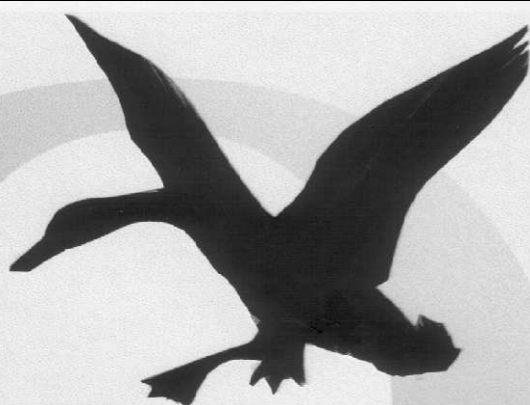


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# Mucky Duck

## Newsletter of 202 Squadron Association

[Http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk](http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk)

### Squadron News

*[This will probably be the last contribution for a while from Charlie - he is off on the Falklands detachment. It seems possible that Association Liaison Officer to Falklands has become a standard progression. All the best, Charlie.]*

Summer 2006 has proven to be one of the busiest seasons for the Squadron in recent times, with this year's trend of plenty of trade continuing. At the same time, we are in the middle of a significant turnover in Squadron personnel, with many of the key players either having departed, or being about to go; the recent announcement of the contractorisation of military SAR is a harbinger of massive upheavals in the medium term as well.

Starting (as always!) with our operational activities, over recent months crews from all three Flights have had a range of interesting scrambles to deal with. Several of the most notable ones have been maritime rescues, even though these days the overwater environment occupies less of our time (operationally) than the overland or coastal. Back in July, an E Flight crew was scrambled from Leconfield following receipt of a Mayday by Humber Coastguard, from a boat 50 miles offshore in heavy seas; a nearby Rig Support Vessel had rendezvoused with the vessel, which turned out to be a yacht, and reported that there was one person on board, who failed to respond in any way to the RSV's enquiries as to what was happening. When the aircraft turned up, winchman Sgt Dave Stanbridge was deployed to the yacht (not an easy task, given the conditions,

but fortunately the captain was Sqn Ldr Paul Coleman, who is perhaps the most experienced Sea King pilot in the RAF), and he ascertained that three others - including the yacht's owner, the sole mariner on board - had been lost overboard, leaving the one individual, who had no knowledge or experience of sailing, on board but more or less helpless. The man on the yacht seemed in a reasonable condition, so he was left on board to await the arrival of a lifeboat to tow the yacht back to shore, while the aircraft crew and the RSV crew collaborated to work out a likely search area for the missing trio. With time clearly of the essence, given that the casualties had already been in the water for well over an hour, a search plan was initiated, and despite the 15-20 foot swell, Radar Operator Sgt Adrian Cooper was able, during the search, to use the thermal-imaging camera to help locate them. All three were duly located, having drifted more than a mile from the yacht; drawing heavily on his stamina and courage, Dave went repeatedly into the waves and recovered all three to the aircraft, but this brought its own problems, as the large quantity of salt water swilling around the cabin caused a progressive deterioration of the aircraft's electrics. Despite these problems the aircraft sped to land with not only Dave and

Coops, but also co-pilot Flt Lt Iain Robertson, attempting to treat the casualties, and they were duly delivered to hospital in Hull, with Sqn Ldr Coleman, alone in the cockpit, having to fly, navigate and communicate with Kinloss and the Coastguard all by himself. One of the casualties had appeared to be dead when lifted out of the water, and this was certified at the hospital, but the other two survived to make a full recovery. The rescue was not yet over, though: while the three people were being delivered to hospital, the Hull Lifeboat - despite losing an engine en route - had fought its way through the seas to the yacht on one engine, and had taken the yacht under tow. The pair of boats made inevitably rather slow progress towards land, and it was noticed that the condition of the man who had remained on the yacht was deteriorating. The lifeboat crew then requested that the Sea King go back out to sea to recover him as well, to get him to hospital more quickly; this was also accomplished, despite the difficulties of winching Dave onto and off the slow-moving lifeboat in the rough seas, and despite the various malfunctions - including intercom problems - which the salt water had caused. Once the crew had returned, exhausted, to Leconfield, more details emerged about how the incident started; it transpired that, initially, two of the passengers on the yacht had been washed overboard, and the captain, having transmitted a distress call, then attempted to recover them, but was himself lost over the side when another large wave hit, and the one man remaining, paralysed no doubt by fear as well as by unfamiliarity with sailing, was unable either to operate the radio or make any attempt to manoeuvre the yacht to the aid of the others.

