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Mucky Duck

Newsletter of 202 Squadron Association

<http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk>

The Squadron News

I regret that I must start with a sad announcement: I have failed in my stated intention of having a pond full of Mallards outside the Squadron Headquarters in time for the Reunion visit to Boulmer in April. I must confess that there will be neither water nor waterfowl for the viewing pleasure of visiting Association members (unless there is water pouring from the sky, I suppose), a sorry state of affairs for which I take full responsibility. My plans fell at the first hurdle, when I couldn't locate any ducks in a non-airworthy condition to inhabit said pond (though my thanks to Sgt 'Dinky' Davies of A Flight for offering some clapped-out parrots), and there seemed little point in digging a pond without any prospect of anything living in it. Indeed, I feared that, were I to create the water feature and not fill it with ducks, I might end up as its first occupant at the hands of an angry and disappointed Association mob...nonetheless, I can report with pleasure that, at the new palace which E Flight have just taken over, there is to be seen a very fine pond, complete with fountain, with a sole Mallard proudly bobbing around. More of E Flight's new premises later. All three flights have been busy operationally over the last six months, though as usual the bulk of the rescues has been done by D Flight, with 39 this year (up to mid-March). A Flight, after a busy 2006 totalling 202 jobs, and E Flight have both got off to a slow start this year, though both units were involved in the Cumbria train crash on 23rd February. When first notified of the incident, ARCC controllers at RAF Kinloss feared the worst and despatched four Sea Kings to the scene (one each from Boulmer and Leconfield, and two from C Flight 22 Squadron at RAF Valley); this number of aircraft is only ever seen at a large-scale disaster, such as Lockerbie, Piper Alpha, or Boscawen. Arriving between 2145 and 2230, the various crews were all expecting a long night, and started shuttling people



to Preston and Lancaster hospitals as they were freed from the wreckage, but mercifully the train was much less busy than one might have expected for a Friday evening express, and the occupants fared much better in the crash than everyone had feared: after several hospital runs each, the aircraft were released and went home rather earlier than originally expected. It was still a lengthy operation though, with the aircraft having to battle each way through poor weather over the Pennines, and E Flight logged 5 hours 40 minutes flying, landing back at Leconfield at 0225, and A Flight 4 hrs 30. In total, 18 casualties were moved by air, and Sir Richard Branson later wrote to OC ARCC to express his appreciation of the RAF SAR contribution to the rescue activity that night.

Apart from operational flying, the usual training activity continues, and with several new types of exercise being introduced to keep crews proficient in all the skills which they might need to produce at a moment's notice. Ever since A Flight tackled a moorland fire on the Otterburn ranges last summer, the Fire & Rescue Service has been keen to train together with us to prepare for future aerial fire-fighting, and the unit is expecting to take part in a live burn in late March, with the Sea Kings using the Sims Rainmaker bucket to drop water, under the supervision of a specialist Spanish team who will be visiting from Catalonia to train the ground-based fire-fighters. RAF SAR Flights have always had a Rainmaker on the inventory, though use has been sporadic except in the Falklands where our Army brethren have a habit of setting fire to remote islands; with the onset of longer dry spells in the UK, water dropping Sea Kings may well become a more familiar sight.

A large exercise which has already taken place saw A Flight and E Flight deploying fire-fighters to a North Sea ferry for a Maritime Incident Response Group training event. DFDS Seaways loaned a ferry, the *King of Scandinavia*, for the exercise which took place off Tynemouth on Saturday 25th November (one A Flight Operations Clerk got a fright the day before the exercise when he answered the phone to be told "Hello, this is the King of Scandinavia", to which he replied "Oh, er, hello Sir, er, how can I be of service?", only to be met with, "No no, it's the ferry calling about the exercise tomorrow!"). Three Sea Kings were used both to transfer fire-fighters to the vessel following reports of a simulated fire, and to evacuate passengers/casualties, who comprised various Station personnel from RAF Boulmer. The

exercise was observed by Group Captain Steve Garden, the SAR Force Commander, and vindicated the protocols for deploying fire-fighters to an offshore incident, while providing a few learning points to ensure an even slicker response in future.



