



## 244 SQUADRON & KINDRED SPIRITS ASSOCIATION



### Newsletter No. 47

JIM SAYS, in our last Newsletter, I asked for ideas about the eventual disposal of the painting of our Squadron badge. I have had quite a few replies on this subject. The consensus being that it should remain in the UK. The majority of you have chosen the RAF Museum at Hendon. This is a reasonable choice. However, we don't want the badge to be kept hidden in some dusty archive. It should be on public view if possible. Any further suggestions before we make a final choice?

I must once again make an URGENT appeal or interesting copy for future Newsletters. Many of you have yet to make a contribution of your tales of long ago. So, come on folks, send some in (tales of the Gulf/Aden areas please).

As usual, at this time of year, I make final appeal to non-payers of Subscriptions. There is a notation on this Newsletter if you have yet to pay for 2005. Failure means no further Newsletters. As regards funds, donations keep coming in, and cash at bank amounts to £2163.49.

Finally, may Audrey and I wish all our members in the UK, Eire, France, Australia, Canada, USA and Argentina a very happy Xmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

### THE COMING OF OLD AGE.

He'd served in Egypt and the Western Desert, he'd sweated and suffered prickly heat in Aden, and enjoyed the sun, sea and lovely sands in Salalah. Now he is eighty-two years old, and Egypt and Salalah now entertained tourists, whilst Aden, well who they entertained was anyone's guess?

War Service was a long time ago, and although attending re-unions, had stirred old memories he now had to cope with difficulties that come with old age.

October is always the time for the annual medical check-up. Will his blood pressure be too high? Last year the systolic was over two hundred and the diastolic over ninety, so the number of tablets He took everyday increased. Thank goodness his doctor talked about other things besides his medical problems. They both shared a interest in cricket and rugby, so in between their chat about prostate problems, Michael Vaughan's success again; the Aussies came up, helping to lighten his frequent trips to the loo.

Talk of cricket brought back memories of the matting wicket at Khormaksar with the matches against visiting Navy ships and the inter-block competitions. He remembered how the Officers Mess had fielded two Aussies one a year, a very good spin bowler who won most of their matches with his crafty use of the mat. The lads all cheered when he was sent on detachment to Socotra.

Those were the days, a game of cricket, then a night on the Maloti beer brought in from Asmara. These days on pint of John Smith was his limit so as not to disturb the household all night.

The doctor has decided to try him on twenty-four hours blood pressure monitoring, he thinks the high pressure is caused by white coat syndrome.

Oh! For the sun and the sea in Salalah, no thoughts then of blood pressure, and arthritis. Instead looking forward to the bully fritters on Thursdays made by Ted the West Country cook and later plenty of Canadian

Export to help the evenings along. He often thinks about his friends from the days in Salalah, of 'Darkie Baker' from Cleveley Paul Southall from Southend and from Hawick, 'Jock' Scott.

How they played football against the young Arab Levies, who played in their bare feet, but yet their corners and long free kicks would have done credit to David Beckham.

The two, three five formation (unheard of in today's game), with 'Darkie' Baker playing a stopper centre half in the mould of Alf Young from Huddersfield Town or Stan Cowan Manchester City. He felt that the Levies centre forward always went back to his tent nursing sore shins.

Occasionally the 'second dickey' for the Flight Commander, 'Ginger' Marden played centre, forward for the team. He said that he had, had trials with Fulham, but that was hard to prove in Salalah.

So what of the future?

With the coming of old age, memory fades, but one memory remains with him the good friends who served with him during those years.

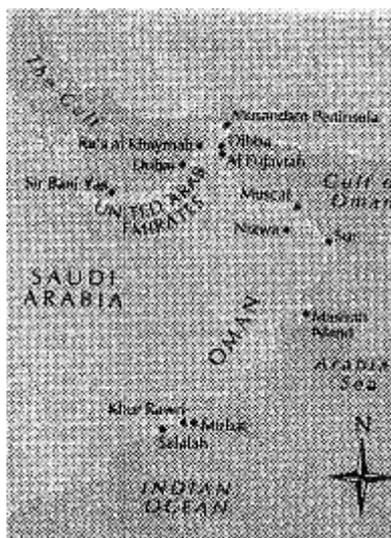
So now when he's having a drink, unknown to those with him he raises his glass to 'Darkie' Baker, Paul Southall, 'Jock' Scott and all the others who were with him, and asks the question, "WHERE ARE THEY NOW?"

