

Spring 2012  
Number 29



**The Newsletter of  
202 Squadron Association**



I told you that spring weather in Lossiemouth is great

# The President

As I write, this year's reunion is but a month away and I'm really looking forward to it. The efforts of the folks up at Lossiemouth mean that the Reunion dinner is going to be the best ever, with a true Scottish flavour. I have to confess that I became a little despondent at first, since, despite the almost unanimous vote at last year's AGM to go to Lossiemouth for this one and the early announcement of a date for planning purposes, almost 20 members who regularly come to our reunions, and might be considered "usual suspects", found that they couldn't make it. However, since then, things have looked up, we've attracted a number of new members, who are going to risk travelling to the wilds of Scotland and, the way things are going, we stand to have a record attendance at the dinner. That, coupled with the other events we've arranged, should make it a memorable weekend.

Some of you may remember, way back when we first got our Association going, that I said that we should not have same old committee, beavering away in the background year after year, and that we should ring the changes from time to time. But, sadly, apart from the odd change of role within the Committee, it's still largely the same team. I'm pleased to say however that a few members have "volunteered" their services of late and we should have

them join the Committee at the AGM on 28<sup>th</sup> April. Which means I can start thinking about letting somebody else take the reins of Reunion organisation. I'm hoping/intending that the one in 2013 should be my last as organiser. To which end it would be nice to have an idea of where we should go as early as possible – the decision will be taken at the AGM in April, but, if you're not going to be there, you could let me have suggestions (reasonable ones!) by e-mail (chadwick@which.net) or telephone 01242 584996 before then.

In Comradeship  
Pete Chadwick

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### **This was picked up from The Goldfish Club's winter newsletter.**

Charles Sydney Alfred Withers who lived in Peterborough died on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

Charles was the flight engineer on a 202 Squadron Catalina engaged on convoy escort duties in connection with the North African Landings on 12 November 1942. During the take-off, prior to commencing the sortie, the aircraft had bounced which had knocked a hole in the bottom of the fuselage. After the sortie, they landed in Algiceras Bay but, in spite of inflating a dinghy in the fuselage to help with flotation, the aircraft began to sink. Charles escaped through the engineer's window and spent an hour in the sea before being rescued by an ASR launch from Gibraltar.

Dear Hugh,

Thank you for Mucky Duck NO 27. You asked for any information about XP345.

This Whirlwind X was at CFS, Ternhill in 1965. I flew my first ever helicopter sortie in the aircraft. The sortie was for 1 hour with Flt Lt Ian Richardson, who was my instructor. We did 2 engine-offs and 6 landings – that was on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1965.

345 and I coincided next on 16<sup>th</sup> June for an hour's revision before my mid-course check. The instructor then, for the revision, was F/O Forsythe; we did 5 EOs and 10 landings! Next 345 helped me through my IRT with Flt Lt Farrington for 45 minutes on 17<sup>th</sup> August during which we completed one QGH and one GCA. Finally I flew 345 on my penultimate trip at Tern Hill – 2 hours 05 minutes on 25<sup>th</sup> August with F/O Geoff Leeming.

345 and I then parted company, as I left UK soon afterwards to join 110(H) Squadron at Seletar, (which, for youngsters is in Singapore).

Unfortunately I have no photos of XP345 and I didn't fly the aircraft again as our paths didn't cross on 202.

Thanks, Hugh, for your efforts with the magazine and please give my regards to all at the reunion. I doubt very much whether anyone remembers me now, but I

wish the Association all the best (and all its members!)

Yours sincerely,

Dave Carey

### **News From the Frontline**

October 2011 to April 2012 certainly brought with it the unexpected. Having cast my eyes over recent years' Form 540s, there has been a definite straying from the norm for the winter season. Firstly though, I feel it important to mention the most recent changes to the squadron line up.

There has been a dramatic change in personnel relating to those holding key squadron appointments, not least the departing of OC 202 Sqn, Wg Cdr Mackmin to HQ Air and the arrival of Wg Cdr Jarvis as her replacement. Other movements have included Sqn Ldr Clarke, OC A Flt, handing over the reins to Sqn Ldr Frayling following her return to the SARF after 5 years in Air Command. In addition to a number of internal moves and the odd bit of reshuffling here and there, we have also lost a couple of 202 Sqn stalwarts to retirement. MACR Forsyth of the Sqn Tg Team and MACR Hayward from D Flt both received a healthy send off. Most notably Mr. H being publicly 'enamoured' by A Flt on his 202 Grand Tour Extravaganza.

