

202 Squadron Association

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NEWSLETTER

Departure of Squadron Commander

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with some regret that I have become a member of a quite exclusive club, namely an ex-squadron commander. I have thoroughly enjoyed my 2 years and 10 months in charge of 202 Squadron: the people are thoroughly professional and the SAR role is the most rewarding in the Service. I have also particularly enjoyed my formal contact as Squadron Commander with you all, with the Gibraltar Reunion being one of the highlights of my tour. I should like to put on record my formal thanks as Squadron Commander to Flight Lieutenants Martyn Williams and Tim Brookes, the Squadron Association Liaison Officers during my tour, and Sergeant Pete Mawer, the previous Squadron Adjutant, for the work they have all done for the Squadron on behalf of the Association.

As an original member, I fully intend to remain active in the Association. I am posted in October 2004 (on promotion), however, to take up a NATO post of Personal Staff Officer to the Deputy Commander in Chief, Joint Force Command in Brunssum, Holland. Being posted overseas may therefore affect my ability to attend this year's (and next year's) reunion but I look forward to seeing you all in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Garden

2005 Reunion

Friday 22 April, Saturday 23 April and Sunday 24 April 2005

Park House Hotel, Near Telford

4 stars - pool - jacuzzi

Near Cosford Museum and an ex-202 Squadron Hastings

More details inside and after the next Committee meeting

Life on 202 Squadron.

As summer draws to a close, personnel on 202 Squadron are as busy as ever. As always I will update you on the total number of rescues completed so far this year and describe some of the more prominent ones. I will also mention the 202 Squadron window recently discovered in Scotland. .

Jobs so far

	Rescues	People Saved
A Flt Boulmer	121	104
D Flt Lossiemouth	132	122
E Flt Leconfield	99	86

Prominent Jobs

A Flight Boulmer

On Thursday 22 July, A Flt were scrambled to a Tornado GR4 crew who ejected before their aircraft crashed into the sea 30 miles from Newcastle. Thankfully the Pilot and Navigator were uninjured and were taken to hospital in Newcastle for routine checks.

D Flight Lossiemouth

During the recent very bad weather that culminated in the Boscastle flooding, D Flt at Lossiemouth helped airlift 57 people who were trapped by a landslide at Lochearnhead in Central Scotland. The motorists were blocked in on the A85 near Stirling.

E Flight Leconfield

In August, E Flt at Leconfield were scrambled for the second time this year to Morcambe Bay in response to concerns that Cackle Pickers were going to be cut off by the tide. 17 people were airlifted to a safe area. 'Rescue 128' was stood down by the Rescue Coordination Centre at Kinloss when everyone was accounted for.

202 Squadron memorial window

I mentioned the '202 Squadron memorial window' in my introduction. A lady who has bought an old church at Elvanfoot in Lanarkshire contacted the squadron through the Chaplain at RAF Leuchars. He has informed us that there is a large memorial window to the personnel of 202 Squadron in the church. Not much else is known about it at the moment other than it is in need of a bit of repair and support.

Tim Brooks

202 Life in the Falkland Islands

Having returned from my first visit to the Falklands in late March, I will describe the role of 202 personnel when detached to these remote islands, 22 years after the conflict ended. Aircrew are currently detached to 78 Squadron for approximately 6 weeks at a time and at present can expect to go back again 6-8 months later. Groundcrew are detached for 4 months at a time and consequently only expect to be detached every couple of years.

Travelling by Civilian Airbus A330 from RAF Brize Norton we arrived at Mount Pleasant Airfield 18 hours later. After being greeted by the crew that we were replacing, they handed over various secondary duties and showed me around the squadron. The following day, after reading the books and understanding the procedures specific to the FI, we flew a familiarisation sortie to re-acquaint the rest of the crew with the Islands and to introduce me to various places such as low level navigation routes should we need them on Operational rescues during our stay.

78 Squadron operates 1 Chinook and 2 Sea King Mk3 and is in a constant state of transition. With the exception of the Boss, Eng O and WO Eng, personnel are only attached to the Squadron for a maximum of 4 months. The primary role of the Sea King is to be available in the event of a Tornado crew having to eject. Thankfully, this is as rare as it is in the UK and Sea King crews train as they would normally. The remote nature of some of the sites makes the Helicopter invaluable. During my visit, the Sea King was required for army tasking on numerous occasions when the Chinook was otherwise engaged. This is something that SAR crews do not normally do much of and was therefore very interesting.