The Squadron infrastructure has received a massive boost with the eagerly-awaited opening of the new building at Leconfield. The fountain and bobbing plastic duck are far and away the best bits, but I should also mention other features: the sheer size, for a start, which allows well laid-out operations and engineering sections; modern and quiet accommodation; plenty of office space and equipment; and recreational facilities galore. Your correspondent was pleased to notice during a recent visit that a large and bright new sign has been placed at the turning to E Flight welcoming visitors to 'RAF Leconfield'; the old sign outside the former hangar had been a bit tatty, and was known to peeve somewhat the Army owners of Normandy Barracks, so full marks to the person who ensured that a brash new sign was factored into the plans for the palace rather than simply consigning the old sign to the scrapheap and not replacing it.

D Flight is also being largely refurbished, since GEF vacated the far side of the hangar creating much more space; for the first time in over two years, crews will be able to sleep on the Flight premises, following construction of new accommodation within the hangar. Since the Station Fire Officer forbade further use of the old bedrooms in 2005, crews have been veritable hobos, squatting for several months in a wing of the Sergeants' Mess (which provided great opportunities to

eavesdrop on drunken airmen wandering past late at night, singing and brawling – at least no one could ever have overslept there, however great the human disturbance in the small hours, with the pre-dawn chorus of screeching seagulls), before moving to a stinking smoke-stained surplus Married Quarter outside the camp. The new accommodation lacks all these features, and apparently even meets at least some of the Fire Regulations too. At the same time, the Operations Room has been extended and updated, and having the aircraft parked side-by-side in the hangar, instead of in tandem, will allow the engineers to wheel out whichever one they please, rather than

having to play Musical Sea Kings when they wish to tow out the 'one at the back'. Fortunately the old hangar doors remain though, complete with holes made in 1941 by the cannon of a passing Ju 88; the fate of the dim red lighting in the Stores room, as used by Royal Navy Fairey Gannet crews prior to night-flying in the 1960s but still serviceable in 2005, is unknown.

Anyway, enough of my prattling. Best wishes to all Association members, and other MD readership; we on the Squadron look forward to welcoming Association members to Boulmer at the end of April.

Charlie Logan

The Battle of the Atlantic

A Coastal Command Pilot's Perspective

The difference between this personal view of the Battle of the Atlantic and that of post-war historians is largely one of perspective. The historian has not only the advantage of hindsight, but is also party to information of a global nature which would have been completely beyond the reach of the average aircrew member.



Alan, the author, and his crew in June 1944

My experience is necessarily limited by the immediate horizon of a Coastal Command pilot. This in the very literal sense that our intelligence was very sketchy, and our knowledge of the seas over which we flew was limited to the extent of our visual lookout. Our main enemy was boredom. We flew long patrols (between eighteen and twenty-four hours duration), in all weathers, over empty seas. In two-and-a half years of squadron service, I sighted three and attacked two enemy U-boats. Hallucinations were caused by fatigue -- I once saw a motor cycle and side car in midAtlantic -- and many months were spent on night patrols which consisted of hour after hour of unbroken blackness, dark

unchanging seascapes and radar screens which never showed an echo.

The Catalina aircraft we flew were noisy and drafty, and we were often numb and cold and wet for hours. Navigation aids were few and we relied upon dead-reckoning navigation and the magnetic compass to bring us back to base - often to find landing conditions at their worst when we were at the very end of our physical endurance. How effective were we? We could not possibly have known at the time and perhaps it might be useful to take a look at some statistics.

We are talking about a period of five-and-a-half years, from August 1939 to May 1945, of which the most critical period

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was from July 1942 to June 1943. I joined my first operational squadron (202 RAF) at Gibraltar in January 1943 and completed one tour by June 1943, flying a thousand hours in six months, mostly on convoy escort in the Atlantic.

During the month of August 1939 the first ocean-going U-boats set sail for their Atlantic patrol stations, and by September 1939, seventeen U-boats were on station in the Atlantic and another fourteen were on patrol in the North Sea. On the day that Britain declared war on Germany (Sunday, 3rd September 1939) the British liner Athenia was sunk without warning by U-30's torpedoes. Most of the 128 lost were civilian passengers en route for the United States. Two weeks later the British aircraft carrier Courageous was sunk by U-29 off the Western Approaches. By the end of September 1939, 41 Allied and neutral ships had been sunk, totaling 154,000 tons.

