

Number 22
Spring 2008

Mucky Duck

Newsletter of 202 Squadron Association <http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk>

From the Squadron

As I write, the expected changes, which I have mentioned previously, are right in the middle of happening. Some things, mainly behind the scenes, will never be the same again, but other aspects of life on the Squadron continue as usual.

One constant is that yellow helicopters are still flying around rescuing people in droves. Last year the Squadron's crews were called out over 600 times, and E Flight, for the first time in recent history, was the busiest of all with 231 scrambles. As described before, this massive increase in the number of jobs was largely the fruit of determined efforts by Flight personnel to raise awareness among civilian emergency services of their existence and capabilities. The amount of tasking received from agencies further afield than Humberside correspondingly increased, and a couple of the more notable incidents from the last six months follow.

Fg Off Matt Crosby-Jones during his first ever shift on crew was tasked to pick up from the rig support vessel toxic gas. During the Infirmary, it was all hands the casualties, with Matt to take part in the resuscitation, leaving Flt Lt in the front. Sadly it was casualties survived despite the crew's best efforts.



received a baptism of fire September 23rd, when the 3 unconscious personnel Viking Islay following a leak of transit back to Hull Royal to the pumps trying to sustain summoned from the cockpit Cardio-pulmonary Graham Stewart on his own all in vain and none of the

An unusual and, again, tragic incident which E Flight attended was the loss of a navigator from a Tornado GR4 over Norfolk on November 14th. The aircraft was being flown by a BAe crew on a test flight from RAF Marham, and during inverted flight the navigator's seat detached from the cockpit and fell through the canopy. R128 joined R125 from B Flt 22 Squadron (Wattisham) and a Police helicopter in the search for the navigator, and it was the Leconfield crew who successfully homed to the SARBE (the new PLB). Unfortunately it transpired that the navigator had not managed to free himself from his seat in time.

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The following week, another duty crew was called to reports of people in the water off Whitby. A lifeboat managed to recover two of the three casualties, but a woman was still in the sea; R128 was guided to the right spot by a shore observer who could see her, and winchman MALM 'Harry' Harrison was lowered into the water. In scenes reminiscent of the rescue off Scarborough in 2005 in which MALM Nick Petch won his AFC, Harry endured repeated submersion in massive crashing waves to find and get hold of the woman, who was subsequently raised to the aircraft using a physical grip lift as the sea was too rough to use strops. Again, sadly, the individual was beyond help and was pronounced dead on arrival at hospital.

Elsewhere, the usual variety of rescues has continued, and I am delighted to report that Flt Lt Darren French, captain of a D Flight crew which flew 9 hours through the night in appalling weather to rescue lost walkers above Loch Tay (as described in the Autumn 2007 MD) has been awarded an AOC-in-C's Commendation for his leadership and flying skills.

Shortly after that rescue, Darren left the Squadron to take up instructional duties on the Tucano at RAF Linton-on-Ouse.

So far D Flight has had a storming start to 2008, with 43 scrambles up to the end of March; many of these have been captured on film by the makers of a forthcoming television programme called Highland Rescue, who have been living with the crews and flying on rescues at all times of day and night.

The changes which I referred to earlier relate to the relocation of the Squadron Headquarters to Valley, and the transition

from Service to civilian engineering. During the course of April, the HQ staff will leave Boulmer for good and take up residence in the new premises which have been built at Valley to house the entire SAR Force HQ; 203 (R) Squadron move up from St Mawgan later in the spring. I mentioned in an earlier article that C Flight 22 Squadron would become part of 202 Squadron when the Squadron HQ arrived at Valley, with 203 Squadron being absorbed simultaneously into 22 Squadron; this plan has been abandoned, so the three squadrons will remain, with three flights on each.

At the same time, the take-over of engineering and supply by the SKIOS (Sea King Integrated Operational Support) organisation continues apace. Boulmer is the last 202 base to change over, with Leconfield and Lossiemouth having already made the transition at the time of writing. Fortunately some of the Service engineers have joined Agusta Westland, the company providing SKIOS, to provide a core of experience amongst the new personnel, most of whom are unfamiliar with the aircraft or role. The military engineers who have stayed within the RAF have been given a range of postings, from Typhoon to Sentry to Tristar, which has been a relief as many had feared that all postings would be to other helicopter types; it's not that the engineers particularly disliked working on helicopters, but the current high operational tempo of the Support Helicopter squadrons (and the fact that all the green helicopters are based in the south of England) would inevitably have caused significant quality of life issues for anyone used to the SAR shift pattern and living in the north of the country.

I look forward very much to seeing a good many of you at the Reunion which Pete Chadwick has conjured up at Leconfield in May – could I just remind you to bring a ball of string and a whistle, so that no one gets lost without trace during the tour of E Flight's cavernous new premises...See you there!