Presumably owing to the size of population, (2300 at the last count not including the military population) SAR callouts are not as numerous as they are in the UK. We were, however, scrambled twice at night and the Squadron completed 10 rescues in February. The most notable difference when night flying is the complete lack of cultural lighting*. Night Vision Goggles have to work much harder than they do in the UK. This in itself is of excellent training value.

My first impression was that the Islands were much bigger than I had anticipated. Covering an area the size of Wales, one of the most notable differences is the lack of trees and the diversity of the Wildlife on offer. Whilst on stand down I managed to see most types of Penguin including king penguins, elephant seals, dolphins and even killer whales. Luckily, I was there in summer so the weather, although breezy, was nothing

like the drifting snow and gales on the TV footage at the time of the Falklands War.

I am reliably informed that the welfare package available to personnel detached to the Falklands is superb in comparison to what was available. Every week we received a 20-minute phone card and we were entitled to use the Internet for 40 minutes every day. This enabled me to converse with my wife daily using the messenger service, a form of instant email. Within the first couple of weeks my typing had improved dramatically!

So, it was (mostly) warm and sunny. I saw lots of wildlife in its natural habitat, I was with a great crew and we did some excellent flying that we don't often get to do in the UK. Is it possible to conclude that the personnel of 202 Squadron detached every so often 8000 miles from home are actually enjoying themselves? I think so, but you'd better ask me again this September after I've experienced a Falklands winter!

Tim Brooks

** I expect you all knew, but I had to ask, and Tim tells me, "Cultural light is the light generated by streetlamps etc over towns and cities. Over places like Hull it can be too bright and stops night vision goggles working effectively, but usually it helps them. With absolutely no light at all, night goggles will not work very well, as found in the Falklands."*

HC

Secretary's Spiel

Membership is holding steady with 133 Current Members. A few new members joined - welcome to them - and as per the AGM, any member that has not paid for 2 years gets removed from the list.

It's the time of the year for Annual subs to be paid; if you haven't paid already, please send cheques for £5 made payable to 202 Squadron Association to me at the address below - don't worry I shall be chasing those that haven't paid.

As most of you know by now, the database crashed and I have had to rebuild, thanks to all those that have confirmed their details - if you haven't had a letter from me about this it means that I need your details - once again please send to the address below.

If anyone knows of anyone that wants to be a member, please get them to drop me a line.

See you next year at the reunion.

2005 Reunion News

Although details are not yet finalised, I can tell you that the 2005 Reunion will be on the weekend of 22/23/24th April 2005. So, please pencil those dates in you diaries.

We shall be staying, and dining, in a hotel close by the Cosford Museum, in which there is a Hastings which many of you from the Met Flight era will have flown. The weekend will be based around a trip to the museum, which has many other aviation artefacts to interest us all. Including some Sea King memorabilia!

I've negotiated a very favourable deal with the hotel, which is 4 Star and has a pool, sauna and leisure facilities which will be available to us.

I'll have more details after the Committee Meeting on 8th October, but, in the meantime, make sure your diaries are free for the 22/23/24th April 2005.

Pete Chadwick

FINANCE CORNER

The Association's Bank Accounts have the following balances, as at 1 September 2004 :

Lloyds 30 day Notice Account-----£3510
"Working " Account-----£ 209

Several Members pay their subscriptions this month--cheques, banknotes, Euros are welcome, but Standing Orders are preferred. The Forms are readily available from Jules or myself.

Brian Tanner

Bob Pountney

We don't know how it played in areas nearer the equator, but there was a fair bit of publicity earlier this month here in Northern Scotland for the retirement of Bob Pountney from Kinloss where he was an assistant controller at the Rescue Co-ordination Centre.

Bob joined at age 15 and a good part of his 44-year career was spent as a winch man in SAR. We are told that he logged around 8600 hours including some 400 missions with about 350 people rescued.

The best-known rescue in which he was involved was the Piper Alpha disaster when Lossiemouth Sea Kings lifted survivors from the safety boat MV Silver Pit to the Tharos, which, in addition to its fire fighting duties, was being used as a casualty clearing station.

