



## 244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



### Newsletter No. 44

Jim says, so sad to tell you that Don James my friend and your Treasurer passed away in early August. Don had not really made a full recovery from his heart op of two years ago. At his funeral our Association was well represented, and both Merseyside and Southport and District branches of the Aircrew Association were out in force.

Don James joined the RAF in 1939 and duly qualified as Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. He joined 100 Sqdn at Watton, Cambridgeshire flying Blenheim IV's. In December 1941 when Japan entered the War, three aircraft were detached to fly to Singapore to reinforce the defence there. Don was the Wop in F/Lt Riddell's crew.

En route to Singapore, Don's aircraft force landed in Iraq, and the aircraft was 'written off'. Fortunately for Don he eventually joined 244 at Sharjah. What would have happened if he had reached Singapore is anyone's guess!!

Whilst with the Sqdn he flew Vincents, Blenheim IV and V's. After his tour was over he was posted to Kenya and became the A.O.C's personal Wop. He returned to UK in late 1944.

Where do we go from here? I am now Secretary/Treasurer and have decided to carry on as long as able. We are still flourishing with 135 members and new ones still trickling in. To do this successfully I must have your co-operation, particularly with the payment of subscriptions and of course with the provision of copy for our Newsletters.

As regards Newsletters (still three per year) please note that your stories must be about your doings in the Gulf of Arabian peninsular.

On the subject of subscriptions, quite a few of you have yet to pay your current years Sub. There will be a notation on this Newsletter if you have not already paid. Failure to do so will mean no further Newsletters will be sent.

To assist my efforts, from now on no receipts will be sent for Subs (except when cash is received). Also, if you wish to resign your membership please let me know — to keep my records up to date.

To end on a Festive note, may myself and Audrey plus Frances (who is in ill health) wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

## **CRUISING**

*By Jan Kern*

*'Twas early '42 I sailed the oceans blue,  
Life was really super aboard His Majesty's trooper,  
Queuing here and queuing there — even to go you know where!  
Boat drill, boat drill, what a pleasure!  
Could one wish for greater leisure?  
The daily routine was dull and drab,  
Any food going we had to grab,  
Hunger was never far away — except when the boat did rock and sway.*

*Never mind, we did survive,  
I, for, one came home alive.*

*The years between were indescribable  
(Alright for Les - he had the Bible!).  
Some were good, some were bad,  
Much depended on the C.O. one had  
Blighty was a land far far away,  
Aerographs and censored letters  
(All checked over by our betters)  
Were our contact with that land remote,  
No wonder we said 'roll on, that bloody boat'.*

*Never mind, we did survive,  
I, for one, came home alive.*

*The years did come, the years did go,  
Here we went and there we'd go,  
Older and older we did grow, at times it really did show,  
Different lands and different races,  
Different customs and different faces,  
We took them all in our stride,  
'ill at last the enemy cracked,  
Reluctantly admitting he was whacked*

*Never mind, we did survive,  
I, for one, came home alive.*

## **UPLIFTED FROM 'EBAY' ON THE INTERNET (ANYBODY REMEMBER HIM?)**

Unusual WW2 Royal Airforce Logbook to 1196734 L.A.C. W R Morgan who served as rigger/mechanic on the Communications Flight at RAF Habbaniya in Iraq from 1.11.41 to 20.11.43 flying in the ancient Vickers Valentia and then 244 Sqn. Log records flights up to 11.43 and then one final in June 1945 in a US Curtis Commando. With log is his leather C type flying helmet complete with G type oxygen mask and wiring loom. Helmet and mask are in poor condition. Also with lot are a number of hand-written training notes with hand drawn colour illustration, diner menu, theatre tickets, call up papers, photos of family and girlfriend all stored in a canvas bag with his initials to front. Unusual for a rigger to have an official log book. Buyer please confirm bid at end of auction. Overseas bidders can make payment by money order in UK POUNDS STERLING ONLY. I DO NOT ACCEPT FOREIGN CURRENCY, CHEQUES OR PAYPAL. I will accept Foreign Currency in cash but at the local exchange centre's rate and there is also a minimum £3 commission charge of 2% of the greater. If sending cash, please send by registered mail or at your own risk by normal mail. Items shipped overseas can be insured up to £500 and the extra charge for this varies as to the weight of the item. Please bear in mind if bidding especially on heavy items sent by normal mail are at buyer's risk

