



**The Newsletter of 202 Squadron Association**

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



The view from the Met Observer/co-pilot's seat in a Hastings C Mk 1 Approaching Longships Lighthouse in the 1950s

**From a painting by David Cobb**

## From the Squadron

Once again your correspondent writes from the sunny South Atlantic, having had a busy first shift with 2 Army types needing transfer to Stanley in the same night (inevitably, though, they decided to get 'tired and emotional' at different times meaning that we couldn't take them both at once). Back home it's been another busy summer, and a series of accolades has been awarded to Squadron personnel. The most significant of these was the award, promulgated in July, of the Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air to Master Aircrew 'Harry' Harrison of E Flight. This award followed an incident at Whitby, as described in the Spring 2007 Mucky Duck.

Another high-profile rescue, which took place on March 13<sup>th</sup> this year, has resulted in the award of the Edward & Maisie Lewis Award to a D Flight crew. Captained by Sqn Ldr Pete Richardson, the deputy Squadron Commander, the crew was tasked to rescue a sailor with chest and abdominal pains from a Russian vessel, the Semyon Lapshenkov, which was well over 200nm west of the Outer Hebrides. Unfortunately the ship was beyond the range of the Coastguard's new Sikorsky S-92 helicopter, which came into service at Stornoway earlier this year, so the venerable Sea King was duly stripped out and sent on its way. Due to the reported condition of the casualty, winchman Master Engineer Duncan Tripp, a Lossie stalwart for many years but now the Squadron's Winchman Training Officer, decided to take a doctor to assist with treating the man, weighing this up against the extra fuel which could have been taken instead.

Arriving on scene, the 100m vessel was being moved around a great deal by the heavy seas, and the chosen winching area was pitching over a range of 10 metres; despite the size of the ship, nowhere else was suitable as a winching area due to the layout of the vessel and the amount of equipment and obstructions on deck. Flight Sergeant Dave Hutt, the RadOp/WinchOp, commenced lowering Duncan, but on the first attempt an exceptionally large movement of the ship at the critical moment slammed Duncan into an obstruction, injuring his back, and Dave brought him back onto the aircraft. The crew was faced with the awkward decision about whether the casualty's condition was critical enough to justify a further attempt to deploy an already injured winchman with no guarantee of success. Some shipping captains have been known to overstate the condition of a casualty to ensure that he is removed promptly, enabling the ship to continue its journey with minimum delay. Given that the ship was so far removed from any other means of assistance, Duncan agreed to be winched out for a second time. This time, he arrived on deck and went to assess the casualty and prepare him for recovery to the aircraft. As Duncan worked, he had a terrifying moment when the aircraft, hovering nearby, vanished suddenly downwards, and he feared that it had

ditched. In fact, the aircraft was fine and hadn't moved, but the ship had pitched up sharply so as to hide the aircraft from view. Due to the time lost in the two winching attempts, co-pilot Flt Lt John Darlow was becoming increasingly concerned about the fuel state, and Duncan and Dave worked very hard in the most difficult conditions to bring the casualty expeditiously aboard the aircraft. The long return flight went without further incident, and the casualty was delivered to hospital in Stornoway; as the crew continued on to Lossiemouth, the casualty was moved straight to Glasgow by a fixed-wing air ambulance, and it transpires that he would have died on the ship within 24 hours had the D Flight crew not managed to rescue him. The crew logged nearly 8 hours' flying, most of it in darkness, and the Shipwrecked Fishermen and Mariners' Royal Benevolent Society chose to bestow the prestigious award upon the crew in recognition of the challenges and dangers faced during this rescue; the crew attended a ceremony at Fishmongers' Hall in London in early October to receive their award. In addition, Flight Sergeant Hutt has received a SAR Force Commander's commendation for his personal contribution to the success of the rescue.



Other awards received by Squadron personnel recently include: Commander-in-Chief Air Command's Commendations to Flt Lt Mick Wood, for his tireless work in preparing the Sqn for contractorised engineering, and for his work with youth groups which also earned him a Sunday Times award; to Flt Lt Andy Doyle who captained a Leconfield aircraft during the Gloucester floods of 2007; and to Sgt Jonna Carrington for both the Sheffield and Gloucester floods. Flt Sgt Pat Sim received a Commendation from the Air Officer Commanding 2 Group for 32 years' outstanding service, culminating in his role as Flt Sgt Eng at E Flight, while Master AEOp Chris Bodiam received a Commendation from Commander British Forces South Atlantic Islands for his part in a rescue of a seriously injured crewman from the vessel CSL Valiant, 185 nm south of the Falklands in appalling weather. SAR Force Cdr's Commendations, in addition to the one mentioned above, have been awarded to winchman Sgt Chris

Bradshaw for the daring rescue of 4 cragfast climbers from Ben Nevis, and to Flt Sgt Roger Lang, on behalf of all D Flight engineers, for achieving an Excellent categorisation in this year's SAR Staneval assessment.