Prior to his retirement, colleagues arranged a surprise visit from Sam Marcus, the beneficiary of one of Bob's more emotional jobs, when Bob became an unwitting celebrity in the TV series *Rescue* 16 years ago. Sam made an early entry to the world on the Orkney island of Sanday in July 1988. He was 10 weeks premature and weighed just 3lb, so urgent steps had to be taken to get him to hospital for specialist care.

Sanday and Kirkwall airports were fogbound, so Kirkwall lifeboat was launched with a doctor, nurse and incubator on board to pick up the tiny baby and return to Kirkwall. The youngster's only realistic chance of survival was to get to hospital in Aberdeen, the nearest centre with specialist staff and facilities. With no fixed wing flights possible at Kirkwall because of the fog, D Flight was called in from Lossiemouth. They encountered the low cloud and fog as they approached Orkney and were finally forced down about a mile short of Kirkwall Airport.

Bob tells, "I hailed a passing van and climbed into the front and into the back climbed the *Rescue* series film crew who had been on board. The farmer whose van it was just shrugged as if it happened every day and drove us to the airport." Thence a waiting ambulance took baby Sam, a doctor and a nurse to the helicopter. With every second vital to Sam's chances of survival, the Sea King took off and headed for Aberdeen.

It was feared that the baby might not survive the 45-minute flight. Bob recalls, "His condition took a turn for the worse in the incubator and the doctor and nurse did the life saving. I just did what the doctor

told me to do, which was a little bit of massage on Sam's heart". [Experts, at least the one I'm married to, tell me that heart massage on a 3lb baby is not as easy as it sounds. Ed] The youngster suffered a cardiac arrest just as the helicopter touched down, but medical staff managed to get his heart going again.

If you read this, Bob, have a very happy retirement and please consider joining the Association. With suitable training and experience, you have all the material to soon become a Master Bore like the rest of us.

[Much of the above was lifted from *The Press and Journal*. HC]

Dear Hugh,

Frank Radina

From the write-up in the Autumn Newsletter [2001 Ed] I note the name of Frankie Radina whom I knew of, but never met.

I did, however, fulfil his last wish - to have his ashes scattered at sea by 202 Squadron. I mentioned this to two ex-Hastings members on seeing Frankie in a photograph at the Leconfield reunion.

I was in the aircraft with the blades turning when a lady, Frank's widow, handed the urn to Sqn Ldr Faulkner—I believe he died in Glasgow.

We flew some two miles out in Bridlington Bay, came to the hover, the ashes were scattered and Sqn Ldr Faulkner recited the *De Profundis*—for burial at sea. I did a circle round the area and we returned to base.

As a postscript I enclose photo-copy from my last log book. [Not really reproducible. Ed] Dave Pells was the Navigator and Sqn Ldr Faulkner was from Station Headquarters Administration

Yours aye
Tony Harrison

The LG Groves Prizes and Awards

When No 202 Squadron disbanded as a meteorological reconnaissance unit in 1964, it was the last of its kind. A small number of Meteorological Reconnaissance Units were formed in early 1941 to help the war effort – increasing to a peak of 18 squadrons with 750 personnel. By the end of World War II over 16,000 met. sorties had been flown and 52 aircraft did not return. Most of the meteorological reconnaissance squadrons were disbanded in 1946. On 1st October 1946 No. 518 Met Squadron renumbered and became No. 202 Squadron.

Most Association and Squadron members will be aware of the LG Groves prizes and awards; several have been recipients. Sgt Louis Grimble Groves, Met Air Observer, was killed whilst flying with 518's sister squadron, No. 517 Met Squadron, on 10th September 1945. He was the Met Air Observer in a Halifax Met Mk III X9-N aircraft (RG380) which took off from Brawdy for an EPICURE met. sortie (across the Bay of Biscay to approximately 43N 14W). Bad weather at base on return caused a diversion to Weston Zoyland and the aircraft flew into high ground in the Quantock Hills. There were no survivors.

In 1946 Sergeant Groves' parents, Major and Mrs Keith Groves, instituted three prizes to be awarded annually in memory of their son. The 1946 prizes and awards, made in 1947, were the Aircraft Safety prize, the Meteorology Prize and the Award for Met Air Observers.