Although Squadron aircraft are in theory only ever tasked when life is in danger, it is relatively infrequent that the life of someone we rescue is actually in the balance, and that the person's survival depends entirely on the crew's prompt actions. The job above is one example of a true life-or-death situation, and another was faced by an A Flight crew in early September. The aircraft was scrambled to rescue a crew member from a large German sailing ship, who had fallen from the rigging, bounced off the deck and spent 10 minutes in the water. By the time the aircraft arrived on scene, the woman had been recovered to the ship, but was unconscious and not breathing. The ship's doctor had done what he could, but Sgt Si Price was faced with a very seriously ill casualty, who was close to death, when he arrived on board. With great haste, the crew managed to recover Si and the casualty to the aircraft, and set off for Wansbeck Hospital in Ashington, but during the 45-minute transit back to land, the casualty's condition worsened further; despite his relative inexperience as a winchman and medic, Si (working with Radar Operator Macr Rik Maving) managed to keep the woman alive and treat her to the extent that, by the time they landed at Wansbeck, the danger was past and the woman's condition had stabilised. The next day, the ship arrived in Newcastle, and the ship's crew were able to visit their colleague in hospital. These rescues are two of several hundred jobs which the Squadron has achieved in recent months, and the tempo of operations has been a source of excitement and satisfaction to all of us around the Flights. By 20<sup>th</sup> August, A Flight had equalled last year's total number

of jobs, which is quite remarkable, and for a while A Flight were ahead of D Flight in the job stakes (again, an unusual occurrence), though the Lossie crews had a busy September and are now back in the lead. All this flying has not been without incident, though: back in April, a D Flight aircraft, flying over moorland south-west of Kinloss, suffered a



progressive break-up of the main gearbox, which - had the crew not put down immediately - would have resulted in loss of the aircraft. As it was, the aircraft was partially dismantled by the engineers where it was (the second trip by D Flt engineers into the wilderness this year!) and then the hulk was transported by Chinook back to Lossiemouth. In early July, another D Flight aircraft had just lifted to the hover on a training sortie, when unusual vibration was noticed by the crew; before they could land, control was lost, and the aircraft came down very heavily, breaking off the entire tail section - as shown in the picture - but fortunately not harming the crew. This is not the first time that crews have had cause to be grateful for the robust construction of the Sea King - inheriting an aircraft design originally intended for repeated deck landings is clearly no bad thing!

Moving on to the Squadron's people, we have just learned that Wg Cdr James will be posted in January next year, rather earlier than expected, taking up a position in Kabul for six months before returning to the UK (but not to 202), and we all wish him well with his new adventures. He will be replaced by Wg Cdr Andy Bastable, an experienced SAR pilot, who has commanded A Flt 22 Squadron at Chivenor among other recent duties. Sqn Ldr Andy Shenton, the Squadron 2iC, has just left to take over C Flt 22 Squadron at Valley, but when the Squadron HQ moves to Valley towards the end of next year, his unit will be redesignated C Flight



**Mucky Duck**

**202 Squadron Association**



202 Squadron, so he will come back to the fold before too long. His replacement as 2iC is Sqn Ldr Pete 'Rocky' Richardson, an experienced Support Helicopter pilot who has just converted to the Sea King; also new in post earlier this year is Sqn Ldr Jon Heald, another experienced Chinook pilot who took over D Flt, replacing Sqn Ldr Dave Williams who exchanged command of D Flt for A Flt, replacing in turn Sqn Ldr Iain MacFarlane (another vastly experienced Chinook driver) who moved from commanding A Flt to being a line pilot on D Flt (his choice - not a demotion or punishment!). After this flurry of arrivals and departures, Wg Cdr Bastable's arrival in post should mark the start of a period of stability among the Squadron's senior management - but watch this space!