John Broadbent Mem. No.335

### ARABIAN ODYSSEY

An Expedition Cruise to the Lands of Antiquity

28<sup>th</sup> February to 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006; 13<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> March\* & 25<sup>th</sup> November to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006



Come with us to a corner of the world that has fascinated travellers for centuries. Our unique cruise offers a comprehensive look at an area richly influenced by its ancient history and its recent wealth. The diverse nature of the people, customs and the landscapes they inhabit, make for an enthralling experience as we venture through the mosaic of lands bordered by vast deserts, through green wadis and pass in the shadow of spectacular mountains. The contrast of old and new is staggering, from the ancient villages and souks of the old towns to the magnificent cities of glass and steel.

#### The Itinerary

Day 1 London Heathrow to Muscat. Fly by scheduled flight to Muscat, in the Sultanate of the Oman. Stay overnight in a first class hotel.

Day 2 Muscat to Salalah. Morning at leisure, in the afternoon, fly by scheduled flight to Salalah, the Oman's second city in the Dhofar region. Upon arrival in Salalah, embark the MS Island Sky.

Day 3 Salalah to Mirbat. This morning, drive east out of Salalah following the coast road to Khor Rawi, a long inlet that is home to many species of migrant and indigenous birds. Continue our drive along the coast to the seaside town of Mirbat, once the capital of Dhofar. Visit the restored fort. Rejoin the MS Island Sky in Mirbat the afternoon, and enjoy some free time in this delightful region.

Day 4 At Sea. Sailing along the coast of the Oman.

Day 5 Masirah Island. Today, we will spend a few hours on Masirah Island, a sparsely populated drop in the ocean, located some 15 miles off the Oman coast. Here the bird-life is prolific with over 300 species recorded.  
 Day 6 Sur. Sur has been on seafarer's maps for centuries, as both an important port and historic shipbuilding centre. Today, it is a quiet and picturesque town, with a charming shoreline and peaceful air. Small boat building yards dot the beach, and all along the coast fishermen land their catches of swordfish and tuna. Our tour will take us to a Dhow yard where vessels are still made without a plan or blueprint, along the corniche and across the mouth of the lagoon to al-Aija, a pretty village of low, whitewashed houses and ornate merchant's houses.

Day 7 & 8 Muscat. On the first morning of our visit to Muscat we will explore the colourful Mutrah Harbour, with its fishing boats, dhows and market. Later, drive through the exclusive residential area and diplomatic enclave. See the Zazawi Mosque, the extraordinary Al Bustan Hotel, the National History Museum and the Sultan's Palace. The excursion will end with some time at the Mutrah Souk.

On the second day of our visit, there will be the opportunity to take an optional long but rewarding trip into the interior to the oasis town of Nizwa in the conservative interior of the Oman, we will explore the meandering alleyways of the souk and climb the stairs of the 17<sup>th</sup> century fort.

Day 9 Al Fujayrah, United Arab Emirates. See the city centre and drive out to Bithna Oasis in the mountains to view some of the archaeological sites, and then take a spectacular scenic drive through the mountains to the coastal town of Dibba. It is quite charming, with a backdrop of high mountains leading down to an attractive bay and beaches

Day 10 Musandam Peninsula, Oman. In the morning we will drop anchor off the beautiful Musandam Peninsula. This is without doubt the most dramatic of the mountainous locations in the Gulf and a difficult region to reach other than by sea. This little known and untouched area is a haven for birds and offers some stunning scenery.

Day 11 Ra's al Khaymah, United Emirates. This morning we will arrive at the garden of the United Arab Emirates, where fertile coastal plains are bordered by the waters of the Gulf and the rugged Hajar Mountains. Explore the city individually or join an optional two-hour 'Wadi Bashing' trip in a four-wheel drive vehicle.

