



Celebrating 100 years of the RAF

LOYALTY

The 33 Squadron RAF Association Newsletter

Issue 9 Autumn 2018



Paul smashes the
1179 challenge!



The Association on Parade:
11/11/2018



Our 'Man in
the North'
finds
Corporal
Butchers

Inside this issue...

From the Chairman / Editor

Page 2

From the Hart—OC 33 Squadron

Page 4-5

Lest We Forget : Remembrance Day 2018

Page 6-8

Paul Lyall and Chris Perkins offer their impressions of that very special day in London

The Every Man Remembered Challenge 2018

Page 9-11

Founder member Paul Davies smashes an extraordinary challenge in Belgium

Our Man in the North

Page 12-21

Some impressive sleuthing by Tony Whitehead uncovers information about 33 Squadron RFC in Yorkshire during World War One

Mixed Pickles story bears more fruit -

Page 22-23

Family ties discovered after George Roney's story reaches Australia?

Puma Operations: AGILA 1979-1980

Page 24-28

Memories of Op AGILA by Mike Hodgson

Page 29-31

Personal recollections from one of the pilots who flew during the cease fire and election campaign.



SEE THE WORLD
WITH THE
Royal Air Force

Apply: INSPECTOR OF RECRUITING.
4 HENRIETTA ST. COVENT GARDEN, LONDON, W.C. 2.
Or any R.A.F. Unit or Depot.

Cover Picture: Lying amongst the many wreaths that were presented during the 2018 Remembrance Day Parade in London to mark the Centenary of the end of World War One, the 33 Squadron Association wreath lies at the base of the Cenotaph in Whitehall. The centrepiece of our wreath shows 17 flags, representing personnel from those countries who, since its formation at Bristol Filton aerodrome on 12 January 1916, have served with, and in some cases, died with No.33 (Home Defence) Squadron Royal Flying Corps and No.33 Squadron Royal Air Force, The wreath bearer was Mr. Glenn Stringer, who had flown in from Japan to take part in this special event.

(Photo: Glenn Stringer)

From the Chairman / Editor..

Having contracted at the last minute what my old Brummie mucker Chris Perkins described as the 'dreaded lurgy' I missed one of the main highlights in the Association's calendar this month, the Remembrance Day Parade at the Cenotaph in Whitehall this year. And of all the Cenotaph Parades to miss, the 100th Anniversary of the end of World War One, taking place on Armistice Sunday, 11 November 2018, and in the year that the RFC and RNAS became the RAF, this was not the one. I was so pleased at the response that our members made to meet our aspiration to have 33 members parading, how sad that the RBL and the demand for places put paid to that plan. Yet it was good to see some new faces in the ranks, and we even had some of the two winged master race joined in! It was good to have our President join us this year too, but I fear he may have started a new and rather expensive tradition re the post-Parade refreshments that may break the Fund!

You will read in OC 33's article just how busy the Squadron has been this year, but has 33 ever had a 'quiet' year? On a squadron that is now far smaller in terms of manpower and resources than many of us were used to 'back in the day', the fact that the Puma Force reached the 25 000 hour mark in September, with 7 500 of those hours on Op TORAL, played their part in the Centenary Celebrations in the air and on the ground, while continuing to meet a demanding operational and exercise programme, all of this is proof of the commitment that the young aircrew and engineers continue to give to 33 and the RAF.

As 2018 marks the RAF's 100th birthday and the end of the Great War, this year's Association Tour looked in to 33 Squadron's early years, and went North to look at some of the airfields

that we flew from between 1916 and 1918. For those of you who have not read it, I recommend a look at the 'Zeppelin Hunters' Tour Handbook, on our website, easily accessible via the 'Sqn History' tab, along with the Tour Report on the Home Page in Latest News. Tony Whitehead's article about Bramham Moor and Cyril Butchers is an excellent addition to this period that is sadly lacking in coverage in the History Room archives.

One thing the Tour brought home to us is the variety of aircraft and tasks the Squadron has undertaken since it was formed. In 2021 the Puma will have been in service for 50 years, the longest period that the Squadron has operated one aircraft type. In preparation for a celebration of this remarkable achievement in just over 2 years time, it would be useful to start collecting your recollections and memories, your photographs and your memorabilia, reflecting all of the operations and exercises that have involved 33 and the Puma since 1971. Research into the Squadron History is a fascinating but arduous task, made more difficult by having so few living veterans from past times left to talk to. Write it down now, and label your photos with who, where and when. , it makes research so much easier. I have started the ball rolling with Op AGILA (1979-1980) and I thank the 230 Squadron Association for letting us reproduce Mike Hodgson's article as an fine example. I expect to see a joint celebration in 2021, so having a '230' article in a '33' publication can be the first brick in the footings of a future Puma Force Association, as so many of us have served on both. Discuss - over a beer tomorrow? See you in town.