As mentioned above, the way Search & Rescue helicopters are provided within the UK will be changing in due course, with 2012 announced by the Government as the date when military SAR starts being replaced by a new organisation. This announcement didn't come as much of a surprise to most of us: over the last ten to twelve years, most non-deployable branches of the military have been contractorised, and the wake-up call for us was the announcement in 2004 that RAF SAR engineering would go down that route. Since then, there has been much speculation over how much longer the existing set-up would last, especially given the rapid ageing of the Sea King fleet. None of us on the 'shop floor' know exactly what form the new SAR outfit will take, and although there is likely to be a contingent of military aircrew, the Sqn as we know it is unlikely to survive. The uncertainty surrounding this detracts from the positive aspects of the reorganisation, which will be one new fleet of aircraft to replace the three UK SAR fleets which we have at the moment (the RAF's Sea King HAR3s and 3As, the Navy's Sea King HU5s and 6s, and the Coastguard's S-61Ns), all of which are rather elderly and all of which are rather different from one another. There will probably be no further news of the future of the Squadron, or of SAR helicopters in general, for some time while all the issues are examined and resolved, but it would seem that the Squadron will survive for another five or six years at least in its current iteration.

In the meantime, best wishes from all current Squadron personnel to all Association members and we're looking forward already to the reunion at Boulmer next year. I look forward to seeing a great many of you there.

**Charlie Logan**

Message: Hi; I have little idea where to start from but all I know is an ex RAF pilot is what we need;.My business partner and I are purchasing a small private jet and we are looking for a pilot. We live on an island in the Mexican Caribbean and finding someone on this side would be, to say the least HARD; It will be a low stress job; that will be a small perk and the island is super cool. I am unsure of where to start from but any help in ideas where to start to look will be very much appreciated. [We would not normally carry this, but I am intrigued. Contact details from me in confidence if you want them. Ed]

## Some of the emails received



### A Venerable Lady

I am emailing you with a request for information; in 1985 my father bought the boat in the picture attached. We believed that she served the RAF in Lough Erne as a tender to the flying boats. I would be very grateful if you could provide any stories or pictures relating to her service during the war.

Best Regards Ciaran Clinton

My father served on this Squadron, not sure of the dates just wondering if anybody remembered serving with a Fred Ray. I believe he was flying Whirlwinds at the time. Just like to chat with people who served with my father.

Many thanks Sgt Steven Ray

Message: During World War II my grandfather, Cecil Richard Hodges worked for the Air Ministry, being based at Hughenden Manor. He was involved with the top secret production of target maps and other associated target material for the Royal Air Force. This operation was named Codename 'Hillside'.

My grandfather ran the machine room at Hillside and was responsible for the accurate preparation of target material for printing and distribution to RAF Groups and bomber stations. He was responsible for the printing of the Dam Busters, Tirpitz, D-Day, Peenemunde and V-weapon target material among the many other materials he prepared.

I am conducting research into my grandfathers wartime activities. In honour of him I am attempting to track down one of the target maps he helped to produce at Hughenden. My grandfather died in 1989 and I never had the chance to talk to him about his work - in fact I hardly knew him.

I would be very interested if any of your members has such a target map they would be willing to part with. I live in the United States.

It is an important part of my family history that I would like to preserve.

Thanks very much, Jim Hodges, Seattle USA

Book Review

# Baling Out

## Amazing Dramas of Military Flying

Robert Jackson

Pen and Sword Books Ltd  
192 pages  
Numerous illustrations &  
Index  
£19.99 in hardback

Robert Jackson is the author of over 80 books on military, naval and scientific subjects. He was also a former pilot and navigation instructor with the rank of Squadron Leader RAF(VR). His familiarity with the field comes across in his writing and, while his book is quite accessible to laymen, the service, or ex-service reader is aware of a common experience.

If your reviewer remembers correctly, parachutes were withdrawn from our Squadron in about 1963 during our time in the meteorological reconnaissance Hastings role, and the Squadron has not carried them on operations since.

**dit dah dah dit dit dah dah dit dit dah dah dit** was the call I never heard on the intercom, but I seem to recall that it was the signal that the rest of the crew were about to leave the aeroplane through A hatch wearing parachutes and one was invited to join them.

Almost all aircrew will have carried parachutes in training and wondered what it is like to use one for real. This book gives us some idea.

The first few chapters of the book are a history of the development of the parachute from the inevitable claims of the Chinese in the first millennium to present day improvements to ejection seats. This fairly scholarly history is made readable by the use of anecdotes and quotations in telling the story.

