

Flashback

*The Journal of the Royal Air Force
Boy Entrant Photographers Association*



PICTURE
POST

**HULTON'S
NATIONAL
WEEKLY**

PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE:
PRELUDE TO ATTACK
NOVEMBER 4, 1941

4^D

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The Royal Air Force Boy Entrant Photographers Association

Executive committee

Chairman:

John Barry MBE
chairman@rafbepa.co.uk
01480-456763

**Membership secretary
& web site manager:**

Gerry Linstead
secretary@rafbepa.co.uk
01223-565244
243, Milton Road, Cambridge, CB4 1XQ

Treasurer:

Peter Baldwin
treasurer@rafbepa.co.uk
0049-2431-947671 (Germany)
Rather Strasse 75
D41844 Wegberg-Rath Anhoven
Germany

Events organiser:

Stu Usher
events@rafbepa.co.uk (all year)
01569-763981 (May- October only)

Flashback editor:

Chris Pettman
editor@rafbepa.co.uk
01952-270868
2 Botfield Close,
Randlay, Telford, Shropshire,
TF3 2LY



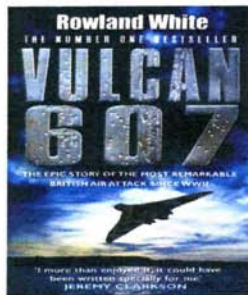
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*The Cameras Are Fitted
Photographs are taken vertically and at an angle
to build up a complete mosaic of the target area.*



Front cover: Picture Post November 1944
Picture has been changed to suit the article

Chairman's Chance

Well for all us budding photographers it has not really been a Kodak summer, so far. That's assuming of course that you have not been busy recording the devastating floods that have affected so many during the past couple of weeks. Luckily we in Cambridgeshire have managed to escape the floods but if you were affected I hope you had your cameras ready and that you are now back on the road to recovery. We are all familiar with the phrase "a picture speaks a thousand words", how true when the insurance man arrives at your doorstep a few days later when the water has subsided and the clean-up has begun. A small digital camera is must these days, even as a backup, or one that you should carry with you at all times for that chance "photo of a lifetime".

Not really a "photo of a lifetime" but an opportunity too good to miss came my way a couple of weeks ago. During a weekend "Morgan" car rally in Lincolnshire we had a number of scenic runs that passed many old RAF establishments. RAF Scampton, Waddington, Coningsby, Binbrook, Manby, East Kirkby (home of Dave Newham's book launch a couple of years ago), names that I am sure are all very familiar to you. The sheer number of stations reminds us that Lincolnshire was once the home of "Bomber Command". I was once told that "if you lined the runways up in Lincolnshire you could taxi from Lincoln to the coast"? Not sure how true it is but it would not surprise me. Passing these places, I wondered how many young flyers raced their "Morgans" along the very same local bumpy, and I mean bumpy, roads all those years ago. What a thought!

The one building however that did stand out for me was the RAF College at Cranwell – what a splendid building and one that I had not visited for many years. They just don't build them like they used to do in 1933. This was my photo opportunity for the month.



Fine view at RAF College Cranwell



A typical Morgan "Watering Hole" – just happens to be the oldest thatched pub in Lincolnshire at Tealby (built in 1367)

The sun is now shining and the water subsiding which means that I need to grab the camera and search for that "photo of a lifetime". I wonder, do you have a recent photo opportunity that you might like to share with us?

We now have some 50 plus members signed up for the Annual Dinner in October which is good news and promises to be another great weekend. I am especially looking forward to returning to the Cosford Museum this year with its new hangar and the latest "Cold War" exhibit – a real treat in store for us. I will however, at the same time, try and avert my eyes from looking at the distant old grassed hangars which brings back memories of those days long ago when we had our cross country training around the airfield and included running over them.....pretty steep for a young lad!

Happy snapping

John Barry

Comment !



Cleaning the F.95's from the Vinten Pod at Cosford Museum

What am I doing on page 5 I hear you all say! Well I thought it was high time our chairman had the place he deserves at the front of the mag! However he also wrote rather a lot and I had to jiggle the pages a bit to fit!

You may notice on page 26 there is an advert for a new joke book. It has not yet been printed as we are waiting on a response from the RAF Museum at Hendon as to whether we can start a fund to reinstate the photographic exhibits at Cosford. Rest assured that whether we do start a fund or not, 'Flashbang...wallop', as it will be called, will go on sale anyway and we can decide later what to do with the profits. (I hope!)

We also have another project in the pipeline concerning the, by now well known 'Rookie', by our friendly cartoonist, Mickie Collins from Canada. More of that later. We hope to be able to make an announcement at the Annual Dinner and Reunion at the Park House Hotel, Shifnal.

That reminds me, it is creeping up fast again and this year we have a record 53 souls attending! I am really looking forward to it with our Cold War theme, both at Cosford and at the Dinner afterwards.

We really hope that none of our members suffered in the recent tragic floods but the opportunity it gave people to show that really we do care for each other was not missed. Our last secretary, Dave Newham, of course lives in Tewkesbury and apart from losing mains water, at least he did not get flooded.

Till either the next issue or the reunion whichever it is, stay safe,
Regards

**Chris Pettman,
Editor.**



Sec's Musings

Whilst on a recent visit to Dublin I was travelling across the city on the "Luas", a very well run tram system, standing in a very crowded carriage when I noticed two young lads sporting the usual spiky hair, tattoos, nose and ear piercings etc jump out of their seats to offer them to two elderly ladies that had just got on. I seem to remember that this was quite a common practice in years gone by but one that seems to be slipping away along with no end of other practices of common courtesy, so I was pleased to note that this simple but welcome act still exists - especially as I'm fast approaching the age when such an offer would be well appreciated I'm sure.

So after 38 years the RAF's commitment to Operation Banner in Northern Ireland has finally come to an end, I remember my time as an ACF at Aldergrove as being one of the most interesting and exciting times of my RAF career. Well done to all photo tradesmen who were involved with what must have been one of the busiest RICs in the trades history.

Well I guess the next stop will be the AGM and dinner social weekend to which I'm looking forward to very much, see you there.

GL.

STOP PRESS!

The Vinten Trophy which was awarded annually to the station in RAF Germany producing the best photographs has re-appeared. It has now been passed to RAF-BEPA for safekeeping and will be at our annual dinner in October. More details in the next issue of Flashback. Ed



Postings and emails

chas@gunter.org.uk

Hi Chris,

The story behind the bike (page 24 edition 27 Summer 2007) is that 'Jangle', Nic and I were in the Photo Section one weekend. Things were quiet and we were bored so we took to having 'speed' trials with the bike. This involved doing a lap round the outside of the Photo Section to see who could do it the fastest. At the time, John was working next door in the NDT Unit. He wandered round and seeing what was up, decided to join in. Being keen on motor sport, John suggested that we attach wings to it in the style of the then Formula One racing cars. So a few sheets of white mounting board, some black tape and a wooden developer stirring paddle quickly produced the result seen in the photo. There is actually writing on the centre panel but it seems to have 'burnt' out. I can't remember what it said but had the words 'F1' and 'Equipe' on it. Possibly John can recall as it was almost certainly his idea.

What you see is a Formula One 'Racing' bike with John Lewis as Driver and the rest of us as pit crew. As far I remember, the suit John is wearing was a genuine racing drivers suit of the time and that he had won it in some motor sport magazine



competition. Again, John should be able to verify that. Sadly, the one thing I can't remember was who took the photo.

Cheers,
Charlie Gunter.

*Anyone know anything more about the aforementioned picture/
Ed.*

r.owens345@ntlworld.co.uk

Chris,
Rather sad about the museum exhibits as the RAF Museum assured me the photo exhibits would be back on show this year when the building work is complete.

Somewhat miffed if we've lost the Moore-Brabazon exhibit as it was specifically donated to SOP. Some items, e.g. The F49 camera and mount from an Ordnance Survey Pembroke, by the way, were purchased by the then JSOP for about £75 in about 1970.