Dave Stewart

Proud to be...33



THE COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT

Air Commodore Paul Lyall

CHAIRMAN

Dave Stewart
davestewart33@icloud.com

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Dick Brewster

TREASURER

Jez Read
jezr69@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Neil Scott

LOYALTY EDITOR

Dave Stewart
davestewart33@icloud.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

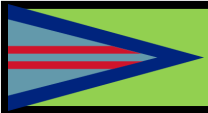
Paul Davies
33sqnassociation@gmail.com

SQUADRON AIRCREW REP

Genevieve Rolleston-Smith

SQUADRON GROUNDCREW REP

WO Docherty (WO Eng 33 Sqn)



From the Hart - OC 33 Squadron



October 2018: Wing Commander Royston-Airey awarding the Puma Force Crewman and 33 Squadron Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Niall Davidson, with his LS&GCM. Medals were also awarded to Squadron Leader Max Bond and Flight Lieutenant Dave Masterton.

Well, my predecessor warned me about how time flies when you're in command, and he was absolutely right! A lot has happened in the 8 months that I've been in the Chair, and the pace of life on 33 Squadron remains frenetic. July saw our inaugural Puma Force GOLDSTAR Exercise, led by OC B Flight; the GOLDSTAR Exercise Series looks to enhance and invigorate the capability and skillsets of the Puma Force through focussing on scenarios other than those that we currently face in Afghanistan. Working closely with 2 Para, JHSS and 606 Squadron, this 2 day Exercise based in and around SPTA concentrated on Eagle Vehicle Check Points (EVCP), Helicopter Assault Force (HAF) and Vehicle Interdiction (VI) Training. Throughout 2019 as a Force we will be looking to build on this concept, with Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief / Non-combatant Evacuation Operations (HADR/NEO), Joint Personnel Recovery (JPR) and UK Disaster Relief scenarios all being considered for rollout.

In August I deployed to the TORAL Aviation Detachment in Afghanistan, to visit the engineers and aircrew of 33 Sqn A Flight who were coming towards the end of their three and a half month rotation. Much

has changed since I first deployed to Afghanistan in 2005, the progress, certainly throughout Kabul has been considerable, but what stood out for me most was the exceptional levels of professionalism, commitment and indeed enthusiasm displayed by the engineers and aircrew of 33 Squadron and the wider Puma Force. Everyone from the Detachment Commander down understood the key role that Puma plays in the NATO Mission in Afghanistan, and the impact that this is having on security and stability in the region. Witnessing the most junior of Sqn Personnel thriving in an operational theatre, from a Sqn OC's perspective was a truly humbling experience.

The RAF Centenary Celebrations in which 33 Squadron, the Puma Force and RAF Benson played a key part, were undoubtedly a highlight of the year. The Flypast on the 10th of July was viewed by over 70,000 people from the Mall, and millions across the globe through news and social media footage. Members of the Squadron were intrinsically involved both in the Flypast and on Parade and I understand that the Squadron Association was also well represented. You will all have hopefully seen the RAF Benson 100 Faces Project, if you

haven't then I urge you to look it up on the Station Homepage. For me this is an excellent representation of what the Puma Force and the broader Benson Community is all about - 'quiet and understated professionalism'. Such was the success of the endeavour, that the Benson Photography Team, responsible for both the concept and execution of the project, have been recognised not only through a number of MOD Awards, but also by several photography industry governing bodies.

Finally, I know that Dave Stewart has done a sterling job of advertising and marketing our recently commissioned Loyalty Pale Ale! Brewed by Jeff Rosenmeier of Lovibonds in Henley, Loyalty has gone down an absolute treat in the various Messes and Bars at Benson, and with a donation being made to the RAF Benevolent Fund for every pint and bottle sold, it's a great way of supporting a cause that is close to all of our hearts. And on that note, I look forward to catching up with many of you at the Puma Reunion this coming Friday.