Most people think of the U-boat as working primarily submerged, but Admiral Karl Doenitz described it as a "diving-vessel," designed to travel for the most part on the surface, diving only to escape enemy surface

ships or aircraft, or to carry out a torpedo attack in daylight. The U-boat had two separate means of propulsion: diesels for surface travel and battery-driven electric motors that had a limited range (about sixty miles) when submerged. The main developments in anti-submarine technology arose from the advantages and disadvantages of the U-boats twin propulsion systems.

As soon as it became evident that a U-boat could expect to be attacked anywhere, it became essential for them to operate in their proper and natural element - underwater. This was made possible by the schnorkel, a ventilating apparatus developed by the Dutch in 1940, but overlooked by German scientists until 1942. The schnorkel enabled U-boats to travel at high underwater speeds at periscope depth, drawing fresh air for the diesels and the crew while discharging exhaust fumes. The airborne long-range radar sets were now virtually useless in detecting submarine movement and Coastal Command shifted tactics once more. In 1942, a Squadron Leader Leigh had invented a searchlight which could be mounted on an aircraft, and controlled by the bomb-aimer. This, together with the improved radar, gave Coastal Command aircraft the edge once more. Now a U-boat could be located at periscope depth, could be homed on by radar, and attacked by night using the new Leigh Light.

If you were plugged in to the intercom system, the attack would sound something like this:

RADAR: Radar to pilot. I have a contact at seven miles, twenty degrees to port.
 PILOT Turning port twenty, descending to 700 feet. (Klaxon horn sounds S S S). Stand by for depth charge attack. Set distributor for stick of six spaced at 50 feet. Radar range and bearing now?
 RADAR: 5 degrees port, 6 miles.
 PILOT: Standard Leigh Light approach. Light on at half-mile. Low level bombsight set for run at 120 knots. Release at 50 feet. All positions report.
 BOW: Front gunner ready.
 NAV. Navigator in position. Bombing window open, bombsight on. D.R. position ready for attack report.
 WOP: Wireless switched to convoy frequency. Trailing aerial coming in.
 ENGINEER: Switched to main tanks, both engines full rich.
 WAIST: Port and starboard guns ready
 TUNNEL: Rear gun ready
 RADAR: Range 5 miles, 5 degrees port
 NAV: Tracking steady at 5 degrees port. Blip getting stronger
 PILOT: What's it look like, Radar?
 RADAR: Could be a sub at conning tower depth. Blip strong. Now 3 miles
 PILOT: Descending to 200 feet. Everyone keep a sharp lookout. Blisters standby with marine flare and sea markers.
 RADAR: Now 2 miles. 4 degrees port. Still strong. Now 1 mile. ½ MILE
 PILOT: OK, Nav, take over
 NAV: LIGHT ON! There she is, Skipper. Keep her steady. Left a little. Steady, steady, steady. NOW! Depth charges away:- numbers one, two, three, four, five, six. All gone. Leigh light out.
 CO-PILOT: Camera turning. We've straddled her with 3 and 4 DCs!
 PILOT: You have control – climb straight ahead. Nav, get that position report off. Can you see anything, tunnel?
 TUNNEL: Not a bloody thing, Skipper.

RAF's Coastal Command aircraft were often outmoded, but despite its obsolete equipment aircrews earned the respect of the Royal Navy and a close liaison developed between surface ships and aircraft. From 1941, when Coastal Command was placed under the operational control of the Admiralty, this cooperation and mutual understanding developed to a degree

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which was never even remotely approached by our German and Japanese counterparts.

The men of Coastal Command were no different from those of Fighter and Bomber Commands. They had one thing in common -- their extreme youth. Most pilots, like myself, started flying training at eighteen and were in command of a crew of nine within a year. Most of us were straight out of secondary school and

were expected to accept responsibility for ourselves and the lives of our crews.

The end came quite suddenly. At 1500 hours on 4 May, 1945, Admiral Doenitz broadcast instructions to U-boat commanders to cease fire. On 8 May, all U-boats were ordered by the Admiralty to surface, fly a black flag, report position and proceed to specified ports. The first surrenders began on 9 May, and others followed in the next few days.



