



# ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Number 11

Autumn 2002

I know it is nearer winter than autumn and I apologise for the late issue of the Newsletter; you can unbate your breath now. The excuse is that I have been upgrading and changing to a new computer and there were problems at the OCU.

## Why does John McCubbin glow in the dark?

You may well have noticed of an evening at Leconfield that John McCubbin glows gently in the dark and put it down to the effect of copious draughts of Yorkshire beer. In fact John was one of the NCOs from 202 Squadron who were seconded to the H-bomb tests in the 1950s working in Australia and around Christmas Island. While there he had the colossal cheek to win the photograph competition for another squadron. The full story of those escapades will appear in a later edition of the Newsletter.

In August the Squadron received a letter from Mr. G T Davies, GM – formerly Flt Eng Sgt G T Davies with service 1938 to 1976 including 1942/1943 with 202 Squadron at North Front. He retired from CFS Little Rissington in 1976

Dear Sir,

May I respectfully request that you would consider sending me brief details of the following missions from 202 Squadron operational records in which our crew were directly involved.

A The then secret mission involving French General Giraud and Operation Torch. On the 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> November 1942 we picked up the General and staff officers from the RN Submarine Search. MOD (Navy) has sent me full details relating to their submarine Search and this mission. There is very little recorded

dealing with 202 Squadron and this hazardous operation.

B On the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> June 1943 when airborne on course to carry out convoy escort over the Atlantic, we crashed into high ground on the coast of Spain. Eight of my crew perished with self and a supernumerary crew member injured and, against the odds, returned to our Squadron at Gibraltar. Do Squadron records record our crash with details? I was awarded the George Medal presented by HM the King in 1944.

May I wish all personnel of 202 Squadron the very best of luck and happy landings. I shall always be proud to have served in the gallant 202 Sqn.

The Squadron Adjutant was able to track down information for him:

. . . A different type of sortie was made on 24 October 1942 when a Catalina picked up Brigadier General Mark Clark, Eisenhower's deputy, from a submarine after his clandestine trip to Algiers, where he met the French General Mast and other leaders of the Resistance. A similar flight was made to pick up General Giraud on 7 November, after he had been smuggled out of France. Although successful, the operation was not without incident, for the General fell into the water during the difficult transfer from submarine to aircraft.

### **George Medal**

Sergeant Gildus DAVIES, R.A.F., No. 202 Squadron. In June 1943 Sergeant Davies was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer in an aircraft which crashed into high ground, and immediately caught fire. Sergeant Davies, displaying complete disregard for his own safety, made many attempts to open a hatch and eventually succeeded in rescuing one of his trapped comrades whom he dragged to

safety. Sergeant Davies then attempted to re-enter the blazing aircraft in an endeavour to rescue other members of the crew. He was, however, compelled to abandon the attempt owing to the intense heat which exploded depth charges in the aircraft. This airman displayed outstanding courage and devotion to duty.

## **From the Secretary**

Membership is remaining steady at 128 with a couple of new members since the reunion – welcome to them.

As September comes and goes, it is time once again for me to ask for your annual membership. Those of you who pay by direct debit you can relax and only check your statement to ensure that £5 has come out.

For those of you that pay by cheque, please write one payable to **202 Squadron Association** (not to me please) and send it to me at the address on p6. Please make sure that your name and address is on the back

## **James Doyle**

We have received the following email:

I hope that I am not wasting your time but I was looking for some information.

During WWII my father served as a flight engineer on Catalina Flying Boats for Coastal Command. Unfortunately I am not sure of the squadron he served in, but after reading your history page I think that maybe it was 202.

His name was James Laurence Doyle.

I know that he spent a time based at Gibraltar and received an MBE for blowing up a U-boat west of the Strait. After being shot down he became a member of the Swordfish Club.

I hope that this can help you answer my question of whether or not he served in 202 so that I can tell my children who have recently become fascinated that their grandfather fought in WWII.

### **Life on 202 Squadron 2002**

Another year's end fast approaches, and so it's time to scribe yet another entry for the association newsletter. Well, life continues on 202 Sqn without much change. The Falkland Islands roueement continues, although the frequency of detachments for aircrew has been reduced due to the most welcome decision to include the Sea King Mark 3a crews from our sister Number 22 Sqn.

Our primary role has seen scrambles continue unabated throughout all of the flights with some noticeable and memorable ones mentioned below:

A Flight had the novelty of working out how to rescue some 800 passengers from a stricken ferry on fire way out on the North Sea. Fortunately the fire was brought under control and the evacuation was not required. F/O Andy Smith and his crew enjoyed their night spent on the nearest oil rig.

D Flight was scrambled to rescue a large crew off a stricken trawler well to the north of Scotland and just on the limits of the Sea King's range. Some frantic planning ensured a successful rescue.

E Flight also had the prospect of evacuating a North Sea ferry with an engine fire off the East Coast, but, after depositing some fire fighters from our own Defence Fire Service, an evacuation was avoided.

We, E Flight, also managed to rescue a herd of cows stranded on an island in the middle of the Humber estuary. You may have seen the TV documentary featuring this well publicized event.

Finally the most notable of all E Flight's scrambles so far was the evacuation of the Rough 3B gas platform just outside the mouth of the Humber when a large and able fishing vessel crashed into it in bad weather.

