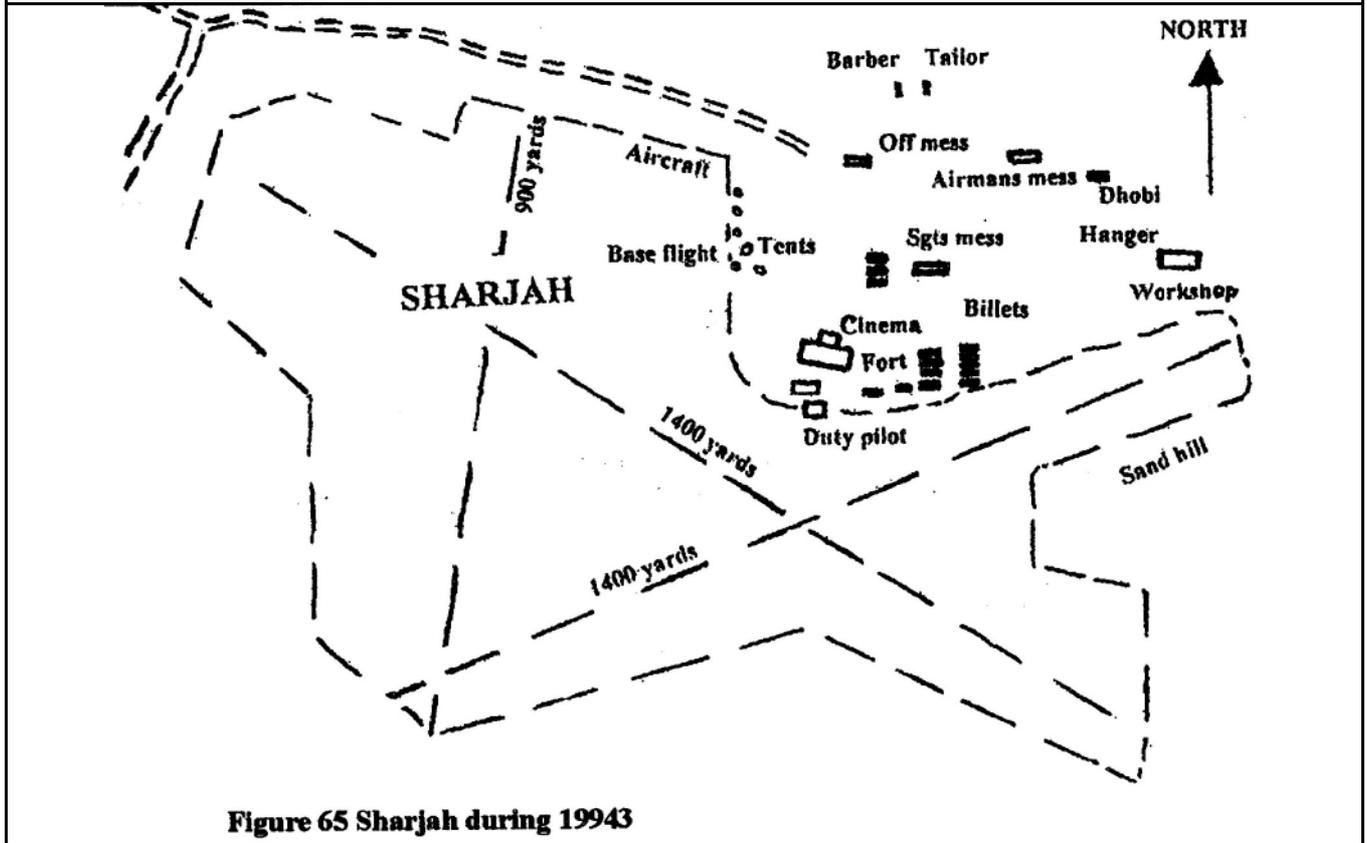
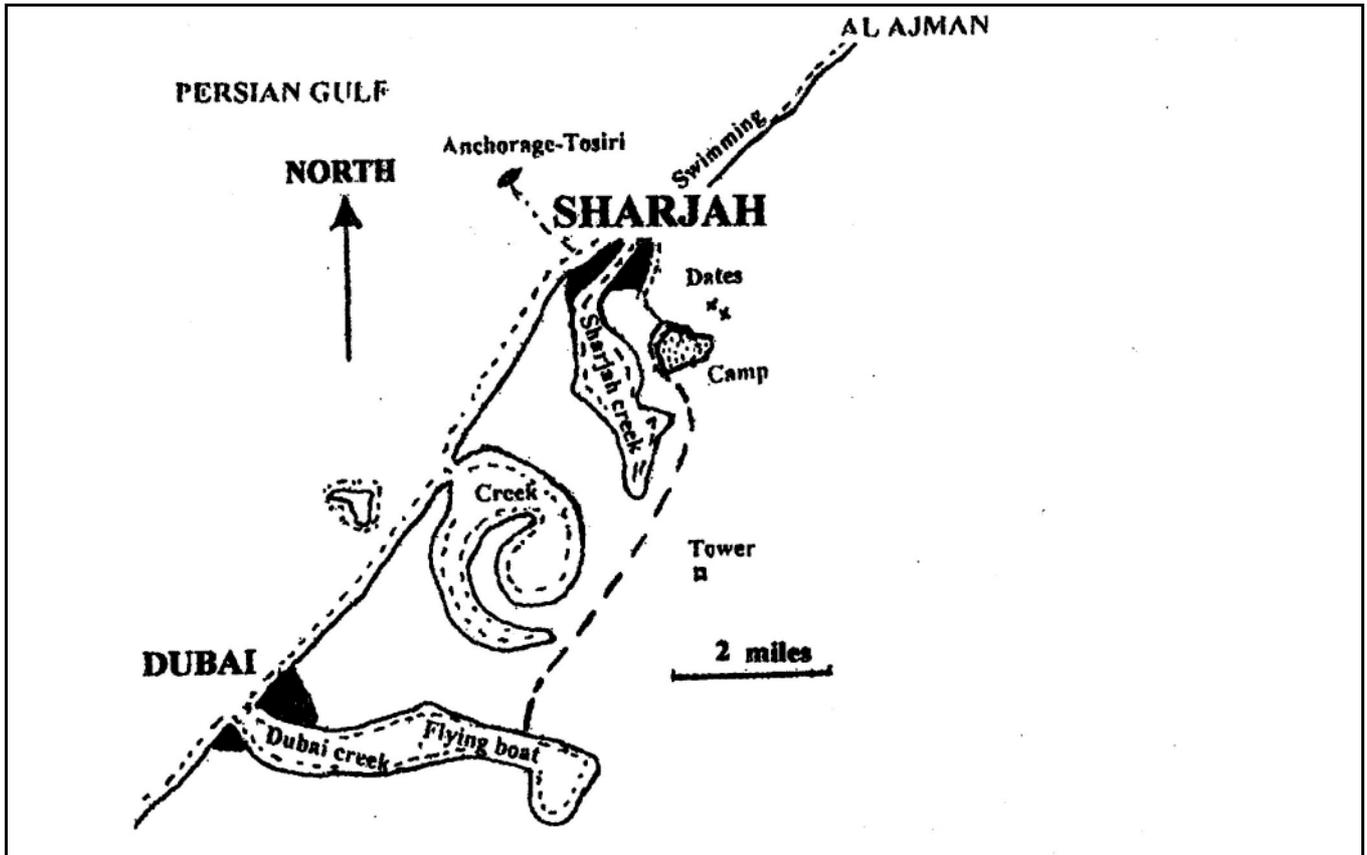