Please pass my best wishes to Dave H, Dave J, Vic and anyone who remembers that far back!

Roger Owens.

*'Tis done, Roger,
Ed.*

Obituary



Eric astride a 'liberated' motorbike from the Italian Forces in the Western Desert

551153 Eric Freeman **5th Entry Boy - Farnborough**

It is with great sorrow that we report the death of one of our members, 551153 Eric Freeman. He died in Wales after moving from Poole in Dorset some years ago to be near his daughter Pat and her family. Eric spent much of the War years in the Middle East with various PRU Squadrons. His interesting travels and activities were detailed over several issues of earlier Flashbacks. After demob in 1947 he joined Fairey Surveys Ltd. When the company undertook a complete aerial survey of Burma under a UN Aid Programme, Eric was appointed project manager for the operation and was ultimately at Fairey for 18 years. His final occupation before retirement was as general manager of "Films in Miniature". Eric was a staunch member of old 'BEPA'. Giving much time, generosity and support to the association. After a formal service in Wales, his ashes will be taken to Poole where he will join his beloved wife, Norah.

May he rest in peace



REMINISCENCES OF THE START OF PHOTOGRAPHIC RECONNAISSANCE UNITS

Part one - By Jack Eggleston

Fifty years is a long time to remember and the old grey cells aren't what they used to be, however, I've been asked to pen a few thoughts and some reminiscences of wartime PRU's and particularly about the beginning and early days of the original photo recce unit. This and subsequent photographic units were of inestimable value in helping the Allies to win the Second World War and many hundreds of RAF photographers served in them. I write from the point of view of an ex 'boy' airman photographer who was involved from the start of the wartime PRU's in 1939.

Large volume air photo recce started during the First World War when many thousands of prints were produced for intelligence purposes. During the time between this and the next World War, aerial photography in the RAF was of course carried out and aircraft and cameras improved. However when the next war was imminent and particularly during the early days, it was found that photography from relatively slow bomber aircraft was not giving the quality of strategic information required, despite the bravery and determination of the aircrews, some of whom were airmen photographers. Many pre-war RAF photographers were employed

on aircrew duties. In those days, it was part of their job when pin-points, line or feature overlaps, or mosaic photo flying was required. Some were classed as photographer/air gunner and entitled to wear the 'flying bullet' badge, for which they were awarded an extra 6d (2.5p) per day when on flying duties.

It was realised that to obtain high quality aerial photography and intelligence under wartime conditions, special aircraft flying reliable detail - producing cameras and aircrew trained in the techniques of modern aerial photography would be required. The aircraft needed would need to have the capabilities of high speed, high altitude, good sky camouflage and long range. Cameras were needed that were reliable, with a film capacity to cover large areas of terrain, did not freeze up at high altitudes or suffer condensation and most of all, could produce images containing as much detail as possible.

This state could not of course be obtained immediately but help was at hand in the shape of a venturesome Australian, Sidney Cotton; a civilian entrepreneur who had been a Royal Navy pilot in the First World War.

Sidney Cotton in co-operation with British and French Intelligence Services, had flown over Italian possessions and Germany several times in his own long-range airliner, a specially modified two-engined Lockheed 12A and had taken many photographs using hidden cameras. He arranged these flights under various business guises, often with high ranking Nazi guests flying with him. As they with pride and arrogance, pointed out their 'wunderbar' factories and facilities, he was able to photograph these installations using automatically operated cameras hidden in the belly of the aircraft. When it seemed that war was imminent, British Intelligence, who helped Sydney Cotton's exploits, got more interested in the act and a collection of photographs recording German war preparations was built up.

Before the war broke out it was decided to form a photographic development unit at Heston, then a civilian airport just west of London. Its function would be to investigate Cotton's and others' ideas for improved aerial photography and intelligence collection. This came to fruition in late 1939 when a few RAF types were posted in to form an RAF unit. The pilots were all hand picked and the photo interpreters who who came later, were specialists in their particular subjects. The NCOs and airmen were a small and specially selected servicing crew of about twenty men. Some engine fitters and airframe riggers, an electrician, an instrument maker, an armourer and four photographers. In case some of you old sweat photogs reading this

can remember, I'll mention a few of the original types. We photographers were chosen by Flt.Lt. Bill Dunton of the School of Photography, Farnborough and Sgt. Wally Walton, who was the first photographic NCO of this new unit. They chose lads who had passed out first, second and third, from the fifth entry of boys at the School of Photography, LACs Whin Rawlinson, Ron Mutton and Jack Eggleston. Paul Lambolt, a civilian who worked with Sidney Cotton on one of his enterprises; the "Dufaycolour" method of colour photography, was commissioned as a Pilot Officer and joined us a little later as our photographic officer. Within a month or so he was promoted to Squadron Leader. Paul was of course a complete photographer and an expert on colour photography but not versed in RAF methods. He had to be coached in the techniques of RAF cameras and photo systems. At that time there were no processing facilities at Heston and we LACs looked after the cameras and camera fits and also carried out aircrew duties as photographers. Films were processed at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough. A few eeks later when it was realised that more photogs were needed, several more airmen were posted in and processing facilities also created. I remember Arthur Johnson, Jim Muncie, Jimmy Purvis, Joe Wyley, Sid Mills and Cpls Jock MacDonald and Donaldson among others.

The first Commanding Officer was Sidney Cotton who was immediately re-commissioned as a

Wing Commander and with him came his co-pilot Flt Lt Bob Niven. As I remember we also had as pilots, Fg Off 'Shorty' Longbottom, MacPhail and Slocum and later Flt Lts LeMesurier and Milne. The aircraft we started out with were Wg Cdr Cotton's own Lockheed 12A with its concealed cameras and pale green fuselage and I think also a twin engined Beechcraft. A little later two long nosed Blenheims (IVs) and two Hudsons arrived. For liaison trips etc., we had a single engined Beechcraft which had belonged to the King of Iraq and still sported his royal crest. Some time later Wg Cdr Cotton obtained two Spitfires which were delivered in October 1939 - N3069 - N3071 Mk PR1As, which the units modified in order to obtain the required capabilities for Photo Reconnaissance. The Spitfires were modified to become long range aircraft which could fly high and fast. They were suitably sky camouflaged and fitted with automatic control operated cameras and film magazines, which could obtain the necessary detailed images of large areas of terrain. These aircraft were flown by pilots trained in photographic flying techniques and became the backbone of photo recce. It was some time before this improved state of photographic intelligence collection could be obtained, so modification of other various aircraft and experimental and operational flights were also carried out until more suitable aircraft came into use later in the war. The aircraft were first stripped of their armament and then modified as much as possible in order to increase airspeed.

I remember flying in a long nosed Blenheim with Fg Off Slocum. It had a long focal length camera pointing forward and mounted on the navigators table in the long nose of the aircraft. We also had hand held cameras that could be slung on a wire and pivoted through the opening of the forward facing lower hatch. The idea was to obtain forward facing obliques as the aircraft dived on its target. On this particular flight we did not use the cameras for some reason and were returning to base. We flew through a cloud and on emerging, there, slap in front of us was a huge barrage balloon and others glinting in the sunlight at various distances. The pilot slammed the throttles open, pulled the stick back and banked steeply to port and we managed to avoid the obstacle. At a lower height we could have hit the hanging cables. Then still keeping a safe height and a good lookout, we managed to get back home.

To be continued.....



Long nosed Blenheim

Thanks for allowing us to reproduce your fascinating story Jack. More episodes will follow in the next editions. Ed.

PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE : PRELUDE TO ATTACK

The loneliest job in the world: flying, miles high, over enemy territory to bring back the photographs on which the great, final offensive against Germany will be based.



