

33 Squadron's Centenary Year

LOYALTY

No.33 Squadron RAF Association Newsletter

Issue 5 Autumn 2016



1916 - 2016



Inside this issue:



FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN	4
FROM THE HART: OC No.33 SQUADRON	5
JANUARY 2016: 33 SQUADRON CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS COMMENCE	7
FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES at KEW:	12
PUMA LIFE EXTENSION PROGRAMME DELIVERS	23
EXERCISE IMPERIAL ZEPHYR: 33 IN EL CENTRO	25
MAY 2016: EXERCISE CRETE LOYALTY _ 75 YEARS ON FROM THE BATTLE OF CRETE	26
MEIVLIEGER' JAN LINZEL CELEBRATES 100 NOT OUT	31
GEORGE RONEY: A KIWI WITH 33 SQUADRON (Part One)	45
NO. 33 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION ON PARADE: THE CENOTAPH, SUNDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2016	52
REFLECTIONS: PAUL 'BOGGY' WEBSTER	55

From the Editor...

What a year it's been... As the Centenary year draws to a close I am very pleased to publish this bumper edition of 'Loyalty', our Association Newsletter, just ahead of the next highlight in our hectic 2016 social calendar – the Reunion! The annual gathering in London sees us approaching the end of a very special year.

The Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph took place last weekend and there is a small article about the parade in the following pages. What a wonderful occasion it was, and the first opportunity since the Squadron Association formed that No. 33 Squadron was represented at this important national event. Next month will see a Service in Dorchester Abbey to mark the official end of No. 33 Squadron's special year. Tickets are still available, see the back page for details. All of these occasions provide us with an opportunity, albeit in very different settings, to make and renew friendships, swap stories and news, remember friends no longer with us, look back on the past and forward to the future. In this edition we will be looking back on events in 2016, introduce some old faces from the past, and look forward to next year and new challenges.

From an item that Paul Canning and Gareth Attridge had mentioned on the Association's Facebook site back in May 2015, and after a lot of searching online and discussions with RNLAf friends in the Netherlands, I am pleased to introduce you all to a veteran 33 Squadron pilot from the campaign that we are going to look at next year in Zeeland. Jan Linzel is a man who celebrated his own century on 7 December 2015. Jan is a Dutchman and he is the last surviving member of the RNLAf's 'meivliegers', a title given to the men who flew against the *Luftwaffe* when Germany invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. Jan's story was published in 2012, and includes his escape to Britain and becoming an RAF Spitfire and Tempest pilot with No. 33 Squadron. It's a great pity that we had not found Jan in time for the Squadron's

Centenary Dinner in January. There cannot be many squadrons in the RAF who could have boasted of having a 100 year old veteran at their centenary celebrations! For several months now I have been in contact with Jan and his wife Marianne, who retired to Southern Ireland after he left the RNLAf. Sadly Jan cannot join us in Dorchester Abbey in December; as I write, OC33 and I are preparing to fly over to County Cork and interview him at his home instead.

Researching the National Archives with Chris Perkins for the trip to Walcheren next year opened up a number of other avenues regarding former 33 Squadron wartime pilots, many of whom were from the Commonwealth. One of the pilots who appears alongside Jan Linzel in the Authorization Sheets was Warrant Officer George Roney, a young RNZAF pilot who joined No. 33 Squadron on the same day that Jan joined. There is a chance that George and Jan flew out to Caen on the same Dakota. George also has a fascinating story, with great relevance to our trip to Zeeland next year. I am looking forward to asking Jan if he remembers George.

Regarding the Battlefield Tour in 2017, I am pleased to say that serving members from 33 Squadron are hoping to join us on the trip next June. I hope that after reading about these two gentlemen and their contributions to our remarkable Squadron history the trip to Zeeland next summer will take on a new meaning. Planning for the trip is ongoing, the final recce will likely take place early next year and a special newsletter will be issued afterwards to explain routes, timelines and details of final payments. In the New Year I will place some background reading material into the folders on our Facebook page, explaining the situation leading up to the operation to clear the Scheldt, provide you with a military overview and give you an idea of what the local Dutch population had endured under German occupation.

I was also able to dig a little further into



33 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

Air Commodore Paul Lyall

CHAIRMAN

Rick Burke Smith
richardburkesmith@hotmail.com

TREASURER

Jez Read
jezr69@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Sonia Nevin

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Dave Stewart
davestewart33@icloud.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Paul Davies
33sqnassociation@gmail.com

SQUADRON AIRCREW REP

Gareth Attridge

SQUADRON GROUNDCREW REP

Eamon Geraghty

some other items from Paul and Gareth's additions to the Facebook page and offer you a detailed account from the National Archives about the birth of No.33 (Home Defence) Squadron, which has led me to a story about a wonderful project back in 2011-2012 that restored the final resting places of 8 of the 13 known casualties that the Squadron suffered during the 1916-18 period. More of that in the next edition.

Finally, I strongly recommend reading Paul Webster's Reflections piece, which puts 33 Squadron's performance in a modern conflict on par with anything from WW1 or WW2. See you in the pub!

Proud to be...33,

Dave Stewart

Foreword from the Chairman ...

Lifting my pen for the second time this year leaves me wondering where the time has gone. It only seems very recently that I wrote to acknowledge receipt of the position of chairman of the Association from Mark Biggadike.

Since the outstanding 100th anniversary dinner at Benson, the association has been fairly busy working behind the scenes. We commissioned a 100 limited edition whisky to commemorate the 100 years of Loyalty of 33 Squadron, to date we have sold 62 bottles, if you missed the first round please let us know as more can be ordered. We have also had a Gold Bullion Wire Squadron Crest Blazer badge made, which is available for the cost of £33, they are proving be popular, so get in early.

Those that attended will know that the AGM in June went well, it is always good to meet up for a beer and a yarn with those that share a common interest. Admittedly the attendance could have been better, but the core 30 odd members were there! During the AGM we revealed that we are planning a Battle field tour to Walcheren in the Netherlands in June 2017. Approximate cost for the proposed 3 day trip is going to be £300, only beer chits needed in addition to this. Your place can be secured by paying a £100 non-refundable deposit, no doubt Dave Stewart who is organising this event will cover more info regarding this trip after the recce, but it's shaping up to be a cracker.

I am very pleased that I was able to secure places in this year's Remembrance Parade which marched past the Cenotaph on Sunday 13 November. We had fourteen Association members, under the direction of Dick Brewster, march past and lay a wreath to remember the fallen of our cherished Squadron, an event that I would love to have been part of, but I was

precluded as I am still serving. But my wife and I were there to see them pass by and met up with them afterwards in the Lord Moon on The Mall, which was as busy as our Reunion will be!

To bring the Centenary Year to a close, OC 33 Squadron has organised a concert by the RAF Band to be performed in Dorchester Abbey. Tickets are £15 a head, all proceeds to go to the RAF Benevolent Fund, again something that should prove to be an excellent event, please support it. I understand that we will have a reserved seating area.

So all in all a fairly busy year. Our membership now stands at 124, unfortunately one of my first tasks as Chair was to reconcile a situation where a number of so-called members had not paid their annual subscription, a task that came easily to Ex Sqn WO, but a difficult task as your Chairman. Obviously the main intent is to increase our membership and not reduce it, but some 30 members forced my hand.

Your committee continues to give its time for your benefit. Please try to get involved in our planned events, and please do offer your suggestions as to what you want from your Association. We are still in our infancy, only 3 ½ years in, something that I still find amazing given the Squadron is 100 years old. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the Battlefield tour; have a good Christmas and an excellent New Year.

RBS



From the Hart: OC 33 Squadron

10 Months In Command

Well, 10 months in now and it feels like 5 minutes! On reflection though, a lot of things have happened in those 10 months; 2 rotations of 33 Squadron aircrew on Operation TORAL totalling 7 months; continuous engineering rotations on Operation TORAL, 2 desert exercises in Southern California totalling 4 months; 10 months sharing National Standby with the pussy cat Squadron next door; the first anniversary of the 2015 fatal Puma accident in Kabul; 33 Squadron's Centenary parade, attendance at the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Crete celebrations and the progressive release of additional capability on the still relatively new Puma Mk 2. All of which have taken place alongside the routine Sqn activity of flying training, engineering and our all-time favourite, additional duties! So, all in all, a pretty busy time, which is probably why it seems like 5 mins?

Looking back to my time as a Flight Commander on 33 Squadron (2008 – 2010), the striking difference is the size of the Squadron today. As a Flight Commander, I had 7 crews under command; as a Squadron OC I have currently only 8, with an aspiration to grow to 11.5. Engineers ,too, have been drastically reduced in number, with circa 90 engineers on 33 Squadron. All of this a result of the migration of Puma Mk 1 to Puma Mk 2 and a reduction in the overall size of the RAF, unrecognisable as it may be to some of the older members of our Association, with only 31,500 blue suits currently in post.

This very small number of personnel on 33

Squadron brings with it probably my biggest challenge, because as you can tell from my first paragraph, the 'ask' has not diminished and the Squadron is as busy as ever. Add to this the fact that the routine of running a Squadron remains almost the same whether you are a large or small Squadron; the only difference is that I have fewer people to off-load those tasks onto and so individuals continuously find themselves incredibly busy.

I have been impressed throughout my 10 months however, with how 33 Squadron has handled this period in our history. Individuals remain as diligent and professional as they ever have done and continue to deliver in everything they do despite the deck sometimes being stacked against them. The engineers in particular have had to deal with a less than ideal situation in trying to get a relatively new airframe serviceable. Various factors have meant that the engineering task to generate the aircraft required for operations, standby and training has been monumental.

Throughout the 10 months, I have tried to be mindful that all work and no play makes 33 Squadron a dull place to work and so I, along with the Squadron Warrant Officer have tried to get back to the old days of Squadron togetherness for want of a better term. It has been difficult though, as time moves on and the younger generation perhaps do not see Squadron life as we once did. That said, some of the younger generation have stepped up to the mark and we have had beer calls, BBQs, a Squadron lunch and even a fancy dress competition

that saw the Squadron Warrant Officer win hands down as Boy George! If you do not believe me, just check out Boy George trying to give me a hug

below! Happy Christmas and I hope to see you all at the 33 Squadron Centenary Concert in Dorchester Cathedral on 16th December.



Boy George or Siouxsie Sioux? Either way, proof if proof was needed that things have certainly changed on 33 since RBS left!

January 2016: 33 Squadron Centenary Celebrations Commence ...



As members of the Association will know, 33 Squadron was formed at Filton, on 12 January 1916 as part of the Home Defence and has, since its inception, continued to contribute to combat and humanitarian operations around the globe. So it was fitting that on the 12 January 2016, at the commencement of the Centenary celebrations, 33 Squadron continues to find itself as relevant as ever with personnel deployed around the world on Operations.

To mark this momentous occasion a committee of current Squadron members were brought together to form a Centenary committee and over a 6-month period created a programme of events that they felt befitted such an historic Squadron. The committee spent months tracking down as

much history, memorabilia and previously serving 33 Squadron personnel as possible to ensure that all connected with this great Squadron were given the opportunity to celebrate its 100th birthday.

To mark the start of the Centenary celebrations 33 Squadron personnel were joined by several of their former Commanding Officers for a formal parade in the Puma Force hangar, which was accompanied by the Central Band of the Royal Air Force. The Vice Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, Mr John Harwood DL, kindly agreed to act as the Reviewing Officer for the parade of over eighty 33 Squadron personnel. Also amongst the distinguished guests was Robert Percifull, a former member of the Squadron who was coincidentally celebrating his 90th birthday. The parade, watched by local and national media,



Mr John Harwood DL, Vice-Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, unveils Wing Commander Biggadike's picture in the 33 Squadron foyer.

friends, family and guests of honour was extremely successful. Before the Parade started, a painting commissioned by Wing Commander Biggadike was unveiled by the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire and overseen by the Station Commander, Group Captain Simon Patterson, and a few of the previous Sqn OCs. The picture can now be found taking pride of place in the 33 Squadron main entrance.

The formal parade concluded with Wing Commander Biggadike handing over command of 33 Squadron to Wing Commander Andy Baron, who marched the parade off as the new OC.

Following the formal parade there was a short memorial service in the hangar, where all those who have served on the Squadron over the past century were remembered. In particular, a tribute was paid to the numerous individuals who had made the ultimate sacrifice, including Flight Lieutenant Al Scott, who died in the Kabul crash a mere 3 months before.

After the Royal Parade, there was an opportunity for the distinguished guests and former members to browse the Squadron. The committee had arranged various memorabilia from the history room allowing them to remember their own time spent with 33, both at home and overseas.

The formality of the day was continued into the evening where the hangar was transformed. Two aircraft from the Puma Force provided a fitting back-drop to a dinner hosted by OC 33 Squadron.

In total, some 250 guests attended the celebrations including many ex-serving members, many of whom had served in the RAF long before the force had moved to the current fleet of helicopters. Having such a diverse breadth of attendees allowed the newer members of the Squadron an opportunity to meet those who been in their positions, potentially decades earlier.

The Squadron was particularly pleased to be able to host a variety of business leaders who had kindly provided support for the event. The companies they represented included Airbus, Bremont watches, Heli-One, the RAF Benevolent

Fund and the Worshipful Company of Founders; without their support the events of the day would not have been able to take place.

The evening followed in the time-honoured tradition of a RAF dining-in night, but had the added twist of a well-known voice from television providing his services as a Master of Ceremonies. Mr Peter Dixon, better known for his resounding introductions on X-Factor, added a welcome element of spectacle that befitted the occasion. The night's programme was extensive and featured the RAF Salon Orchestra providing a musical backdrop to vignettes from serving and ex-serving members of the Squadron. These were used to remember the brave acts during pivotal events that had shaped the Squadron's history. These tales of bravado and *dering-do* were supplemented by something far more current. 33 Squadron 'A' Flt, which was at the time deployed in Afghanistan, provided a video message that was played to the gathered masses. It was an apt tribute to a Squadron that has so often been deployed overseas throughout its 100 years.

The evening function's entertainment did not stop there and two guest speakers provided a suitable dedication to the Squadron. Wing Commander (Retd) Fred Hoskins gave a sterling account of life on 33 Squadron in years gone by, retelling some fantastic tales of his time flying Hornets in Malaya. For those present, the story involving low flying and a monkey will be hard to forget! Next, Mr Howard Wheeldon of Wheeldon Strategic Advisory Ltd, an Independent Analyst and Defence Advisor, gave us a very different viewpoint and looked into the future of Defence and the issues that the Squadron may yet have to face in the years to come.

After the speeches were over and the food and coffee had all been digested, the formal elements of the evening were brought to a close by the departing OC. Wing Commander Biggadike's fitting tribute provided the perfect backdrop and closure to a spectacular day of celebration for the 33 Squadron Centenary, all toasted with port provided by the 33 Squadron Association.

Loyalty!



On the dais: The Vice Lord Lieutenant and the Station Commander watch the Parade form. Wing Commander Baron stands at the rear, ready to march on and take over command of the Squadron from Wing Commander Biggadike.



The Vice Lord Lieutenant reviews the men on parade.

Left: No. 33 Squadron's Warrant Officer and the 33 Squadron Association's Groundcrew Representative, Eamon Geraghty, listens intently as the Station Padre pays tribute to former Squadron members who gave their life while serving with No. 33 Squadron.

Warrant Officer Geraghty would regale the audience at the Dinner in his own inimitable style just a few hours later.



Above: No. 33 Squadron's Standard Party. The 33 Squadron Association's Aircrew Representative, MACR Gareth Attridge, is saluting behind the Standard Bearer.



Right: The outgoing OC No.33 Squadron, Wing Commander Mark Biggadike, (left) hands over command to the new OC, Wing Commander Andy Baron.



Above: The calm before the storm!
Below: In full swing!



From the National Archives at Kew:

No. 33 Home Defence Squadron 1915-1916

Following some early entries on the 33 Squadron Association Facebook page the Editor researched a little deeper into some of the information that was available online. He is especially grateful to Mr Peter Bradshaw, a retired teacher and author of a book about to be published that covers the Squadron's activities from 1916-1918, who was also instrumental in starting a project to restore a number of headstones in Gainsborough Cemetery that remembered a number of fallen No. 33 Squadron aviators. This first article will cover the formation of the Squadron, its operations and losses up to the end of 1916, and give details of the headstone restoration project in 2011-2012. The article in the next Newsletter will cover the period 1917-1918 and look at the stories surrounding the No. 33 Squadron aviators lying together in Gainsborough and other cemeteries around the UK. What follows is a transcription of a document in the National Archives in Kew:

No 33 (H.D.) SQUADRON.

On the 31st December 1915 instructions were issued that the nucleus of No. 33 Squadron should be formed immediately to take over the training duties of No. 20 Squadron.

The squadron was formed in the 4th Wing of the V Brigade, at Filton, Bristol on the 12th of January 1916 from the surplus personnel of No.20 Squadron which was proceeding overseas on the 16th January.

It was first commanded by Major P.B. Joubert de la Ferté who was posted to the squadron from the date of its formation, and by the 21st January the following officers had been posted to the squadron:-

2nd Lieutenant J.E.Evans

2nd Lieutenant P.B. Prothero

2nd Lieutenant E.R.N. Hyde

2nd Lieutenant C.I. Carryer

2nd Lieutenant L.W. Hall

2nd Lieutenant J.S.D.H. Jones

In addition there were twelve officers with the squadron who were undergoing instruction in flying and observation.

At this period the reorganisation of the anti-aircraft defences of Great Britain was under discussion which resulted in the following decisions as regards to the responsibility for anti-aircraft defence being given to the War Committee in February 1916.

- (a) The Navy to undertake to deal with all hostile aircraft attempting to reach this country, whilst the Army undertake to deal with such aircraft which reach these shores.
- (b) All defence arrangements on land to be undertaken by the Army, which will also provide the aeroplanes required to work with Home Defence troops and to protect garrisons and vulnerable areas, and the Flying Stations required to enable their aircraft to undertake these duties.
- (c) The Navy to provide aircraft required to co-operate with and assist their Fleets and Coast Patrol flotillas and to patrol the coast and to organise and maintain such Flying Stations as are required to undertake these duties.

The two Services to co-operate so as to prevent unnecessary duplication.

As a result of the foregoing decisions the defence of London was taken over by the Army on the 16th February, and soon after the rest of the country.

In March, the aircraft establishment for Home Defence was laid down as ten squadrons and No.33 Squadron which was formed originally as a Service squadron was amongst the first squadrons to be specially allotted for this duty under the new scheme, becoming No. 33 Home Defence Squadron on the 18th March 1916.