Charlie Logan

Stop press

As of last week there are seven places left for the dinner at Leconfield

Book Review

Royal Air Force Coltishall

Fighter Station

A Station History

Mike Jennings, MBE

Old Forge Publications 2007
304 pages quarto
Numerous black and white photographs
Index and ten appendices
£25 hardback

When we were offered this book for review, I did not realise that the Squadron had so much connection with Coltishall; I have learned that, in fact 202 Squadron (C and D Flights) put in a total of around fifteen years there. There is no trace of fixed wing activity by us, but there is a very tenuous connection: throughout the Second World War Coltishall squadrons carried out a daily weather flight. From the description given, ground to 30,000 feet we can identify the flight as a THUM (Temperature and HUMidity) proving that the acronym industry existed in those days even if not in the advanced form that we have now.

The author served thirty years in the RAF followed by three years civilian service. He was a Movements Controller who served at numerous stations, home and Overseas before finishing up at Coltishall where, as a secondary duty he managed the Station History Room.

RAF Coltishall was procured and designed to be a bomber station, but by the time that it was ready for operations “the disastrous air campaign over France in the early 1940s caused the Air Ministry to radically review its procedures and tactics. The defence of the United Kingdom was now to be priority one”. The huge number of bomber stations existing and springing up in the area required top cover and Coltishall became a fighter station.

Coltishall set what must be a record about this time: the first appointed Station Commander, Wing Commander Harry Broadhurst, applied for and was given a posting on his second day in post!

RAF Coltishall was declared operational under its new Station Commander as part of 12 Group, Watnall, at 0001 on 23rd June 1940 demonstrating the strange military belief of those days that the world stopped turning for two minutes daily between 2359 and 0001.

As Coltishall opened in 1940 it is not surprising that the first half of this book is devoted to the Second world war. Many good narratives about operations are told with plenty of detail about both strategy and tactics as well as anecdotes about station life. For example at nearby Stratton Hall, the “gin palace”, the off-duty operations room WAAFs sunbathing on the roof had close-up views of USAF pilots admiring *their* view.

The most famous person in Coltishall about this time was surely (then) Squadron Leader Douglas Bader who was posted in to command 242 Squadron. Arriving in the middle of the night not knowing the password of the day he found a sentry who was not convinced of his *bona fides* and would not admit him. With what we now know about Bader’s attitude, we can guess at the conversation.

It is pleasant, if slightly unusual in a book of this nature, that the story is covered from all sides: ground crew as well as aircrew, non-commissioned as well as officers, female as well as male and even civilian.

Coltishall squadrons were prominent in the battle against the V1 and V2 flying bombs intercepting and destroying the former and attacking the launch sites of the latter. The book devotes a chapter to this aspect of the war.

Polish squadrons played a big part in wartime Coltishall and this is described in the book. “Without doubt the PAF had a significant impact on Coltishall throughout the war years and during the time the station was in Polish hands. The respect and gratitude of the British towards the Poles during these dark days cannot be underestimated [sic]”.

It is in post war Coltishall that the direct interest of 202 Squadron appears. During the war SAR was carried out by 5 ASR Flight and 278 Squadron. In the immediate post-war period 22 and 275 squadrons were the mainstay with D Flight's Whirlwinds arriving from Horsham St Faith (now Norwich Airport) on 30th August 1964. A whole chapter of the book is devoted to SAR.

This part of the book is well illustrated and the background explanations will be just what the lay reader requires.

Several tales of professionalism and courage are recounted including a detailed account of how Mel Ward earned his AFC.

Having been associated with 202 Squadron in its present incarnation for several years, I am well aware of MALM David Bullock's tragic final mission, but it is after reading this book I at last fully understand the heroism and sacrifice and why the Squadron holds his name in such esteem.

The station's time with the various jet aircraft that it hosted is told with some detail of the squadrons working up with new equipment and techniques. Life appears to have been quite gentle with the Vampires and Venoms, but the arrival of Javelins and Lightnings fairly wakened things on and off the base.

QRA and other aspects of Cold War life are discussed with a few details of interceptions given and life as a Jaguar station is well covered.

It was Defence White Paper, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, of 2003 that spelled the end for Coltishall.

Despite the anguish life had to go on and four Jaguar GR.3A from Coltishall were entered in the USAFE bombing competition at Lakenheath in 2004 being third overall and the highest RAF scorers. Similar results in other exercises at the time demonstrated the remarkable *esprit de corps* in difficult circumstances.

On 30th November 2006 SWO Pat Chapman locked the gates and gave the keys to Sqn Ldr Hughes, the Station Commander who in turn returned them to Defence Estates.



Wessex of 22 Squadron replacing the 202 Squadron Sea Kings at Coltishall (1 Aug 1983?)

This Station History is one the more pleasant volumes I have handled being beautifully printed on high quality paper and handsomely bound. Its contents will be a source of fascination to anyone who has been stationed at Coltishall and it is a good general history for others.

Hugh Cumming

Email received

First Name: JOHN
Surname: COYNE
Email: johncoyne41@yahoo.co.uk
Request: Family

Message: Any info / photos of Flying Officer Walter Bryden O'Connor, 66024, 202 Sqdn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, Catalina pilot who died 20th November 1942 aged 24 and who is named on the war memorial at Valetta.