Figure 65 Sharjah during 19943

"RIGGER RECKS BOAT SONG"

(as sung at the Aircraft Depot at Habb) to the tune of "The little boy that Santa Clause forgot"

*For I'm just an Erk that A.H.Q. forgot,
I sailed the seas and landed in Mespot.
I worked on Vincents, Gordons, and a few Valencias too.
They said you're very spawny, 'cos you've only two to do,
But then that Records thought they'd have some fun,
And so I had to do an extra one.
It's a pity I'm a rigger 'cos until that boat lists bigger
I'm just and Erk that A.H.Q. forgot.*

*Yes, I'm just an Erk that A.H.Q. forgot
And goodness knows I didn't want a lot
I put in an application for promotion and a boat
I got a swire (small) promotion, but there's no blinking boat
So all I do is lie in Charp
As Erks pass by you'll hear them declare
It's a pity he's a rigger 'cos until that boat lists bigger
Why, he's just an Erk that A.H.Q. forgot.*

Provided by David Kay (men. No.41)

DERBY DAY ON THE ISLAND

NB. One Chip=One Rupee=approx 1s 4d.

Late May early June 1944, morale was low on 244 Sqn. Whole squadron grounded, awaiting complete engine change. Each week a Halifax would arrive carrying new or refurbished Hercules engines in its underbelly pannier. All this was due to 'the great oil mystery'. Afterwards it was discovered that the lubricating oil being used was of 1918 vintage with catastrophic results. In an effort to raise our spirits, I decided to make a book on the Derby. I has a list of probable runners and ante-post prices sent out from UK, and after trimming the odds a little, set our for my first punter.

I approached Harold Olsen, a New Zealand navigator "Fancy a bet on our Derby? " Harold studied the runners, and requested 20 chips on Happy Landings at 20/1. I was a bit surprised at the size of the wager, as I was expecting stakes of one or two chips at most. Anyway, let us proceed. After trimming the odds on Happy Landings to 8/1, the next bet was also 20 chips, the horse (you've guessed it) was Happy Landings. I now had the situation that after two bets I had a possible payout of 600 chips with no other field money! I should have realised the name Happy Landings had RAF connotations, hence the bets. No chance of "Hedging" or Laying Off" (No Ladbrokes or William Hill available here). If disaster happened I could imagine a scenario of "Dear Mum, please send £X with all speed!".

Anyway, things improved. Word got around, and bets flooded in. Money came in from all over. Much of it from the Flights. I can remember that wagers even arrived from the Sick Bay!

Derby Day arrived. My book was badly skewed. Happy Landings a big loser. The Aga Khan's horse Tehran would also show a loss. Also, I laid Taffy the Mess barman 1000 chips to 10 for a place against a `no hoper' named Abbots Fell.

It is now evening time, the Mess is full, and people are clustered round the radio, near the Mess bar. The topes go up, "They're off"! As the race unfolded many horses were mentioned, but as they reached The Bushes two furlongs out (I forgot to mention this is not the Epsom Derby, but the wartime substitute run at Newmarket) only four horses are in with a chance — Tehran, Abbots Fell, Happy Landings and Ocean Swell. As excitement reached high level, someone knocked over a large enamel jug of chai. Most of this splashed over the wireless which immediatelj expired (a spiral of blue smoke from the back of the set!).

Pandemonium reigned! A couple of minutes later someone rushed in from the Mess kitchen (where they had a radio) with the full result. 1st Ocean Swell, 2nd Tehran, 3rd Happy Landings, 4th Abbots Fell. Sigh of relief from yours truly! The winner had a few supporters. I remember two or three small bets at 20/1.

A good profit was realised, which, if I remember, was reinvested in other games of skill or chance such as poker, crap game and even Totoply.

Jim Heslop (mem. No.51)

Jim Heslop (Secretary & Supplies) W/Cdr Ron Rotherham (President) Don James (Treasurer)