On the 6th April the defence of Leeds and Sheffield, two important munition producing areas, was allocated to the squadron, which for this purpose moved a few days later from Bristol to Knavesmire, York, where it came under the administration of the 8th Wing. By the 20th April, the Headquarters of the Squadron had moved to Headley Bar, Tadcaster, and the squadron had opened up a new Station at Bramham Moor.

Owing to the shortage of trained night-flying pilots it was not possible to complete the establishment of the squadron in personnel which at the time of the move consisted of Major P.B. Joubert de la Ferté (Squadron Commander), Captain H.S. Walker (Flight Commander), Lieutenant J.S. Beatty, Second Lieutenants A.M. Lowery and C.I. Carryer (Flying Officers) and Captain W. Wade (Assistant Equipment Officer). There were in addition twelve officers, one flight sergeant and one air mechanic undergoing instruction.

Furthermore the establishment of aeroplanes was limited to four B.E.2.c's (R.A.F.1 engines), of which one could be used for the final qualification of advanced pupils. Pilots who were specially earmarked for home defence work were given as much flying practice as possible on the home defence aeroplanes so long as the serviceable aeroplanes did not fall below two. Bomb and dart dropping practice was also carried out under local arrangements.

The scale of armament and equipment to be carried by a B.E.2.c. was laid down as:-

No passenger.

Either four H.E. bombs with disc nose-pieces or one box of Ranken darts.

Lewis guns fitted so that the pilot could fire upwards through the middle bay.

Wing flares.

Navigation lights.

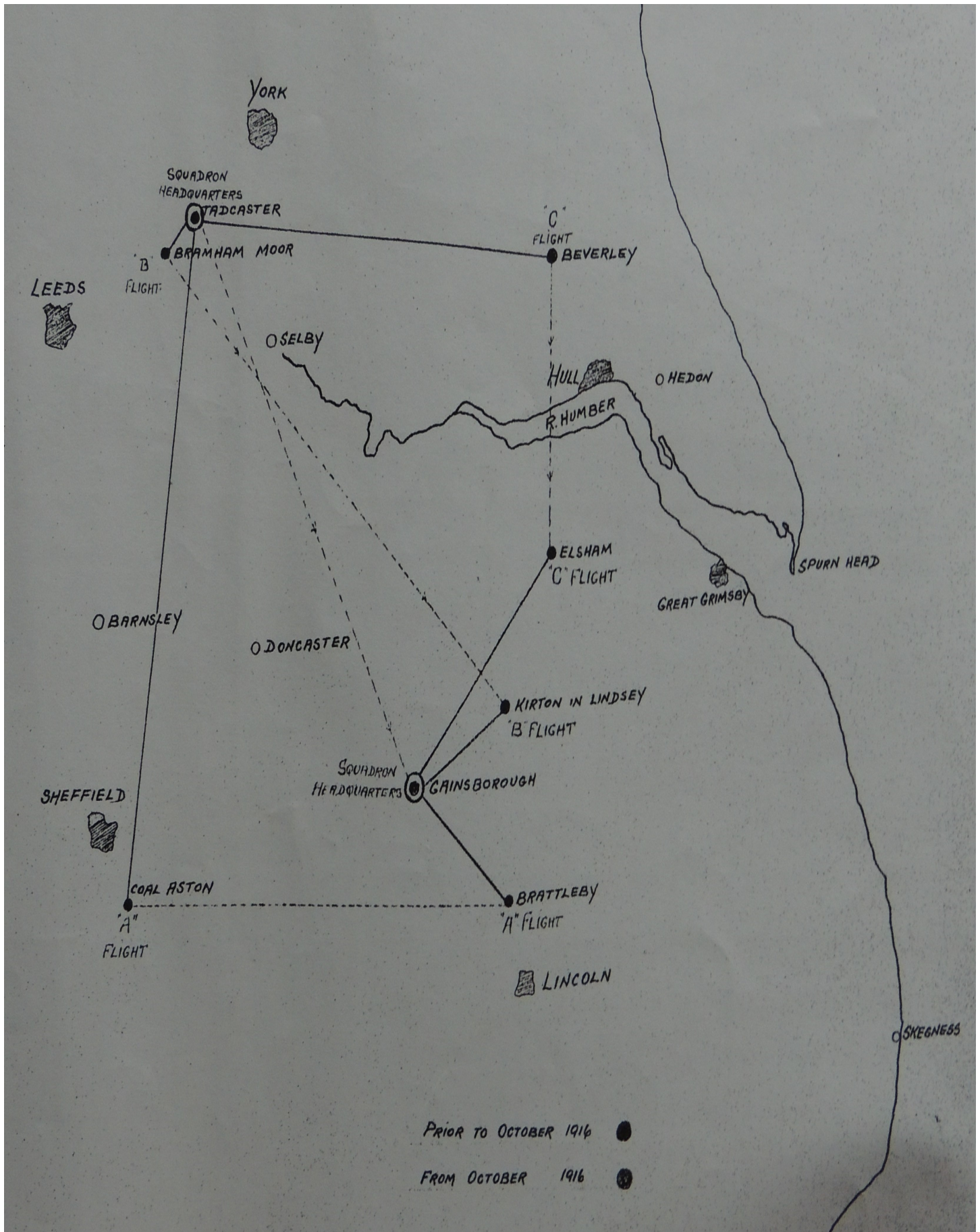
On arrival at their new station the squadron was allotted one B.E.2.c (90H.P. R.A.F.1 engine) from

No.36 (H.D) Squadron at Cramlington, and three of the same type from No.34 (H.D.) Squadron at Castle Bromwich. Pending the receipt of these aeroplanes the squadron used B.E.2.c's with the 80 H.P. Renault engine.

The principle governing the action of these defence machines was that on receipt of warning that an attack was definitely expected, one machine from each station should be sent up to patrol over its own landing ground at a height of from 8,000 to 10,000 feet. The patrol was normally for two hours duration; a second machine being sent up after one and half hours to ensure continuity of the patrol.

The squadron was soon called upon to take action against enemy air raiders. On the night of 2nd/3rd May 1916 five hostile Airships crossed the coast between Saltburn-by-the-Sea and Scarborough between 9.15 p.m. and 10.50 p.m. One, the L.21 came inland at Cloughton, north of Scarborough at 9.40 p.m., and steered a direct course for York. After releasing eighteen bombs on Dringhouses, she reached and began to bomb York at 10.40 p.m. In a ten minute attack, sixteen bombs were dropped along a line across the southern and eastern part of the city. Eighteen dwelling houses were destroyed and many others considerably damaged. One incendiary bomb fell on the squadron's landing ground at the Knavesmire, but did no damage. However, after the raid the inhabitants raised such a protest against the night landing lights being in such close proximity to York that Knavesmire landing ground was closed. Copmanthorpe, some five miles south-west of York, was taken up in its place.

At 6 p.m. on the 2nd No.33 Squadron received the general warning that hostile aircraft were approaching the Yorkshire coast. At 8.45 p.m. information was received from the Anti-aircraft Defence Commander Leeds that Zeppelins were about 30 miles away. At 10.30 p.m. further information from Leeds stated that a Zeppelin was reported a short distance north of Ripon. Thereupon, after some slight delay due to difficulty starting the engine, the Squadron Commander Major Joubert de la Ferté ascended from Bramham Moor at 10.40 p.m., followed by Captain T.W.P.L. Challoner at 10.45 p.m. Both officers patrolled



Above: Disposition of No.33 (H.D.) Squadron Headquarters and Flights in 1916.
 (Appendix A of AIR 1/691/21/20/33 C451592 The National Archives.)

round the north of Leeds from Dunkeswick to Seacroft, as an attack was expected from this direction. Major Joubert de la Ferté landed at 11.45 p.m. and Captain Challoner some 20 minutes later. The Squadron Commander ascended again at 12.10 a.m. but owing to low clouds after a patrol of half an hour. Neither officer saw a raider.

A general scheme for the defence of Great Britain, which had been prepared by General Headquarters, Home Forces, was issued during May. Under this scheme the squadrons allotted for home defence were reduced from ten to eight. No.33 (H.D.) Squadron became responsible for the defence of the Humber in addition to Leeds and Sheffield, and in order to carry out this additional duty the following establishment and distribution of the squadron was decided upon. (see Table 1).

	Aeroplanes	Mobile Searchlights	Defending
HQ Flight Beverley	10 - includes 2 scouts	4	Humber
1 x Flight Bramham Moor	4	2	Leeds
1 x Flight Coal Aston	4	2	Sheffield

Table 1. No.33 (H.D.) Squadron Establishment.

Footnote: Searchlights. Experience had proven that the employment of aeroplanes at night unassisted by searchlights was impracticable and that the provision of searchlights for co-operation with the defending machines was essential. The searchlight detachments were at the disposal of the Officer Commanding, Royal Flying Corps, at their particular station, who issued instructions to the Officer Commanding Searchlights as to their tactical disposition and employment.).

Of the establishment shown in Table 1. there were actually with the squadron at this time the aircraft listed in Table 2. This increase in establishment was to be gradually made up as and when machines

became available, but owing to the demands for aeroplanes for overseas and the consequent shortage of machines for home defence, the establishment to which the squadron was to be increased, was on the 31st May temporarily limited to:-

Beverley 6 B.E.'s and 2 Bristol Scouts.
 Bramham Moor 4 B.E.'s
 Coal Aston 2 B.E.'s

	Aeroplanes	Mobile Searchlights
Bramham Moor	4 B.E.2.c's	2
Beverley	1 B.E.12.	2
Doncaster	1 B.E.12.	2

Table 2. No.33 (H.D.) Squadron Strength.

On the revision of the allotment of defended areas, No.47 (H.D.) Squadron which had hitherto been responsible for the defence of the Humber, handed over to No.33 (H.D.) Squadron in the middle of June, two half-flights stationed at Beverley and Doncaster, and by the 24th June No.33 (H.D.) Squadron had flights at Beverley, Bramham Moor and Coal Aston, and had on charge six B.E.2.c's and three B.E.12's.

The following Night Landing Grounds had been allotted to the flights:-

Flight	Defended	Landing
Beverley	Humber	Atwick Pocklington Bellasize South Cave Winterton Goxhill Hedon North Coat Fitties

Flight Station	Defended Area	Landing Grounds
Bramham Moor	Leeds	Dunkeswick Seacroft Pontefract Cullingworth Farsley Middleton Helperby Copmanthorpe
Coal Aston	Sheffield	East Retford Brampton Redmires Ecclesfield Thorne

Authority for the issue of information, instructions and operation orders was vested in the Garrison Commander, Humber, and the Anti-Aircraft Defence Commanders of Leeds and Sheffield, but as it was impossible for anyone except an officer on the spot to judge the local meteorological conditions, the senior R.F.C. Officer at each station was solely responsible for ordering machines into the air, and was empowered to use his full discretion as to the likelihood of the weather rendering offensive action not only unsuccessful but unduly costly in life and material.

In addition to defence duties the squadron was to be utilised during the day for the advanced training of personnel for overseas, and it was decided that 50% of the Home Defence aeroplanes could be used for this purpose provided that at least half the defence machines were always in a fit condition for night flying.

This scheme of combining home defence duties with advanced training did not prove successful however, mainly due to the fact that aeroplanes which had been used for training during the day although serviceable at night could not be maintained at that standard of efficiency which was so essential to night flying. As a result a scheme was drawn up and approved on the 24th June for the immediate placing of Home Defence Squadrons on a basis separate from training.

A new Defence Wing, at first known as the 16th

Wing and later as the Home Defence Wing was formed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel F.V. Holt to administer all the Home Defence Squadrons, which were now temporarily reduced from eight to six, owing to urgent demands from overseas and the fact that a 'close' season for airship raids might be expected during the short summer nights. This Wing although formed with effect from the 25th June did not actually come into being until the 7th July; between that date and the 14th July, No. 33 (H.D.) Squadron together with Nos. 36, 38, 39, 50 and 51 Home Defence Squadrons were transferred to the new Wing, No. 33 (H.D.) Squadron handing over its training aeroplanes to No. 57 Squadron, for the formation of which it had supplied the nucleus in May.

Generally, for all tactical operations the Wing came under the orders of General Headquarters, Home Forces, to whom the Wing Commander was responsible for the tactical efficiency of his squadrons. The squadrons came under the immediate orders of their local Defence Commanders, subject to any temporary redistribution or changes in stations for tactical reasons which might be decided upon by General Headquarters, Home Forces.

During the period of this re-organisation the squadron experienced various changes in Commanding Officers. Major F.B. Joubert de la Ferté was posted away from the squadron to the command of No.14 Squadron in Egypt on the 2nd June and the squadron was then temporarily taken over by Captain J.A. Cunningham who had joined as a Flight Commander on the 31st May. Captain Cunningham was succeeded by Captain W.C.K. Birch who was posted to the squadron as Acting Squadron Commander on the 13th June.

By the 7th July the squadron had received the two Bristol Scouts which had been allotted to it. The squadron then had on strength:-

Beverley	1 B.E. 12.
	2 B.E. 2. c's (one experimental)
	2 Bristol Scouts.

Bramham Moor 3 B.E.2.c's

Coal Aston 2 B.E.2.c's

1 B.E.12.

There was also a B.E.12 (experimental) which was being overhauled at the Royal Aircraft Factory.

The armament of the Bristol Scouts, which were for day use only, consisted of a Lewis gun and at least seven drums of ammunition. For the B.E.12 which was for both day and night work the following scale of armament and equipment was laid down:-

BY DAY

1 Lewis gun firing upwards, and from three to five drums of ammunition.

1 Ranken Dart Box.

BY NIGHT

1 Lewis gun firing upwards, and from three to five drums of ammunition.

1 Ranken Dart Box.

10 French Rockets.

Navigation Lights.

Wing Flares.

1 R.L. Tube.

1 Accumulator.

Instrument Lights.

Instruments, Radium painted.

Although the position with regard to aeroplanes had by this time improved, there was not a corresponding increase in personnel, which on the 18th July comprised the following officers:-

Capt W.C.K. Birch Squadron Commander

Capt M.F.G. Richardson Acting Flight Cdr

Lt E.N. Clifton Acting Flight Cdr

2nd Lt R.C.L.Holme

Acting Flight Cdr

Lt A. Somervail

Acting Adjutant

2nd Lt J.W. Lockhart

Flying Officer

Captain W. Wade

Assistant Equipment
Officer

The next occasion on which the squadron were called upon to take an active part during an air raid was on the night of 28th/29th July 1916.

At about 11.20 pm information was received by the squadron from the Humber Garrison Commander that a hostile airship had been sighted some forty miles east of the mouth of the Humber proceeding due west. At this time however a thick fog in the vicinity of the aerodrome precluded any attempt being made to despatch aeroplanes. At two a.m. a further report was received of a Zeppelin proceeding from Driffield towards Hull. The weather being slightly clearer Lieutenant R.C.L. Holme ascended from Bramham Moor, but at 3, 500 feet above his aerodrome could barely see the landing flares and as the fog was becoming thicker he was forced to descend.

Of ten German naval airships which had set out on this raid, six only reached England, two of which the L.17 and L.24 had slightly penetrated the mouth of the Humber, dropping bombs without effect in the neighbourhood of Killingholme and Immingham.

On the night of the 2nd/3rd August, six Zeppelins raided England. Although the raiders confined their activities to the eastern counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, No.33 Squadron sent out a protective patrol over Hull and the Humber. Captain Holme ascended at 2.25 a.m. and patrolled towards Driffield, then turning south he circled round Hull at 10,000 feet. Visibility was bad and he could see nothing on his own level, so descending to 8,000 feet he went out over Hedon to the coast and followed it north to Atwick, whence Captain Holme states, "I now saw the searchlight at Beverley giving me the pre-arranged signal that all was over, accordingly I throttled down to come down. My lights had gone out and wishing to keep my hand lamp until near the ground I came down without it to 4,000 feet. When

trying my engine I got into a mild nose dive but came out of it alright and landed without damage at 3.55 a.m.”

The next raid on Hull took place on the night of the 8th/9th August when the L.24, one of eight Zeppelins which came in between Berwick and the Humber, dropped forty four bombs on the town, killing ten people and injuring eleven others as well as destroying a number of houses and shops.

A thick ground mist which was general all over England prevented aeroplanes from ascending. The mist effectively blinded the Hull anti-aircraft gunners, who were able to get off eight rounds only.

On the afternoon of the 2nd September, sixteen hostile airships, twelve naval and four military, set out for a combined raid on London. One, the L.22, crossed the coast at Skegness, turned north and carried out a devious flight over Lincolnshire and Yorkshire without any apparent objective, evidently having abandoned any intention of making for London. Captain R.C.L. Holme, in a B.E.2c, in attempting to rise from Beverley to intercept the raider, crashed on getting off. The Zeppelin, after dropping three H.E. bombs in open fields in the parish of Flinton, went out over the sea at Aldbrough.

It was during this raid that Lieutenant W. Leefe of No.39 Squadron brought down in flames the S.L. 11 at Cuffley. This was the first occasion on which a hostile airship had been brought down in England, and for this exploit he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

On the night of the 23rd September information was received that hostile aircraft were approaching Spurn Head. Captain G.F. Richardson, ascending from Beverley at 10.45 p.m., kept up a continuous patrol from Beverley to south of the Humber until midnight without sighting the enemy. He was then compelled to land on account of fog and clouds. The Zeppelin L.22 had crossed the Spurn Lighthouse at about 10.35 p.m. , and crossing the estuary to the Lincolnshire coast she came in at Donna Nook at 10.40p.m., where he went out one hour later after dropping several incendiary bombs inland.

The Midland and Northern Counties were again visited by four Zeppelins on the night of the 25th/26th September, when bombs were dropped on Sheffield, York and Bolton. The L.14 which had made York her objective, in passing dropped 4 H.E. bombs on the squadrons' night landing ground at Dunkeswick, without, however, causing any material damage.

Fog again greatly hampered effective action being taken by the squadron. At Beverley it was impossible for aeroplanes to ascend. Captain Clifton rising from Coal Aston at 10.55 p.m. was compelled by fog to descend after a patrol of twenty minutes, without having sighted the enemy. Captain W.C.K. Birch ascended from Bramham Moor at 10.50 p.m. and patrolled from Copmanthorpe to Pontefract. At a quarter to twelve eight searchlights came into action near Goole, but clouds encountered at 8,000 feet obscured the pilot's vision and on coming out of the clouds the searchlights had closed down. Shortly after midnight the searchlight at Collingham opened out and A.A. Guns came into action but no Zeppelin was visible. Weather conditions becoming worse Captain Birch was forced to descend at a few minutes to one, after having been in the air for two hours and twenty minutes.

