



The newsletter of the 202 Squadron Association



Lossie Sunset *(Image courtesy of Dick Pearce, D Flt 202 Sqn)*

The President's Piece

Well, another successful Reunion is over; well done Geoff Bakewell for a very successful weekend and for your very funny anecdote (in joke!).

An excellent occasion in the Officers' Mess at Lossiemouth was, however, tinged with sadness as it was also combined with the Squadron disbandment dinner. We were reminded that at that point the only remaining operational Flight of 202 Squadron was A Flight at Boulmer...and it would cease operations in September.

We're hoping that, as currently serving members go their separate ways, they may be minded to join the Association to maintain connections with old comrades. There certainly seems to be a steady trickle of them applying, let's hope that more of them, as they settle into their new jobs, realise the value of continuing comradeship and join us.

That's not to say that we shouldn't give up on persuading more of our older comrades to join us. I recently organised a reunion for old colleagues from my flying training days, some of whom had not seen each other for over 50 years. It was a rip roaring success and the most frequent comment was – "I don't like/go to Reunions as a rule, but this has been so much fun, I'll try my old Squadron's reunion next!". So don't give up on the guys you've been badgering to join, get them to come along to a Reunion and discover how much fun they are.

Here's looking forward to the Standard Laying-Up Ceremony, which will probably be the next event on our agenda.

In Comradeship,

Pete Chadwick



Message from the Chairman

The pressures of work regrettably prevent me from writing at length for this edition of the Mucky Duck but I couldn't pass up the opportunity to thank both Pete Chadwick and Geoff Bakewell for organising, respectively, the Centenary Celebrations at Duxford in October 2014 and the joint Squadron/Association Dinner at RAF Lossiemouth in April 2015. Both events were tremendously enjoyable and interesting, and masterclasses in organisation, for which my thanks, on your behalf, to both Pete and Geoff.

Both events were great social gatherings, with plenty of good food, copious alcohol and the chance to catch up with old and new friends. And at Lossiemouth we were treated to an official Mess dinner, potentially for the last time. But both events also included fascinating excursions. Our guides at the Imperial War Museum Duxford had all researched at length the aircraft types that have been on the 202 Squadron inventory over its history, and our tailored tour of the Museum's collection was a joy for spotters and non-spotters alike. Equally, in April we were privileged to see a combination of the old (a Nimrod, courtesy of Morayvia), the changing (the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre) and the new (the Typhoons of Number 6 Squadron). As our link with 202 Squadron is necessarily loosened due to the Squadron's disbandment, in future we will increasingly be structuring our Reunions to include visits and tour to places of interest not strictly associated with the Squadron.

Our Membership is as large as it has ever been, thanks to the ongoing hard work of Ian Stephenson but, as I have stressed before, we need to 'spread the word' and keep the Association a dynamic organisation. If you know ex-Squadron personnel then badger them until they join the Association!

Finally, I've already singled out 3 members of the Committee for individual thanks but I want to thank, on your behalf, all of the Committee Members who freely give up their own time to carry out duties that keep the Association thriving; without their work our Association couldn't keep going. Owen Wright volunteered, and was thus co-opted onto the Committee, to liaise with the Squadron regarding the disposal of the Squadron's non-valuable (in monetary terms) heritage items. We want to secure such items and store/display them at a location near wherever the Standard is laid up. Owen's perseverance and hard work is maximising the chances of our plan coming to fruition.

I look forward to seeing you all at our next event, which, on current developing plans, should be the Laying up of the Squadron Standard at a venue and a date (in 2016) yet to be determined.

And finally, finally, thank you to Charlie Logan for putting together another edition of the Mucky Duck. As always, I'm certain that it will be an engrossing read.