MARCH 1942

Time started forward

Date	Hour	Aircraft Type and No.	Pilot	Duty	Remarks		Flying Time		
					(Containing number of bombing, recovery, etc.)	GP	Direct	Flare	
5-3-42		VALENTIA S.R. 8963	Sgt LOWRY P.O. TOBBENHAWER	RIGGER	HABBANIYA	K.1	0840	1045	2-05
"	"	"	"	"	K.1	MOSEL	1130	1140	1-10
"	"	"	"	"	MOSUL	HABBANIYA	430	1710	2-40
10-3-42		"	P/O VINSON P/O TOBBENHAWER	"	HABBANIYA	H.3	0445	0830	2-15
"	"	"	"	"	H.3	LYDDA	0915	1255	3-40
"	"	"	"	"	LYDDA	HELIOPOLIS	1420	1740	3-20
"	"	"	"	"	HELIOPOLIS	LYDDA	0915	1205	2-50
"	"	"	"	"	LYDDA	H.3	0900	1210	2-10
"	"	"	"	"	H.3	HABBANIYA	0445	1215	2-30
18-3-42		"	Sgt. GLETON Sgt. FENTONBY	"	HABBANIYA	H.3	0445	0925	2-10
"	"	"	"	"	H.3	AMMAN	1140	1255	2-45
"	"	"	"	"	AMMAN	LYDDA	0915	1010	1-55
"	"	"	"	"	LYDDA	ISRAELIA	1150	1400	2-10
"	"	"	"	"	ISRAELIA	HELIOPOLIS	0445	1500	1-45
"	"	"	"	"	HELIOPOLIS	LYDDA	0625	0910	2-45
"	"	"	"	"	LYDDA	LYDDA	1105	1155	1-50
"	"	"	"	"	LYDDA	H.3	0915	1210	2-55
"	"	"	"	"	H.3	HABBANIYA	1305	1610	2-05



STARTED AND CHECKED BY N.C.O. I.C. COMMUNICATION FLIGHT [Signature] 42 00  
 STARTED AND CHECKED BY O.C. COMMUNICATION FLIGHT [Signature] 42 00