Following the successes of the Home Defence Wing against the raids on the Capital (*No.39 Sqn destroyed 3 airships and forced one down between 3 Sep-1 Oct 16. Ed.*) the raiders gave the city of London a wide berth and concentrated their efforts on the Northern, Midland and Eastern counties.

On the formation of the Home Defence Wing, the broader question of the tactical employment of the home defence air units and their location again came under consideration. A scheme involving an entire change of policy as regards the distribution of air defence units was approved on the 26th July 1916. This scheme proposed that the system of defence by aircraft should be changed from one of individual and immediate protection of defined vulnerable areas, to defence by a barrage through which hostile aircraft would have to penetrate in order to reach the vulnerable areas. Hitherto the stationing of flights in the immediate vicinity of the

area to be defended formed no definite line and left gaps through which the enemy could pass.

It was suggested that flights in the neighbourhood of such places as Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds, should be moved further east with the idea of ultimately establishing a barrage of aeroplanes with accompanying searchlights across the east of England. The barrage line was to be formed about 30 miles inside the 'outer observer cordon' so as to allow of reliable information reaching the flight stations and of aeroplanes being up at 5,000 feet over the barrage line in time to intercept the hostile aircraft. Squadrons were stationed about 20 miles apart.

In accordance with this scheme the following redistribution of No.33 Squadron took place in October 1916. Squadron Headquarters moved from Tadcaster to Gainsborough, 'A' Flight from Coal Aston to Brattleby, (Scampton), 'B' Flight from Bramham Moor to Kirton-in-Lindsey and 'C' Flight from Beverley to Elsham. It was intended originally to station 'C' Flight at Hedon which was situated two miles east of Hull, but meteorological observations had revealed that on nearly every occasion on which Zeppelins had visited the district, all ground north and east, and all low-flying ground near the river was fog covered. Elsham which was seven miles south of the city, on high ground and fairly clear from fog was therefore decided upon.

Prior to these moves, No.33 Squadron, on the 1st October provided a nucleus for No.75 (H.D.) Squadron which then commenced to form at Goldington, Bedfordshire.

On the 5th October, Captain W.C.K. Birch handed over the command of the squadron to Major R.M. Vaughan, who at the beginning of November changed commands with Major A.A.B. Thomson of No.56 Squadron.

In November the squadron began to replace its B.E.2c's and B.E.12's with F.E.2b's and F.E.2d's with which type of aeroplane it continued to work until June 1918 when it commenced to receive Bristol Fighters.

The next raid occurred on the night of the 27th/28th

November when seven naval airships crossed the coast. Five made their landfalls between Scarborough and the Humber at times varying between 9.10 p.m. and 10.50 p.m., and two in the vicinity of Hartlepool at about 11.30 p.m. Of the five, two were driven off by aeroplanes and gun fire. The remaining three confined their attacks to York, the Barnsley-Wakefield district and Hanley, doing little damage, however. One, the L.21 after dropping bombs in the vicinity of Hanley hovered over the eastern counties, emerging at Lowestoft at about 6.30 a.m. the following morning where she was brought down in flames by Flight Sub-Lieutenant E.L. Pulling of the Yarmouth Air Station.

On receipt of the warning that Zeppelins were approaching, Lieutenant J.B. Brophy of No.33 Squadron ascended from Kirton-Lindsey in a B.E.12 at 9.10 p.m. Patrolling north towards Winterton he saw bombs exploding near Beverley and two searchlights focussing on a Zeppelin ahead and about 3,000-4,000 feet above him. He climbed to 13,000 feet and gave chase which he continued for fifty minutes, driving into a headwind of considerable strength. By this time the Zeppelin had passed out to sea just north of Flamborough Head and Brophy finding he could not outdistance the airship abandoned the chase. On his return he saw bombs exploding in the vicinity of York and patrolled the district but could not sight the Zeppelin. He then continued his patrol between Winterton and Blyborough returning to his aerodrome at 12.30 a.m.

Lieutenant G.T. Willcox ascended from Elsham at 9.45 p.m. in a B.E.12 patrolled the Hull, Hedon and Spurn Head districts, returning to his aerodrome at 1.45 a.m. Captain G. Richardson also went up from Elsham in an B.E.2c at 10.10 p.m. and patrolled over Kirton-in-Lindsey, Elsham, Hedon and Grimsby. He sighted a Zeppelin held by searchlights over Hornsea at 12,000 to 13,000 feet and in his report states "I opened all out and headed for the coast just south of Hornsea, but when I got there the lights were out and the airship had proceeded seven to eight miles out to sea". On his return, he saw to the north what he thought to be a Zeppelin falling in flames. This proved to be the L.34 brought down by Lieutenant

I.V. Pyott of No.36 Squadron at Hartlepool.

Three aeroplanes piloted by Captain C.H.R. Johnston and Lieutenants L.H. Jull and F. Egerton, which had endeavoured to ascend from Elsham, Kirton-in-Lindsey and Brattlebury, were wrecked in attempting to take off. The pilots, however, escaped without injury. The squadron sent up two further aeroplanes at 1.45 a.m. but by that time all the raiders had made off.

This was the last enemy raid on England during 1916 and the north of England was not again molested until the August of the following year.

A conference on the question of aerial observation for Coastal Defence Batteries was held on the 8th November 1916 at which it was decided that the Home Defence Wing was to provide one aeroplane and one receiving station for each 9.2 inch Battery on the east coast and Portsmouth. In December, 'C' Flight at Elsham was detailed to co-operate with the Humber Garrison in addition to its home defence duties. (To be continued in the next Newsletter.)

Lieutenant John Bernard Brophy RFC



The outbreak of World War I in August 1914 presented an attractive alternative to university study to John Brophy, a talented sportsman. For romantics of his generation, war was sport writ large. War in the air seemed like the ultimate sport, and Brophy decided to become a military aviator. At that stage, Canada did not have its own air force. The British government began to recruit potential pilots there in the spring of 1915 under a scheme whereby candidates were required to qualify privately before being commissioned in the Royal Naval Air Service or the Royal Flying Corps. Brophy enrolled at the Curtiss Aviation School in Toronto, but his name did not come to the top of the waiting list until October. Although winter brought flying to a stop, preventing him from graduating, there was a great demand for pilots. It was decided that candidates who had shown sufficient aptitude would be commissioned and shipped to England to complete their training; Second Lieutenant Brophy was among them. He left Canada, bound for Liverpool, on 8th December 1915 and began to keep a diary. After arriving in Liverpool he went down to London. By the 5th March 1916 he was at Netheravon. He wrote in his diary at the end of March that 33 Squadron was moving out to go to York, and complained that when they left they took all of the blankets with them. Little did he know that by the end of the year he would join 33 himself.

Awarded his wings on or about 18th April 1916, Brophy was told to fly to St Omer, via Dover, and join No. 21 Squadron at Hesdin in the Pas-de-Calais, west of Arras and Lens, north of Amiens. No. 21 Squadron had formed at Netheravon on 23rd July 1915, equipped with the Royal Aircraft Factory R.E.7. In January 1916, it was sent to France where its main role was reconnaissance. It also operated small numbers of Bristol Scout Ds and a single Martinsyde G.100 as escort fighters. Although the R.E.7 was badly underpowered, the Squadron used its R.E.7s as bombers during the Battle of the Somme, being the first Squadron to drop 336lb (153 kg) bombs. In August 1916 the R.E.7s were replaced by single seat Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.12s. These were used as bombers, and despite being almost useless at the role, as fighters.

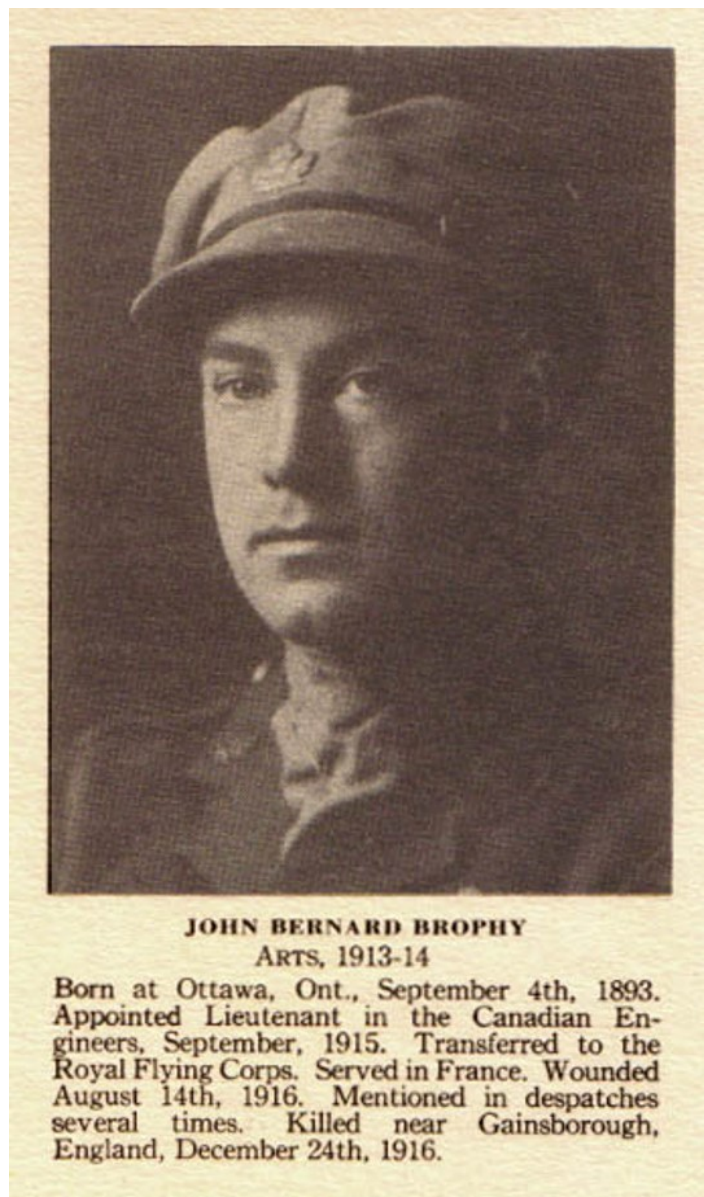
On the 8th August 1916 Brophy was injured when his aircraft hit a lorry after he landed. He was in hospital on 12th when his CO told him to take a week's leave and go back to England. His diary records that he was in London on the 18th, but was concerned that a medical board would not allow him to return to his squadron. Consequently he returned to France on Friday 25th August, catching up with the squadron at Bertangles, near Amiens, in time to participate in the great attritional Somme offensive. Over the next two months Brophy would record the use of the tank, introduced for the first time on 15th September at the Battle of Flers-Courcelette. He was Mentioned in Despatches on Saturday 16th September for shooting down an enemy aircraft, yet by October 1916 he was writing that while he was hoping for leave there were other pilots on the squadron getting 'special leave' because of their nerves. By 12th October the strain was beginning to tell; he wrote, "Will I never get any sleep?" due to constantly being woken early for missions. On the 18th October he wrote that he had been ordered to practice night landings so he could start bombing missions at night. His last diary entry in France was on 12th November 1916: "Expect to go on leave in a couple of days".

Presumably he was in London when he received his posting to No. 33 (H.D.) Squadron in Lincolnshire and, as we saw on page 19, by 27th/28th November Brophy was chasing Zeppelins. Brophy had lasted far longer than expected on the Western Front and had been credited with bringing down one enemy aircraft, probably destroying two others, and forcing down a fourth. During his time with No. 21 Squadron it lost 19 airmen (killed or wounded) and, by Brophy's count, another six became so neurotic they had to be posted out.

Records show that John Brophy was the first No.33 Squadron pilot to be killed in a flying accident following its formation in January 1916. He died on 24th December 1916 near Hibaldstow, Kirton-in-Lindsey, when his B.E. 12 failed to recover from a loop. He was 23. The Squadron's first fatality was Corporal Ernest Butcher RFC, who was killed in a motorcycle accident in Tadworth, Yorkshire on 13th May 1916. Corporal Butcher was 21 and came from Bishopsworth, Bristol and is buried in Fulford,

Yorkshire.

Lieutenant John Bernard Brophy RFC was buried with full military honours at St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Church in Gainsborough on 2nd January 1917. The report of the funeral in the local paper lists many of the Squadron personnel as being in attendance or acting as pall bearers. No relatives attended.





Above: B.E.12. In a letter home on 21st December 1916, John Brophy wrote: "...Some of the best men in the flying corps have been brought back and engaged as Zep chasers, so I feel proud of myself at times. If I ever get close to a Zep you can bet that I won't fumble it..."

Below: FE 2b.



Puma Life Extension Programme Delivers

Written by: Lt Cdr Jon Howe

April 2016 marked a year of deployed operations for the new Puma HC Mk2.

In December 2009, the Secretary of State for Defence had announced to Parliament that the Puma Life Extension Programme (LEP) would go ahead to upgrade the fleet and, only 5½ years later, Puma Force deployed to Afghanistan with 3 of the Mk2 helicopters. They took on the role of Operation TORAL Aviation Support as Chinook withdrew from the country for the last time. The LEP almost stalled in 2010, when the Strategic Defence and Security Review made sweeping cuts across Defence (many will recall emotive issues such as Nimrod and Harrier). Fortunately, the emphasis on battlefield helicopters at the time, and the widely appreciated utility of the Puma platform, saw it through. However, the number of airframes and the size of the Puma Force had to be reduced in order to persuade the Treasury that it was affordable. Puma HC Mk1 retired in 2012 and the LEP was needed to provide essential safety and capability updates, allowing the original airframes to continue in service as Mk2s until at least 2025. The programme was delivered by Puma 2 Gazelle Project Team, working in close cooperation with Puma Force at RAF Benson and the Programme Management Office in Army HQ Air Manoeuvre Capability (AM Cap). The design and qualification were provided by Airbus Helicopters (AH, formerly Eurocopter) and aircraft modification itself was conducted first in France and then the majority at AH Romania; final work was also carried out at AH UK in Oxfordshire and at RAF Benson. From the perspective of Mr Alan Draper, the DE&S Programme Leader for the LEP: “Airbus Helicopters have been proactive, flexible and focused on the needs of the Force. Pragmatism on the part of all of those stakeholders saw us through the spending blight and then willingness to put in the hard work, together, led directly to early delivery and success on operations.”

The programme spanned the period of disaggregation from Main Building to the single Services and, as a result, Puma LEP was one of the first to deliver as Army HQ set up its Cap structure. The governance model they established has been held up as the example for other Major Change Programmes, both in the HQ and across Defence. In terms of the aircraft itself, the original Turbomeca Turmo III C4 engines have been replaced with more powerful Makila 1A1s, incorporating collective

pitch anticipators. This, along with a Digital Automatic Flying Control System (DAFCS) has eliminated the control complexity for which the Mk1 had become notorious. The Makilas offer greater high density-altitude performance but are also more efficient and there is the option to extend the range further using auxiliary fuel tanks. The LEP has also introduced a glass cockpit with an integrated Helmet Mounted Display and replaced most of the avionics, removing years of obsolescence. All the capabilities expected of a battlefield helicopter are still there too: under-slung loads, deployment of troops by abseiling or fast roping, beyond-line-of-sight and secure communications, instrument and night clearances, ballistic protection and crew-served weapons. Two aircraft can be loaded into a C17 for rapid deployment and clearances for air transportation by C130 and A400M are being developed. Sqn Ldr Chris Greenwood is a previous Op TORAL Detachment Commander: “I always enjoyed flying the Puma HC1 but the Puma HC2 is a real leap forward, it has significantly expanded the capability of the airframe and increased safety margins in many areas. It’s more powerful, has longer range and also has more modern and more capable communications and navigation equipment. It is still a rewarding aircraft to fly like the HC1 but it now allows us to deliver a lot more support to the frontline.”

The aircraft was first flown by Puma Force in August 2013. Over the following 18 months they brought the aircraft into service, developing and delivering the training pillar of the capability and, in February 2015, 5 weeks ahead of schedule, the LEP achieved Initial Operating Capability. Full Operating Capability was delivered in January 2016 but Puma 2 has been delivering vital lift to Resolute Support, the on-going NATO mission in Afghanistan, since Spring 2015. The deployment is supported from RAF Benson by both 33 and 230 Sqns. The work consists of moving personnel and equipment between the numerous NATO bases, avoiding the threat to surface travel from roadside bombs. The Puma makes up roughly 10% of the aviation assets supporting NATO, but typically provides up to a third of the passenger moves. According to SAC Ollie Jeffs: “Op TORAL has been a rewarding experience with every day bringing new and exciting challenges. I have learnt

valuable work and life skills while operating in Afghanistan and, alongside earning my medal, it's given me a great sense of pride and achievement." The LEP has had a significant impact on the aircraft's ability to support the NATO mission. With engines which are both 30% more powerful and 30% more fuel efficient, coupled with increased fuel capacity, the aircraft can lift significantly greater payloads over longer distances. It also has improved armour, providing better protection for the aircraft, its passengers and its crew. The increased lift capacity is clearly demonstrated in the heat of the summer when, with full armour fit, the aircraft can still transport 8 passengers – in the same situation with the same armour Puma HC1 would have been unable to carry any passengers. The new autopilot is another leap in capability: it assists the pilots in flying the aircraft and is most significant during 'brownout' landings when dust can obscure the pilots' vision. In these situations the autopilot can hover the aircraft even when the pilots' references are limited, thus reducing the risk in conducting these landings.

Puma Force see its busiest month on Op TORAL

Written by Flt Lt Rhian Watts

Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT demonstrates NATO's enduring commitment to Afghanistan. The mission commenced on 1 January 2015, following the end of Operation HERRICK on 31 December 2014, and is based on the principles of train, advise and assist and does not involve international troops deploying in a combat role.

Between 23 April and 22 May the Pumas moved 1950 passengers and 3890kg of freight in 208 hours of flying, which is 20% above their normal hours. The increase was largely down to the change over of personnel on Operation TORAL (known as a RIP—Relief In Place) and an increase in routine tasking. The Pumas provide support to a multitude of nations that all contribute to Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT, within which the UK's tasks form Operation TORAL.