U-boat L-75 surrenders on 11th May 1945

I was serving my third tour with 202 Squadron operating out of Lough Erne and was on anti-submarine patrol west of Ireland on 11 May, when I accepted the surrender of the German U-boat L-75, which was flying the black flag, and had the pleasure of escorting it to safe harbour in Londonderry.

Alan Robertson.



Actually it's 210 Squadron's

Information sought

First I would like to start by saying what a fantastic web site. Can anyone please help me? I have in my possession an item that was presented to a Flt Lt H M Russel from the officers of 202 Flying Boat Squadron in Malta. There are also signatures inscribed of what I assume would have been the squadron officers. I have an E or F Blake, P W Bale, G or J Wilkinson, a surname of Mosely - can't make out the initials, Phillip Jones, J Gosling, A J Mason, C W Dicken, P Hurren or Horner and A Carr. There is another name which I cannot read but the surname is something like Zugway. Can anyone supply me with any information about any or all of these officers, no matter how small, as I would like to put together some background history to the item. I have no idea how old it is but judging from having Malta on it, it obviously looks like it would be pre-world war II. Any info would be greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

Andy Taylor andyeileen.taylor@btinternet.com



It's Déjà Vu All Over Again

LONDON MARATHON 2007

Contrary to what I promised myself last year, I'm running the London Marathon again this year! I've decided to run for a charity called ORCHID. Never heard of them? Well neither had I! I heard about them in an appeal by Richard Brinsford on Radio 2 as I was driving to Colerne to fly with the AEF. They raise funds for research into men's cancers – prostate and testicular – so I thought, breast cancer gets all the attention, so what about us chaps!!

If I keep to my promise to myself not to run any marathons after this one, this could be your last chance to support me. You can drop me a cheque, made out to "Orchid", to 29, Grace Gardens, Cheltenham GL51 6QE or you could visit my website for donations www.bmycharity.com/petechadwick. The website is best if you're happy with Gift Aid, when the charity gets back your tax.

Please give generously!

Yours

Pete Chadwick

[It's 22nd April Ed]

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 send your orders to:
Webmaster@202-sqn-assoc.co.uk

Please make cheques payable to: Services Fund
RAF Boulmer for all goods except ties for which
the cheque should be to 202 Squadron Association

Information Sought

I'm building a large remote control model of the Sea King HAR3. It will be 1.80 metres long and fly with remote control. I'm trying to obtain the following information:

detailed close-up pictures
Understanding the various light modules on the Sea King to replicate these

I can email you a picture of the almost finished model (very detailed already)

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202 Reunion in Malta??

There's been talk for a while about having a reunion in Malta. 202 Squadron was there between the wars and although there is no-one in the Association who could possibly remember it, it would seem an attractive place to go.

I've done some informal digging and I think there is a need for some discussion. My contact out there, who has first hand experience of running a reunion in Malta - he helped organise the 203 bash - recommends waiting a bit anyway. The tourist industry out there is in a bit of a turmoil and long term bookings may be a bit risky.

The things we need to consider are cost, timing and interest. It's going to cost in the £400-£500 per head bracket and that might put off quite a few members who would then have no reunion to go to. We would be best to go late September, after the schools have gone back, and when they have an International Air Show in Malta. Perhaps we could have a lower key affair in the Spring for those who do not want to stretch to the expense of Malta. Finally, is there really all that much interest?

We need to discuss this at the AGM, but I'd welcome comment beforehand either to chadwick@which.net or the the address on page 5.

Reunion 2007

As most of you know this year's Reunion will be at RAF Boulmer over the weekend 27/28 April. Details have gone out to all members, I hope!. But, just in case of slip-ups, if you haven't had them or if you change your mind, drop me a line or e-mail chadwick@which.net

Yours Aye

Pete Chadwick

Information sought

Seeking any details of the loss of Catalina JX208 Letter F of 202 Squadron that struck the ground at Stradbally, Co Kerry in December 1944. My uncle, Raymond Perkins, was flight Engineer on this aircraft.

Kenneth Bates ksbates@tiscali.co.uk

My father served on this squadron. Not sure of the dates just wondering if anyone remembered serving with 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 steve-ray@gmx.de