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The Newsletter of
202 Squadron Association

www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk

Whither Mucky Duck?

I hope that you noticed that there was no Autumn 2010 edition of Mucky Duck.

At last year's AGM we considered the suggestion from the Squadron Commander that Mucky Duck could be amalgamated with the Squadron's Annual Review. It could be fully incorporated or appear with its own identity within the Review's covers. The Review is a highly professional looking publication on good quality print stock and we should have gained prestige by being part of it. Probably the resulting publication would have been greater than the sum of the two. The AGM agreed in principle with the suggestion and instructed the Committee to

consider the proposal in detail and reach a decision.

This has been done and, while the merit of change was recognised, the balance of opinion was in favour of *status quo*. So, here we are again having lost only the Autumn edition.

A piece of good news is that Mike Furness has offered to take a hand in the production of Mucky Duck.

This does not mean that there will be any diminution of the attempts to recruit new blood to the Committee including a new Editor.

The Cinderella Service - a book review

While reading *The Cinderella Service* I formed the impression that, rather than a book to be read for entertainment, this was a work of scholarly research. When I reached the end and read the back cover this was revealed as the truth – it began life as Andrew Hendrie’s Doctoral thesis. Readers should approach the book in this light.

It is a thoroughly researched history of Coastal Command in the wartime and immediate pre-war period. There is virtually nothing in the way of anecdotal narrative.

There are detailed chapters revealing the War Cabinet and Air Ministry policy and the way it was reached on several main headings: Aircraft, Armament, Anti-Submarine Warfare 1939 to 1941, Anti Submarine Warfare 1942 to 1945, Anti-Shipping Operations – Merchant Shipping, Anti-shipping Operations – Warships and Cinderella Units.

It is this last chapter that 202 Squadron readers may find most interesting as it includes Air Sea Rescue and Meteorological Reconnaissance. [Re-arrange the letters A S R to find something more modern].

It is something that we were regarded as Cinderella units in the Cinderella Service.

I can strongly recommend this as a reference book, but a page turner it is not.

From the President

We're shortly to be getting together again at Valley for this year's Reunion. As is usual, we have one or two new members who are going to attend for the first time; a couple of guests; and a few of the usual suspects who're unable to join us this year.

The one noticeable change over the past couple of years, however, is the increasing attendance by our colleagues still serving. And long may it continue! We should be doing everything we can to make them feel part of the Association and to remain so when they leave the Squadron or the Service.

I was going to suggest that the pool from which we could seek and encourage new members would dry up with the impending demise of the Squadron as SAR is privatized. But that seems to have been thrown back in to the melting pot with the delay in the implementation of SARH. The problem now would seem to be keeping the ageing Sea King fleet going a little longer.

Nonetheless, as *tempus fugit*, we shall continue to be ever more in need of new, younger membership recruits.

Thanks to Sara Mackmin's enthusiasm for the Association, we're going to be making a direct approach to current Squadron members and to those who've recently left by means of a letter signed both by our Chairman, Derek Whatling and by Sara, extolling the virtues of becoming members of the Association. If we can get them in and to a Reunion, I reckon we'll be able to keep em!

That said; you can play a part as well, by thinking of old mates who might not have heard of us and having a go at encouraging them to join with tales of the great get-togethers we have. The record so far is 88 of us at dinner. Wouldn't it be nice to make it the round 100?

Look forward to seeing you there.
In comradeship
Pete Chadwick

News from the Sqn.....

In the run up to the revived Mucky Duck, the front line Squadron continues to be almost as busy as ever. Although notably fewer than before, the 320 jobs during 2010 have maintained their varied nature and unpredictability which has kept the crews at all three flights on their toes. A number of personnel have left the fold for pastures of a distinctly greener nature (well sandier really) and some are still waiting to follow suit in amongst the general manning upheaval across the RAF. That aside, whilst several have gone, an equal number have arrived and the cycle of faces continues across the board, significantly the number of tweed outfits is on the rise with a number of Ex Army seeing the light. MACR Ron Webb has departed the Sea King fleet, clocking up an



impressive 10,000 hours during his many years service, which is going to take some beating! Another stalwart of the SARF has also departed recently in the form of Flt Lt Mike Holman.

MACR Duncan Tripp was recognised this year with a CinC's Commendation for his efforts during the recovery of an avalanched climber on the north face of the Ben early last year. The casualty had sustained multiple serious and undoubtedly life threatening injuries and Duncan faced a tough task in stabilising the individual on the side of a mountain before they were recovered to the aircraft and in to Fort Bill hospital [Belfort Hospital Fort William to us. Ed]. The casualty's injuries proved to be so serious that, after further stabilising him, it was deemed necessary to transfer him to Glasgow in deteriorating weather conditions.