There are a number of coalition bases across Kabul and

the Puma, along with the other coalition air assets, is vital in ensuring that personnel and equipment can move across the area as required. The personnel within the detachment are mostly from RAF Benson in Oxfordshire and deploy as a formed unit, working together both in the UK and overseas. The Chief of Staff said: "In my 4 months here this has been the busiest period of tasking and with the burden of significant restrictions on road moves it has placed more emphasis on personnel moving by air. This coupled with the harsh environment, which puts pressure on the serviceability of the aircraft, shows what a great job the aircrew, engineers and support staff have been doing here."

These LZDZ Issue 2 2016 articles are reproduced by kind permission of JHC.





EXERCISE IMPERIAL ZEPHYR

Exercise **IMPERIAL ZEPHYR** (Ex IZ) is the Puma Force's annual desert training exercise based in California, USA.

Ex IZ started in the usual fashion with the deployment of an advance party to Yuma US Marine Base in Arizona. This party consisted of movements personnel, engineering and operations staff to prepare the way for the arrival of the main body of personnel on RAF C-17s a week later.

The engineers did a fantastic job and had all aircraft ready on schedule for their fly forward date to the exercise Main Operating Base - Naval Air Facility El Centro (NAFEC).

The exercise was 6 weeks in duration and thanks to some good aircraft serviceability the environmental training was achieved ahead of schedule. The extra time available in the fantastic southern California training area was not wasted and the flying hours were put to great use qualifying aircrew in a variety of additional skills.

The engineers must be singled out for special praise at this point, generating a steady two tasking lines from 3 airframes for pretty much the entire 6

week deployment, working day and night in temperatures in excess of +30°C and at the end of a long logistics timeline.

In addition to the successful work element of Ex IZ, there were also some excellent extra-curricular activities taking place. The wonderful city of San Diego has a wide variety of activities to entertain all and the Puma Force put this to good use. For those not on the flying programme or engineering shift, Adventurous Training was readily available and the detachment made use of indoor skydiving, the aircraft carrier *USS Midway*, American football, golf and, of course, the occasional night on the town!

On a more serious note, the first anniversary of the Puma crash in Kabul on 11th October 2015 where sadly both British and US lives were lost, was commemorated during the Exercise at NAFEC. The service was performed by the NAFEC Base Chaplain with OC 33 Squadron in attendance. Following the service a good old-fashioned beer and BBQ pool party was held in their honour.

A great detachment in a great place and 33 Squadron is already looking forward to Ex IZ 2017!



Exercise CRETE LOYALTY 2016

75 years on from the Battle of Crete

On the 20th May 1941, an assault force of over 22000 Germans attacked the Island of Crete. Their objective: to capture 3 key airfields on the island allowing an influx of reinforcements to overwhelm the defending allied troops. After many days of desperate fighting, service personnel from the UK, Australia and New Zealand fighting alongside local Cretans conceded defeat and withdrew from the island. Each year Crete remembers the bravery and sacrifice of all those involved in the Battle with a week-long commemoration and, 75 years on, this tradition is as strong as ever.

Of the British Forces serving in Crete, a small band of men with only 4 Hurricane fighters from No. 33 Squadron, based at Maleme airfield, joined in with some of the bloodiest fighting. It is for these men in particular that 10 current members of 33 Squadron travelled to Crete to participate in the commemoration services and to honour the ultimate sacrifice of 55 former Squadron personnel.

On an average Wednesday at 3 am, RAF Benson would normally be very quiet. On the 18th of May however, the guardroom was alive with 10 members of 33 Squadron about to depart for London Heathrow;

destination: Crete. After a pleasant 4 hour flight the group touched down in the early afternoon sun on Crete. A quick collection of hire vehicles, some suspect navigation and a 45 minute drive to the accommodation meant Exercise CRETE LOYALTY 2016 was well under way. During that evening, the group headed into the local town of Agia Marina for dinner and a quiet drink, before turning in for an early night in preparation for the next day; not before of course a spot of ironing and polishing under the watchful supervision of the Sqn WO, to repair the damage of transporting No. 1 uniforms!

Rethymno Service - 19 May 2016

As the Battle of Crete was fought by many different nations it was only fitting that the group paid tribute to all those who served by attending as many commemoration services as possible. The first of these was in Rethymno, a busy town located around an hour's drive from Agia Marina, to remember the Australian servicemen who had fought in Crete. The service took place at midday and space was at a premium with large numbers of Service personnel, Cretan dignitaries and local people all keen to pay their respects. After a moving service and some brief



respite from the Greek sun the group spent some time making introductions to members of the various armed forces who were in attendance and would be at many of the services to come. There was just time for a quick group photo with two Cretans dressed in full traditional dress.

Firka Fortress - 20 May 2016

The following morning, after a quick breakfast in the hotel, the group set out for a flag raising ceremony in Chania, the capital of Crete. Parking was at a premium near the event owing to such a large turnout and after a few laps of a tricky one way system the group finally found a space and set out on foot. The ceremony took place along the waterfront in Chania, with the Cretan military band enthusiastically playing the national anthems of all those attending as the various flags were raised. Once the last flag was raised, the group were invited to walk around the naval museum located nearby, which highlighted numerous stories of the role the Royal Navy played during the Battle of Crete, especially in the evacuation of allied forces once defeated by the German military.



Galatas

Later that evening, the group set out for the small town of Galatas. During the battle, this town saw a small yet determined group of New Zealanders fighting alongside the townsfolk to try and repel wave after wave of German attack. The allies lost just over 200 men, with a further 40 Cretans giving their lives in defence of the town. The Germans, in contrast, are reported to have lost upwards of 1500 men by the time they had finally taken the town. The service to commemorate this fight took place in a small, tightly packed courtyard in the centre of Galatas. With it being the 75th anniversary, the head of the New Zealand Army, Major General Kelly,

had made the trip to attend the service. Throughout the readings, a New Zealand choir sung traditional Maori songs adding an incredibly sombre and moving touch to the event.

RAF Memorial and Souda Bay Cemetery - 21 May 2016



As their friends and family back home had a lazy Saturday morning, the 10 members of 33 Squadron on Ex CRETE LOYALTY left the hotel for the most significant reason for their visit to Crete; the Royal Air Force Memorial at Maleme. This memorial was close to the airfield which was identified as a key strategic target for the Germans and which 33 Squadron had fought valiantly to defend. The memorial is hidden away behind a small lorry park at the side of the road, yet once past this uninspiring front, a small haven of greenery breaks the dry Cretan landscape to reveal an immaculately kept site. During the battle, 30 Squadron had fought alongside 33 Squadron to try and repel the German advancement and it was incredibly fitting that some of their current members had made the trip to Crete to support this memorial. The service was much smaller in scale to the others attended, yet this only added to the event. The peacefulness gave everyone a clearer mind to think of and understand the sacrifice made by those members of the Squadrons on which we now serve. OC 33 Squadron laid a wreath on behalf of the Squadron with WO Geraghty laying one on behalf of the 33 Squadron Association.

After the service the group went for lunch at a hotel called 'Mike's' where they met with the last remaining British veterans of the Battle who had also attended the memorial earlier in the day, which gave everyone the chance to hear first-hand accounts of the Battle and a small inkling of what life must have been like at the time.



Post lunch, the group got changed into something a little more comfortable and, under the guidance of Mr Sean Johnstone, an ex-serving member of the RAF Regiment, set out on foot to what at first glance appeared to be a dilapidated and unused bridge. However, on closer inspection, scores of bullet holes and WW2 battle damage could still be seen. The bridge had been a significant and important crossing

between Maleme airfield and the route further into Crete, clearly a key asset for both sides during the Battle. Fighting had raged to try and capture the bridge, with scores of gliders attempting to land in the wide and open flat river bed beneath the bridge in order to offload German reinforcements.





The last event of the day took place at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Souda Bay. At 6pm, just as the temperature began to cool, the group stood smartly lined up alongside Service personnel from all the allied nations represented and viewed wreath after wreath being laid at the central memorial. The New Zealand Maori choir once again sang, with an acoustic guitar giving a touching accompaniment to the service. This was the largest commemorative event of the week and was attended by many dignitaries, including the UK's Secretary of State for Defence, Mr Michael Fallon.

Hill 107 and Closing Ceremony - 22 May 16

The final full day of Ex CRETE LOYALTY began with a visit to the German Cemetery located on Hill 107. This hill had been a key objective for the Germans to take in order to control the surrounding area. The hill itself directly overlooks both Maleme airfield and the bridge that the group had visited the day before and therefore had had great tactical advantages. The group climbed the hill and at the top were faced by a cemetery full of poppies with row after row of graves. As the group moved around the cemetery it became apparent that vast numbers of the graves were all marked with the same date, the 21 May 1941. This was the day that the Germans had launched their assault on Hill 107 and had lost so many men in taking it.

After a fortunate recommendation, the group met with a local Cretan who had amassed a large collection of wreckage from the Battle of Crete, one piece of which turned out to be from a 33 Squadron aircraft: an outstanding piece of history for the group to be able to touch.

The day concluded at Maleme Airfield itself with Hill 107 in the distance. A large closing ceremony took place, again attended by a vast array of Service personnel and the local civilian population. After another set of wreaths had been laid, the group moved towards to the coastline that borders the airfield in order to watch a Greek Air Force F16 display finish the commemorations in style.

For OC 33 Squadron, the Squadron Warrant Officer, and the Project Officer, the evening finished with a meal held close to Maleme airfield and which was attended by numerous senior representatives from each nation along with remaining veterans from the battle. After numerous traditional Greek and Cretan dishes, the OC couldn't resist getting involved in some authentic Cretan dancing with the head of the New Zealand Army; unfortunately all evidence of this seems to have gone missing!

Ex CRETE LOYALTY was a resounding success, with many friendships built between those local to Crete and those from the far side of the world. It had captured the history, atmosphere and sadness of an iconic battle, and one in which 33 Squadron personnel, especially ground crew, played a

significant role. What a privilege it is to serve on 33 Squadron and continue the work of those that have gone before in service to the Royal Air Force.

Loyalty

Ex CRETE LOYALTY personnel:

Wg Cdr Andy Baron, OC 33 Squadron, Aircrew

Flt Lt Tim Barry, Ex CRETE LOYALTY Project Officer, Aircrew

Flt Lt Ian Putman, Photographer, Pilot

WO Eamon Geraghty, 33 Squadron Warrant Officer, Engineer

MACr Gareth Attridge, Aircrew

Sgt Louise Hartzenberg, Flight Operations

Sgt Lee Taylor, Engineer

Cpl Claire Price, Admin

Cpl Alex Smallshaw, Engineer

SAC Mark Bird, Engineer



'Meivlieger' Jan Linzel Celebrates 100 Not Out ...



On 7th December 2015 Jan Linzel, the last surviving member of the Royal Netherlands Air Force who fought the Luftwaffe when Germany invaded the Netherlands on 10th May 1941 celebrated his 100th birthday, with the aid of the Dutch CDS, the 30-strong RNLAF brass band and the Dutch ambassador, at home with his wife and family in Glengariff, County Cork. To the people of the Netherlands, this brave band of fliers became to be known as ' de meivliegers', which translates literally as the 'May Fliers'. They are as important to Dutch people as our own Battle Of Britain pilots.

Reaching 100 is quite an achievement, but what makes it doubly interesting for anyone associated with 33 Squadron is that this brave gentleman also served with 33 from 3rd August 1944 until 26th June 1945, and is one of five Dutch pilots listed in recently examined authorisation sheets for the period at the National Archives in Kew. Jan was born in the province of

"When I pulled away, a bullet came through the floor and exploded in my thigh. There was a lot of blood and I started to feel faint. I threw off the hood and bailed out – you have no idea how quiet it is when you are hanging in the air."

Groningen. He liked service life and wanted to fly, and made his first flight from Soesterberg in a Fokker S-IV on 25 May 1938. Despite his instructor predicting that he would never learn to fly he went solo on 23 August 1938. On 10 May 1940, Jan was at Ypenburg near The Hague and scrambled to meet the German bombers attacking the airfield. He shot down an Me 110 and attacked an He 111 before he and his aircraft were hit and he had to bale out. Later in the war he made his way to England via Switzerland, France, Spain and Portugal, intent on joining the RAF.

The following pages are extracts from Jan's book. The other Dutch pilots with 33 Squadron during the war were Dick ter Beek, Joop Wansink, Jan Adolf Schiff and Cornelius Ligtenstein. We are now liaising with our local guide for next year's trip, ex-RNLAF officer Jan Westhoeve, to see what we can discover about the other 'flying

Dutchmen' who flew with 33 Squadron over the same period.

Jan Linzel *Oorlogsvlieger* Part 2: No. 33 Squadron

On the 14th July we were back at Tealing and were regularly sat on standby. We got airborne occasionally, behind German planes. Occasionally we found ourselves on the other side of the North Sea. This situation lasted until the 25th July, and then suddenly Dick and I were transferred to the operational side, 84 GSU at Thruxton, where we got to fly Spit IXBs. We had exercises on 2nd-3rd August. Then a transfer over to 33 Squadron that belonged to 135 Wing, Second Tactical Air Force. This meant that we were part of a fighter squadron supporting and protecting the Army from the air. 33 was stationed at Selsey Bill, a peninsula about 20 kilometres or so east of Portsmouth. It was a rough, sandy area., a 'wartime field' with tents everywhere. Before I went there they had me totally kitted out for the Front, with a camp bed, a canvas bath, a canvas washstand and whatever else was needed.

Arriving at Selsey Bill I was immediately crammed into a tent. On the ninth I began flying. I had to do a sector reconnaissance flight, from Selsey to the mouth of the Thames and back. There were many areas along the coast that you could not fly over. They were full of guns. The Navy was there too and their boys shot at everybody - friend and foe. You took a map up with you and the danger areas were indicated in red. Well, I went there to have a look! I made sure that I did not fly over the red sectors, but the boys were sharp! So sharp that I was even shot at once when I flew past Brighton, outside the prohibited area. They fired at me like savages. I thought that the boys must have been bored and wanted something to do. I felt like that myself.

No. 33 Squadron Spitfire with invasion stripes and long range drop tank.



On the 10th August the squadron was sent to Fairwood Common for a gunnery course, an airfield on a peninsula to the west of Swansea. The newest fliers had to go by car, the rest with the aircraft. In a squadron like this you always had 22-23 aircraft and 24-25 pilots. Always more pilots than aircraft. Swansea was a dull place. We did a lot of air-to-air, shooting at towed targets. The targets were divided into three; I scored 4 at the front, 4 in the middle and 12 in the back – not too bad! I had a lot of fun there.

On the 16th August we went back to Selsey Bill. I drove back with the doctor in the squadron staff car, he drove and I navigated from the back with a map and compass. There were no road signs and lots of traffic. Enormous columns were making their way towards the coast. Everything was set for the 'Black Out', with shielded lights. We got back the following morning without any problems, and over the course of the day the squadron followed with the planes.

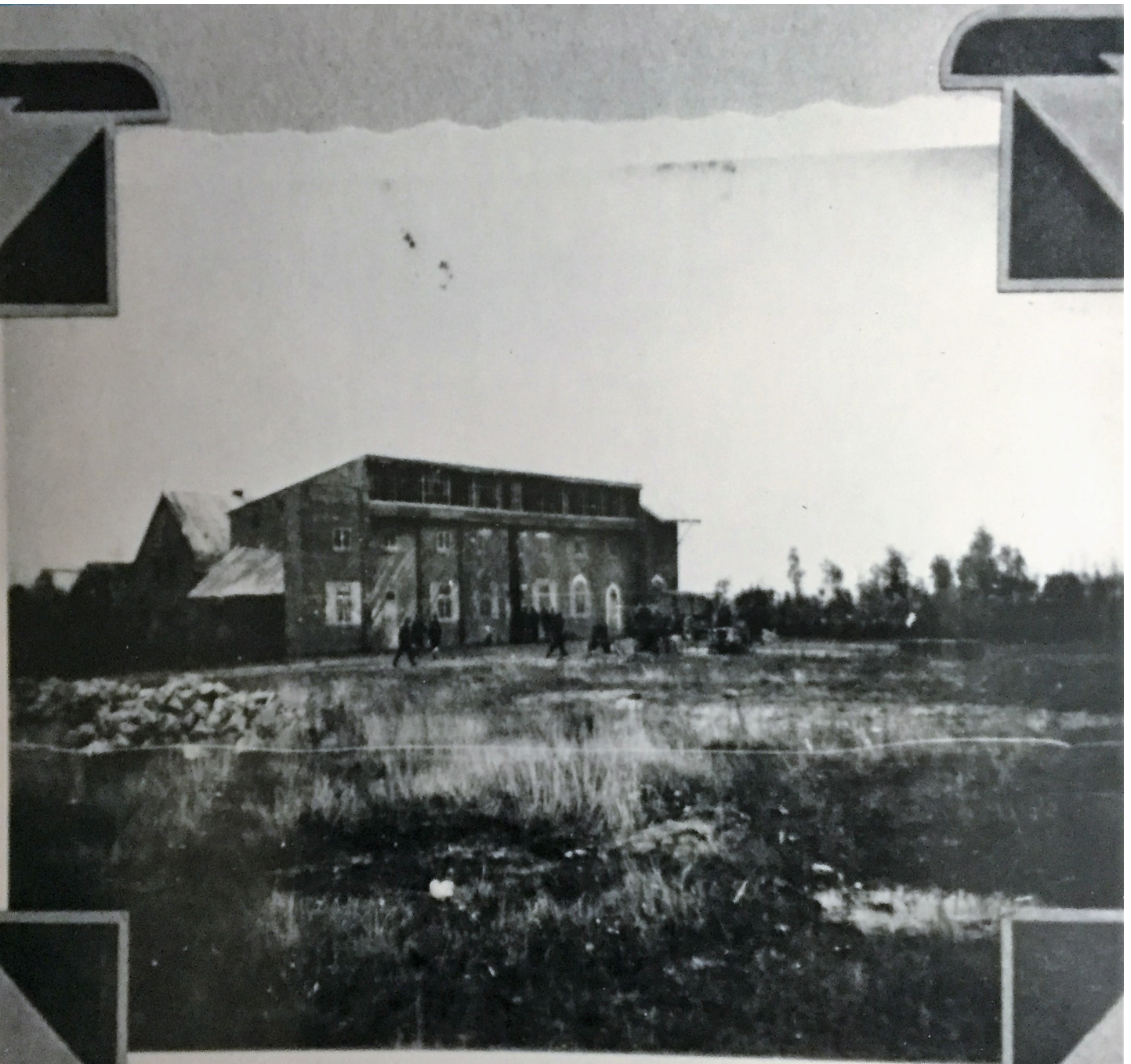
On the 19th we flew to Tangmere. A flight of just 5 minutes, It will always be there in my logbook. Tangmere was 5 kms north east of Chichester, to the north of Selsey Bill. It was a fantastic pre-war airfield, complete with a station cinema and a magnificent cinema organ played by one of the officers. Everyone used to stay behind after the film had finished to hear him play. There I sat on standby.