*Adjusting the Shutter Mechanism
Wonderfully delicate mechanism controls the
cameras, which must function at extreme altitudes.*



**YOUR FAVOURITE LAMPS
ARE OVER THERE -
HELPING TO BRING VICTORY**

Osram

A SBC PRODUCT

THE WONDERFUL LAMP

FIRST time you fly at 40,000 feet in a photo-reconnaissance plane is a pretty awesome experience. Flying at more ordinary flight levels you don't get any feeling of height. You look down on the fields and the woods and the towns in a detached sort of way as though you were looking at a view from a hill top. But at 40,000 feet things are different. Until you get used to it, you feel as though you are poised on a cliff edge, and you have to take a pull on yourself to look over the side.

It's not surprising really. Lots of odd things happen up at that height, the height at which much photo-reconnaissance is made deep inside enemy territory. The sky is a dark blue for one thing, because you are in the dark blue band of the sun's spectrum which misses the earth's surface altogether. Bright sun and a night sky overhead are alone enough to shake you a bit. But there are other curious things, too. Your Spitfire feels quite different to what you've been accustomed. It is impossible at first to fly level and turns are something of an adventure. The earth's surface looks quite different from anything you've seen before, and you're lost before you know it. And weird

things are happening to your tummy due to the rarified atmosphere. Your intestines expand so that, if you could see them, they'd look like yards of flattened motor cycle inner tube. And you don't know, until you've tried it, whether you're going to get the "bends"—blockages in the arteries due to nitrogen bubbles forming in the bloodstream. The "bends" cause intense pain and you are no good for high flying if you get them. It is easy to imagine you are getting them before you attain confidence, and it is easy to imagine your oxygen supply is failing. You can swear your arm is tickling, so you whip off your glove to see if your finger nails are going blue—the sign of oxygen failure. You can live for just half a minute without oxygen at 40,000 feet.

Long distance photo-reconnaissance is nearly always done at high levels, as height forms your

only protection against the enemy's defences. You carry no guns or ammunition. You rely on seeing the enemy fighter first and then pulling away from him. German flak has been known on more than one occasion to hit a Spitfire flying at 350 miles an hour above 30,000 feet. But the reconnaissance pilot has the reward of bringing back to base photographic evidence of incalculable value. Intelligence officers pounce on his pictures for evidence, maybe, of new enemy production or assessment of damage on factories. From one sortie alone, perhaps, the Army are given pictures of as much as 400 square miles of enemy territory, with defences revealed. And the Navy can learn from coverage of ports, the latest moves of enemy units. The invasion of Europe would not have been possible without the work of the comparatively few pilots who ranged alone over the Continent in Spitfires or Lightnings, and the pilots and navigators in the Mosquitoes, their only weapons a camera and a strip of film.

The results obtained by the long-range photo-reconnaissance units could not be so conclusive were it not for the close co-operation that exists between the British and American squadrons. Their tasks are allotted and controlled by a joint headquarters, so that there is no duplication of effort. The airfields from which they operate, adjoin one another. To the visitor these airfields are fascinating in their apparent disregard of war. They are set in lovely country, and on them there is no sign of a bomb, a gun or a bullet, only unarmed sky-blue aeroplanes.

To the pilots, this unity of effort is inspiring. It is a thrill to meet a returning Lightning over Dover at 30,000 feet on your way out; and it was something I shall never forget when, as I was flying high and alone above occupied territory, my ears were filled by the lusty voice of an American P.R. pilot singing that crazy song "Mairsy dotes and do77 dotes and lidle lambs edivy." The unknown American was a returning P.R. pilot who had just crossed the English coast on his way home and he was feeling good about it. But he had left his radio on "transmit," and no one else could use the air until he had finished his song.

Good navigation is essential if the reconnaissance pilot is to find his target and bring back the pictures. So much is obvious; but it is a special kind of navigation. At high altitudes the customary aids of



A Room With a View
Streamlined glass gives view in all directions. Pilot is 22-year-old Lieutenant Red Matthews. He has made 44 missions over Europe.



The Cameras Are Fitted
Photographs are taken vertically and at an angle to build up a complete mosaic of the target area.

continued on page 14

HULTON'S NATIONAL WEEKLY PHOTO-RECONNAISSANCE: **PRELUDE TO ATTACK 4^D**
NOVEMBER 4, 1944



Back From His Flight

His photographs are being printed. He recounts weather, incidents of journey, flak and fighters.



Pin-Pointing the Targets

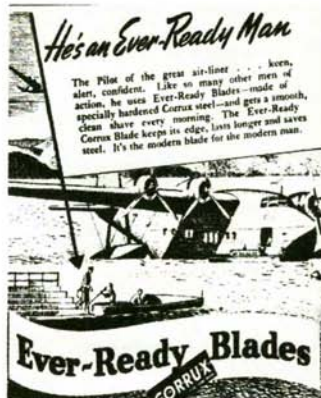
Special points of importance are picked out. Further big enlargements of certain sections of the photographs are ordered.

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continued from page 13

roads and railways are of little value. They do not stand out to the eye as at normal heights. Indeed, a town of the size of, say, Tunbridge Wells, can be difficult to see. It is only by orientating it with reference to nearby woods, or rivers, or coast-line, that it can first be spotted. And by "nearby" means anything up to twenty miles. For the high altitude pilot, on clear days, has a radius of vision of a hundred miles and more. His eye sweeps scornfully over man-made scars on the earth's surface, and is filled only by the mighty lines and spaces of nature. Remote from mankind, alone in an unreal world of sunshine and night sky, he feels himself sometimes in the company of the gods.

WING COMMANDER NIGEL TANGYE.



Manufactured at N.A.F.F. Co., Ltd., 100, Strand, London, W.C.2. Sole Agents, No. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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"Give Us the File on Hamburg Oil Tanks, There's Something New Here!"
The pilot's mission was to Hamburg. His pictures show that the oil storage tanks are in use again. They may be supplying the German armies fighting in Holland.

9



The Full Story is Pieced Together
Weaving to and fro over the target, the pilot has taken hundreds of pictures. These are built together over a map, to form a vast connected picture of Hamburg Docks.





The "Mosaic" As Finally Pieced Together

Many missions have gone to make the "mosaic." It provides the knowledge on which a big air attack is launched.



Pin-Pointing the Targets

10 Special points of importance are picked out. Further big enlargements of certain sections of the photographs are ordered.



THE RESULT: BOMBERS LAUNCH RAIDS ON OIL-REFINERIES AND DEPOTS IN HAMBURG DOCKS

FROM the whole complex mass of the great port of Hamburg, wharves, piers, bridges, cranes, warehouses and dwellings—bombers of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force have picked out a limited number of objectives. From 30,000 feet the objectives look minute, but one of them is the largest oil refinery in Germany. It has an annual capacity of 350,000 tons, and it is burning along its entire length. Seven other refineries in the same area

send up their immense columns of oily smoke. The camera that took this picture is the standard one used for photo-reconnaissance. Its weight, loaded, is 85 lbs. It produces a negative 9 in. by 18 in., and is capable of 200 exposures. The U.S. 7th Photo-Reconnaissance Group, pictured in this series, have a record of 47,000 prints in one day, and in the month of June—which included D-Day—they made more than half a million prints. 11



Off on Its Lonely Mission: A Lightning Heads for Germany
A pilot of the 7th Photo-Reconnaissance Group of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force is at the controls. For this job Americans use Lightnings. We use Spitfires.



Interpreters Get to Work
With maps, slide-rules, magnifying glasses, experts work long hours to drag out the hidden meaning of the new pictures.