In 1960 Major and Mrs Groves made a further donation to increase the value of the prizes and awards and set up a fourth award, named the Second Memorial Award. It is given at the discretion of the Ministry of Defence for meritorious work in any of the fields covered by the original prizes and awards, or in operational meteorology.

Following the disbandment in 1964 of No. 202 Squadron as the last remaining meteorological reconnaissance squadron, the Met Air Observers Award became known as the Meteorological Observers' Award.

For a full and interesting account of meteorological reconnaissance in World War II, including the crash of RG 380, I thoroughly recommend "Even the Birds were Walking" by John A Kington and Peter G Rackliff (Tempus Publishing Ltd, Stroud, Glos).

John Malcolm

There seem to be gaps in the record, but as far as we can gather, the members of the Association who have received awards are [then]

Sgt J McCubbin (1954)*

Flt Lt K Ignatowski (1963).

Additionally the following Squadron members were recognised; I am sure that there must be others and apologise for any omissions.

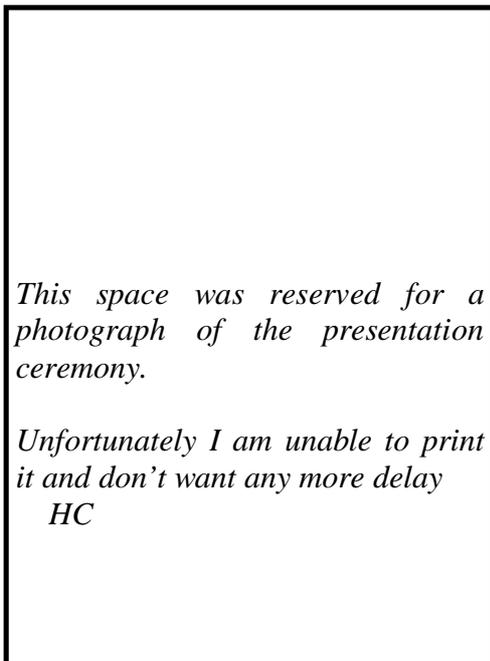
1950 M Pilot BJ Calnan

1951 Flt Lt D Carlson

1953 Sgt GN Franklin

1962 Flt Lt RJK Nicholas

*Sadly, John has died since this was written



Another common destination for these awards was our "sister" organisation, The Meteorological Research Flight based at Farnborough.

Imagine the guffaws from the macho 202 Squadron Air Met Observers when one of our MRF colleagues who had just (deservedly) received the LG Groves Air Meteorological Observer Award for work in the Far East on tropical storms, remarked, "Of course we didn't fly if there were cumulus or thunderstorms about."

The Nostalgia Dinner

As this year's reunion has a "Hastings theme", arrangements a little different from normal have been made for Saturday night. While the others have the usual formal dinner, ex-Hastings members may opt for a special treat – The Nostalgia Dinner.

Dinner will be served in members' laps in extra-uncomfortable metal framed seats which will lurch violently up and down and yaw erratically from side to side. Blasts of freezing cold air will be played over diners.

Dress: flying suits and boots

Menu:

Starter: Tea biscuit and orange juice

Main course: Tepid NAAFI pies
Dried out baked beans or
peas
or
Almost thawed Birds Eye
TV dinner for one

Sweet: Lukewarm powdered coffee
with evaporated milk
Oxygen

Throughout the meal diners will be entertained by the rhythmic chanting of the Navigator cursing the Pilot and a gentle buzzing noise from the Engineer.

To test readers' powers of observation, the Spring Edition of the Newsletter was numbered 13 instead of 14; you all failed the test. It had nothing to do with editorial incompetence.

What's in a Name?

It has been suggested to me that this journal requires a name; "The Newsletter" is not really 21st Century. I have sympathy with this view; "Newsletter" was OK when we were new and still organising. For example the Shackleton Association calls theirs "The Growler".

One suggestion has been, "Duck!". Perhaps too obscure.

The one that I favour is "Yellow Pearls".

Do you agree and any other ideas before I approach (with trepidation) the Committee?

Letters and items for publication are very welcome—in fact they are really wanted. If you don't want to write it, just let me have your idea and I'll do it myself or farm it out. Because we use photo-copying for the "hard copy" versions of the Newsletter, photographs can be disappointing. Items from the Squadron's recent (helicopter) history will be particularly welcome.

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

* To order