On 26th August the squadron was reassigned to Carpique, the airfield in Caen, France. All the 'kites' were flown over. The airfield had changed hands several times. It was a ruined mess. The runways had not been repaired. I flew there in a Dakota of Transport Command. The two 'linies' who were supposed to put the tents up were so busy that we did the job ourselves. I shared a tent with Dick ter Beek. The surroundings were strewn with small mines that were being defused. On the airfield still lay dead Germans. At the moment we arrived they were busy burning the bodies with flame throwers. It was a mess and it stank too. Caen itself was a big mess, where they had cleared roads through with bulldozers. It stank incredibly there too. While I was digging holes for my tent poles I came across a German bayonet buried about 30 cms deep, still in its sheath. I cleaned it up and I cherish the thing now as an artefact.



KITES ON
DISPERSAL AT
MERVILLE.

Above and following pages: Photographs from No. 33 Squadron's photograph albums showing the conditions at ALG B53 - Merville airfield. The Squadron was based at Merville from 12 September to 2 November 1944.



FRK'S COOKHOUSE
AT MERVILLE.
BELGIUM

"...The men are living as comfortably as can be expected, and seem to be enjoying their experience in France. They sleep in tents but have some fine messing facilities bequeathed by the Germans." said Mr. Jordan, the High Commissioner for New Zealand, when he flew in from London on 26 September to visit RNZAF personnel.



OUR LIVING
QUARTERS.

(MÉRVILLE)

To The Bitter End

Our commitment over the Front began on 1st September 1944, with 'beachhead patrols' between Le Havre and Bayeux. That was where all the Allied supplies and munitions were unloaded. Above this bridgehead there was always a chance of air attacks and there were always fighters in the air. Le Havre was indeed still in German hands while Bayeux swarmed with Allied naval vessels. If we got too close to Le Havre the Germans began shooting at us. If we flew too close to the ships then we were fired at from the sea. The Navy really shot at anything that flew.

On the 3rd September I flew to the other side with a Spitfire IXB to bring back beer for the squadron. I had an unused 90-gallon tank completely filled with Whitbread beer. I only had my internal fuel tanks to fly back with and had just enough fuel. "You will watch closely for flak when you come back?" they asked, almost concerned. "You only say that when this warm English p**s needs to be picked up", I said, which they didn't think was very nice.

On the 10th September we flew from Carpiquet-Caen to ALG B35. That was one of the makeshift landing strips with 'summer field tracking', very coarse mesh stretched across the ground. Although you could land there it was very bad for your equipment. After six take offs and landings ready for replacing and you often had a blowout. If you were carrying a bombload it was extremely dangerous. Due to bad weather we were grounded for three days on that strip. The Front was always moving and we went with the troops from Le Treport to Merville, to the west of Lille. Merville was one of the captured German bases. Our tents stood in a big quagmire and in mine, under six army blankets, I was freezing cold at night. Then I had a look around the area and found a mattress in a school. My suffering from the cold was over! We built heaters out of the four-sided benzine cans that we were getting our fuel from, we ran chimneys through our tents, we had warmth and plenty of hot water, even a bath made from sail cloth. Yet despite our efforts to improve our living conditions, living at Merville remained a damp affair. In the evenings you didn't want to get into bed because it was wet. In the morning you didn't want to get out of bed because your clothes were wet.

You kept your socks on; there were times when you didn't see your feet for ages. If you took your socks off, you may not see them again. A bath in those conditions was an absolute luxury.

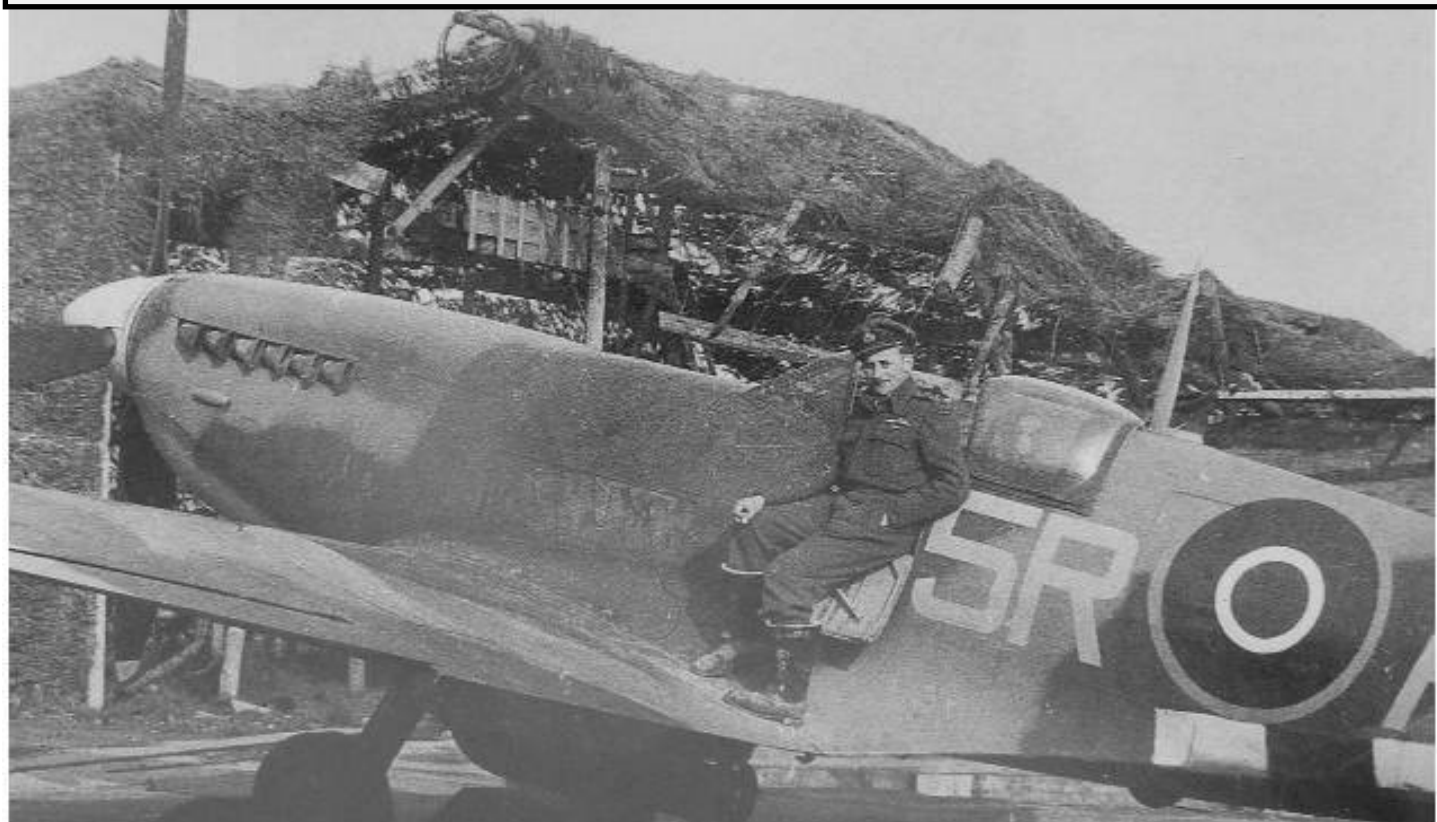
From Merville we carried out a lot of operational flights. Le Havre, Dunkirk, Boulogne, all in German hands. Above Boulogne we dropped pamphlets in German, telling them to quit. In Dunkirk we bombed a sanatorium because the Underground had told us that German troops were inside. We bombed artillery positions by Axel and yards near Rosendaal. That was one all in one day. We went there with the whole squadron. Then the advance moved forward so rapidly and the Allies found themselves before Antwerp. The forward troops encountered a fort there that caused them some concern, and there I scored a wonderful 'direct hit', right in the middle of the fort. I heard the Boss shout over the R/T, "Bloody nice bombing". Most of the other bombs dropped by the squadron were also good. Our troops were able to take the fort that same day.

To the south of Breskens we bombed buildings. After the liberation of Antwerp Montgomery's idea was to launch a powerful offensive towards Berlin and end the war by the New Year. He thought that a push to the north towards the Ruhr would give the best results; therefore, the main effort became the capture of the bridges across the Maas, Waal and Rhine. He thought that the port of Antwerp was not important. A bad misjudgement!

After the unsuccessful battle for Arnhem the Germans still occupied the shores of the Westerschelde, so that the river could not be used as a major Allied transport route. The Westerschelde was around 80 kms long and strewn with mines. The polder land on both shores lay below sea level and could easily be flooded. On the southern shore the Germans held a large bridgehead at Breskens, protected inland by the Leopold Canal. On the northern shores the enormous cannons of Walcheren stood watch. The Germans had turned this island into a veritable fortress, with defensive ramparts and heavy artillery. On this 'Gibraltar of the North' stood seven batteries, covering access to the Schelde and making it inaccessible. Around each battery there was a ring of infantry troops, protected by minefields and barbed wire. There was also



Tangmere, July 1944: It wasn't just 33 Squadron nipping home for some warm p**s for the boys! What a great idea this would have been on AMF, ferry tanks full of beer! Spitfire Mk IX of 332 (Norwegian) Squadron, beer from Henty and Constable Brewery, Chichester. (Photograph: IWM).



Jan and Spitfire 5R-A PL255 at Merville, complete with 'Invasion Stripes' and 500 lb bomb.



Back Row (L-R): Sqn Ldr Matthews DFC (OC) Fg Off Linzel, Flt Lts Starkey and Clarke, unknown, Flt Lt Smith, Fg Off Leeming.
Front Row : unknown, except for the W/O pilot, third from the left, who is probably W/O B.G. Leigh.



(L-R): Flt Lt Starkey RCAF (in cockpit), Fg Off R.R. Clarke RAAF, Flt Lt Smith RCAF.

plenty of air defence. The long dike wall around the island was treeless, giving the machine guns uninterrupted arcs of fire along the whole length. German resistance would not be broken until the 8th November. The cost to the Allies was 1 300 dead, of which half were Canadian.

Memories

On the day that Operation Market Garden started we could do very little. For seven days the weather was too bad for flying. Over that period we used the time to furnish a large building in Merville as an Officers' Mess. We could drink as much champagne as we wanted there. It cost us almost nothing! Good stuff. The French had hidden the stuff in caves at the start of the war and it had lain there for a few years. It cost just a couple of shillings a bottle, about one guilder. The only conditions that the French imposed was that they had to have the crates and the bottles back. Every fourteen days one of our three tonners drove to Lille and came back to the Mess packed with champagne. Fantastic! At the request of the Base Commander, Group Captain Johnny Walker, a Mess Meeting was held. It was decided to organise an evening party in the Mess and to invite local dignitaries like the Mayor. Someone asked, "What about popies?" Popies were girls. There must also be dancing! Two chaps said that that wouldn't be a problem, they knew lots of girls in the surrounding area. The afternoon before the party we reminded them about the girls. "Fine," they said, "but could we have a couple of three tonners to collect the girls?" No problem. At which point they drove to Lille to pick up a load of whores. When the party was in full swing, they let the 'ladies' loose in the Mess. What happened next is easy to guess. The 'ladies' got up to speed very quickly and while they were dancing they began to undress. Some danced completely naked. Well, you should have seen the wealthy citizens of Merville! Everyone was so prudish in those days. The ladies of the town fled quickly. What remained was 'rif-raf', of course. That party became an enormous scandal, and if I recall, news of it quickly spread around the whole of the Front. Sometime later I got a lift from Canadian officers who asked me where I lived. "33 Squadron, 135 Wing." "Oh..." they said, "that's where they had the party!"

27th September we bombed Walcheren.

28th - we hung around over Rosendaal and somewhere in the south of the Netherlands we shot a transport.

30th - a section tried to fly to the north, but after one hour thirty minutes we had to return due to bad weather.

Then it was October. we harassed artillery units at Dunkirk. At lunchtime one day we drove towards the town to take a look at the soldiers. That was an experience! From a large concrete factory building we peered through large binoculars at the movements of the German troops in the town.

2nd October - we flew for the first time deep into the Netherlands and between De Bilt and Utrecht we shot at a column of vehicles. We also strafed a variety of vehicle at Amersfoort.

3rd October - we landed at Gent because of bad weather.

6th October - we dive bombed the telephone exchange in Dunkirk with the aim of destroying German communications.

11th October - we bombed German artillery to the north east of Woensdrecht. We dropped bombs in two ways, either dive bombing or hedge-hopping. When hedge-hopping the bombs were adjusted to explode after 11 seconds. Eleven seconds after they hit the target they exploded. Otherwise you yourself would be blown into the air, as we were flying less than ten meters above the ground.

13th October – we bombed Schoondijke. That same day we were in action again at Woensdrecht.

17th October – we conducted a 'low-level' bombardment on the fort at Breskens.

18th October – we blew up at an ammunition depot at Oostburg.

19th October – we bombed German artillery at Breskens.

21st October – air action over Essen.

28th October – we bombed and strafed anti-aircraft positions at Dunkirk.

And so it went. You lived in a daze. Eat, sleep, get up, shoot and land.

On the 1st November we patrolled over the 'Invasion Forces' of Walcheren. At Westkapelle we saw the Allied landing craft approaching the beaches. We flew over at 1 000 feet. Those guys were receiving really heavy fire from the shore. In one of the landing craft sat my nephew, the other Jan Linzel, but I did not know that then. He sailed on the water, I hung in the air. On the North Sea lay three warships: 'Warspite', 'Erebus' and 'Roberts', with their 15 inch cannons they tried to silence the German heavy artillery batteries. It was an impressive sight. I saw each enormous flame and then a great cloud of brown smoke. Moments later there was another enormous flame and a cloud of smoke, big plumes of smoke. The 'Warspite' fired over us. Therefore we had to stay at just the right height when we flew.

Our camp was now moved to Maldegem, between Gent and Bruges, and we no longer slept in tents. We got a house with rooms. The house had belonged to a Belgian collaborator. There was no furniture in there, but there was a gramophone. There was just one record, the 'Java'live' by the Inkspots. And we played it all day long. The locals were very fond of us and we received many invitations. In this period I was involved in many different actions in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, including bombing missions on Breskens and Souberg. A couple of times I hired a Citroen, which was decorated in camouflage colours, and drove around to have a look at things for myself. What I saw was not pleasant. We had wrought a terrible devastation. I did not tell the people that I was one of the people who had taken part in these attacks. Each and every farm that the Germans had entrenched themselves in lay in ruins. Horrible! But what can you say when what is done is done?

On 2nd November the Allied advance reached Sloedam. They wanted to have the Schelde opened up to Antwerp. Between Veere and Sloedam our troops were being heavily shelled by mortars. We were given the German positions and went over

with twelve Spitfires and bombed them. As we dived on the target we opened up with everything we had. We didn't just drop bombs, we strafed with our 20 mm- and machine guns. Then we went round again and completely emptied our magazines. During one of the attacks I saw a German unit near a small farm, with smoke rising from it. On the next pass I shot the place up. I flew over once again and saw a very large cooking pot lying upside down. I had shot a field kitchen to pieces. In retrospect that seems to have been effective because our troops were able to advance immediately.

On 3rd November 1944 we bombed positions at Wagenburg. I dropped my bomb and turned around to go back again. I had started a nose dive and was preparing to shoot when I heard a huge bang. I was hit! But how and where? My first reaction was to check my flight instruments. Everything looked normal. I was still flying. In the distance I could see that the squadron was busy forming up and I flew off in that direction. When I was close I called over the R/T to my mate, Starkey: "Can you have a look at my aircraft? I've been hit but I don't know where." He flew up next to me. "Oh, very nice. I can look right through it," he said. I had suffered a direct hit in front of the tailplane and there was a big hole. But the tail of my Spitfire was still there. Except for one wire all of the cables from the elevator were shot through. That wire saved my life, without it I would have flown into the ground.

We regularly lost colleagues, but losses were quickly replaced with fliers from the Operational Training Units or pilots coming back from leave. When things got tough there were losses soon after. Many young pilots did not return from the battlefield. When an older, more experienced pilot did not return it was just bad luck. Caution was considered a plus. Operational flights were run by experience, not by rank. The leader of a section had to be an experienced pilot. Sometimes a flight sergeant would lead the whole squadron and his No.2 would be a flight lieutenant. The No.2 position was the least dangerous. That was mainly the youngsters. After a number of operational sorties you were rested, mainly after 150 operational hours. This was true at least for fighter bombers. For the heavy bombers the number of sorties was twenty five. Those who went on rest tours temporarily became



33'S DISPERSAL H.Q.
MALDEGEM.



CAMOUFLAGED HANGAR
AT
MALDEGEM.

instructors at an Operational Training Unit. Then, after a few months, you returned to the squadron.

After the sortie at Wagenburg my badly damaged Spitfire (5R-A) was written off. That really upset me. I knew every quirk of that aeroplane. On the morning of the 4th we bombed and strafed Dinteloord, as our troops were being held up at the edge of the town. In the afternoon we bombarded German positions at Zevenbergen. On the 6th November we flew between Utrecht and The Hague looking for trains, but there were no trains to be seen. At the yards around Utrecht we found some freight train activity and we decided to drop our bombs on the central station. There was a fairly strong southwesterly wind blowing across the town and we dived in from the east on a northeasterly heading, as that was the same direction as the platforms. Because of the strong wind two bombs drifted off to the right and hit a house. To this day I know that it was not my bomb because I was flying a No.2 and could see everything. The bombs fell close together at the edge of the station. My bomb fell slightly shorter, between the wagons. One of the bombs fell on a *Weerbaarheidsafdeling* (WA) house, which was the black uniformed branch of the National Socialist Movement (NSB) in the Netherlands, which was ample justification for hitting it. A number of NSB'ers kicked the bucket as a consequence, proof that what goes around comes around. Two of the projectiles landed on an old people's home and a hospital. I later found out that that had caused a number of fatalities and wounded casualties. It was a terrible shame, but what could you do about it?