PICTURE
POST

Pages 12 - 18 have all been reproduced from a copy of Picture Post from November the 4th 1944



under the spotlight



Jo Oliver - part 5

'D' Day had arrived & passed, the south of France invasion successfully completed, so the P.R. requirement diminished our necessity to continue at Gibraltar (Gib). It was time to pack up 8 men & myself – we were listed to leave by boat for home & were led to believe that we were the lucky first???? However, see later. A nice ship home – the Winchester Castle – with 2 of us sharing a cabin. It took 4 ½ days to sail straight to the U.K., ½ the time it took to get us to Gib. in 1943. We were accompanied by 2 small aircraft carriers. After arriving in the U.K. when walking along the platform my name was being shouted out & the party of us assembled together to be told we would be going straight to Customs then a light meal & off to Benson, as we would not be going to a transit camp. So on the train to Benson at Cholsey, & while waiting there for transport to the camp there were many aircraft towing gliders flying overhead, I think it was about the 17th of September. Upon reporting to the Sqdn, what a surprise, all the rest of the flight were home & away on leave – they flew home –

so we had the wool pulled over our eyes about being first.

There were 3 Cpls on the Sqdn, Cpls VIC BROWN, KEN EWINS, whom I first met at MILDENHALL in April/May 1940, & FITZGERALD – he first joined us at Mount Farm early 1941 so he had a good spell at home, he was posted overseas soon afterwards. Next to leave us was Vic Brown, leaving Ken Ewins & myself.

Had an unfortunate occurrence: the squadron had 3 MUSTANG aircraft, they were 24 VOLT, & of course, SPITFIRES were 12 VOLT. A chap got hold of a MUFF & fitted it to a Mustang & it nearly caused a fire, so I was put on a charge as I had signed the F700 & the person concerned was given a short sentence, but I was dismissed free of guilt. Three South Africans piloted the Mustangs but they left after a short while.

Ken Ewins was courting DAPHNE a WAAF clerk in our Sqdn Orderly Room & they decided to get married. Cameras & film were still in very short supply but somehow I got hold of an F24 8" & some film. Ken racked the lens

out so that is was in focus at about 12 – 15 feet & then he lugged it all the way to Winchmore Hill, North London. Many of us attended the wedding, I was Best Man – I think it was a short time before the war ended.

War ended on May 10th; on June 21st. I was posted to 540 Squadron, now in FRANCE at COULOMMIERS about 60 kilometres from PARIS. Flew there in an ANSON a/c from Benson, as it was responsible for supplies & a/c maintenance. Coulommiers was an American camp with 82 & 101 Airborne Divisions based there so we had mainly U.S. type rations. It was an all tent camp - working & living in tents, so life was raw & sparse. Every weekend on a Friday night a lorry ran us to Paris for an overnight stay so we had a complete day for sightseeing! Only allowed 200ft up the EIFFEL TOWER, I guess up above us was still secret radar. Paris was flooded with service men of all nationalities – to the women's delight. We were getting 240 francs to the pound so good Champagne was in great demand.

The Squadron & Wing (as it was called) at Coulommiers was commanded by Wg/Cdr FREDDIE BALL (later Air Marshall) who was C/O out in North Africa. Jack EGGLESTON was also serving in North Africa with him. The photo establishment was 1 Sergeant, 2 Cpls & eleven men – somewhat different when I was on the Sqdn,

just 2 men & myself. After 2 months, I volunteered to go on detachment to NORWAY with what seemed the greater part of the Squadron.

We flew to Norway in a converted LIBERATOR a/c, when I say converted well?? The bomb bay was stripped & planks of wood were our seats for 6hrs 45mins. We were issued with leather jerkins & told to take warm clothing, but upon arrival the airmen were all in short sleeves, it was sunny & warm. We were based at an airfield named VAERNES approx. 8 miles up the fjord from TRONDHEIM. Not a lot of work for P.R.; once again, I was in charge of cameras. There was a railway station not far away called HELL, we all bought a ticket to HELL to prove we had 'been to HELL'. Only been at Vaernes a few days before VJ Day was declared but it was not a big booze-up as there was no beer just very strong schnapps that had to be rationed as it was very potent. Sadly, we saw (it wasn't the drink) lots of white & ginger lemmings heading for the fjord, apparently this occurs every few years.

There were 2 German submarines in the harbour at Trondheim & we were allowed to go in them. I always thought how cramped the sailors were but oh dear these were small subs, & talk about cramped!

We were billeted in houses virtually on the airfield, there were a couple of nights when it was a bit

cold so one of the lads lit a fire & within ½ hr the whole room was warm, the rooms were lined with wood - perfect to retain heat. A lorry trip up the valley was organised for days off on a Saturday, these valleys were beautiful especially during autumn. The black market was rife - swapping cigarettes for silver fox furs & I wont tell you how I got mine home.

After 2 months, the detachment was booked to return to the U.K. The Air Force was fast running down & demob was awaiting most of us. Our flight back was in a Sunderland but after a ½ hr delay, due to bad weather, we had to

disembark & some of us were seasick. After an hour's wait it was all back on the aircraft & off to FELIXSTOWE, a 6hr 45min trip, at least we had proper seats - unlike the Liberator. A train journey to Mount Farm, where I was in 1941/2, & it was late when we arrived so it was an overnight stay before off on leave the next day. After leave, it was only a few days before demob for me, & how strange it felt after 6 years & 6 months in the R.A.F.

Jo Oliver



American forces laying airstrip at Coulommiers, France



The Railway Station clock at Hell in Norway



The Fincastle Trophy is awarded to the winners of an annual maritime competition between the RAAF, CDF (or RCAF in old money), RNZAF and RAF. Fincastle '74 was held during November in New Zealand at RNZAF Base Auckland, with the aircraft based at Whenuapai and accommodation at nearby Hobsonville. In the blue corner was a Nimrod MR I of 206 Sqn from Kinloss, in the red corner were Orions of the RAAF and RNZAF along with an Argus of the CDF.

The bulk of the RAF support team, including the photographic element was fast-tracked out to New Zealand by – Belfast. A weeklong journey with calls at:

Malta	refuelling only
Masirah	hot, hot, hot
Gan	plenty of time to walk round the island and to visit inmates
Tengah	Terror Barracks, say no more
Darwin hotel in town,	took full advantage of room-service
Townsville	hotel in town again, this is the life

The motley contingent consisted of:

Alex Cowe (Cpl APO)
Dave Clark (SAC APO)
Tim Gormley (Cpl ACF)
and myself Pete Belcher (Cpl ACF)

The aircraft was liberally defumigated on landing in NZ, but the first thing that happened afterwards was a Kiwi photog dashing on board handing out cans of lager. God bless New Zealand. Once off the a/c we were whisked away to the Sgts mess for some arm bending practice. Unfortunately that didn't last very long as a mess member complained about us – in particular, *me*. In my wisdom I was wearing a flying-suit with various badges on and Cpls tapes sewn onto the epaulets. The F/Sgt who invited us in was most apologetic but was powerless to do anything else but take us to a more hospitable bar. Later, having been settled into our accommodation in Hobsonville, we were all made honorary members of the local club, and became able to partake of their regular 'chomps & piss', the latter coming in large jugs for ensuring glasses were permanently topped up.

The next day there was large press coverage of our Nimrod arriving, whereupon I gave them a thrill by falling base over apex while struggling to pull the power cable over to plug into the a/c. Until then I had never appreciated the discord between Australians and New Zealanders, as shown when the Aussies arrived with *two* Orions. The Kiwis promptly impounded one of them as the rules stated one a/c only per participating country. It didn't take the Aussies long to start going around with a stencil and red paint 'zapping' all and sundry with kangaroos. The Kiwis promptly followed behind with their



F.135 Camera

own red paint adding a ball and chain to each, as they put it, 'Skippy, the bouncing rat'.

The Nimrod was equipped with a hand held clockwork F134 for any available person to poke out of a window, along with an F126 and an F135 in the rear end, both, I am told, originally intended for the TSR2. As I remember it, we had had some serviceability issues with either the cameras or flash unit, and were somewhat apprehensive about the outcome. Equipment failures in the day to day life at home was one thing, but falling flat on your face in front of 'the rest of the world' was a daunting prospect. One part of the competition was a nighttime submarine hunt, and after seeing XV262 off we all repaired to the bar for the evening. We had barely settled in for a long wait when it came as quite a shock to be recalled to meet the inbound Nimrod. What the expletive deleted piece of kit had gone u/s this time? It turned out that the crew had found the submarine almost straight away (by luck or judgement?), identified it and made a kill, and were aching for the film to be processed.