Day 12 Sir Bani Yas, United Arab Emirates. Once a barren waterless island it has been transformed into magnificent green landscape. Here great conservation efforts have been made and where once there was little life there are now over 80 species of birds and herds of giraffe, Arabian Oryx and gazelles.

Day 13 Dubai. Welcome to Arabia's Hong Kong. A day to see the sights, visit the shops and sample the food.

Day 14 Dubai to London Heathrow. Disembark this morning for the return scheduled flight to London.

Prices per person based on double occupancy Tour Code: SCISKARABI

Deck	Suite Category	Double Occupancy	Sole Occupancy
Magellan	Standard (Forward)	£3395	£4495
Magellan	Standard	£3895	£4795
Columbus	Superior	£4195	£5395
Marco Polo	Premium	£4595	-
Marco Polo	Corner	£4795	-
Erikson	Deluxe Balcony	£5095	
Explorer	Owner's Balcony	£5395	
Marco	Single	£4695	

\*On this departure the cruise operates in the reverse order, from Dubai to Salalah with a visit to Doha in Qatar, Itinerary available on request.

+ This itinerary is one night shorter and does not visit Sir Bani Yas, itinerary available on request

Price includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, one night's accommodation in Muscat on breakfast only basis (28<sup>th</sup> February departure only), 12/13 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on full board, selected shore excursion, port taxes, transfers, airport taxes.

Not included: Travel insurance, optional excursions, gratuities, visas.

N.B. Ports subject to change. [www.noble-caledonia.co.uk](http://www.noble-caledonia.co.uk)

### FLIGHT OF THE VINCENTS (Continued)

In less than an hour the cloud cover thinned and eventually disappeared altogether, giving clear views of the coastline to allow us a trouble free trip for the rest of the journey to Mukalla. On landing there the Squadron was hospitably welcomed by the son of the sheik of Mukalla who, having had a university education in England, spoke English with an impeccable accent. This was something we did not quite expect in such a remote and

desolate part of the globe. Also unexpected was the gift of a mutton stew lunch for all to share. This was received thankfully but with varying degrees of appreciation, with some searching in vain for the sheep's eyes, which every schoolboy knows, or imagines, the Arabs love to eat.

We had been one aircraft short at Mukalla for Sergeant Day had had difficulty getting airborne at Salalah. However, he had taken off early the next day to appear as a burgeoning dot along the coast, just in time to prevent one-crew search party taking off. I would have been part of this crew and I remember being irritated at having been selected; for uncharacteristically, my digestive system was beginning to give me trouble and I had been keenly anticipating reaching the sanctuary and medical care that was available at the permanent R.A.F. base at Aden. And this was now, thanks to Sergeant Day's arrival, only some three hours flying away.

When we arrived at number Eight Squadron's base at Khormaksar near Aden, the marshalling, refuelling and servicing of the aircraft, seemed to take an exceptional toll of my energies. And I shall never forget the oppressive and humid heat of that day and I drank glass after glass of ice cold fresh lime juice, which then came out of every pore of my body as fast as I drank it. It was a stupid thing to do for it was, albeit unknown to me at the time the root cause of a subsequent long bout of digestive disorder.

However, it was near heaven to enjoy the luxuries of a permanent base again after the restrictions of the trip when, having only the use of water that we carried with us, we had drunk and washed sparingly. And then only the parts that showed, the remainder now virtually required decoking and disinfecting, as did our clothing. Ah the bliss of a freshly washed carcass, clothed in newly laundered clothes, sand free, oil free, sweat free and smelling beautifully of just nothing.

However, my bliss was short lived for I enjoyed, or more correctly, took part in, the sampling of the fleshpots of Aden for one evening only. When the atmosphere, and animation of the waterfront bars, enhanced by an uncounted and irresponsible intake of alcohol, made me light headed enough to imagine that this was life as it should be, to be enjoyed with absolute abandon. It was only when I found myself crowded into a taxi with four other randy and raunchy airmen en route for the red light district of Shaykh Uthman that I began to have my doubts. Once there, and surrounded by a choice of near naked and enticing prostitutes, beautified by an alcoholic haze, my doubts began to disappear, and a rising anticipation became paramount. A visible!