Yours,

Steve Garden



News From the Front Line: June 2015



XZ585, the doyen of the fleet, pictured at Lossie on March 2nd

(image copyright Mark Leith)

It is an interesting time at present, with the theme of Transition very much in the thoughts of all those at the Flight(s). Summer (the 'Gentleman's' Quarter', with no night flying stats to achieve) is now well in force, with the

heady aroma of singed meat in the air and 202 Sqn now operating solely out of RAF Boulmer with a mix of personnel from A, D and E Flts. It is strange to finally be arriving at the point in time where the Squadron begins its draw down and eventual handover to Bristow and the inevitable laying up of the colours. This means we have and will be saying goodbye to many colleagues, off to pastures new or onto retirement and a well-deserved rest.

At the start of the period jobs were a little scarce with bulk of the winter weather still making its way, in a foreboding manner, over the North Atlantic. However once it got into its stride the British winter contributed greatly to the SAR callouts throughout the Squadron.

D Flt continued to be busy with some very interesting jobs right up to their handover to Bristow. They welcomed Flt Lt Ed Burrows to the Flight in October (better late than never), but said goodbye to Sqn Ldr Iain 'McHoots' Macfarlane and Mucky Duck favourite Flt Lt Dave Punchard, to take over as OC 1564 Flt in the Falklands and a career with Bond Offshore respectively.

A particularly noteworthy event included the exploits of Flt Lt Tony Falkingham, who during his yearly Categorisation Check certainly earned his flying pay. Early into the shift, even before the QHI had time to hatch some devious plan to test the very fabric of Tony's SAR knowledge, the job phone rung its heart stopping tone, tasking R137 to a perturbed fisherman stuck up a tree in the middle of the River Esk, in full flood. One can only speculate as to how he ended up in such a predicament - perhaps it was a good vantage point from which to view the running salmon - but I digress and ours is not to wonder why, only to get airborne within 15 minutes. The stricken fisherman in question was successfully winched to safety and the crew returned to base to collect their thoughts and ponder: 'that would surely be it for a Cat Check shift?!' The shift, however, had one more ace up its sleeve. That evening the job phone went once again, this time with reports of a vessel not only carrying nuclear material and suffering from an engine fire, but also drifting uncontrollably towards an Oil Platform with approximately 40 souls on board! Quite clearly this had to be an inject that almost certainly originated from the pages of the QHI's well-thumbed tome 'Diabolical Schemes and other such Shenanigans, Vol. 1'? The answer was a no. So in a much stripped

down Sea King, R137 launched and successfully evacuated 34 personnel from the Oil Rig, back to the safety of Lossiemouth, in the process of which they had to purposely exceed the max all up weight, in order to get all non-essential personnel to safety. Flt Lt Falkingham passed his Cat Check.

Visits to D flight continued throughout the quarter culminating in November with a visit to Lossiemouth by HRH the Queen as part of a tour of the new QRA facilities now in place. Many flight members and their families were lucky enough to meet the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, and pose for photos which later appeared in the local newspapers.

An equally 'popular' visit was also provided by the Standards Evaluation team in December, which thankfully passed painlessly and successfully for all.



XZ585 on D Flt's final SAROp, 31st March 2015 (*image courtesy of Lochaber MRT*)

In February it was announced that Flt Lt Ian Campbell was awarded the AFC for a rescue conducted in the Falklands last October, as part of 1564 Flt. Ian and his crew were tasked to find a fisherman whom had been swept overboard in horrendous weather, at night, 70nm off Stanley. The crew

showed immense bravery and skill in not only finding, but recovering the body from the mountainous Southern Atlantic seas. Ian received his AFC from HRH Prince William, The Duke of Cambridge, in May.

As planned, at the end of March 2015 D Flt handed over the reins to Bristow operating out of Inverness. The transition was, rather poetically, conducted in flight down the centre of Great Glen with the Sea King R137 passing the S92 at Midnight and 'high fiving' , or as close as is safe in a helicopter, Coastguard 951 in the midst of a search for a missing walker.