In the afternoon of 10th November we carried out an attack on a really large forest at Poppel. The Germans were concentrating troops there for a counter-attack. The whole wing went up there, four squadrons of twelve kites. The wing commander and the group captain were also with us, a total of fifty Spitfires! The planes followed each other down in a nose dive to drop their bombs, and then fired their guns. A rain of bullets came down from above. You could not crawl away and take cover in a hole. After the bombing all fifty planes went round again and emptied their magazines into the forest. During the nose dive of my 'bomb-run' I saw the bombs

from the aircraft in front of me exploding and whole trees flying through the air. Back at the airfield for the Wing debriefing there was already a telegram from the Army waiting for us that said: "Thanks a lot, we could walk right in." Instead of a counter-attack, no resistance was offered.

On 11th November we carried out an attack on the railway lines between Utrecht and Arnhem, during which my engine started to stutter. I carried out a cautionary landing at Volkel, where other Spitfires from 84 Group were based. The following day I did an air test but the engine was not good. I stayed for a few days in Volkel, and slept in a nearby monastery. A little later I flew in an Anson to Brussels, and from there I got back to Maldegem in an Auster.

On the 15th November I went on leave to London. I went straight to the Cumberland Hotel for a meeting with my neighbour, Captain Dik, now attached to the Naval Staff, and a couple of colonels. Dik used the hotel regularly, to dine and to drink. While I was in town something happened that reinforced my annoyance at the mentality of the Dutch colony in London. Dutch military personnel were entitled to one litre of Bols Jenever per month, distilled in Buenos Aires, and a carton of American cigarettes. You could collect your ration from the Directorate of the Air Force in Arlington House. Of course it was impossible for me to get there each month because I was at the Front. After more than three months away I reported in to collect my gin and cigarette entitlements. All I got was a bottle and a carton. I explained that I had been away at the front and thought that would sort things out. But no, I was told that I'd just have to get here on time. I was furious. "OK, from now on I shall just say to the Jerries: 'Boys, just stop the war for a bit while I go back to London to fetch my gin!' " I asked the assistant who his boss was, and was told it was Mr so-and-so. I said, "When I come back here again, everything will be ready for me. Understood? I don't want my ration disappearing while I am sitting at the Front." Only then did I get what I was due. The scoundrels were selling our stuff on the black market.

The joy that had followed the Allied liberation of Antwerp was short lived. Not long after the first ships had entered the port on 28th November, the Germans had begun terrorizing the city with V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets. Antwerp would be hit by 800 of these weapons, and over 3 000 people lost their lives. I got back to the squadron on 28th November, to hear that German resistance at the Front remained stubborn. The next day we flew to Dunkirk. We had maps and photos in our hands, with the target precisely marked. I had been briefed; "Look! This is the house that you must hit." We hedgehopped in and dropped our bombs. My bomb was right on the button, practically in through the front door, and completely destroyed the house. Apparently it was the German Headquarters in Dunkirk. We also got annoying and boring missions. For example, if there was a really large 'show' with lots of bombers and they had insufficient escorts we had to go with them. There was always a certain number of fighters with them for protection. They called us the 'mixed pickles' because our squadron hosted so many different nationalities. You took a 90 gallon long range fuel tank with you and then you had to fly at 25 000 – 30 000 feet, above the bombers. It was deathly cold! It was not for us! We were equipped and trained for 'low-level'. Our Spitfires had shorter wings, which made turning at low altitudes much easier. But they were not so useful for flying high. Our Spitfire IXBs had very little heating. You sat in your normal uniform. Anyone wearing too many clothes would not fit into the cockpit. Moreover, you had a 'Mae West' on and in place of the parachute 'cushion' we had a dinghy, a folded rubber boat that also took up a lot of room. I had a pair of socks that I cut the feet off and I wore them over my knees for these flights. You wore thin gloves with a silk inner. It was just enough. The first time I got back from one of these escort missions, I thought I had knees made of glass, it was deathly cold! The Jerries often thought that we were the bombers. Although they could not see us they had us on the radar, therefore we also attracted lots of heavy flak. By some miracle I always managed to get through.

Once we were flying up there when Squadron Leader Mitchell suddenly gave the order: "Shoelace

ninety degrees port." That meant that we had to make 'cross-overs' during the 90 degree turn. After the turn the left section was sat on the right. The right section went to the left. Everyone flew in a very wide formation and within the sections one also made crossovers. It was a complicated manoeuvre but we were really well trained. We did this constantly to make ourselves less vulnerable. When we were halfway through the turn there suddenly arose a great cloud of exploding flak, precisely where we would have been if we hadn't carried out the turn. The Germans could not see us as we were sat above the clouds. However, their radar was very good. They could not tell the difference between fighters and bombers on their screens. How did Mitchell know that? He must have had a sixth sense. What is was was cold. Around 40 to 50 degrees below zero! The canopy of the Spitfire was made of armoured glass, which chilled down to the low temperatures found at such great heights. When we descended the water vapour condensed on the cold canopy and immediately froze. There was such a thick layer of ice which was totally transparent. You could no longer see anything through the front windshield. As you could see nothing ahead you had to look sideways and tried, with the cockpit canopy slid back, to come in and land. The long range fighters, for whom this work was normal, had a 'pilot relief tube', a funnel and, of course, good heating. The 90 gallon long range fuel tanks made the plane hard to handle, we were all over the place like a car with no suspension. I didn't like it!

On the 5th December we carried out a 'low-level' bombing mission against the railway line at Alphen aan den Rijn. A Christmas gift for the Jerries. We did the same thing at Zutphen. There was an enormous amount of flak there. On the 11th we were over Arnhem and after that over Schouwen-Duiveland. Everywhere there was loads of flak. Looking back, it is a wonder that I lived through it all.

On the 15th December we flew from Maldegem to Lasham in England. We had to hand in our Spitfire there as we were switching over to the Tempest. We didn't like that. How could you get a better aircraft than a Spitfire? The Spitfires were fantastic machines. But the squadron was being reequipped

with the Tempest V, 100 kms faster than a Spit. We didn't really want to believe that. If you put the nose of the Spit down and went into a steep dive with the throttle wide open you could reach 9/10ths of the speed of sound, that's what we believed.

On the 17th December we flew by Dakota to Predannack, a great field on the Lizard, a peninsula to the east of Lands End. When we saw the area from the air our first reaction was: what in Hell's name were we doing here? It looked like a desert. But it went really well. It turned out to be a beautiful area with lots of summer cottages, mostly inhabited by war widows. We didn't find that so bad! The Officers' Mess was housed in the 'Polurian Hotel' in Mullion Cove, which was situated on the rocks about 100 metres above the sea, with a fantastic view of Michael's Mount, Penzance and Land's End. Super de luxe! We had a lovely time. We were sat on the hotel terrace reading the papers, while in London it was five degrees below zero.

On the 24th December I had my first flight in a Hawker Tempest F. Mk V.....(Read more about Jan on the Association's FB site.)



Flying Officer Jan Linzel standing in front of Tempest SN164 5R-U at Quackenbruck Airfield in Germany . Apparently the bandage around his neck was due to a large boil!

George Roney: A Kiwi with 33 Squadron (part 1)

Early life and education

George James Roney was born in the town of Oamaru in the province of Otago, New Zealand on 1 January 1922. He was the youngest son of George Charles Roney, a baker originally from Adelaide, Australia, and his wife, Rosannah. George had five elder siblings, two sisters and four brothers. His early education was at Oamaru North, followed by a secondary education at Waitaki Boys' High School where he attained matriculation standard. George had considerable sporting ability and his name is still visible on the Honour Board of Waitaki Boys' High School, being a member of his school's first rugby



fifteen, and playing an 'outstanding part' in athletics. He went on to win the Junior Otago High Jump Championship in 1941 and tied equal for the North Otago Championship as a member of the North Otago Amateur Athletic Association. He also belonged to the Athletic Football Club and to the Oamaru Miniature Rifle Club. After leaving school, George was apprenticed locally as a motor mechanic for Maude Brothers, the Ford Dealership in Oamaru.

He joined the Territorials on 6 September 1940 and moved with them up to Christchurch.

The Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF)

The New Zealand government established the New Zealand Permanent Air Force (NZPAF) in 1923, with a strength of four officers and seven other ranks; its Territorial attachment – the New Zealand Air Force (NZAF), retitled the Territorial Air Force (TAF) in 1930 - had around 100 members. Later that year, the Canterbury Aviation Company's assets were acquired for the NZPAF with the help of a £10,000 donation from Henry Wigram; the aerodrome at Sockburn, Christchurch, which was named after Wigram, became New Zealand's first military aviation base. In 1934 the NZPAF was renamed the RNZAF, which became an independent military service in 1937.

During the Pacific Defence Conference at Wellington, April 1939, the British and New Zealand Governments agreed that, in addition to providing personnel for local defence, the RNZAF's role in the event of a European war would be to provide trained aircrew to the RAF under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) which linked Canada, Australia and New Zealand in a training scheme to supply aircrew to Britain. It proved to be an important multi-national strategic decision.

This plan was formalised on 17 December 1939. New elementary flying schools and aeroplanes were established in New Zealand with a proposed annual output of 700 pilots and 730 observers and air gunners. Britain supplied training aircraft, mainly Harvards and Oxfords. Another flying school was established at Woodbourne in 1939, and an aircraft factory to assemble Tiger Moth trainers was completed at Rongotai, Wellington, by early 1940.

At the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939 the RNZAF comprised 91 officers and 665 airmen, with 79 officers and 325 airmen in the TAF. The government accepted a British proposal to train New Zealand airmen for the RAF, as part of the Empire

Air Training Scheme (EATS). New Zealand agreed to provide the RAF with 880 fully-trained pilots a year and send another 1992 partially-trained airmen (520 pilots, 546 observers, and 926 air gunners) to Canada to complete their training. New training schools were established at Whenuapai, New Plymouth, Ōhakea, Harewood (Christchurch), and Taieri (Dunedin). An initial training school was set up at Rongotai (Wellington) which later moved to Levin.

George enlisted on 21 December 1941 and joined the RNZAF as an Airman Pilot, Group V, (LAC A/Pilot U/T GP V) aged 19 years 355 days. George's enlistment papers state that he had dark hair, hazel eyes and stood around 6 feet tall. His father had to sign the consent form as George was under 21 when he enlisted.

Initial military service and training

George completed his basic military training, elementary and service flying training in New Zealand. His training started immediately after enlistment, with basic training at Initial Training Wing (ITW) Levin (22 December 1941 - 5 February 1942), and further training at ITW Rotorua (9 February – 3 April 1942). After that his flying training commenced, with initial flying training at No 1 Elementary Flying Training School (1 EFTS) Taieri, near Dunedin (2 May 1942 – 25 July 1942) and advanced training at Service Flying Training School (SFTS) Woodbourne, near Blenheim (27 July 1942 – 22 December 1942). The RNZAF F373 paperwork shows that George learned to fly in a Harvard and was awarded his pilot's wings on 19 October 1942.

Departure to Britain

On 19 December 1942 George was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant and started a period of Special Leave, presumably for Christmas and New Year, possibly knowing the date that he would be sailing to Britain. He embarked in Wellington on 15 January 1943, with the ship sailing to Britain the next day. As he left New Zealand George became an attached member of the RAF. Several weeks later, on 27 March 1943, George arrived in England. His records show that he started the official in-country arrival process on 28 March down on the South Coast before commencing further flying training as a Spitfire fighter pilot at bases scattered across the

country. From George's paperwork his progress towards becoming a fighter pilot with a front line squadron is clearly recorded, as follows:

28 March 1943: No 11 Personnel Despatch & Reception/Receiving Centre (PDRC)

31 May 1943: 12 (NZ) Personnel Reception Centre (PRC)

PDRCs and PRCs were established in Bournemouth and Brighton. It is unclear where George was processed, but his paperwork records that on 19 June 1943, while at 12 (NZ) PRC, George was promoted to the rank of Temporary Flight Sergeant.



29 June 1943: 17 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit ((P) AFU) Calveley, Cheshire

In 1941-42 an airfield was built near the village of Wardle, Cheshire, north-west of Nantwich, as one of a number of airfields intended to boost the fighter defence of Merseyside. It had three concrete runways of between 1 100 yards (1 000 m) and 1 400 yards (1 300 m). By the time the airfield was complete, the need for fighter defences for the North-West of England had declined, so it was decided to use it for training; the station opened on

14 March 1942 as a Relief Landing Ground for No. 5 SFTS based at RAF Ternhill in Shropshire. On 13 April 1942 No. 5 STFS was renamed No. 5 (Pilot) Advanced Flying Unit ((P)AFU), continuing operations both from Ternhill and its satellites, including Calverley, which was the only one of Ternhill's satellites to have hard runways.

In May 1943 RAF Calveley became the main base for No. 17 (P)AFU, equipped with 174 Miles Master trainers, which moved from RAF Watton in Norfolk. To accommodate the unit's large number of aircraft, RAF Wrexham in North Wales served as a satellite airfield. No. 17 (P)AFU disbanded on 1 February 1944.

**30 November 1943: 61
Operational Training Unit
(OTU) Rednal & Montford
Bridge**

Rednal opened as an RAF base on 8 April 1942 and was about 12 miles NW of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. No 61 Operational Training Unit (OTU) had originally formed at Heston in London in June 1941 and moved to Rednal on 16 April 1942 under 81 Group Fighter Command. Rednal was a standard three runway station with 50 hard standing dispersals, 11 hangars, substantial living sites about half a mile away and a satellite airfield at Montford Bridge, 4miles NW of Shrewsbury.

The training undertaken by the pilots at Rednal was intensive; consequently training sessions often resulted in high accident rates. In common with other OTUs Rednal witnessed many incidents; take off and landing crashes, mid-air collisions, taxiing accidents and Spitfires lost on the high ground of south Shropshire and North Wales. The exercises undertaken at Rednal included sector

reconnaissance, cross-country, high climb to 30,000 feet, instrument flying, low flying, formation flying, bomber affiliation and dogfight practice. Dogfight practice claimed the life of one young Belgian, Pilot Officer, Jean Noizet who collided with another Spitfire and crashed into a local wood; his body was only discovered in 1977, still inside the cockpit of his Spitfire. The remains of this aircraft are now on display at RAF Cosford museum.

**7 March 1944: 1 Tactical Exercise Unit (TEU)
Tealing, Inveraldie, Angus, Scotland**



In 1941, the MOD decided to build an aerodrome at Tealing, about 45 miles NNE of Edinburgh. In October 1943 the name of the Tealing unit was changed to 1 Tactical Exercise Unit (TEU) under Combat Training Wing, specialising in air firing and evasive action. By January 1944 the TEU was operating up to 110 aircraft. In February 1944, RAF Tealing exchanged 40 Hurricanes for 38 Spitfires from Grangemouth. Just prior to D-Day, 1 TEU was put on operational readiness to re-enforce the regulars in the unlikely event of a German counter-attack from Norway, but the unit was stood down on 15 June. The TEU disbanded on 31 July 1944.

**10 June 1944: No. 84 Group Support Unit (GSU)
Aston Down, Gloucestershire**

No. 83 GSU and No. 84 GSU were holding units for the operational squadrons of the 2 Groups that were part of the RAF's 2nd Tactical Air Force (2 TAF). The GSUs maintained a large number of aircraft of all types used by the squadrons in each Group, prepared ready for issue to the squadrons to replace



**Flight Sergeant Roney at Edinburgh Castle, with the Portcullis Gate in the background.
Presumably this was taken while George was at 1 Tactical Exercise Unit at Tealing.**

losses. The GSUs also had conversion flights to provide type conversion and continuation training for the pool of pilots posted to the GSU to await demand for replacements from the squadrons. No. 84 GSU formed at Aston Down on 14 February 1944, with Typhoon Is, Tempest Vs, Spitfire IXs and Mustang Is. No. 84 GSU moved to Thruxton on 13 July 1944, and later to Lasham, near Odiham in Hampshire.

George was posted to Aston Down on 10 June, but after just two days he moved up to the RAF station at Doncaster, now the site of Doncaster Racecourse. Looking at the records, No 84 Group Communications Flight is listed as one of the units based there from October 1943.

On 19 June 1944, his last day in Doncaster, George was promoted to the rank of Temporary Warrant Officer, returned to No. 84 GSU at Aston Down and remained there for several weeks. On 6 August 1944, George was posted to No. 33 Squadron RAF, part of 135 Wing of the RAF's Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF), operating from the Advanced Landing Ground (ALG) at Selsey, East Sussex.

No. 33 Squadron RAF

No.33 Squadron had moved from Britain to the Middle East as a bomber squadron in 1935, becoming a Gloster Gladiator-equipped fighter squadron on 1 March 1938. The Gladiators were in action against the Italian Air Force in North Africa in June 1940, with great success. The Gladiators were replaced in September 1940 by Hawker Hurricanes, and it was Hurricanes that the Squadron took to Greece to take part in the fighting against the Italians in Albania. Operations began in February 1941 but were soon disrupted by the German invasion of Greece, and in April only four air-worthy Hurricanes remained. These were evacuated to Crete, where three more were lost during the German *Luftwaffe* attacks on the island prior to the airborne invasion. Only one aircraft survived to return to Egypt.

In Egypt new aircraft were quickly found, and the squadron provided fighter cover during the see-saw battles against Rommel and the Africa Corps that ended with the victory at El Alamein. After El Alamein the squadron was used to protect the

coastal shipping that supported the advance west along the coast towards the final German stronghold in Tunisia. By the end of 1943 the squadron had converted to the Supermarine Spitfire, and in April 1944 these were taken back to Britain to take part in the D-Day landings and the campaign in Western Europe. In the month before D-Day the squadron flew a mix of fighter sweeps, bomber escort and day intruder missions. After D-Day it eventually moved to France, then Belgium, operating as a fighter-bomber squadron until December 1944.

Apart from a brief spell at Fairwood, now Swansea Airport in South Wales, and two days at Plumetot in France, the Squadron operated for most of June, July and August from airbases in South East England, putting them within easy flying time of France. George joined No. 33 Squadron in August 1944, an important month for the Allies, with the Americans finally breaking out of the Cotentin Peninsula at the beginning of the month, and by the end of the month Paris had fallen and the Normandy Campaign was over. Allied air assets began to move over to France in force to provide close support for the advancing Armies, using former *Luftwaffe* bases and rapidly built, temporary ALGs. Looking at George's log book entries for August 1944 it is clear that he underwent a period of acceptance training with the Squadron before he boarded a Dakota on 26 August and flew across to Caen in France. On 1 September 1944 George started flying sorties over Occupied France and the Low Countries, clocking up three flights and 4 hours 25 minutes on his first day, a marked increase in tempo to his training days.