I hope that listing the awards like this does not demean the achievements of the individuals, but full descriptions would result in a very lengthy article! If anyone would like to hear more about any of the above, please contact me and I will be delighted to furnish you with more detail.

If you want to see for yourself what the Squadron and its people are up to, there are two documentary series being screened at the moment which feature our activities. 'Highland Emergency', on Channel 5, covers all the emergency services in Scotland, but with a heavy bias towards the SAR helicopters (RN and Coastguard as well as RAF). A film crew who spent much of the early part of the year at Boulmer have produced a series called 'RAF Rescue' which is being aired on the channel ITV Borders.

Away from flying, the move of the Squadron HQ from Boulmer to Valley took place in April, meaning that HQ personnel now have to cover even more miles to visit the three flights. Notable movements of Squadron personnel include Sqn Ldr John Sheldon AFC who takes over as OC D Flight at the end of October from Sqn Ldr Jon Heald, who is posted to the Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre; Flt Lt Steve Johnson has handed over the Squadron QHI role to Sqn Ldr Chris Mace, after nearly four years in post. Having moved to Valley with the HQ in the spring, Steve moves offices in the new SAR Force HQ building and becomes the new OC of the SAR Staneval team (formerly HSU/GSU). Flt Sgt Austin Harley leaves D Flight and the RAF shortly after a long and distinguished career on helicopters, initially as a crewman on Pumas and more recently as a SAR winchman, and will be moving to Valley to take up an instructional post at SARTU.

Finally, a different type of event was a 10 km run in aid of the British Heart Foundation in the summer, in which your correspondent took part; this is noteworthy because of the exceptional generosity of the Association Committee, who sponsored me to the tune of £100; this was the largest single donation I received, and was enormously appreciated both by me and, presumably, the BHF. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Committee and the wider Association for this most generous gift. That's all for now – more in 6 months!

Charlie Logan

## REUNION 2009

This is a heads up about next year's Reunion, so that you can get it in your diaries and start to plan. The 2009 Reunion will be centred around the parading of the 202 Squadron Standard at the Queen's Birthday Parade in Gibraltar.

The parade will take place on the evening of Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009. The programme of events for the 202 Association Reunion will commence after lunch on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June with a Meet & Greet and Annual General Meeting. Members will then witness the parading of The 202 Squadron Standard and watch The Queen's Birthday Parade on that evening.

On Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June, there will be a Service of Dedication in King's Chapel when the 202 Squadron Standard will be laid up and the 202 Squadron Memorial Board dedicated. In the afternoon there will be some sightseeing, probably to the caves etc. In the evening will be our Formal Dinner in the Officers' Mess and that will conclude Association activities. Obviously, at this distance the detailed programme has still to be ironed out, but should not differ wildly from this.

Having learned from our previous experience visiting Gibraltar, we shall leave all travelling arrangements to individual members - you may choose to fly direct from your local airport to arrive on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> and depart on the 12<sup>th</sup> - you may choose to be in Spain and drive down - or you may choose to be on holiday in Gibraltar - whatever, the choice is yours! As long as you're in Gibraltar from 1200ish on 10<sup>th</sup> 'til the morning of 12<sup>th</sup> June, that'll be fine.

We hope once again to make use of the Britannia House self-catering flats and there is also a possibility of some rooms in the Officers' Mess, but this cannot be relied upon at this stage because of potential Exercise commitments. In any case, Officers' Mess accommodation would only be available for the 2 nights of the Reunion. Or, as happened last time, some of you may choose to book into local hotels for an extended stay.

I know that we are looking a long way ahead and there is still much planning to be done, but it would be really useful if you could let me know of your intentions/plans/hopes to attend and the sort of travel/accommodation you have in mind.

An e-mail to me or a note would be most welcome. Even regrets would help the planning process.

**In comradeship**

**Pete Chadwick**

## Sergeant Robert Laverty, 202 Squadron RAF, and Others, KIA

Losing comrades to “friendly fire” is not new, nor is the “friendly fire” always American. On 20 November 1942, 202 Squadron lost a Catalina and its crew to anti-aircraft fire from the Allied merchant navy.

One of the crew was Air Gunner Flight Sergeant Robert Laverty and I have learned of the story from John Mulholland, his nephew, who wrote an article about the incident for the Journal of the Orders and Medals Research Society. I quote extensively from this article.