Also would be obliged if you could give me a contact to acquire info etc., re his brother Leading Aircraftman Michael Peter O' Connor 1564701 R.A.F.V.R. who was training to be a pilot in Canada. He died 12th April 1943 aged 19 and is buried in Moose Jaw (Rosedale)

Reunion 2008

As you're all aware, this year's Reunion will be at Leconfield on 16/17 May. For those who've already booked, I will be getting final details out, and asking for further payment, towards the end of April. For those of you who haven't yet booked and wish to come, you should know that, at the time of writing this, 21st Mar, I have only 6 seats left for the Formal Dinner.

Pete Chadwick

First Name: Peter
Surname: Lay
Email: p.lay470@btinternet.com
Request: Family

Message: I work in a residential care home in Norfolk. One of our residents, John Bloomfield Levien, was, I am told a flying boat pilot during World War 2. He flew Saro Londons from Gib. and later Catalina's. I wonder if he was a member of 202 Squadron. I am making these enquiries without his knowledge. I am not sure which unit he was with but if I can find out and get him association material I am sure he would be delighted. He is reticent about his service but is a member of the Catalina association. Can you confirm or otherwise his membership of 202. Many thanks. Peter Lay (ex-RN)

First Name: Stephanie
Surname: Mellors
Email: stephb@world-net.co.nz
Request: Family

Message: Looking for news of Frank Bithell who was at Gibraltar, 202 Squadron. Enquiring on behalf of his best man who has lost touch. At one time in Leeds area. Frank's wife was Betty.

First Name: Jean
Surname: Roberts
Email: jean@pinehurst112.freemove.co.uk
Request: General

Message: Does anyone have any information please, on the occasion when a part of a propeller from one of S.F.Cody's aeroplanes was presented to the unit when it was stationed at RAF Brawdy. It was presented in recognition of a rescue and I would very much like to find out further details.

With thanks and best wishes,
Jean Roberts

I have always been proud to be associated with 202 Squadron; the following, culled from Steve Larke's Squadron Yearbook, reinforces it:

Honours and Awards 2007—A Summary

MBE:

Sqn Ldr Paul Coleman

Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air:

Sgt Andy Elwood

C-in-C Air Command Commendation:

Sqn Ldr Paul Coleman

Flt Lt Iain Robertson

FS Andy Catterall

Sgt Andy Cooper

Sgt Andy Elwood

Sgt Si Price

Sgt Dave Standbridge

SARF Commander Commendation:

Mrs Ann Bradley

Flt Lt Andy Johnson

MACR Paul Hayward

MACR Rik Maving

CT Rob Jessop

Sgt Dean Antik

Sgt Si Price

Cpl Ritchie Hunter

The "D" Flight Engineers

Civilian Awards

Vodafone Royal Humane Society Lifesavers'

National Winners:

Sqn Ldr Paul Coleman

Flt Lt Iain Robertson

Sgt Ade Cooper

Sgt Dave Standbridge

Billy Deacon Helicopter Award:

Sgt Dave Standbridge

"2007 has been a highly successful year for the Squadron. We have found ourselves assisting major national incidents where we consistently demonstrated the professionalism and capability of the Squadron and kept the Royal Air Force very much in the public eye . . .

. . . As we look forward to the challenges of a new year, I wish you all a safe and successful 2008."

Wing Commander Andrew Bastable
Officer commanding 202 Squadron

The Flight Shop

A Flight shop has various items for sale. Please contact the Flight direct to buy. The list and prices printed here are only a guide as, like many things, it's all up in the air just now and a new, up-to-date list will be published when the Squadron upheavals finish.

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
Cummerbund	£20.00

Ties are also available price £7.50.
Please send your tie orders to:

Webmaster@202-sqn-assoc.co.uk



FINANCE CORNER

At the end of March the Association Bank Accounts have the 'healthy ' balance of £3500 - not including the deposits paid for the 2008 Reunion. In 2007 the Association purchased the 'Silver Mallard', supported the Leconfield Memorial and Poppy Appeal - full details will be presented at the AGM in May.

Brian Tanner

Secretary's Spiel

The membership is going well with 153 members. Most of the Subs for 2007 are in, I will be sending hastening letters shortly. Please remember to check your Standing Order as membership is now £10. Anyone not paid should send their membership fee to me at: 66 Thornhill Road, Ponteland, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE20 9QE.

I have been doing the Sec's job for 6 years now and due to work/family commitments, I am finding it hard to give the role the due attention. If there is anyone in the association that would like to take it over the membership element of the secretaries role, please let me or one of committee know.

Jules Rutt

Mucky Duck, formerly the 202 Squadron Newsletter, is published bi-annually in Spring and Autumn.

The Editor is very keen to have contributions of all kinds from serving and retired members and others. Contributions are welcome in any format and through any medium, though written contributions are preferred. Photographs are particularly welcome though you should be aware that they may have to be reduced in quality and size due to production and distribution constraints. If you don't have an actual contribution, but just a suggestion, please let me have it.

My thanks to all contributors

Hugh Cumming
hcumming@lineone.net
01224-722054