F.126 Camera

It transpired that a new record had been set by locating the target within one minute of entering the search area.

The plucky Brits, in the form of Flt Lt Eric Hemson's crew, went on to win the competition and were duly presented with the Fincastle Trophy. For my part, having always had an interest in a/c 'nose art', I managed to scrounge some paints off the ever enthusiastic Kiwis and quickly come up with a victory emblem which I applied to the Nimrods' fin. It comprised of a John Bull figure lifting up a wilting maple leaf in one hand and holding a Kiwi by the throat in the other, his foot meanwhile on the neck of a prostrate kangaroo. The down side was a case of sunstroke through the time spent up on the fuselage.

There were many examples of the Kiwis hospitality. One day there was a 'hangi' (a Maori style pig roast). On another day we were all

flown off to Taupo and Rotorua in either a Bristol Freighter or a Hercules. We drew the Bristol Freighter (ear defenders provided for all), because, as an Aussie commented, "you built the damned thing – you can fly in it". The trip included a visit to the geothermal springs at Orakei Korako, a barbecue with beer and a Maori concert, complete with 'haka' greeting. One of my several regrets is not buying an LP (ah, nostalgia) of this Maori music, but it probably wouldn't have reached the UK in one piece anyway.

The Kiwi overall organizational thoroughness was exemplified by their getting bottles of a local wine with the labels overprinted with FINCASTLE '74, an air force crest and RAF RAAF CAF RNZAF spaced around. Another memory is of one of the Kiwi photogs dashing around all over the place trying to find a bank or somewhere that would exchange our 'Scottish' pound notes for us. I blush at the lack of forethought.

The Nimrod eventually departed for home via the USA and Canada, leaving us Belfast pax to wait another week before plodding back westwards over almost the same ground we had covered going out. The reasoning for the delay was that if the Grimmy had gone u/s en route, we would have gone eastwards also, because we had the spares, so there.

A week free to play tourist was a welcome bonus and luckily the weather was hot and sunny. There used to be RNZAF Sunderlands based at Hobsonville and for some time one was preserved there. In the

vague hope that it might still be there, three or four of us took a wander down to the old slipways one morning. Needless to say it was long gone but it was a pleasant day and we passed some time watching a small boat ferrying personnel across the inlet to the housing estates the other side. When the crew offered to take us as well just for the ride we jumped at it. Eventually they took us all the way in to Auckland harbour and dropped us off to do some rubbernecking. When we got bored with the shops the others trailed along with me to the Auckland War Memorial Museum where I knew there was a Spitfire – my weakness. On another day we also found the missing Sunderland, hiding amongst a line up of other a/c at MOTAT, the Museum Of Transport And Technology, also in Auckland.

On the way back to the UK we stayed at the same hotel in Darwin as previously, little knowing that before long it would be known around the world. After the typhoon that hit that area not long after we had passed through, amongst the other newspaper photographs of the local devastation, there was one of the Darwin Travel Lodge swimming pool – with cars in.



Belfast interior

On arrival back at Kinloss we were surprised to find the Belfast being met by a substantial welcoming party, including the Station Commander. I suspect this was because before the Nimrod left New Zealand, us Belfastites had repeatedly harangued the departing crew that by the time we got back all the excitement would have died down and we would be forgotten. But, fair's fair, we received a grand welcome, even if I was greeted by the news that the tail art had been removed in error, and would I mind painting it on again please. It was probably lucky that during my RAF time I almost exclusively used colour slides instead of prints. One of these blown up large on the wall, drawn round and backed by carbon paper and I had a template for repainting an almost exact copy. This time though, I did it on both sides of the fin, and of course being Kinloss – no sunstroke.

This a/c later became the favoured background to PR photos taken at Kinloss. If you promise not to tell anyone, I'll let you know how to tell the difference between the original version and the copy. Out in New Zealand I couldn't remember how to do a capital Old English letter 'f', back in the UK I was able to look it up and paint 'Fincastle' as it should be instead of 'fincastle'. Not a lot of people know that.

PS. My son left the RAF in 2006 after 22 years in Movements. I let him 'proof read' this article, where upon he told me that amongst the UK-MAMS personnel on the Belfast

bringing us back from New Zealand, was a certain "Dinger" Bell who was to become one of my sons' Corporals, and later, Sergeant during his career. Wheels within wheels.

Pete Belcher

*Great stuff, Pete, thanks for that.
Ed.*



Back at Kinloss

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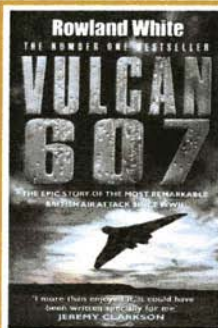
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Any profits accruing from the sale of this publication will initially go into the funds of RAFBEPa. However it is hoped that a fund may be started soon to assist in the return of the Military Photo Exhibition to the RAF Museum at Cosford. We'll keep you posted! Please allow up to 28 days for delivery.



Book Review

VULCAN 607

By Rowland White

Published by Corgi Books

ISBN 978-0-552-15229-7

Paperback £6.99

Available at all book shops & stores

I make absolutely no apology for reviewing another book about the Avro Vulcan. Whether you remember the Falklands conflict, were actually there or it is just a distant memory this book will be very difficult to put down. Most people were unaware of the incredible problems and risks the RAF crews faced just to drop 21, thousand pounder bombs on an airfield runway to render it useless.

It took 16 aircraft and 19 inflight refuels just to get one Vulcan to Stanley.

It had never been attempted before and probably never will again. We do not possess the aircraft anymore to drop that sort of load in one go. Once you start reading this account of the operation to start the recovery of the Falkland Islands you will be totally gripped. Even though you know the outcome, there is suspense in almost every page and the heroism of all the aircrew taking part shines through. Some mention is made of the cameras used and of reconnaissance missions, so important to every successful sortie as you all well know. I am sure in the not too distant future a film will surely be made of this epic journey.

At the price of the paperback version of this book, if you have not already bought a copy, it should be on every ex airman's bookshelf. So get to your local bookstore now or get those birthday or Christmas wish lists out again and get scribbling!

Chris Pettman.



Would anyone care to submit a similar picture but geared to the Royal Air Force?

Get your thinking caps on.

Entries by 25th October 2007

and we may be able to present a prize at the Dinner. You would not have to be present to win it!

With thanks to John Lewis for submitting it.

Ed.

WYTON AIRMEN OFF TO SINGAPORE

A detachment of Canberra photographic reconnaissance aircraft from No 58 Squadron, Royal Air Force Wyton is taking part in a large scale exercise code name BERSATU PADU in Malaysia. The detachment, under the command of Sqn Ldr P. J. T. Retief, left the UK from Honington, Suffolk, where the squadron is temporarily based.

The three aircraft involved flew out to RAF Tengah, Singapore, via Cyprus the Persian Gulf and the Maldives Islands. A ground party followed the same route in aircraft of RAF Air Support Command.

On arrival in Singapore, the Canberras have formed the tactical low level reconnaissance element of a five-nation force from Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia and UK. Their task is to carry out photographic and visual reconnaissance in support of land and air forces engaged in the exercise, by low flying over the jungle.

The detachment will remain in Singapore after the completion of the exercise, in order that it may carry out high level photography of Malaysia. This photography will be used to produce accurate mapping of areas, which up to now have been largely uncharted.

Both aircraft and men should arrive back at Honington during the first week in August, no doubt to enjoy some well earned leave with their families.