All valuable training for our Winchmen. The retirement of MACR Larke of E Flt was short lived as he returned on a career extension for a further 2 years, a big welcome back!

Winter came thick and fast for the Flts with the first heavy dumping of snow appearing in November. In contrast to the previous couple of winters, this was to prove to be the only substantial snow for the season. That said, there was still a fair smattering of mountain jobs as a result. One in particular involved a scramble to some lost walkers on the southern flanks of Ben Nevis at midnight. Three walkers were extracted from above the snow line within the vicinity of the notorious Surgeon's Gulley area before being delivered to an awaiting Lochaber MRT. Dressed in trainers and plastic macs with a daysack between them, Lochaber MRT had labelled it as one of the most ill-prepared expeditions they had ever seen!

The post-Christmas rush to the hills by those wanting to try out their new Christmas presents did not seem to bring with it its usual spate of accidents. As the months progressed, SAROPS became fewer and fewer. March alone saw D Flt with only 8 jobs and Leconfield with only



two. This has, however, allowed time to catch up with essential cross training with other emergency services. Exercises were carried out by all Flts with MRTs, Police and RNLI. In October the Sqn had an Emergency Services Training day and in March D Flt played host to a Pre-Hospital Care Course (PHECC). Set by the British Association for Immediate Care and organised by MACR Tripp, the three day course involved instruction and examining on all aspects of emergency care in the pre-hospital setting including medical, obstetric and paediatrics as well as trauma emergencies and incident management. Attended by 202 Sqn members and also MRT, those who passed the course were awarded a civilian PHEC qualification and certificate. The course was deemed a great success. Still on the theme of SAROPs, the end of the reporting period saw two of the three flights combining their efforts in support of the stricken Elgin Platform located 150 miles to the east of Aberdeen. Reports of the Elgin Gas Platform having 'blown its head' stirred up reminders of the Piper Alpha disaster of 1988. Without the availability of Nimrod to provide on scene command and control, the crew from Boulmer, being first on scene, assumed the role of coordinating the evacuation. A task not to envy; at one point there were a total of 7 helicopter assets on task including Coastguard and the oil industry's own contracted aircraft.

A second aircraft and crew were mustered at D Flt but were stood down from task as the evacuation of approximately 240 personnel progressed well leaving only a skeleton crew of 19 on board. The gas head is still leaking.

Other events for the period have seen Sgt Bethell of E Flt deploy to Afghanistan to service the SARF commitment to MERT. This has been the second such deployment of 202 Winchmen in recent months where their paramedic skills are adding tremendous value and saving the lives of those injured and who require immediate care between point of extraction and hospital. As part of their continuing professional development the Winchmen regularly participate on shifts at local hospitals. The experience gained and techniques practiced in theatre have all promoted the capability of our winchmen to the extent that Sgt Bradshaw of D Flt, on his return from Afghanistan, had to demonstrate to a Consultant at Kirkwall Accident and Emergency how to employ a technique using an EZ-IO drill. This procedure involves drilling into the bone of the casualty to provide immediate vascular access.

E Flt, in spite of their recent lack of jobs, have had the opportunity to conduct joint training with the other three services. Leconfield were tasked on escort duty for AAC Apaches deploying to HMS

Illustrious on exercise. Whilst on task the crew managed to conduct deck landing training, all good stuff for the currencies!

FS Gibson of A Flt received a SARF Commander's Commendation. Two people had become trapped by fast flowing water in a vehicle in the river Rede in central Northumberland. Heavy rains over the previous week had led to flooding and the vehicle in question had been overwhelmed whilst attempting to ford the river. With the volume of fast flowing water making operating conditions extremely difficult, FS Gibson was unable to effectively stop the casualty and elected to use a physical grip technique to rapidly remove the casualty from danger and extract to a safe location.