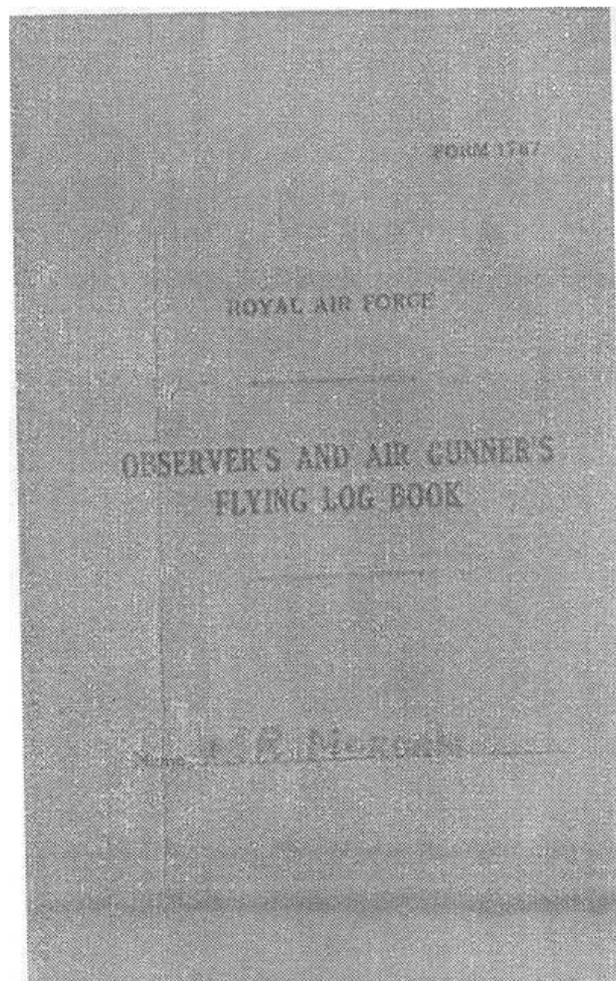
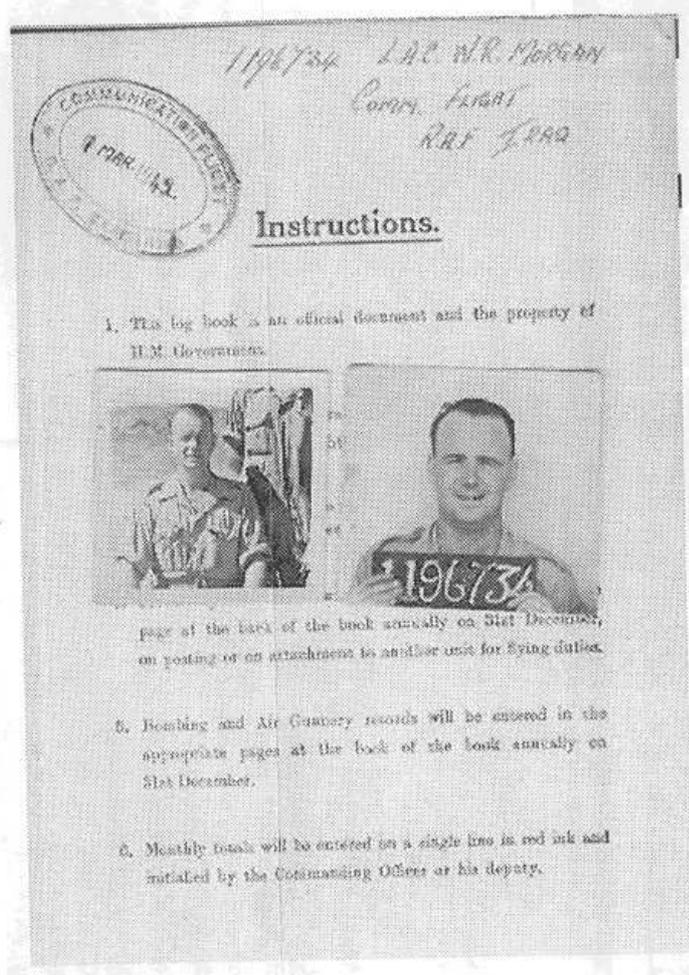
Units at which served

Aircraft in which flown

Left England 28-8-41  
 Arrived Margell 28-10-41  
 COMMUNICATION FLIGHT  
 HABBANIYA 1-11-41 20-8-43  
 115 M.V. SHIBAN 21-11-43 20-12-43  
 244 SQUADRON 31-12-43 25-3-44  
 SHARAH  
 244 SQUADRON 25-4-44 2-6-44  
 FUSERAM  
 121 M.V. ROEN 26-4-44 2-10-44  
 21 P.O.C  
 EGYPT 3-10-44 12-11-44  
 Arrived England 8-12-44

RODAX  
 VALENTIA  
 FORTRESS  
 SHARAH SCION  
 LORNAED HUDSON  
 LORNAED LODSTAR  
 LORNAED COMMUNION





I was posted to Khormaksar in September 1964 onto 5004 Squadron Airfield Construction who spent their time repairing and constructing airfields in Beihan, Dhala, Thumeir, and Makeirias etc. when they weren't under the great influence of too much ale. Three months later I was posted to Salalah when 5004 and its sister squadrons 5002 and 5003 were transferred to the Royal Engineers, naturally enough very few of the RAF personnel changed over, they either left the service or remustered to MT drivers or fitters or some other allied trades.

The climate in Aden was absolutely unbearable at times due to high level of humidity with any cuts refusing to heal at all. I managed to stub my toe on a steel peg one night and split it down the side of the nail, it suppurated for about three weeks before my posting to Salalah and healed up completely within a few days of arriving. The climate there was superb, the jebels were absolutely verdant in the monsoon season but the 'dizzys' ruined things somewhat by planting mines on the bondu road to the jetty at Raisute and fired shells from the Jebels at us, definitely not cricket sir! However, the Paras duly arrived from Bahrain and sorted them out but at the same time drank our meagre stocks of ale, which without the LST supply boats were not replenished. Basic was the correct description of the life in Salaam but compared with your day it would probably have been regarded as luxurious all things considered, a camp with only 60 personnel and a Flight Lieutenant CO, who I knew at Hullavington, was a great deal more pleasant than Khormaksar.