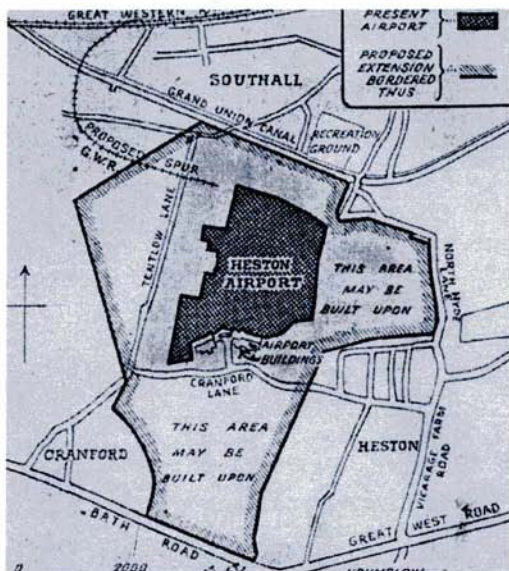
Thanks to Jenny Archdale for submitting this cutting relating to an exercise carried out from RAF Wyton from February to September 1969. Were YOU on it? We'd like to hear about it.

As a change from the usual stream of old photos we bring you something different in this issue. A prewar map of the airfield at Heston and also where it was in relation to today's urbanisation.

The old airfield is now Airlinks Golf Course plus of course a lot of buildings. We have already had a lot of memories of the old PRU Units but if anyone would like to add to the records let us know.

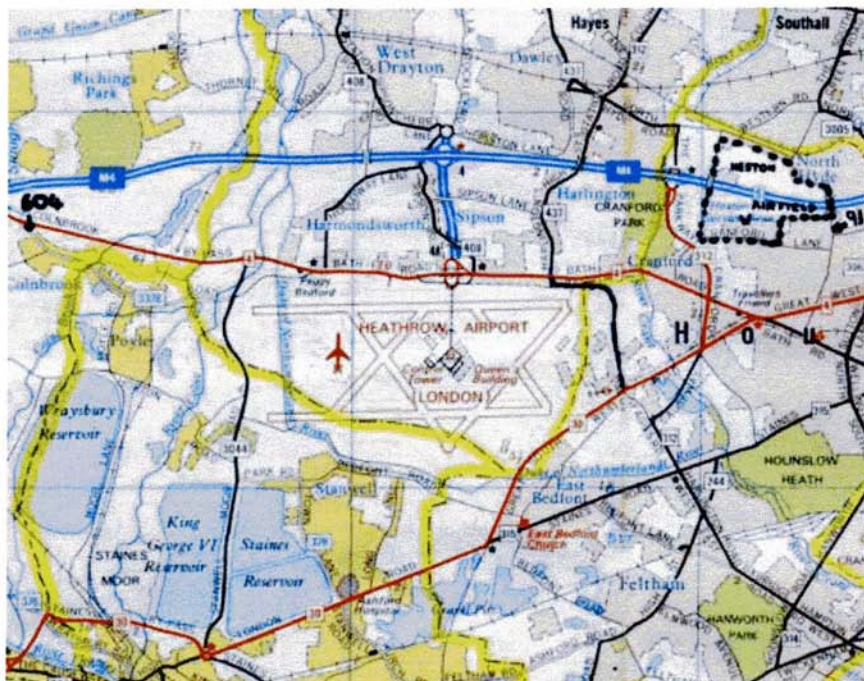
Ed.





***Heston Airfield
as it was!***

Where Heston was in relation to Heathrow Airport today!



Starboard Home!



The story of an epic cruise by Stu & Erica Usher

Since retiring from the MOD in 2005, Erica and I spend half of our year in Western Australia with our family and the other half in Stonehaven in the North East of Scotland, where I grew up. Normally we make the round trip by air, but as a somewhat belated retirement present to each other, we decided some time ago that we'd make our recent return journey from Australia by sea.

As one or two of you are aware, with Erica accompanying me, I'm fortunate enough to have been appointed as a guest speaker aboard a number of ships plying the northern hemisphere cruise routes, so there might well be some validity in thinking we were suckers for punishment, embarking on a trip of five weeks duration, but this turned out not to be the case, and the trip from Fremantle to Harwich was a thoroughly enjoyable experience.

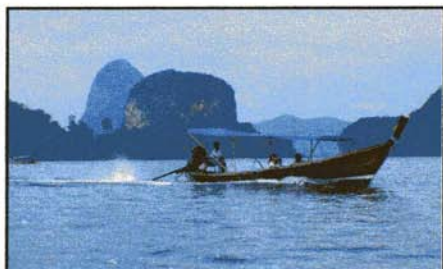
We boarded the MV "Funchal" at Fremantle on 14th April, and after passing Java Head and crossing the equator on 20th April, we arrived in Singapore in the early evening of the 21st. We went ashore immediately to take part in a night-time tour of the zoo, which I can thoroughly recommend. The following

morning saw us ashore again, re-acquainting ourselves with the parts of city we could actually recognise, such as Raffles, CK Tang's and the like. We both love Singapore, and are fortunate in being able to get there from time to time.

On 23rd April we docked in Phuket in Thailand where we'd booked a side trip to islands of Phang Gna, one of which was famously used in the James Bond movie "The Man With Golden Gun". It's one of a series of massive limestone monolith-like rock formations that rise out of the sea like huge icebergs. They also featured in Leonardo de Capprio's movie, "The Beach" and once you've seen them, you can understand why the movie makers find them an irresistible backdrop.



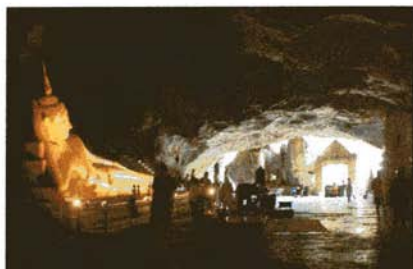
*Erica in
her
element-
Shopping
in a Sin-
gapore
Market!*



Everyday transport for getting around Phang Gna island complex, seen here in the background. A down-market version of the long tailed boat we travelled in maybe but this one was nothing like as crowded.

We travelled there and back in what are locally known as “long-tailed boats” – fairly rudimentary hulls seating four abreast, about 10 metres long with a gim-balled, large capacity motor on the stern driving a four metre long prop shaft! They go like the proverbial off a shovel, and although horrendously noisy, are a bundle of fun! Lunch at a superb Thai restaurant on stilts in the sea, was followed by a visit to a huge Buddhist temple cut into a mountainside. The scale of it was pretty impressive, and inside was the gold covered 15 metre long reclining Buddha. We certainly knew we were in the Orient! .

The next port of call was Colombo in Sri Lanka where there had just been some Tamil Tiger insurgency resulting in masses of police and military personnel everywhere one looked. This took the edge off things a bit and although a visit to the museum and a second Buddhist Temple were worthwhile, it prevented us meeting up with some friends at the lovely old colonial Gale Face Hotel on Colombo’s seafront.



Difficult to photograph without the use of flash, this is the Cave Temple of the Reclining Buddha in the Phang Gna region of southern Thailand. The gold covered statue measures 15 metres in length.

By this time we were about 10 days into the cruise and had teamed up with two other couples to take part in the cruise-long quiz competition. We’d become good friends and spent a lot of time in each other’s company.

One of these couples had also become friendly with two of the on-board entertainers who had all the scuttlebutt on a rumour of some triangular relationship among three of the passengers that had gone badly wrong, this resulting in a violent screaming match between the wife and husband’s bit on the side, who I wouldn’t have touched with a Flit gun! This had quickly escalated, with the ship’s Master at Arms taking up residence outside the offending couple’s cabin door to keep the wife under some degree of control. God help the husband who presumably was in there with her, but frankly, his was a self-inflicted injury and so very much his problem!