While there are too many scrambles to mention them all in detail, for the statisticians amongst you the 202 Sqn SAR Ops thus far for 2002 read as follows:

<u>Flight</u>	<u>SAROps</u>	<u>Persons Rescued</u>
A	134	73 plus 1 dog
B	175	160
E	129	180 minus 1 dog

Well it's time for me to draw this little missive to a close for the very last time. Come January I shall be posted to the Sea King OCU. My successor has yet to be nominated, but when he is, he will be in for a very pleasant surprise to be your association representative on the Squadron. As an ex "pongo" it was, with hindsight, a great introduction for me into post RAF life. I shall leave with fond memories and a lot less heartbeats than when I assumed the role from Flt Lt Graham Stewart.

Good luck for next year's reunion.

**Martyn Williams**

## Reunions

Once again the reunion in Leconfield was marvelous occasion and I don't imagine that anyone did not have the time of their life [even Martyn – see article below] and be assured that the Committee have given our thanks to all concerned at the Mess in Normandy Barracks. Thank you very much, also, to the serving members of the Squadron who did a brilliant job of organizing the Saturday and making us so welcome to the Flight. I trust that the bar takings reflect our gratitude.

There was some cynical comment during the safety talk in the Cinema when we were told that smoking was a fire hazard. It seems that our fags were likely to be rather more effective incendiary devices than all that the Luftwaffe had thrown at the same building.

Unfortunately this excellent venue will not be available to us next year and we must look elsewhere. The Annual General Meeting decided that we should investigate holding our reunion in Gibraltar next year to coincide with the Squadron Colours being paraded at Battle of Britain weekend. It was a very popular idea and a sub-committee was set up to investigate and achieve.

The question was asked, "Shall we be able to take wives (spouses)?" and it was agreed that we should, though one veteran of the Hastings Gib trips sitting beside me muttered that he thought that supplying them was Charley Brown's job. [If you don't understand, get an old man to explain]

The Chairman has reported that we are now looking at the end of September 2003 as there is no accommodation available

around Battle of Britain. Flights are still proving a little difficult, but one option being looked at is chartering our own BAe 146. This would require as big a commitment in numbers as we had for Leconfield – about 70. The Chairman will write to all of us when there is a concrete proposal. Let's get saving.

### **Also on the reunion night . . .**

On that evening in May, while we were having a jolly good time in the Leconfield Mess, all three flights of the Squadron were airborne on scrambles in their own areas. Martyn tells of them:

D Flight was scrambled from Lossiemouth to rescue an injured walker in the Torridon area on the West Coasts of Scotland. Skipped by Flt Lt Chris Cooper, Rescue 137 arrived on scene with the Kinloss and Torridon Mountain Rescue Teams already in attendance. The casualty required winching to safety and was flown to Raigmore Hospital for treatment.

A Flight, skipped by Flt Lt Rich Wood was scrambled four times during his very hectic last shift in the RAF before joining civy street. He certainly left search and rescue on a busy night.

Unlike last year's three scrambles, E Flight was only to be tasked twice during this year's reunion. The first, as many will recall, was during the Association Reunion's photograph in front of the duty aircraft. (Timing, Timothy??) It was to rescue a cliff faller at Bridlington; sadly his dog died in the fall, but the casualty was rescued safely by HM Coastguard just before we got there. Many apologies to the ladies whose skirts I raised and if I messed your hair, and especially to the gentlemen

whose hairpieces were dislodged. I am so glad you managed to retrieve them all!?

After the hectic events of the day had quietened down and my crew and I were settling down for a quiet evening thinking of the Association members supping all that fine wine and ale and enjoying good food in great company, we were scrambled once again. This TIME It was to a very badly injured Danish trawler man some 100 miles east of Leconfield. The weather you may recall was lovely with little wind, so I was totally unprepared for the awful conditions we encountered on the scene. Fortunately for me, I had the second oldest and most experienced winchman in NATO on the crew – MALM Steve Lynch. He was able to draw on all his vast experience to enable us to effect a very traumatic and protracted rescue, injuring my Radop, Sgt James Lyne, in the process.

Eventually as the casualty was brought on board, I was able to regain my composure gratefully assisted by Steve Lynch's very dry retort that "The casualty will eventually recover as his heart beat and blood pressure are considerably less than mine". (Military humour – what a great tonic in times of stress.)

After dropping the casualty and James Lyne off at the hospital, we returned to Leconfield via the Officers' Mess – just to check on the proceedings, you know! Not being aware of events at the other Flights, we could not make head nor tail of the huge grin worn all over the Squadron Commander's face. Well we know now and no doubt he had a belly full of ale!

#### F/L Sassoon

I believe F/L Sassoon was killed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1942 while flying with 202. His name is on the war memorial in Malta. He

was a close friend of my father and I wonder if you have any information on what he was doing when he was killed.

Chris Hooper

#### **Henry "Shrimp" Davies**

Many members of the Rescue Flight stationed at RAF Coltishall will remember Henry "Shrimp" Davies - coxwain for 29 years of the Cromer lifeboat. Shrimp died on 25<sup>th</sup> June aged 88 years,

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July Stewart Hamilton Forbes attended his funeral service in Cromer Parish Church on behalf of the Association and the Squadron. The church was filled to capacity with mourners and a further five hundred took part outside via a public address system

#### **The New Committee**

The AGM agreed the following committee

Derek Whatling - Chairman  
Jules Rutt – Secretary  
Brian Tanner – Secretary  
Stew Cameron-Forbes

### **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

I must be the luckiest Newsletter Editor alive – I've got loads of material. Thank you and keep it coming; we can always have a bigger newsletter or publish more often. The next planned edition is Spring 2003.