The airfields that No. 33 Squadron operated from 6 August until 15 December 1944, when the squadron flew back to Predannack in Cornwall to re-equip with Hawker Tempests, are shown below:

6-12 August:	Selsey, East Sussex (ALG, satellite for Tangmere)
12-18 August:	Fairwood Common, Gower Peninsula
18-19 August:	Selsey
19-20 August:	ALG B.10 Plumetot, France
20-31 August:	Tangmere
31 August-7 September:	ALG B.17 Caen, France
7-10 September:	Lympne
10-12 September:	ALG B.35 Le Treport, France

12 September-2 November: ALG B.53 Merville,
France

2 November-15 December: ALG B.65 Maldegem,
Belgium

October 1944: Operation SWITCHBACK and the Breskens Pocket

Following the D-Day landings in June 1944, and the subsequent breakout from Normandy and the Cotentin Peninsula, Allied supply lines became stretched as the armies rapidly advanced into France and Belgium. Montgomery's 'Narrow Front' thrust towards the Ruhr in September 1944 failed at Arnhem and led to a reappraisal of plans to open the port of Antwerp as a logistic hub much closer to the front lines. As well as trying to capture all of the ports along the Allied left flank - Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, Cherbourg, Dunkirk, Ostend and Zeebrugge - the Canadian First Army was also given the task of clearing the Scheldt Estuary from the North Sea to Antwerp, a 50 km (30 mile) stretch of water that was part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall. There were coastal batteries along both banks of the West Scheldt, and the island of Walcheren was considered to be one of the most heavily fortified sections of the entire Wall, standing guard at the mouth of the Estuary.

The Allies had reached Antwerp on 4 September 1944 and captured the city and port relatively easily, yet due to the focus on Operation MARKET GARDEN planners failed to recognise the importance of blocking the escape route being used to evacuate the German 15th Army across the Scheldt from Breskens to Vlissingen, along the South Beveland isthmus to Woensdrecht and Bergen op Zoom and into Germany. Over a three-week period the Germans carried out their own 'little Dunkirk' and had evacuated over 100 000 men, their vehicles and heavy equipment by 26 September.

Operations to take control of the Scheldt commenced in early October 1944, with Allied planning staff predicting a quick resolution, but such assumptions were extremely misplaced, as the poor Canadian infantry soon discovered. Poor weather, terrain completely unsuitable for heavy armour and fighting a well organised defensive force that had taken an oath to fight to the last man and used inundation to channel lines of advance into well

planned killing zones turned the Canadian advance into a miserable footslogging campaign that measured gains in metres.

No.33 Squadron was part of the Allied air effort supporting the Canadian operations during the Battle of the Scheldt, operating from the temporary base at Merville in France for most of the period before moving forward to Maldegem in Belgium. At the beginning of October the Squadron was busy supporting the ongoing Canadian operations to clear the Germans from the Channel ports. George took part in the second of twelve aircraft 'shows' against Dunkirk on 1st October. During this second 'show' at last light, F/O C.D. Leeming was hit and baled out, landing safely behind the lines. He was picked up in the CO's car about 3 hours later.

On 2nd October a 10-ship mission was flown against a gun site north of Antwerp in the morning, while George flew in a 12-ship in the afternoon on an armed recce flight in central Holland, where MT and barges were attacked. The weather on 3rd and 4th October was very bad, preventing any operational flying. A 12-ship took off at lunchtime on the 5th October for an armed recce task around Utrecht, but bad weather was encountered again.

No. 33 Squadron began flying missions to support Operation SWITCHBACK at 1500 hrs on Friday 6 October 1944, an operation designed to clear German opposition from the Breskens Pocket in order to launch Operation INFATUATE 1 and 2, the amphibious assault on Walcheren. Earlier that day a 12-ship took off at 1010 hrs to bomb and strafe Dunkirk, which George participated in. The Operations Record Book (ORB) states that light flak was encountered and bombing results were good. All aircraft were back at Merville between 1055-1110. The crews then briefed for the afternoon mission to bomb and strafe enemy positions in the Breskens area.

The Operational Records of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force (AEAF) and Air Defence Great Britain (ADGB) for 6th October 1944 state that the fighter planes and fighter-bombers of both commands carried out more than 1 000 flights above the occupied part of Netherlands that day. In Zeeland, air support was provided for the Canadian ground

troops' attack across the Leopold Canal. Air attacks were carried out on German targets near many places in Zeeland-Flanders, including Biervliet, Oostburg and Hoofdplaat in the Breskens Pocket.

The Air Branch War Diary of First Canadian Army states, "Friday—weather was good and a record number of sorties were flown today. On the ground the fighting around Tilburg and above the Leopold Canal has been very heavy. Operation SWITCHBACK began today and we now hold a small bridgehead over the Leopold Canal and most air support was directed into these areas...No 84 Group flew 719 sorties (armed recce 267, pre-arranged support 355, immediate support 8, tactical reconnaissance 42, photo recce 39 and artillery recce 8) and 123 Wing carried out most of the air support for Operation SWITCHBACK."

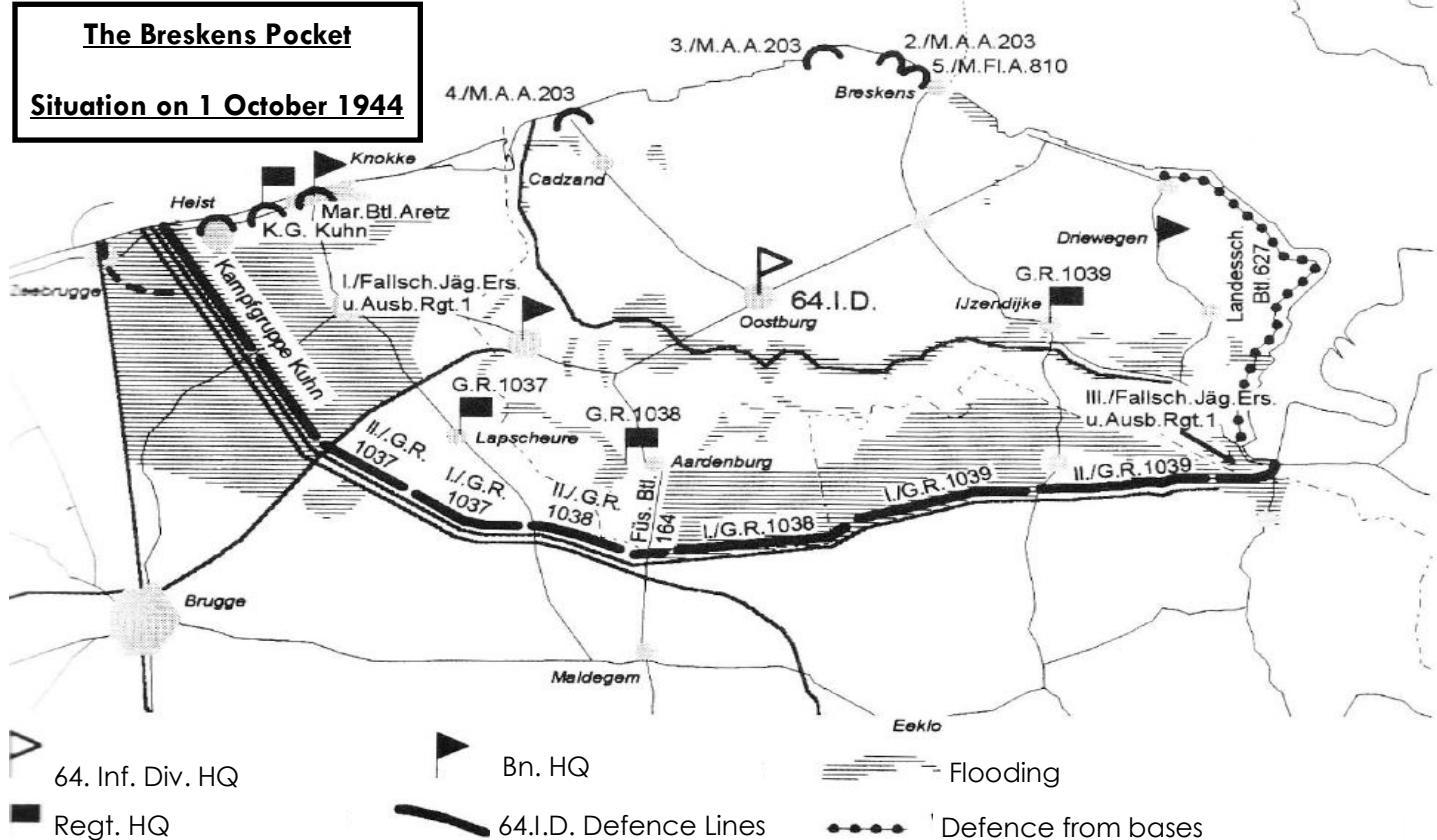
At around 1500 hrs on Friday 6 October 1944, the second 12-ship of the day departed from Merville on an armed reconnaissance mission, led once again by F/O V.J. McFarlane DFM RAAF. George took off in PV160, a Spitfire Mk IXe.

(to be continued)

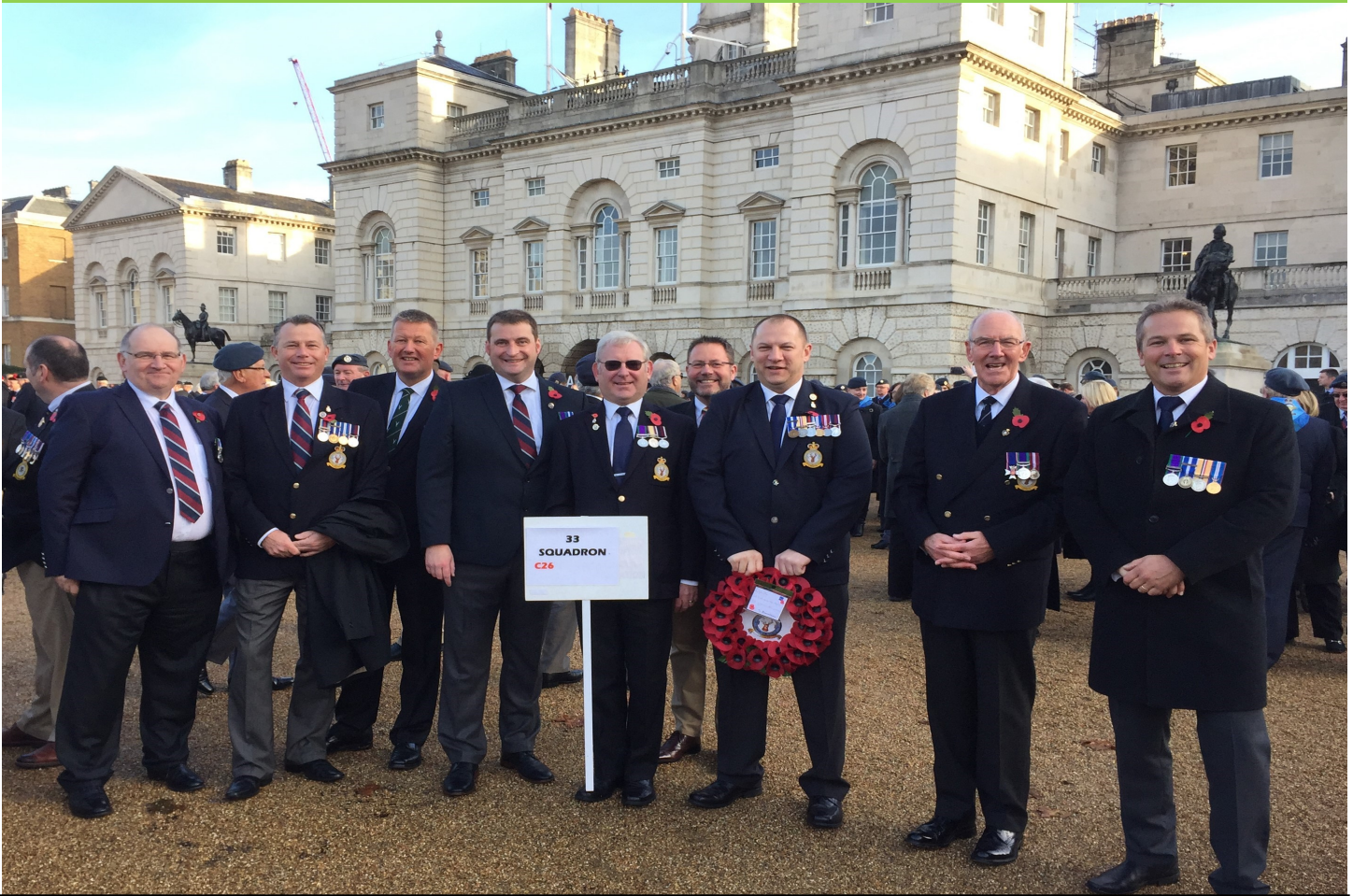
George Roney (ringed) sat on the wing of a Spitfire with 33 Squadron pilots, names as yet unknown.



The Breskens Pocket
Situation on 1 October 1944



No. 33 Squadron Association on Parade: The Cenotaph, Sunday 13 November 2016



0905 hrs_ Horse Guards Parade: the Association's first wave forms up on Graham Lowe.

Having been issued a weighty set of Royal British Legion instructions by Rick Burke Smith several weeks before the event, the chosen few converged in good time on Horse Guards Parade on a beautifully clear and crisp Sunday morning. In order to be ready for a 1000hrs 'March On' to Whitehall a few sensible souls had arrived the night before and stayed in hotels around town, while others had had to get up very early and either drove, caught buses or trains into London. In fact, one of the party was so keen to get there in good time he nearly arrived a week ahead of everyone else due to a slight error with his diary!

There were already many hundreds of veterans either on Horse Guards or waiting to be processed through Ticket Control when the 33 Squadron Association team started arriving around 0900 hrs. The various Service columns were already forming up across the square as we were checked in. After 30 minutes standing around the longest column was the queue leading to the 3 sets of portaloos, as the effect of cold air took effect on bladders full of tea, coffee and other beverages. It must be an age thing.

By 1000 hrs the professional drill instructors, ably assisted by Dick Brewster, had us all lined up and ready to go. What happened thereafter could



Above: 0950 hrs Horse Guards Parade_ 13 of the 14 members on parade, see Angus Dawson on previous picture. Dick Brewster is standing behind an Air Gunner from No. 31 Squadron SAAF.
 Below: Meanwhile, over in Hong Kong, Glenn Stringer and Dan Senior-So lay a wreath at the Cenotaph on behalf of the 33 Squadron Association.

almost be described as miraculous, as several thousand ex-servicemen, women, wheelchairs, motorised scooters and dogs squeezed six abreast in columns through the arches and wheeled right into position on Whitehall, where we were greeted by the first of many rounds of warm applause from the public. On huge TV screens we were able to watch the precision drill and formality of the Royals and VIPs that was taking place further down Whitehall. Out of camera view, just along the road, it was an entirely different and hugely enjoyable spectacle as banter and hip flasks were swapped.

All of the jollity stopped just before 1100 hrs, Big Ben struck eleven, the guns fired, and the whole area fell absolutely silent for two minutes. Again we watched as the wreathes were laid, prayers were said and hymns were sung. Then the bands struck up and the columns to our right started to move off to the beat of the bass drums. Much of the spectacle is lost once you start to march, as you concentrate on keeping step and spacing. It



used to be so easy! Before you know it, there's an 'Eyes Left' and the Cenotaph looms high above you. The wreath is quickly taken from the front marker and there's an 'Eyes Front'. A few seconds later and the column starts to wheel right, heading back around the circuit into Horse Guards Parade. The cheers and applause from the crowd was constant, from the minute we stepped off to the minute we halted on the Square. As a serviceman, parades used to be something to be avoided at all costs whenever possible. As a proud veteran and Association member I would recommend participation in this parade to each and every one of you, and on behalf of all of the members who marched that day I take this opportunity to thank RBS for making it happen.

arches into Whitehall, but this time we wheeled left towards The Lord Moon, to meet up with RBS and Paul Davies. The pub was crammed full, with a huge variety of berets and badges on display. The debrief was short and positive: we want to make an Association presence at the Cenotaph Remembrance Parade a regular event in the calendar, the blazer badges were a great idea and drew many comments around the route and in the pub, an Association tie is required, as are hip flasks for the Squadron Whisky, we want more Association members marching with us next year ... and some of us are even considering wearing bowler hats next time!

We remembered them - Loyalty

By 1230 hrs we were heading back through the



Reflections: Paul 'Boggy' Webster

Our Editor, Dave Stewart, has kindly asked if I would relate my thoughts about No 33 Squadron, the finest SH outfit there is in my humble opinion. So here it is. The events I mention are certainly relayed as I remember them, though quite a few years, civilian life and a fair few beers since will no doubt have altered my recollections somewhat. I make no claim to absolute accuracy and may have jazzed things up a bit.

Having come off the SAR Force at Valley, where the flying was exciting but the RAF was viewed as a rather annoying interference with the SAR boys' proper civilian lives on the 20 days a month we didn't work, the front line seemed very, very far away. Although I wasn't really sure what I was getting into when Navs began to be posted as integral SH crew I definitely didn't want to be relegated to purely a winch operator on the Sea King, with some snotty first-tourist co-pilot having the temerity to locate things on my behalf when the venerable Wessex was retired. So it was off to the OCU at Odiham for me, where I first encountered the quietly confident, adventurous and unassumingly modest outfit that was No.33 Squadron.

After my course an offer I couldn't refuse of a tour in Germany on 18 Squadron came along, and beer at 20p per pint took a lot of turning down! So off I went to Laarbruch and enjoyed a tour of some ease with few exercise commitments, no standby requirement and not an Op to be sniffed at for the Puma Flt. Again, the front line was distant.....but was I happy? Well, not professionally at any rate.

Things kind of crystallised for me that I might be in something of a backwater when extensive floods hit the Netherlands and the Maas river burst its banks. 33 Squadron detached aircraft to Laarbruch, used 18 Squadron's line and HAS's, our PBF and even our aircraft to fly in support of the Dutch troops repairing dykes about 20 miles from our own home base, while 18 Squadron's crews shuffled around with their hands in their grow bag pockets burning

with embarrassment. I honestly couldn't believe that 33 had been flown in to do what should obviously been a job for the local Squadron. With the splitting of 18 and Laarbruch's closure I took the chance to actually join a proper war going outfit, and so began my own association with a unit that I believe exhibits all that is good about SH effectiveness, fortitude, and camaraderie.