Why am I telling you this? Well, once docked in Male in the Maldives on the evening of the 28th April, the couple were



Whilst in Sri Lanka, we visited a large Buddhist temple in Colombo with too many statues to count. A Buddha supermarket perhaps!

read the riot act by the Captain, and then unceremoniously dumped on the dockside with their bags and left to make their own way back to Western Australia. We later heard that had there not been a bombing incident at Colombo airport, they'd have been put off there. Such is the price of human frailty I guess.

We didn't do a lot in Male as it's essentially a holiday location, and was chock full of well-heeled tourists, most of them living in rather smart beach villas and cabins built out over the sea. Erica and I decided we'd get away from all of that, so we got airborne in a Twin Otter seaplane and took a flight around the resorts. Pretty swish, and great if all you want is sun, sea and sand. There seemed little else, and I imagine about a week would be enough. We sailed the same evening.

After the Maldives, we set off on what was to be our longest spell at sea, seven days in the hot, sultry condition of the tropics, as we headed generally WNW for the southern entrance to the Red Sea. Weather conditions remained perfect, with flat calm seas all the way, and flying fish skittering away to port and starboard



What must be one of the most idyllic airports in the world. This is the base of Trans-Maldivian Airways who operate only Twin Otter seaplanes and for whom De Havilland Canada periodically re-open their production line.

as "Funchal's" bow cut through the mirror smooth water. This was time to give oneself over to really relaxing, having the odd beer or two, doing a bit of reading or participating in the traditional deck games of quoits, pitch and putt and the like. Our group of six was still doing well in the ship's quiz competition, lying third overall and beginning to sense that we could do well here.

During the early hours of 3rd May we passed through the narrow neck of water between Yemen and Sudan at the southern end of the Red Sea, and I was inter-



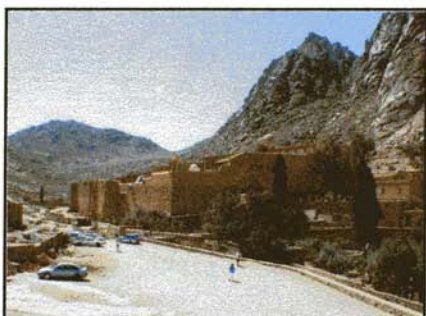
MV 'Funchal' at anchor off the Maldives. This shot of the ship was taken as we flew over her during our flight.



Heavily funded by the Japanese, the stunning El Qantara Bridge also known as the Murbarak Bridge, now spans the Suez Canal at Ismailia.

ested to find that when I got up on deck at about 06.30hrs, some crew members were rolling up fire hoses. It so transpired that these had been run out during the hours of darkness ready to repel any attempt by Sudanese pirates to make trouble for the ship. With that lawless country awash with weaponry, this is not in the least uncommon and two cruise ships have already been fired upon by Sudanese thugs armed with RPG's and AK47's. Regrettably for them, their aspirations are many times larger than the pathetic inflatables they use to approach the ships, and none have so far succeeded in boarding a passenger vessel, but it was a sobering thought for all but a certain enthusiastic photographer seeking a very different type of holiday snap!

Early on the 7th May, we docked in Safaga, a scruffy and nondescript Egyptian port at the southern end of the Suez canal, used mainly by pilgrims en route for Mecca. The dockside side was heaving with humanity, pouring off two recently returned ferries. Erica and I were heading off to Hurghada for a trip in a



A highlight of our cruise, the visit to St.Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai Desert was an unforgettable experience. Sadly the rules banning photography inside the monastery were very strictly applied!

tourist submarine, but whilst we awaited our call forward, we watched with much suppressed mirth as pilgrims stacked up the roof racks of the taxis and taxi-vans with their bags and bundles to the point of outright insanity. T'was ever thus in Egypt I'm afraid!

From Safaga, we moved up to Sharm El Sheikh at the south-easterly end of the Sinai peninsula, and set off on a 3 hour drive to St Catherine's monastery, well into the Sinai desert. This was somewhere we had both wanted to visit, and we were not disappointed. It was a fascinating place, steeped in Biblical history, and of course the traditional location of the Burning Bush which, if you are a believer, still flourishes today within the confines of the monastery. Here we viewed manuscripts and books, some written more than a thousand years go. Time had stood still in this place and evidence of this was all around you – even the remnants of Moses' still-active well, seemed convincing. The journey through the Si-

nai desert to get to St. Catherine's had also been an unforgettable experience.

Our next port of call was Suez, but having been to Egypt on several previous occasions, we had already decided to stay aboard, rather than spend four hours in an armed convoy with other tourist busses making their way to Cairo and the Pyramids.

The transit through the Canal was interesting, particularly for myself, having had some involvement with the Suez Canal Authority some years back. I had dealt mainly at Port Said, but had never sailed along the canal, although I'd had the authority to use the military road that ran down the side of it. The El Qantara bridge which now traverses the canal was impressive to say the least, but no doubt will be the first thing to go if ever there's a repeat of the hostilities that typified this region some years ago.

We passed out of the canal and into the Mediterranean at about 6.30pm on 10th May and set course for our next stop at Piraeus in Greece, where after an hour's delay awaiting the arrival of the pilot, we docked at 9.30am, on a brilliant and typically Mediterranean morning. Not fancying the crowd scenes at the Acropolis in Athens, we had a trip planned to Cape Sounion and the Temple of Poseidon. The countryside en route was so reminiscent of Cyprus, and the whole experience was really worthwhile, even if the temple itself was perhaps a little over-rated.

We were only in Piraeus for the day, and at 4pm, headed back out into the Mediterranean for the four-day transit to Lisbon. We hugged the North African coast for some of the time, ultimately passing Gi-



This is the Temple of Poseidon at Cape Sounion, not far from Piraeus town in Greece. The trip getting there held more appeal than this somewhat overrated monument!

braltar to starboard on 16th May, breaking out into the Atlantic on the same day.

The approach to Lisbon from the open sea was via a long fjord-like inlet, and as this was carried out early in the morning I was on deck to enjoy it. Sailing into the sunrise we docked in Lisbon by 8.00am and were ashore very promptly on a quick walking tour of the city. We had never been to Lisbon before and were impressed by its spaciousness and history, but I don't know that we would necessarily rush to return, but by this juncture, I suspect we were becoming a little jaded, with thoughts of our arrival in UK tending to predominate our thinking.

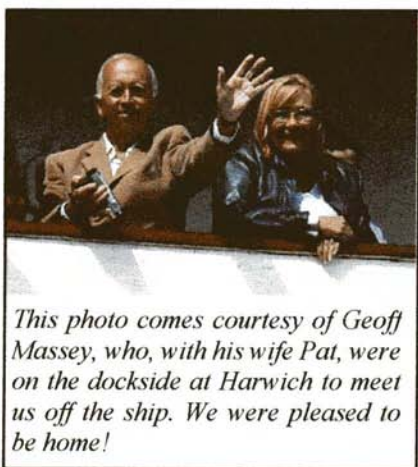
The final leg of our cruise from Lisbon to Harwich was probably the most eventful part of the cruise. We were still plugging away at the quiz, and came second in the penultimate round, thus ensuring our place in the final on 19th May. The final would be from a standing start between the top five teams, with the running score from the earlier rounds being discarded. We were looking forward to it!

During the evening of the 18th May we ran into some very heavy swells. The night was punctuated by the sound of doors banging and stuff tumbling about all over the place, and at breakfast the following morning, there was a noticeable reduction in the number of passengers! "Funchal" is only a little ship, and although fitted with stabilisers, she still rolled and pitched a good deal, so many people were feeling uncomfortable.

During the course of the morning another drama began to unfold, when an announcement from the bridge advised that a passenger was to be lifted off by helicopter in the early afternoon. This was a lady who had become unwell earlier in the week, and even although we were now close our destination, the ship's doctor decided she needed to be hospitalised straight away. So it was that a French Navy helicopter, similar to our Merlin, rendezvoused with the ship somewhere off Cape Finistere, and carried out the 'casevac' operation in very difficult circumstances given the rolling of the ship.