One of the more dramatic incidents this year unfolded a number of miles off the Northumberland coast. During a night role training sortie and having completed an FCS radar let down, SRG 131 was in the hover at 50 ft and just about to start manoeuvring towards the target boat, when one of the engines decided to give up the ghost. Rapidly identifying the emergency, Flt Lt Alex 'Spacer' Johnson took control of the aircraft from the left hand seat and managed to achieve forward flight. Whilst previous Squadron aircraft routinely operated on the sea's surface, Spacer thankfully maintained a modicum of height between the aircraft and the water before climbing away for a running landing at Newcastle airport. For his efforts Spacer was awarded a Green Endorsement.

Flt Lt's Dan Easter, Matt Prosser, FS Nige Mortimer and Sgt Ben Jacobs were all awarded SARFC's Commendations for their efforts to deliver several Coast Guard Pumps to a vessel shipping water in the North Sea last autumn. A large number of the Squadron's winchmen achieved Paramedic qualification this year which, although the high standard of medical care changes little, will be of literally great relief to those who may have taken a tumble down a hillside or such like, as they can now be given all manner of opiate based painkillers.

In June, the revised Squadron Standard party made their way to Gibraltar again to take part in the Queen's Birthday Parade that a number of the Association will have witnessed during the reunion 2 years ago. The



attached photo is of MACR Paul Hayward, Sgt Garry Stewart and FS Mark Lean and was taken during a brief respite in the rain that apparently was present for most of the detachment. It would appear that 2009 was definitely the year to go!

On the social scene, all three flights achieved a Christmas bash with cover provided from the rest of the Sqn for each function. Indeed, D Flt managed to turn this into a weekend away to Skye and made merry in the Cuillin Hills Hotel in Portree. The endeavours to conform to the first night's fancy dress theme are to be commended and the patience of the staff likewise, as a very eclectic band gathered for dinner....

HM Government's decision on the future of SAR(H) is obviously one of those topics that we all wish we knew more about, however, rather than gaining clarity the waters appear to only muddy further. Those who've been following the news will know as much as the rest of us as to the current situation. As it stands, the consortium previously selected has had the contract retracted and we know not what the long term plan is. The silver lining to that cloud being that whatever the short term outcome, the extension of 202 Squadron as a productive unit seems inevitable. So, at least for the foreseeable future the Squadron continues and those privileged to have served with a duck on their shoulder will likewise continue to swell in rank....

Whirlwind XP345

The Yorkshire Aircraft Preservation Group has approached the Squadron seeking a photograph of Whirlwind XP 345 in SAR colours. We understand that Pete Chadwick actually has this aircraft in his logbook, but can anyone help with a picture or any other information about this helicopter.

FINANCE CORNER

The Association's Finances remain 'healthy' with £5,954 in the Bank.

A 'thank you' to all the Members for their prompt payment of Subscriptions - very few have needed a reminder !

There was a small 'overspend' on the Reunion at Shawbury - otherwise expenditure this year has been routine.

An Early Meteorological Reconnaissance Member

On entry to the RAF, I trained as a W/Op (Air) and also did an Air Gunnery course. Eventually I found myself at OTU at Lossiemouth. We all sorted ourselves out into crews and I remained with that crew until 1947, when my time in the RAF ended.

When we left OTU, there were five long range Met Squadrons operating with Halifax aircraft and we were posted to 519 Squadron at Leuchars. The operation was code named "RECIPE". This involved flying northwards almost to the Arctic Circle and returning down the coast of Norway. Part of the trip was done at 20,000 feet, part under 10,000 and part at sea level. Readings were taken by the Meteorological Air Observer who coded them into about 50 five figure groups which were immediately sent back to base by the W/Op.

The crew was seven in all, and consisted of the Skipper, Second Pilot, Navigator, Flight Engineer, two W/Ops and a Met Air Observer.

519 Squadron disbanded on 31st May 1946 and we went to Aldergrove where 518 Squadron was doing the "BISMUTH" operation. This was a series of triangular tracks and straight line probes radiating from South to North through West covering the Eastern Atlantic and Norwegian Sea.

518 Squadron also had a detachment at Gibraltar flying "NOCTURNAL". This was a straight track half way to the Azores and back.

After three months at Aldergrove, we went to Gibraltar. We had been there for about a month when, on 30th September 1946, 518 Squadron disbanded and on 1st October 1946 we became 202 Squadron. Demob came in 1947 and I went back to Aldergrove. In June one more operation brought my total to 55 with just under 1000 flying hours.

What about the Halifax? We flew Mk III and Mk IV and we all felt that the Halifax was the best of aircraft. Looking through my logbook I counted four three engine returns, one hydraulics failure, and three operations aborted due to sunspot activity causing total radio blackout.