Jeff Evans (Mem. No. 353)

### THE CRUISE OF THE VINCENTS

This story has been uplifted from Fred Hitchcock's (mem. No.272) excellent book, 'A Shillingsworth of Promises' Thank you Fred! Episodes will appear in future Newsletters.

Mid 1938 brought some stirrings of excitement in Habbaniya, for 55 Squadron was scheduled to make a long distance round trip of the Middle East. Circling the Arabian Peninsula, across northeast Africa to Khartoum, onto Nairobi, back up the Nile to Cairo and then via Amman back to Iraq and Habbaniya.

Twelve Vincent aircraft were duly serviced and fitted with long-range belly tanks, and the accompanying ground crews were selected from volunteers, and I had the good luck to be included. The squadron would be under the command of Squadron Leader Howe, and I was to fly with a Sergeant Pilot Richardson.

In early August the great day came and the Squadron took off, formed up and headed south. It was difficult to realise that these areas over which we were flying were considered to be the fertile lands of modern Iraq, and the 'lands of promise' of many ancient civilisations. Ctesiphon Arch being some sort of relic and proof of their existence. And there was nothing to indicate the exact location of 'Ur of the Chaldees' or of Babylon, and it was left entirely to the imagination to realise that the hanging gardens and maybe the Garden of Eden used to be down there somewhere. It seemed like Paradise well and truly lost.

After some two hours of flying we approached the Persian Gulf and then followed the coastline of Kuwait. It was a welcome change of scenery to have the blue sea on the port side, but the dreary Khaki of endless desert remained with us to starboard. And this was Kuwait in 1938 when it was only just being realised that oil was there in undiscovered millions of tons. And this would not start to be produced in any quantity until some eight to ten years later. Until then the main source of income for Kuwait's tiny population would continue to be the traditional fishing and pearl diving. There was absolutely nothing to indicate the incidental and fortuitous opulence that was to befall this small protectorate. In fact within an hour we had flown over it, not even vaguely appreciating the future political and geographical significance of this small desert buffer state.

After another two hours or so of thinking, talking and singing to myself, we landed at Bahrain Island. There to rejoin the other crews for a natter and a smoke before refuelling, checking and picketing down the aircraft for the night. Bahrain was still within the orbit of British influence, and this devolved itself to my advantage in as much as the Royal Navy had established a canteen on the island. And on visiting it I was pleased and astonished to see, lined up on the shelves, bottle after bottle of Mackeson's Milk Stout, with their labels proudly announcing Brewed in Hythe. A hefty thirst, nostalgically quenched.

Unlike Kuwait, Bahrain had already been exploiting its oil reserves for some years, but it was early days and modern developments had not yet ruined the true Arab nature of the place. And there was still literally thousands of small fishing and pearl diving boats whose crews gleaned a healthy living from the seas, gladly and preferring life on the water, as opposed to suffering the heat and humidity of working ashore. The following day, after enjoying an unexpected luxury of filleted fish cooked with egg and bread crumbs for breakfast (the texture was strange but the taste was excellent), we took off and headed for Sharjah and Muscat. It took two and a half hours across the water to reach Sharjah where we refuelled from the stock of four-gallon cans that had been off loaded there by the Royal Navy for just this purpose. Then taking off again and skirting West of the Djebel Akdar Mountains, we entered the Gulf of Oman and followed the coastline to the twin towns of Matrah and Muscat.

As we lost height to land at Matrah the reflected heat from a ground temperature of 132 degrees Fahrenheit could be felt at about two thousand feet, and at one thousand feet an unmistakable stench of fish caused our nostrils to dilate and twist in disgust and disbelief.

On looking down the source of this acrid ammonia smell could be seen – row after row of dead fish ripening in the sun.

Muscat had a small harbour, the architecture of which reflected the early Portuguese influence in the area. And one old windowless stone building, standing high on rocky promontory was currently being used as a prison. The sight of the poor wretches incarcerated there, pleading and scratching through a three inch gap at the bottom of a heavy wooden door for some sort of attention, filled one with a feeling of helplessness, also a feeling of shame that such imposed degradation could exist.

## **NOVEMBER 2004**

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