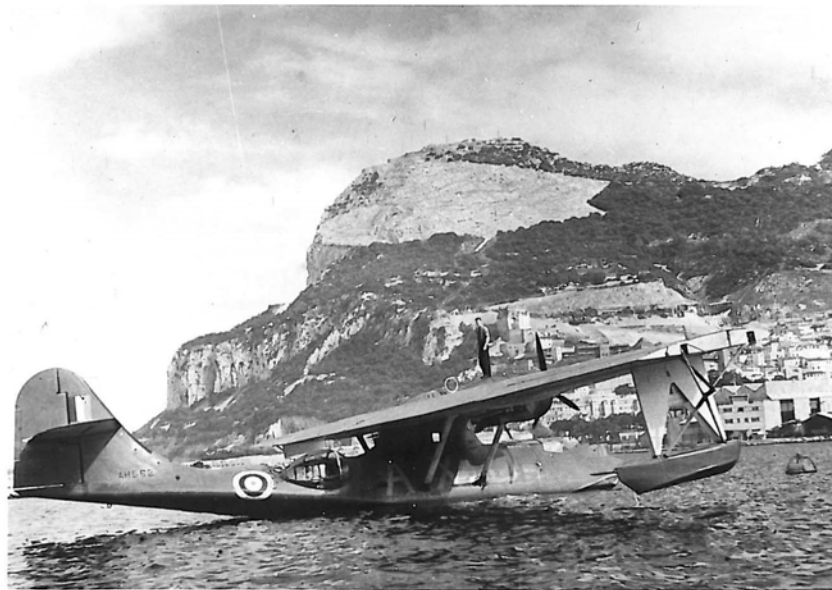
Robert Laverty was born in Co. Tyrone in 1924, ran away from Armagh College to join the RAF in 1940, became a Flight Mechanic and came to 202 Squadron in Gibraltar as a Flight Sergeant Air Gunner. On the way he served with 35 Squadron which had just become the first operational Halifax squadron.

At the time the Squadron were still flying Catalinas on anti-submarine patrols escorting convoys sailing from the UK to North Africa.



A Catalina, almost certainly of 202 Squadron over Gibraltar in 1942

The fateful sortie was Robert Laverty's seventh. The Catalina was on what should have been a routine anti-submarine patrol escorting convoy KMS 3 *enroute* from Greenock to Oran. It was a largish convoy of 53 ships escorted by 12 corvettes and sloops and had proceeded without incident until just after 0900 close to 35N 10W, SS *Grange Park* and SS *Prins Harold* were struck by torpedoes fired by German submarine U263.



A Catalina- almost certainly 202 Squadron's at the moorings in Gibraltar. One hopes the fitter on the wing is a good swimmer.

Twenty minutes before the U-boat attack the Catalina had reached the convoy and was circling at a range of 2 miles. The last minutes of the Catalina were graphically reported by an eye witness, Pilot Officer D R Higgin of 32(F) Squadron who watched the incident from one of the frigates, *HMS Fowey*:

"At 0850 approximately on 20.11.42 an aircraft identified by me as a Catalina, approached the convoy at a height of about 1000 feet and proceeded to orbit at a range of about 2 miles. At 0910 when the first of two ships was torpedoed, the aircraft was astern of the convoy. It turned to starboard, and flew on the same course as the convoy approaching to within a mile of the left hand edge. A corvette positioned astern and to the left of the convoy, threw out depth charges causing spouts of water. The aircraft at once changed course, and passed over or near the corvette and headed for the left hand edge of the convoy losing height to about 700 feet. As it crossed the first ships, turning away to port, a cannon or Oerlikon in the centre opened fire. Immediately a barrage of light and heavy flak was sent up by all ships in the vicinity.

The Catalina was hit at once, the port motor steaming vapour. Making a fairly rapid turn to starboard and signalling violently with lamp, the aircraft closed motors and attempted to glide to the rear of the convoy. Hit repeatedly by continuous and very heavy fire, it burst into full flames before spinning into the sea from about 2-3000 feet. Striking the water the Catalina disintegrated in heavy explosion. A few pieces of small wreckage, two deflated dinghies, and an oxygen bottle was all that remained. There were no survivors.

Note:- At no time was the flying boat fired upon by any vessel of the Royal Navy."

Commander RM Aubrey, commanding HMS Fowey, wrote:

"... When Fowey was passing through the columns to regain station, one merchant ship asked, "Was it bombs or torpedoes?". I am convinced that many ships thought that the casualties had been caused by bombs from the Catalina, which to them was just an aircraft.

The crew of Catalina F153 was:

Fg Off O'Connor (Capt)	Sgt Fletcher	Sgt Sanderson
Plt Off Campbell	Sgt Drywood	Sgt Tiffin
Fg Off Pollock	Sgt Laverty	Sgt O'Rorke
Plt Off Macarthur		

They are remembered on the Malta Memorial.