E Flt suffered from some poor serviceability at the beginning of the last quarter due to a spate of highly unusual airframe vibrations in both of their aircraft. However, due to the diligence and hard work of the engineers and aircrew, this was resolved and they continued to provide SAR cover as always. Notable jobs included the rescue of 2 crew members from a stricken fishing vessel 100 miles off the Farne Islands, in rough seas and with the added bonus of the boat, rather rudely, sinking whilst simultaneously spilling fuel and debris.



Leconfield, 1st April 2015: crew walk for aircraft delivery flight

(image courtesy of SAR Force IES)

All the way through the quarter, Leconfield continued to work closely with the coastguard and lifeboats alongside Humberside Coast Guard who took over from E Flt at 0900 on 1st April 2015. The handover was marked with numerous farewell parties for those leaving the service and an excellent, locally organised event in Leconfield village, which was greatly appreciated by all those at the Flight.

Now the last shining beacon of 202 Sqn, A Flt has seen an influx of personnel and personalities in recent months from D and E Flts, bolstering numbers and providing the shift plotters with a much easier secondary duty.

The start of winter saw a period of poor weather, mostly fog based, which made it difficult for the crews to train safely. However, once it abated, the focus was on night flying to further hone skills that may have dulled slightly, as they always do, over the summer period. Jobs were few and far between but those that did present themselves proved to be most challenging.

Winchman Sgt Neil Clements showed exceptional bravery and skill in rescuing a woman from the coast just off Newcastle in what can only be described as extreme weather conditions. He twice entered the water, having to fight through powerful waves to get to the casualty. Due to the conditions and the urgency to extract the casualty, Neil had to use his strength to physically grip the casualty while they were moved to calmer water, where she could be winched into the helicopter. Once on board Neil then commenced CPR until their arrival at the hospital. For his actions, Sgt Clements was awarded the Billy Deacon Trophy, presented by HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

As the new year was welcomed in, A Flt was struggling for personnel to fill the roster, with a few being grounded for medical reasons and others being away in the Falklands. Fortunately the sister flights were able to provide willing volunteers to cover, and SAR continued unhindered.

The ageing aircraft went through a period of unserviceability with one of the engines on XZ586 stubbornly refusing to start for almost two weeks. As unperturbed as ever, the engineers scratched many heads, oiled this and hit that and generally performed miracles to get the old girl flying once again.

As the end of SAR approaches we are now starting to say goodbye to those leaving for: OC A Flt Sqn Ldr Emma Landy leaves to be replaced by Sqn Ldr Iain MacFarlane, Flt Lts Andy Doyle, Iain Cuthbertson and Sgts Chris Bradshaw and Neil Clements leave to join Bristow SAR, Flt Lts Nige Lynch and 'Griff' Griffiths leave to pursue a SAR career in the Netherlands, Flt Lt and Flt Sgt Bethell leave to a better life Down Under, and last but not least Flt Lt Ian Campbell leaves to his new post as a Tutor QFI.



Lossiemouth, 1st April 2015: final landing from tasking (same job as the previous evening!) *(image courtesy of SAR Force IES)*

The flight, and indeed the Squadron, continues to perform its duty to the usual high standard with all those still on the front line appreciating each flight in a yellow Sea King just that little bit more, knowing that in a few months it will all be just a happy memory.

Flt Lt Sam Dempsey



The next two articles are by Ian Robins, and explain how two of the eye-catching emblems of 202's SAR era came about

Yellow Helmets

My yellow 'bone dome' has recently been returned to me from its place in the SAR museum at SARF HQ at Valley. Wg Cdr Heald handed it back to me at the last reunion Dining-in-Night at Lossiemouth. I subsequently explained to those dining in the Stotfield Hotel on the Saturday of the reunion why it came to be painted yellow. While there were some 'old stagers' listening – at least I hope they were listening – few of the current Squadron remained to hear my tale. So I thought I could give them all the story through an article in Mucky Duck.