On arrival in early '97 I was warmly welcomed by OC33, Roger Uttley, and told that my Flt Cdr would be interviewing me shortly. Except he didn't. It maybe should have told me something that neither Dave Stubbs nor Howard Nash would admit to being responsible for me. After about four months it was finally acknowledged that A Flt were to bear my admin burden so full of hope I went and knocked on the firmly closed A Flt office door, only to be told to come back later; planning was afoot for Ardent Ground, the AMF(L) artillery exercise to be held that year in Thracian Turkey and the Flt staff were not to be disturbed.

A rather large fly, probably a tsetse one, got in the planning ointment then, when the population of Brazzaville decided they wanted to really kick off about something. I can't remember what. Anyway, the Squadron was given notice that we were to prepare to deploy for a UK citizen extraction mission via Libreville in the Gabon, and A Flt were, quite rightly, in the vanguard. Ooh, now this was more like it. We got jungle kit. We did training. We polished tents and we had jabs. Many, many jabs. We got very excited and I was genuinely impressed at the well practiced focus and ease with which the Squadron got itself ready to fly far away and do stuff. And then, suddenly.....! Nothing happened. The Op receded, and was left....indeterminant.

So back to Plan A and off went the AMF(L) to Turkey. I think I finally met Dave Stubbs as we climbed into the cockpit and he clearly thought I needed a close eye because we spent the next month or so flying together. And great flying it was - I think we were the first NATO unit to fly low over many of the

former Soviet states. Nightstop in Prague, low level over Transylvania, outrageous abuse of a beautiful five-star baggage room in Bucharest, then into the challenging but brilliant artillery moves and low level trips right up to the Bulgarian border. It was clear that this was bread and butter to the Squadron; after the shambles of the SH 'Ex GREEN BLADE' swampfest in Dumfriesshire I had been distinctly unimpressed with the way the wider SH did field deployments, but now here I was practicing for war in a far flung field, with a slick operation run by capable guys and supported by resourceful and reliable ground crew. Never mind the humming turdis's, showering from a car battery in a tent full of mossies or the rampaging tortoises all around, this was the Front Line at last, and only 12 years into my career! What a sea change from the laconic days on 18...the only disappointment was that just after we deployed Op DETERMINANT was reborn, and the B team of the Squadron deployed on a real job to West Africa. They were happy, but we most certainly weren't, with H Nash expertly rubbing salt in the wounds. I fondly remember Stubbsy's face as he picked up the bluey from H in Libreville, saying, "Aw, isn't that thoughtful, he's sent us a letter", his warm smile turning to speechless flabbergastment as he opened it and a single delicate white feather fluttered to the tent floor.....

And so went the rest of my shortened tour on 33, fab flying in Norway, awesome nightstops all over Europe (on most transits we flew more than we slept, which in a Mk1 Puma is saying something), but please no-one mention to Gp Capt Cormack the tugboat in Preveza.

My tour came to an end when I swapped the joys of the front line for a desk job at LAND Command, where, being the only chap with a single surname, a regional accent and a fish tank on his desk I was never really going to fit in.

And at that time, despite much wailing and gnashing of teeth, there came to pass the Joint Helicopter Command, and there was much rejoicing. Or not.

Having had responsibility for tasking SH support for

Army training and thus finding good stuff for our boys to do, I was most disappointed to find that JHC would thenceforth be tasking its own assets. Rather like the cooks deciding who should get the chips. After 2 years of not wearing DMS shoes, because "An Officer will only wear leather shoes, Old Boy," I was offered the chance to go back to 33 as OC C (Trg) Flight, which I of course jumped at.

Now, the Squadron had always run that A Flt did AMF(L), B Flt ran the routine tasking and exercise support and C Flt did the training. It was now I realised that Reggie Pattle, OC B Flt and by appointment to HRH purveyor of Duff Gen and Wizzo Wheezes, was a much better politician than I, for no sooner had we arrived than C Flt were somehow magically given the running of the tasking too and his B Flt would just sort of fly around a bit and paint things a sandy colour on their days off. On a normally staffed flt this would have been fine, but since the entirety of C Flt consisted of Me, Shep Shepherd, Jim Ixer and Adam Jux, with Jonny Adamson running interference for us on occasion, this was a big ask, and getting a quart out of a pint pot was something at which I did not excel. For those of us on the Sqn at the time it is still a period tinged with great sadness as we lost two of our finest, Andy Crous and Mark Maguire, in challenging winter conditions in the Kosovan hills. We were already a pretty close unit, but the collective grief we shared as their repatriating VC10 pulled onto stand at Brize was remarkable and still leaves a poignant sting to this day. Still, the crews kept their CR, the permanent detachment to Kosovo ran well enough despite the ongoing threat of liver damage from rocking the HAS Bar and the required moves up the slippery pole were achieved for the right people. Then Wg Cdr Paul Lyall arrived, took a swift look around, and suddenly, and delightedly, I found myself commanding the estimable A Flt.

Throughout all of this I was gradually realising that 33 was not like other units. Many squadrons think they're the best because their badge is better than their neighbours, or they've nicked the right bit of plate steel after happy hour. Some are proud purely because the jet they fly can stop; many rely on the

deeds of their forebears as a source of their pride. 33 is very rightly proud of its history and achievement, most obviously during the tragic disaster of Crete, but it does not rest on its laurels and is far from blowing its own trumpet. Almost to a fault, I think 33 just gets on with its job without the need to hide behind undone top buttons or stripey scarves. In the 20 years with which I have been associated with the Squadron, it has achieved all that which has been asked of it, with fortitude in sometimes very harsh conditions, with humour in the face of horror and with clear sighted professionalism despite the fog of war emanating from higher headquarters.

Which kind of brings me to our little adventure in Mesopotamia, and why Tony Blair still owes me and the rest of the then A Flt many, many beers. In writing this fairly light hearted rambling I must first say that those of us on the initial TELIC push worked hard in pretty poor conditions against an uncertain threat, but in retrospect the level of threat and consequent skill and courage shown by those who operated in Iraq during the later insurgency were of a much, much higher order and have had me in slightly shame faced awe ever since. Those who came after, and went back to Iraq and Afghanistan time and again have my deepest respect, and especially at this time of year I am very mindful of the dear friends we lost there.

But back to the start of it all....through variously foul means I had managed to gain approval for WHITE HART 2002 to be held in Sion, Switzerland; as far as I know this was the first ever training by NATO aircraft there. Nice job, I thought, I'll look forward to that. But it was not to be....a few months before, Paul Lyall came into the office, fixed me with that piercing gaze of his and told me that A Flt weren't going to play. That nice Mr Blair said that the Squadron was to deploy aircraft to Banja Luka for the winter and that A Flt was the lead. Now hang on.....I thought about this for a millisecond or so and started planning. Who on earth wouldn't swap the regular public transport and skiing opportunities of snowy Switzerland for a chance to share a portacabin outside the asbestos poisoned Metal Factory? The

sweetener, as if we really needed one, was that the Squadron was also tasked with supporting the 13 and 3/4 Hardly Worthits in Belize early the following year, and as a reward for being too cold all winter A Flt were to deploy to be too hot for a while to balance things out. Result!

So off we went to Bosnia, where we did some great ops in the pretty challenging Balkan winter, all the time dreaming of warm days in the Caribbean, pints of Pina Collada sipped lazily in the hammock swinging between the hockey stick and a palm tree on Goff's Caye. It was cold in Bosnia, the Metal Factory was a rubbish place to live and because the army can't hold their beer we were limited to 2 pints a day. We did, however, do all that was asked of us. I had a brilliant Flt team and remain ever grateful to Mike Slattery, Jim Dewar, Jim Ixer and Boot Strawson for running it all for me. I don't think we missed a single task due to unserviceability because of the fantastic work of JEngO Mike 'Stretch' Pettit and his team. Robbie Lees, Simon Catton-Wretham and I did get away, narrowly, with a bad case of pressonitis racing the darkness home one evening, ending up in a low hover in the middle of Banja Luka city in low cloud that we were sucking lower. I still shudder to think about that bad weather abort between the tower blocks and power pylons, and apparently the rest of the team were outside listening to us struggling just over the hill in the dark, as Flt Lt Warwick Creighton gently explained after the next morning's debrief. When Warwick issues a bollocking, you know you've been bollocked!

Well, about half way through our time in Bosnia that nice Mr Blair changed his mind, and we swapped Belize for Basra, but not in a good way. Mine's a Guinness, thanks Tony. The folly of TELIC is well known; we all know the appalling shambles of our accommodation on arrival, despite the best efforts of Sqn Ldr Pattle to make up for the failures of our force Loggies. We remember the lack of food, the shameful attitude of our 'brethren' on the Tornado det and the absence of anything like direction or leadership from the higher-ups. We remember the heat, the Safwan crapper, boiled hamburgers and the speeding complaints. But what else?



Above: 'The Borrowers' on parade! The front row includes, from the left, AJ (2nd), Colin Would (3rd), Boggy (4th), Paul Lyall (5th), Reggie (6th), Mark the SengO (7th) and RBS (8th). I will leave the rest to you, still easily recognizable despite some atrocious haircuts!

Below: First morning at Safwan, Boggy in his dossbag.





Above: Hasty Rebrief 09 March 2003.
Below: The three little words nobody on SH, except the RAF Regiment section, likes to hear: "Gas Gas Gas!"



I remember the determination of all those I served there with, the sense that although things were rubbish we were still going to get on with it regardless of how we were treated. I remember the feeling of solidity that our bedrock Dave Stewart gave us back at Benson, the leadership of Paul Lyall and the dependability of our ground crew under Mark Johnson who at one time had his aircraft operating at six different bases between Iraq, Bosnia and the UK.

I remember the first missile attack on Ali Al Salem, sitting in a concrete tube in full NBC kit, with the erroneous but genuine belief that Saddam would lob chemical weapons at us. I remember the almost overwhelming sense of responsibility I felt when the job of leading the follow-on tasking came down on the original Al Faw invasion plan fell to me, then the realisation that it really didn't matter, that any one of our crews could lead this if I dropped down dead. I remember the 19th of March 2003, the stunned silence in the darkness at the Gibraltar pickup point when the USMC cabs shut down back at the start point and OC 42 Cdo was told of the tragic Sea Knight crash and the loss of his troops. I remember the absolute clarity of knowing that 13 RAF SH and a single AAC Lynx could do the job, unsupported, of 22 USMC transport helos, 12 Cobras, 4 A-10s and 2 C-130 Spectre gunships, because that's what RAF SH did; we flew around in circles until the job was done. I remember saying my son's name as the launch codeword, the noise of the formation lift, the diamond focus of flying at thirty feet into a hostile enemy country, all the time with the feeling that this just didn't happen to wee lads from Belfast. I remember the piece of compo box cardboard handed by a Marine to our crewman with, "Thank F**k for the Royal Air Force" written on it. I was told at the time that No 33 Squadron that morning led the biggest helicopter mission in British history, and probably the largest since the Vietnam War. The honour of commanding that, the trust of Wg Cdr Lyall and the crews following me, still leaves me utterly overawed, and it was by far the most challenging event of my 20-year career. And somehow, knackered after almost no sleep for 48

hours, we got away with it. But there was much more challenging work to come.

After a day or two we were given ill defined tasks to deploy into Iraq - B Flt up country in support of ground forces and A Flt to operate CASEVAC from inside Iraq. The guidance from SHFHQ was....absent. No Op orders at all; no idea of posture, possible onward movement or duration. All done with a phone call telling us to kind of go forward and do some stuff for a while. Why on earth we even had a nominal HQ of many folk deployed to a car park in deepest Kuwait remains a complete mystery to me. Anyway, after deploying the ground party forward under armed convoy we flew in, though as I recall we were only committed very late in the day.

I remember waking in the back of the cab on the first arrival at Safwan, in formation at night, and someone yelling, "GAS GAS GAS" when we were still rotors turning. I remember getting out of the cab, the BALO telling us to follow between the tapes as the mines hadn't been cleared and wondering why he was bent over, until he warned me about the snipers. That was scary. Sleeping on the open ground with camel spiders all around was terrifying.

Most of all from Iraq I remember, with unbounded pride, the efforts of the ground and aircrews operating at Safwan. Time after time, night after day after night, when the calls came the cabs were ready, the kit was serviced and the threat maps were up to date. Time after time, over 80 times in all if I recall, the exhausted crews launched into the harsh revealing sunlight or the pitch black darkness, landing close to where the casualties had been hit, disregarding their own safety for the sake of helping those broken by war. I was, and remain, awestruck at the resolve and courage, on one night six times in a row, of the formations flying into danger for the sake of others. Again, what came after created a new normal for threat levels, but this was the first time in living memory that UK SH had been used so extensively in conventional war, and we did good. Or rather, they did good, I just hung around and used up compo really.

Throughout all of this 33 Squadron kept its morale high under Paul's excellent leadership, rightly confident in doing a difficult job well despite the searing heat, lack of sleep and dreadful living conditions. I remember my frustration at the invisibility and apparent lack of concern of our senior leadership, the sense of injustice at the relative differences in facilities between us and the Tornado det, the embarrassment of our fantastically helpful USMC comrades calling us, "The Borrowers", and Captain Bill Denehan leaving us speechless by asking, "Has the UK ever been to war before?"

Like most people it is not the easy or comfortable events which marks my timelines, it is the slightly tougher times and the reactions to them that I tend to think of most fondly. I remember the banter, the table football, Audrey's Very Best Friend, the executive pooing facility, tiny bottles of Tabasco, sand storm tent collapses, jammed weapons, Oliver North and wearing respirators while watching 'Goldmember' in a hole on the ground during an air raid, the film projected onto Dode Dahroug's stained sleep sheet, or the 'Safwan Shroud' as it was known.

I retired from the Royal Air Force about a year after Op TELIC, and I am so glad I left from the unit with which I feel most affiliated and for which I feel the most pride. It is a little saddening to me that the Squadron Association has not found the support which I feel it deserves from the Squadron alumni, but in a way that just shows the attitude of the Squadron - do your job well, and don't go on about it. I guess we just rely on that final thing which binds, a single word which means so much and which has seen us through the heartbreaking losses and the hardest of tasks: Loyalty.



33 Squadron personnel putting up tents in the desert, somethings never change!

And Finally...

Bad Boy's Past Forgiven? Following his visit to Buck House in October, many congratulations go to Squadron Leader David Julian Rhys Morris for his appointment to the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. On the same Honours list, AVM David John Stubbs OBE was also appointed to the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath. Amazeballs!

FS Fg Off Niall Davidson: Good to see Niall back at RAF Benson after successfully completing his commissioning course at Cranwell. Niall is now the DDH Air Safety Officer in Ops Wing, hoping to fly again one day.....

Puma OCF: 33 Squadron is now operating quite happily without the embedded OCF element, and doing what it enjoys most - getting across the iso-dollar line as often as possible. Meanwhile No.28 Sqn, reformed as a joint Chinook and Puma squadron after the RN ran off with the Merlins, and having dried the building out after an unfortunate leak shortly after opening, is reminiscent of 240 OCU for those old enough to remember, just with less aircraft!

Josh Jones: Josh, the USAF exchange officer with 33 Squadron from 1999 to 2002 - remember his Halloween parties?! - is recovering well after his A109 medical helicopter crash in the States in September. Josh broke his back, leg, ribs, sternum, and clavicle. Thanks go to Dick Brewster for keeping in close touch with Josh and keeping our members informed. Josh thanks everyone this side of the pond for their good wishes. Messages can be sent to joshua.h.jones@gmail.com.

Colonel John Alexander RCAF : the Editor met up with John in Ottawa recently after his 12-month detachment to Egypt as Commander of the multinational peacekeeping force. John was the RCAF exchange officer with 33 Squadron some years ago, and has returned to the Canadian MoD to start a tour as Director Air Simulation & Training.

From AMF to AVM: AOC No.22 (Training) Group, AVM Andrew Turner, was the Reviewing Officer for 606 (Chiltern) Squadron's Parade at RAF Benson. The ceremony marked 20 years of support to the SH Force on operations and exercises around the world. Fortunately AVM Turner did not have to carry a sword on this occasion, not a bad thing after his sword drill display in Norway many years ago!

Op TORAL: Pumas continue to provide support NATO's

Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT in Afghanistan. 230 Sqn A Flt handed over to 33 Sqn B Flt under Sqn Ldr Tom Holgate in Jul 16. On his visit to theatre the JHC Commander, MG Richard Felton, commented on the professional approach and high standards displayed by the Force. What a pity that despite lots of photographs of Comd JHC around camp, there was a small group of people discovered recently who didn't know who he was!

Xunantunich: for the older readers who can recall the happy times and great flying we used to have in Belize - now available on FB - after more than a century of excavation work at the Mayan site at Xunantunich they have finally discovered a royal tomb and the remains of a Mayan adult, buried with jade beads, obsidian blades and jaguar and deer bones. The tomb, one of the largest burial chambers ever discovered in Belize, measures 4.5m by 2.4m. The archaeologists were more excited to discover some hieroglyphic panels, believed to be part of a hieroglyphic stair that was originally at the ancient Maya city of Caracol, about 45 kms south of Xunantunich, and another popular Puma drop-in site. If memory serves me well, gin was always high on the archaeologists' supplies list.

Las Vegas Puma Reunion: Can anyone confirm the rumour of a Reunion being arranged by Reaper jocks? Did I hear Richie Knowles' name mentioned?!

Welcome Back ..Paul Davies, from his detachment to Al Udeid, glad to see that you left the Middle East in a far better state than when you arrived. A warm welcome home too to the 33 Squadron El Centro detachment. Any idea yet when we can welcome back the Pumas that were left behind? Don't worry, once the SHFHQ is up and running again, planning oversights like that will be a thing of the past. Sort 'em out, Mr Baron! On a similar vein, welcome back to the Puma fold Sqn Ldr Simon O'Brien. Ask him to explain the Camel IA drills.....I bet you didn't do that at DSTL 'OB'!



"And so, my fellow Association members, ask not what your Association can do for you - ask what you can do for your Association."



**We are always looking for contributions to the Newsletter.
Submissions to '33sqnassociation@gmail.com'.**



Celebrating the 100th Anniversary of 33 Squadron

The Central Band of The Royal Air Force are proud to celebrate the centenary of 33 Squadron with a spectacular concert at the stunning Dorchester Abbey



Friday 16 December 2016

7.30pm | £15 per person

All proceeds to the RAF Benevolent Fund

Proud to support



**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**
THE HEART OF THE RAF FAMILY

Tickets from: <http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford/index.aspx#event=2122>

Car Parking: <http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk/parking>

Additional parking will be available at the Recreation Ground, follow the signs.

BFBS will be recording the Concert, to be shown on Christmas Day.

Please inform the Membership Secretary if you are attending the Concert.