But then a tiny thought penetrated my befuddled mind, asking me, "How many others had been there already today?" And my revulsion to batting on a sticky wicket saved me. My wick remained undipped. But alas, the more randy and uncontrolled still went in to bat but none, I'm sure, reached double figures, brewer's droop probably limiting their ambitions.

The following morning I felt like hell on earth, with a throbbing head, stomach pains and diarrhoea. The medical officer ordered me to be detained in the sick bay, diagnosing gastro-enteritis, or worse. However, after sympathetic and careful nursing over three days I was feeling sufficiently recovered to assume that I would be able to carry on with the Squadron when it continued its journey the next morning. The M O. agreed, but prescribed a heavy dose of bismuth and opium tablets to be taken just before take off to ensure a more comfortable flight.

I took the tablets and powder and, for a while, I felt comfortable enough. But then, on landing at Perim island to refuel, I had an urge and wandered away some fifty yards to drop my shorts and deposit a neat little heap of bismuth, followed by a diarrhoeal gush.

Fred Hitchcock. Mem. No.272

### **A TYPICAL DAY ON MASIRAH ISLAND (USAAF)**

Many mornings I would wake up after a windy night and find my outline of sand on the sheet. Nothing to do but shake it off and report for roll call. These Quonsets weren't sand-proof. Speaking of roll call, why would anybody go a.w.o.l. when there was no place to go? Well, as they told us in the army, there's the right way, the wrong way and the army way.

Next it was it was time for shaving and a shower with brackish salt water in preparation for a delicious breakfast of powdered eggs, toast and jelly along with powdered milk. Once in a while we would get oatmeal and sea gull eggs. How I longed for my mother's pancakes and bacon and real coffee instead of this substitute tasting like iodine.

Although it will probably be another 110-degree day, it's time to check into headquarters and begin the day's work. First order of business is the Morning Report followed by whatever may have come in from Accra. This can't be my lucky day for I have to prepare the Army Payroll as well as one for the native help — kitchen, latrine and house boys. We are very, fortunate to have a sergeant who can read and write Arabic. He had travelled across Arabia with his grandfather as a boy.

It's late morning now and time to check in with Operations and see if there are any incoming planes coming in. Sure enough there is mail along with supplies — everyone will be happy. Then I will get the Major's jeep and lead the plane to the parking area. We have a large sign on the back which says, "FOLLOW ME", However, some of these crazy young pilots thought the sign meant try to catch me as they would literally chase me down the runway. Pilots were a good bunch of young officers and would often bring me a bottle of Scotch whiskey in the pilots pouch from my very best friend in Aden. This saved a lot of postage. Ha!

Time for lunch and who knows what it will be – dehydrated potatoes, canned meat (spam) or maybe some biscuits the Mess Sergeant had baked. What is left over after lunch will probably be carried over for supper, although sometimes we would have turtle soup or gazelle meat.

After lunch most of us would go for a dip in the ocean. Some had swimming trunks and the rest buck-naked. Our doctor was a paediatrician and he said the hot sand was very good for the feet.

It looks like it will be a quiet night, so I will check in the tower and see if there is any music from the States. Once in a while we can get the Aaregon-Trianon ballroom from Chicago and always Tokyo Rose.

We only have church services once a month and maybe a movie once a week. Not much else to do but read or play cards.

Masirah was supposed to be a six months base, however, I spent two years there and never regretted it. I never felt better in my life and was sorry when the base closed and I was transferred to the North African Division in Casablanca. This division has a reunion every year and it is great to see everyone again.

T/Sgt Clarence O. Pelham. Army Air Corps. ATC Mem. No.242

### **NOVEMBER 2005**

Jim Heslop (Hon Secretary/Treasurer)

W/cdr. Ron Rotherham (President)