I was one of 2 Sqn Ldrs running the two SAR Whirlwind Squadrons. We were very junior for such responsibility, but SAR was not considered important like the fast-jet end of the Air Force. We were thus given quite a lot of autonomy and were generally left to run things our own way. That is not to say we were not able to call for support when required, but such a call often received a low priority.



In my view, the SAR force should have had easily visible clothing. Rather like the winchmen's orange immersion suit, all crews should be issued with 'dayglo' suits so that if they were forced down in the mountains they would be easier to see and to recover than if dressed in the standard 'green bag'. I submitted this request to HQ 18 Group, our then Group Headquarters within Strike Command, but got short shrift. I was told that the request was impossible and I should proceed no further with it.

This riled me a bit, so I went along to the Squadron Painter and Finisher, Corporal Al Forshaw, and asked him to paint my 'bone dome' the same colour as the yellow Whirlwind, which he instantly did. This mod seemed to be fairly popular and soon most of the Squadron bone domes were similarly painted, then I noticed that 22 Squadron had followed suit. I am pleased to note now that every time I see a programme on SAR on the television that many of the Coastguard helicopter crews also wear yellow bone domes.

So it is interesting to see that following my annoyance at being turned down on a simple request for easily visible flying kit, a cult has developed which has continued, and I hope will continue for many years.

Duck on the Tail

I was posted to be OC 202 Squadron from a Lightning squadron. Each fighter squadron had easily visible squadron markings usually on the tail fin, which helped morale by giving the pilots and groundcrew readily identifiable 'colours' to muster round.

I arrived and saw no squadron badges on any of the Whirlwinds and thought that I might be able to add to the already high morale by painting the squadron badge, in the form of a mallard duck, on the tail rotor pylon of each aircraft. My excellent flight sergeant, Ken Noyes, set to and soon drew up a set of stencils. We tried them out with the painters' help and found them to be fine, so I planned for each aircraft to have a (Mucky) duck painted on the tail pylon when it passed through Leconfield on its next major servicing.

I was reading something a bit later referring to markings on aircraft and the authorisation of same. It said that any change to an aircraft's markings had

to have the authority of the Air Officer Commanding. Our two SAR squadrons came under the command of the two maritime regions within 18 Group – 202 Squadron was under Northern Maritime Air Region, or NORMAR for short. Thus it was AOC NORMAR who conducted our Annual AOC's Inspections. Fortunately there was an Inspection scheduled soon after the first aircraft had had the Mallard painted on it, so I thought that might be the opportunity I needed to get the duck made official. As he inspected the personnel and the aircraft, I asked him if he liked the newly painted duck. He smiled approvingly, so I took that as the formal approval.



202 Sqn Whirlwind, Finningley, 1977 (*image copyright Michael Hall*)

All the aircraft were duly painted, and I thought they looked excellent, so I was a bit disappointed to find that when the Sea King entered service the duck was removed and put on the fuselage. Maybe someone can explain in another article how that decision came to be made.



Editor's End

The usual hearty thanks are due to those who have contributed. I would like to make special mention of Sam Dempsey, who returned from the Falklands to have the MD contribution thrust upon him, yet he set to cheerfully and delivered as good an article as any previous in record time! I am also fortunate to be able to include a number of high-quality images, most of which are previously unpublished: thanks to all, notably Mark Leith (more of Mark's photography can be seen at www.airliners.net) and Cpl Pete Devine and SAC Gina Edgcumbe of the SAR Force Image Exploitation Section.

Since the last issue, I am pleased to report that Morayvia have been successful in their bid to acquire a Sea King; XZ592 will duly make its way north in the coming weeks. If anyone has details of 592's past, Bob, Mark and the team would be delighted to hear anything you can offer. Please contact me and I will put you in touch.

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Leconfield, 1st April 2015: both Sea Kings depart for storage at RAF Valley