Since parachuting was a new science in the First World War, some agents were understandably afraid to launch themselves into space and place their trust in a thin silken canopy. The pilots of No 60 Squadron - despite being fighter pilots on SE.5s – were sometimes called upon to drop agents from elderly BE and FE aircraft in 1918 and they overcame this problem by making the agent sit on a trapdoor in the fuselage floor. When the pilot pulled a toggle, the trapdoor opened and the agent fell through. There was one story of a terrified agent, clinging to the sides of the cockpit for dear life, being beaten over the fingers with the pilot's pistol until he eventually let go. This potentially useful modification is no longer fitted.

Tales of successful, if dramatic, escapes abound, but it is in the telling of ones during the First World War that did not work, that 202 Squadron gets its first mention:

*September 8<sup>th</sup>. Captain G B Gates, 202 Squadron, engaged an Albatros two-seater which turned over on its back and caught fire. The observer jumped out in a parachute which, however, also caught fire.*

The founding of the Caterpillar Club for people who have saved their lives by Irvine parachute is related. It followed the experience of Lt Harold Harris, US Army Air Service, who, in 1920, was the first person to save his life by jumping from a disabled aircraft with a manually opened parachute.

In 1939 membership of the Caterpillar Club stood at about 4000; it is now over 100,000.

In his chapter on the inter war years Jackson relates the development of airborne forces – the paratroopers – the beginning of jumping out of a perfectly serviceable aeroplane.

There is also a good number of tales from the post Second World War era – Korea, Vietnam, Cold War, peace time flying and research.

The work of Martin Baker and others in the development of the ejection seat is well covered and the eminence of British design and manufacture is given appropriate coverage including the rather grim story of the F104G – the so called Widow Maker of the 1960s.

*What precisely do the men in the back of the V-bombers feel when they know that their pilot and co-pilot can eject themselves to safety, whereas they themselves need at least eight seconds to scramble out if the aircraft is about to crash? I expect no answers . .*

That was how a Daily Mirror correspondent posed the

great question of that era in the Royal Air Force.

The book does tell, in a non judgemental way, of occasions when pilots had to abandon their crews, but this is more than compensated by tales of heroism. There are several instances related of pilots sticking with a stricken aircraft longer than necessary in order to save their crews or to avoid the aircraft crashing onto an inhabited area.

It is one of these tales that brings 202 Squadron's second mention of the book: Flight Lieutenant Garth Alcock and his crew had a nightmare trip in Vulcan SM610 on 8 January 1971. Briefly, the aeroplane had caught fire and was heading for the Master Diversion Airfield at Leeming when the situation got so bad that Alcock ordered the navigators and AEO to bale out

Over Rothbury. They did so and were picked up by a 202 Squadron Whirlwind from Boulmer. Alcock and Flying Officer Pete Hoskins, the co-pilot, continued in control of what had become "little more than eighty tons of blazing debris" until they had guided it towards the coast when Alcock ordered Hoskins to eject and continued alone for a few more seconds ensuring the safety of the village of Wingate before banging out himself. An AFC and four Queen's Commendations were well earned that day.

This book will not add much to the technical knowledge of serving and past Squadron members, but it is a good read for its anecdotes.

**Hugh Cumming**

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## A Catalina Story or That 202 Squadron gets everywhere

**We have a request for help from Kevin Broadfoot who is researching the loss of Catalina FP119 in 1942.**

**The story as far as it is known is very interesting, with a slightly oblique connection to 202 Squadron. I am indebted to Kevin for this background.**

FP 119 was built in San Diego, California, accepted on 5 June 1942 and delivered on 17 June 1942. Before being flown to Montreal's flying boat base at Boucherville she spent around 8 weeks at Elizabeth City, North Carolina. The ferry crew would have picked FP119 up at Boucherville, flown her to Gander, Newfoundland, and then across the Atlantic to RAF Greenock, Scotland, arriving 16 August where she was placed in stored reserve until allotted to 202 Squadron in Gibraltar.

Exactly one month later, on 16th September, 1942, Pilot Officer Thomas L Wright RCAF and his crew, all from 119 Squadron, took off from Greenock for Pembroke Dock. They arrived the following day, having been forced to spend the night at Stranraer owing to weather.