Once into the Channel, the swell moderated and our last morning was spent in pleasant weather, spotting places on the English coast as we gently cruised up to Harwich. The voyage had been wonderful and we had enjoyed every moment of it.

Geoff and Pat Massey were collecting us from Harwich, and as the ship docked, we eventually spotted them on the dockside, Geoff with his eye jammed to the viewfinder taking photos of every group of passengers in case he failed to spot us in the throng, but as you can see here, he soon picked us up.



This photo comes courtesy of Geoff Massey, who, with his wife Pat, were on the dockside at Harwich to meet us off the ship. We were pleased to be home!

So our great adventure came to an end, but to round things off neatly, we managed to win the quiz final! Would we do the same trip again? Well probably not, but shorter cruises, yes, most certainly. And of course, two weeks later we were back at Harwich to take up our 2007 "Midnight Sun" cruise to North Cape and the Lofotens, but that's another story!

Stu Usher



Wow....what a fantastic experience Stu, truly a journey of a lifetime. Thanks very much for sharing it with us.

Ed.

- midwaf or midwat** A Women's Auxiliary Air Force N.C.O. that is over-officious with her W.A.A.F. subordinates. Punning on *midwife* and implying interference.
- milk round** A run made fairly regularly by a Squadron or a Force, if it returns to its station or base in the early morning.
- milk train** The early-morning patrol (or 'recco' fight). Cf. the preceding entry.
- mill or mill around** Of a formation of aircraft: to fly in a self-protective circle; or, more generally, to fly, 'flat out,' in and out, so as to cross one another's path. Adopted from American airmen.
- mobile** especially in *get mobile*. Get moving; get busy; to attend promptly to a duty or to something in which one's profit or self-interest is involved. In contrast to *static*.
- mod** A modification, especially in the sense of a mechanical improvement. Colloquial. From the official abbreviation.
- Mos** (pronounced *moxy*); **Mossy** Mosquito aircraft.
- mouidy** A torpedo. Adopted from the Navy, which has used the term since about 1900. (See *Introduction*, para. 6.)
- mouse-trap** See *rat-trap*.
- movies, go to the** Of airmen: to go into action. (See *Introduction*, para. II.) Adopted from American airmen.
- much!** Not much!; ironic. "He never goes out with Waaf's,—" **Much!'**; implying that he goes out very often with them.
- muck** (Very) dirty weather. Contrast *dirt*.
- muck you, Jack, I'm fire-proof** A frequently heard catch-phrase. (See *Introduction*, para. 6.)
- mucking-in spud** A friend with whom, in Army slang, one 'mucks in'—shares everything. **Spud**: perhaps from the Irish nickname, 'Spud (Murphy).'
- muscle in** To take advantage of another's good fortune or advantage. From the language of the American underworld, via the cinema.
- muscle merchant** A P.T.I. Instructor. The P.T.I.'s are usually strong and fit.
- Mutt and Jeff** See **Freeman, Harby and Willis**.

M

- maash** (pronounced *markeesh*)! It doesn't matter! 'san fairy Ann!' From the Arabic; adopted from the Army.
- Macaroni** An Italian; generally, an Italian aircraft. Borrowed from the Army.
- made-up** See *make-up*.
- Mae West** The safety-jacket worn by pilots and aircrews. (See *Introduction*, para. 9.) The term is now official.
- Maggie** A Miles Magister trainer 'plane. Cf. **Annik** and **Lizzie**.
- make-up** To promote (e.g., from Leading Aircraftman to Corporal). Not slangy, but colloquial.
- inarmalade** That gold-coloured braid which adorns the hats of the mighty. Group Captains and those officers whose rank is even more astrological.
- matlo; or Fleet Air Arm wallah** A member of the Fleet Air Arm. For the second, see *wallah*. **Matlo** (or *matlow*), borrowed from the Navy, represents French *maitrot*, 'a sailor.'
- Me** See **He, Me and You in Introduction**, para. 10.
- meat waggon** A variant of *blood waggon*. Cf. *blitz buggy*, which, by the way, is now used occasionally in official communications.
- medico** A Medical Officer. Not a blend but a direct adoption of the civilian colloquialism.
- Mess or Messer** A Messerschmitt 'plane. Cf. **Spit** and **Spitter**.
- Mét or Mèts** A Meteorological Officer. (The Army form of the word is *Mét*.)
- Mickey Mouse** 'The bomb-dropping mechanism of some types of bomber aircraft is so called because it strongly resembles the intricate machinery portrayed in Walt Disney's cartoons' (Hunt and Pringle, *Service Slang*, 1943).



Humour In Blue



A Search and Rescue Helicopter was on a routine training exercise over the Outer Hebrides when it developed engine trouble. The young Fg/Off managed to land on a sand strip on the Isle of Barra and alighted to find an old lady collecting cockles. "Excuse me" said the young Fg/Off "Is there a Mechanic on the island?" She thought for a minute or two then said, "No, on Barra we are mostly McNeils."

+++++

Two Air Officers were talking over wartime experiences. "Whatever happened to old Charles?" said the first one.

"Oh, he went quite mad you know, in the desert. He went orf with a camel, actually eloped with the thing." said the other officer.

"Good Lord" said the first one "Was it a female camel?"

"Of course it was, there was nothing odd about Charles you know."

+++++

Two young pilots were on a detachment to a remote RAAF base. On their first evening they decided to hit the town, or what there was of it.

They found a local and asked him "Does this town have any night life?"

The man replied, "It sure does cobber but she's off crook (sick) today."

+++++

An old Japanese General and an old British General were talking. "Why do you always win battles and we lose ours?" asked the Japanese General.

"Because we always pray to God." said the British General.

"But we also pray to God, so how come we never win?" said the Japanese General.

"Ah" said the British General "Not everyone understands Japanese."

Freddie Flashback

by Davkris



Let's go surfing.....now!



<http://www.theparkhouse-shifnal.co.uk/>

The setting for this years Annual Dinner and AGM.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

BBC news 24 now available live on the Internet.

<http://www.royalmail.com>

Find postcodes, addresses etc

<http://vmphoto.photobox.co.uk/>

Online photo service from Virgin.

<http://www.dpreview.com/>

Thinking of buying a new digital camera, great site for reviews etc.

<http://earth.google.com/>

Google Earth combines the power of Google Search with satellite imagery, maps, terrain and 3D buildings to put the world's geographic information at your fingertips. Have a look in your neighbours' back yard!

<http://www.clubconcorde.co.uk>

Club Concorde has been initiated with the aim of getting a Concorde back into the air! The aim is to have her flying again in time for the 2012 Olympic Games. It costs just £10 for life membership for which you will receive a beautiful print of Concorde and updates whenever available on the progress.

The club is being run by 2 ex Concorde pilots who already have an eye on a possible contender, which is unfortunately an ex Air France example.

Have a look at the site and see what you think.



and finally.....

All contributions for the **CHRISTMAS 2007** issue must be received at the Editorial Office by **Monday 12th November 2007**.

2 Botfield Close, Randlay, Telford, Shropshire, TF3 2LY

Telephone: 01952-270868

email: editor@rafbepa.co.uk

Text should be in Microsoft Word files and photos in low res Jpeg format. If you wish to send hard copy or photographs these can be scanned and originals returned to you, usually within a few days.

Stu Ushers Australian photo from the last issue



"I think I've been organ-ised"

"You're not allowed to play with your didgeredoo in public anymore, so they've taken it away."

An Australian dreaming of being in the bush!

"Gee, it's lonely in the outback."

He's a kangaroo'd boy!

This is what he should look like holding his '2 up' game!



Captions
please to the
Editorial Office

Anonymous
if you wish





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...our business!"**

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Ancient Chinese proverb say.....

*No such thing as flea lunch,
Only occasional fry in soup!*

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