Perhaps the diciest of all incidents was when, about 750 miles out of Gibraltar, a hole blew in the nose. This meant that the Navigator and the Meteorological Air Observer had to leave their positions in the nose because of the gale blowing through. We W/Ops were also in the nose, but we



were able to stay there as we were protected by the radio equipment.. Our Navigator got us back to Gibraltar by a combination of dead reckoning, star shots and QDMs.

What of Gibraltar? Incredibly I shall never forget our arrival at Gibraltar. We went into the transit canteen for a meal and it is etched in my memory just how brilliantly white the bread was after all those years of war time grey/brown bread.

At Gibraltar there occurred one of the most amazing ditchings ever. Those who know Gibraltar will be aware that the runway juts out into the sea like an aircraft carrier. A crew were taking off on that day's mission when power was lost and the aircraft ran off the runway into the sea. The crew calmly got out, walked along the wing and stepped onto dry land.

This was a long time ago and memory plays tricks. While we were 518 Squadron at Aldergrove I celebrated my 21st and I and the crew went into Belfast and had a meal at the Grand Central Hotel and I remember it well.

The Grand Central was regularly visited by us and I am told that it was taken over by the military during the troubles. I wonder if it still exists. [Sorry, no. Its site is the CastleCourt shopping centre now. Ed]

Over the years three of us in the crew of seven were in touch, one sadly died and for many years two of us kept in touch until Cyril, our Met Observer, sadly died around last Christmas. I suppose that I am the sole survivor of the crew, which is an odd sensation. As I said earlier, it was a long time ago, but it was an experience I look back on with fond memories.

Graham Bett

Fairly Mild Coincidences

It is good to have reminiscences about meteorological reconnaissance from other than an Air Meteorological Observer (Graham Bett - Wireless Operator – page 7) and it is mild coincidence number one that the reviewed book (The Cinderella Service - page 2) contains this picture of a 518 Squadron Halifax employed on just those duties. The coincidence



is weak as the picture was taken leaving Tiree, probably to fly a “BISMUTH” and I don’t think Graham was stationed there, though he did fly “BISMUTH” later from Aldergrove.

To create mild coincidence number two Graham mentions the Halifax at Elvington, which was visited by a group of members a few years ago. This airframe is actually a mongrel from the marriage the fuselage from Halifax HR 792 which crashed on Lewis and wings from Hastings TG 536 from Catterick; the two types flown by 202 Squadron on meteorological reconnaissance. I am pretty sure that our Honorary Member – Iggy – did actually fly both types for the Squadron.

The Last Man Left in the Air Force

I'm the last man left in the Air Force!
In my office inside MOD
I've a copy of Queen's Regulations
Applicable only to me.
I can post myself off to St Mawgan,
Detach me from there to Kinloss,
Or send me on courses to Cosford,
Then cancel the lot – I'm the boss.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force!
I suppose you imagine it's great
To be master of all you survey,
But I tell you, it's difficult mate.
I inspected three stations last Tuesday
As C-in-C (Acting) of Strike,
Then cleaned out the bogs at Brize Norton
And repaired Saxa Vord's station bike.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force!
My wife says I'm never at home,
When I'm not flying kites I'm at Manston
Laying gallons and gallons of foam,
Or I'm on my marine craft off Plymouth
Shooting flares at the crowd on the Hoe,
Or I'm Orderly Sergeant at Valley,
It's an interesting life - but all go!

I'm the last man left in the Air Force!
When not ADC to the Queen
I'm Red Arrows Leader at Scampton
Or the QCS Silent Drill Team.
Tomorrow I'm painting the Guardroom
And air testing several planes,
The day after that I'm in London
Where I'm Chaplain at St Clement Danes.

I'm the last man left in the Air Force!
But I'm pensioned off before long.
There's been no talk of replacement
And I can't justify signing on.
I hope to enjoy my retirement,
I've put up a fairly good show,
I won't cut myself off entirely -
There are always reunions you know.



The correspondent sending this photograph of a stopped Hastings engine also sent the rather cryptic text:

You may want to make use of the attached. Some narrative in this form along the lines of :

".....and I remember in August 57.....we had to feather No 1where were we ?.... about 54 North and 25 West on BISMUTH CHARLIE.....yes....turned back to Aldergrove....."
from a fading memory !

At least nowadays you would be considered to be green - saving a quarter of the fuel

The Association Committee

Pete Chadwick	President and Reunion Organiser
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Brian Tanner	Treasurer
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Ian Stephenson	Membership Secretary
Matthew Crosby-Jones	Squadron/Association Liaison Officer

Mucky Duck is published twice a year aiming for April-ish and October-ish.

The Editor is always requiring contributions, because it can't work without them. Please make the effort with: news items, opinions, reminiscences (not necessarily true) and anything else that occurs to you. Photographs are particularly welcome. JPEG format is best, but we can cope with almost anything.

Please send items to:

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