On 24 September, 1942, P/O Wright flew FP119 from Pembroke Dock to Mount Batten to pick up 3 passengers: Lt James Turner RN, Major Samuel Greig RASC, and a civilian (as far as I can tell) a Mr GD Marcil. On 25 September they departed for Gibraltar but unfortunately the aircraft was lost in an electrical storm off San Fernando, Cadiz Spain, with all its seven-man crew and passengers missing.

FP 119's failure to arrive went unnoticed in Gibraltar until signals from the UK started arriving enquiring about the aircraft's arrival. Then panic sets in because London knew that Lt Turner was carrying detailed plans relating to Operation Torch - the invasion of Vichy

French North Africa -including the start date for the Operation and also lists of names of French agents in North Africa.

Lt. Turner's body and that of Sgt Edwards were washed ashore near Talifa and laid out in a fish processing factory before being collected by a truck from Gibraltar. When the detail from Gibraltar arrived they left behind all the (secret) papers because their orders didn't include any mention about collecting them! It was only when Lt Turner's body reached Gibraltar and a Most Secret letter was discovered in his pocket that someone decided to return to Spain and collect the rest of the papers!

The Spanish by then had had a look at them but failed to appreciate their significance and decided they weren't very important! They thought the list with the agents' names were actually blacklist of characters to be arrested! It was a very close call.

Sgt Edwards and PO Wright were buried in Gibraltar. The bodies of some of the other crew were later washed ashore but they were buried at sea.

The interest in this stems from the fact that this Catalina crash was the inspiration for the wartime deception which is generally known as 'The Man Who Never Was' (officially called Operation Mincemeat) where the British Intelligence services had a dead body carrying false papers dumped from a submarine and washed onto a Spanish beach.

Kevin is trying to find out more about the flight - likely route, height and duration - and any possible interference from the Spaniards. Is it likely to have refuelled in Lisbon? He would be delighted to hear from anyone who can tell him more about Catalinas and operations from Gibraltar or who worked with the flying boats at Mount Batten.

## The Flight Shop

The A Flight Shop has a lot of very attractive items of Squadron Memorabilia that are available to Association members.

202 Squadron Plaque	£24.00
202 Squadron Embroidered Badge	£4.00
Sea King Enamel Badge	£3.00
Large Sea King Print	£2.00
Sea King Mountains Print	£1.00
Sea King Postcard Print	£0.25
Tankard	£15.00
Pen	£0.40
Key Ring	£1.00
202 Squadron Sticker	£0.50
RAF Crest – Enamel Badge	£3.00
Bookmark	£1.00
202 Squadron Crest Enamel Badge	£3.00
Sea King Sticker	£0.50
Sea King Embroidered Badge	£4.00
T Shirt (all sizes)	£8.50
Polo Shirt (all sizes)	£14.00
Tie	£7.50
Cummerbund	£20.00

Please make cheques payable to: *Services Fund* **RAF Boulmer** for all goods except ties for which the cheque should be to *202 Squadron Association*. These prices are correct at the time of writing, but a review could take place any time.

## 2007 Reunion

You should by now have had a note that the next Reunion will be at **RAF Boulmer on Saturday 28th April 2007**. I am still sorting out accommodation etc. but put that weekend in your diaries. Further details to follow.

If for some reason you haven't heard from me, please let me know.

Pete Chadwick

chadwick@which.net

Contact details - usually just email addresses for the persons seeking information on page 4 can be obtained from the Webmaster or Editor. Here's one more:

Seeking any details of the loss of CatalinaJX 208 of 202 Squadron that struck the ground at Stradball, Co Kerry, in December 1944. My uncle Raymond Perkins was the Flight Engineer on the aircraft.  
Kenneth Bates

[Http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk](http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk)

If you have not been there yet or recently, trust me, the new 202 Squadron Association web site is well worthy of a visit.

I shan't embarrass Mike any further, but get yourself down to [www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk](http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk).

One thing that the Webmaster really wants is entries for that venerable RAF squadron institution: **the line book**.

I know that we have to protect the guilty, but, come on, between us we must know hundreds of good lines.

The Editor of *Muck Duck* is very keen, verging on desperate, to receive items for publication. You don't have to write it; give him the idea and he'll press-gang someone else. Letters and email are best, but it is quite OK to tell him while pressing a pint into his hand. You will then have to remind him.

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