We have had an email from John Easto:

Please excuse my intrusion but I wonder if you could advise me as to whether or not it may be possible for me to obtain, from members of your Association, any photographs of the Catalina IIAs with which 202 Squadron was equipped during 1943 to 1945. I am a modeller and am hoping to build scale models of the IIAs flown by each RAF squadron

Regards

John Easto      j.easto@btinternet.co

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I sent Mr Easto copies of the photographs accompanying the article starting on page 6. He replied,

Dear Hugh,

Thank you so much for your email response and the photos included. For your interest the aircraft shown is/are Mk IIIs. The Mk IIIA was the amphibious version - both in service in '42. Nevertheless there are several very useful details shown which are common to both marks.

Il think that the Cat was a beautiful plane in the air - very distinctive shape.

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In the caption to a photograph in the review of the book *Royal Air Force Coltishall* in the last Mucky Duck, I wrote "Wessex of 22 Squadron replacing 202 Squadron Sea Kings at Coltishall (1 August 1983?)"

The fount of all knowledge lies within our Association; I have received:

Hugh,

The Wessex replaced the Sea King at Coltishall on the 1 Aug 1988. I was OC C Flt, 202 Sqn at the time and moved the Flt down to Manston.

Yours,

John Moody

Thanks, John,

Hugh

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*A backward poet writes inverse*

## Finance Corner

The Association's Finances remain 'sound' with £4000 + in the Bank [Lloyds !]

A 'thank you' to all the Members who have paid the increased subscriptions [now £10].

There are just a few who may need a reminder.

When all the bills were paid for the Reunion there was a 'small' surplus [thank you Pete].

Since then we have sponsored Charlie Logan on his Fun-run [£100] and supported the Poppy Appeal [£25].

Brian Tanner

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## Membership

We have 157 members on the database. Of those:

101 have renewed,

48 not yet renewed

And 8 reminders sent but no reply in respect of previous years non payments.

**Ian Stephenson**

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Getting ready to go to London. Do you know where I can get a WW2 Airman's cap? Have a beret but we did not wear them then. Would love to parade in the proper cap of the time.  
Regards

George

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*The roundest knight at King Arthur's table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his shape from too much pi*

First Name: Caroline  
Surname: Anderson  
Email:  
Request: Family

Message: I am researching family history. My uncle John Singer Anderson, whose death certificate I have just obtained, was Pilot II 1567951, and died in an aircraft accident, lost at sea on 18.4.1947 (presumed). I wonder if there is any way that I could obtain any more information about what happened to the aircraft, and what they were doing at the time.

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I am writing to you as I thought you, or others in the Royal Air Force, may be interested in learning that my father, M/N E J Kett (Jim), who served with 202 Squadron in the 60s, passed away last week. He was 86 and his funeral will be held at Horsham St Faiths Crematorium on Thu 16 Oct 08 at 14:45.

As an aside, when going through his papers we found many photographs from his time with 202 Squadron and other units. Once things have settled I would be happy to make these pictures available for use in the association archives. I also have his log books. My father was a crew member and great friend of Harry Crossman and Archie Gavan, before they were killed in an air accident.

If you wish to contact me by telephone my number is xxxxxxxx

Kind regards  
Robert Kett

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I am not sure if it was at the reunion or (more likely) an email that I have lost, but in the Spring someone asked me if I knew who carried out the burial at sea for Master Pilot Frank Radina and I replied that I had forgotten, but would look it up.

Apologies to that person and the answer is Master Pilot H A Harrison on 11 April 1968 in XJ 437 accompanied by Squadron Leader Faulkener.

Hugh Cumming

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*Tell those management training idiots that it doesn't matter how much they push the envelope, it will still be stationery*

# Our Committee

The current committee is:

Ron Moseley	Honorary President
Derek Whatling	Chairman
Jules Rutt	Association Secretary
Brian Tanner	Treasurer
Stewart Cameron Forbes	Sales
Pete Chadwick	Reunion Organiser
Hugh Cumming	Newsletter
Mike Furness	
Mike Hamill	Webmaster
Ian Stephenson	Membership Secretary

The Squadron Commander and Association Liaison Officer, currently Andy Bastable and Charlie Logan, are *ex officio* members of the Committee

It is a policy of the Association that the Committee will offer themselves for re-election at each Annual General Meeting and will encourage members to offer themselves or be nominated. The Committee is concerned that we do not finish up with the same people in post endlessly thus stifling a flow of fresh ideas and initiatives.

Mucky Duck is published biannually in Spring and Autumn - April and October more or less.

It is dependant on a flow of material and will dry up without contributions. Please scratch your head, or wherever you keep your brain, and come up with some stories, memories, items of interest or photographs. You do not even have to write it. If you give me the idea and source, I shall find a volunteer or, as a last resort, do it myself. Reproduction of photographs is not brilliant.

Contributions please to:

Hugh Cumming