The Squadron is working extremely hard at the moment. Despite best efforts, and with unforeseen events taking their toll, there have been occasions when the shift plots have had to declare to a three man crew. That said, resolve is as strong as ever, and with the excellent output from our resident SKIOS engineering team (frequently achieving 100% 1<sup>st</sup> cab serviceability) the task is still being achieved with excellent results with the crews of 202 Squadron remaining *semper vigilantes*.

**David PUNCHARD**

I have just received my copy of the latest edition of the Mucky Duck and was pleased to see the reproduction of the montage of the Squadron's aircraft which was presented to the Squadron at the Valley reunion in the Spring. Magnificent though the painting undoubtedly is, the artist could only work from the material available to him and, unfortunately, the Halifax depicted is inaccurate on two points:- by the time 202 replaced 518 Squadron in October 1946 the war in the Atlantic had come to its happy conclusion and the traditional Coastal Command livery (white with battleship grey upper surfaces) was not being applied to new aircraft coming off the production lines - the Mark 6Ms issued earlier in the year to 518 to replace the 3Ms were produced in Bomber Command livery (black with camouflage upper surfaces) which they retained in squadron service. Secondly, the 3Ms and 6Ms were built without mid-upper turrets. The second and third photos in the website section on meteorological aircraft show Mk6s in the colours in which I flew in them and without the mid-upper turrets. The coloured picture of a Halifax on the website is of a Mk3B in the daylight tactical markings of 4 Group, Bomber Command (vertical yellow stripes on the tail). I make these points not to nit-pick but hoping that historical accuracy ought to be established in the squadron records while those of us who had the honour of serving in the squadron in those far off days are still able to contribute. Best wishes  
Mike Kendall

*Ian Stephenson has received some correspondence from Janet Yelland the daughter of Norman Hewins, who was a radar mechanic on the squadron from 1946 to 1948. That is the era of the Halifax at Aldergrove.*

I have now managed to obtain the photographs from my father; some have the accompanying stories below. He was a keen photographer and always had his Brownie camera to



My father did a Radar Mechanics course at Yatesbury before being posted to Aldergrove in 1946.



The crashed Halifax was a shock for my dad as he just serviced its radar. The plane flopped off the runway on landing and stopped about 150 yards from the billets. Dad was inside his billet and it was quite scary as it was coming straight towards him.





The 202 Squadron crest is visible on this one



A Squadron inspection at Belfast Harbour in the late 1940s. Our member is in the front rank.

The Admiral doesn't look too happy.

As our membership sets out with great trepidation for the Northern Unknown Land and bearing in mind the lack of Navigators in the modern RAF, I feel that I must reassure the more nervous souls that, having reached Lossiemouth, you will not trip over the Arctic Circle for nearly another 600 miles.

While I had need to visit Lossiemouth on a few occasions in my civilian job, my logbook tells me that my only visit with 202 Squadron was in August 1963 when it was still a Royal Naval Air Station; HMS Fulmar.

The task was to transport a senior Admiral (Sir Charles Maddon if memory serves) and his entourage to the US Navy base at Keflavik in Iceland. The trip was declared to be a VIP flight so, as well as having to fly in best blue bib and tucker, we had to land exactly on the stated time. Anyway the wind was kind to us and we were well ahead of time approaching Iceland and had to slow down. In the last stage of the flight, the US Navy gave us a fighter escort. By this time we were creeping along at about 150 knots, which is the speed at which the fighters were prone to falling out of the sky. After a few attempts at formation they gave up in disgust and went away to play with themselves.

We learned that they were practicing flying at low speed to accompany us outbound.

That this never happened was regrettable, because on the way home without a VIP timetable we set off around 230 knots and we could have had the lovely spectacle of a Hastings pulling away from a flight of Starfighters.



202 Squadron's aircrews are known for carrying out demanding, skillful work in the air for the good of the Service and the safety and security of the Nation



In the Cold War days the highly trained and experienced signallers and Air Meteorological Observers of 202 Squadron also carried out skilled work for the defence of the free world

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**Full reports on finance and membership will be available at the AGM but tasters are:**

Cash in our accounts amounts to £4885 and recent outgoings include web site hosting fee and a Remembrance Day wreath

Membership now stands at 141 with a few reminders to go out. We have 5 new members: 1 from Aldergrove and 4 from chopper days



The curfew sounds the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The Seaking homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me