Yours Ever

Wg Cdr Chris Royston-Airey

'Loyalty'



Above: No.33 Squadron Standard Party, London, July 2018

Below: Engineers receiving Commander Joint Force Logistic Component Award , Ex Saif Sareea, Oman, September 2018



For the Puma 1 generation - spot the differences on this unusual view of a Puma Mk2.



Lest We Forget

33 Squadron Association participates in the
100th Anniversary of the Armistice at the 2018
Remembrance Day Parade



“A nation that forgets its past has no future”.
(Winston Churchill)

Chris Perkins writes: Following on from an extremely rewarding and successful trip to Lincolnshire at the beginning of October, the 33 Squadron Association once more participated in this year's Remembrance Day Parade. Being fully conversant by now with the "inner workings" of the Royal British Legion registration process, our staunch treasurer, Jez Reid, applied early for 33 places. Initially this was accepted by the RBL, but due to this year being the 100th anniversary of The Armistice, and a consequent extremely high number of applications, this was culled to 23. By virtue of democratic process, the Committee drew out the names of participants. However, on the day only 21 formed up on Horse Guards Parade. Our Chairman, Dave Stewart, was a last minute absentee, sadly having succumbed to some "dreaded lurgy" the night before. This almost had disastrous consequences as he had the Association's Wreath but, dedicated to the end, Dave dragged himself from his sickbed early on Sunday morning to drive to a local RV and safely deposit it, at arms length, with our President, Paul Lyall, prior to his departure for London.

Jez's efficient distribution of the comprehensive British Legion joining instructions ensured that all of our party assembled easily and well ahead of schedule. Many previous friendships from past postings and detachments were renewed amongst veterans. However, Eamon Geraghty and his pace stick made sure that everyone was assembled in good order, formed up and ready to move. Having a number of 21 in the flight not devisable by a rank length of 6 did initially cause angst and confusion during the march. That said, appropriate guidance and supervision again from Mr Geraghty and Mr Brewster on the march kept all intruders and drifters out of the blank file and in trim. With the anticipation of increased Veteran numbers the British Legion had provided extra portaloos. However, their use was extremely restricted

by a crocodile queue of the entire WRAF Veteran contingent 30 minutes prior to march off.

Once again, the continual support from members of the public around the route was superb and very moving indeed, as was the atmosphere amongst all of the participants. Every 33 Squadron hip flask was put to good use if not drained by the completion of the parade. The 33 Squadron Association spans generations of Puma Airmen and it was a genuine privilege to parade with a complete cross-section stretching over those years.

Appreciation and great credit must be accorded to the Committee, in particular Jez Reid, for the impeccable co-ordination in making this such a memorable historic occasion. With the RBL having received over 17 000 Veterans' application for 10 000 places on the Parade, I believe that Jez will be opening the list for 2019 early in the year, and will again bid for 3 places. To avoid disappointment get your bids of interest in early to ensure a position high on the list. It is a day of phenomenal experiences.

"Loyalty"

As Chris said, marching with the contingent for the first time was our Honorary President, who wrote: Twenty one members of 33 Squadron Association represented the Squadron at the Annual Ceremony of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on 11 November. It was a bright sunlit day, which made the inevitable waiting around on Horseguards Parade more bearable. A few hip flasks may also have helped ease the pain! The parade formed up at 10 am to march out onto Whitehall just before the ceremony at 11 am. There was considerable banter in the ranks as other representatives sauntered past - a great welcome for the nurses and a little less for the Met Police. After the ceremony was finished, the Veterans' Parade marched round the block to salute the Princess Royal before dispersing. It was a great honour to march with my Squadron colleagues in the year of the Royal Air

Force centenary and the year that marks 100 years from the cessation of hostilities in World War One. It was much more fun than I expected: spirits were high, the public were there in force, and we managed a creditable marching performance, despite the distractions of having lesser units in front and behind us.

Finishing with cocktails in the Ritz was a rare treat. I'd recommend the experience to anyone and thank all those that organised it for the Association.

Paul





One of our key Association members could not make the Remembrance Day Parade this year, as he had a very important challenge to complete. That man was Paul Davies, and this is his story:

It all started off innocently enough. For those who know me well you will know that I am in no way, shape or form built for running but I had been attempting to keep active with the occasional run when my colleague, Scott Drinkel, had a brainwave and suggested that maybe we could combine some kind of running activity with the upcoming 100th commemorations for the end of the Great War. It took a bit of searching for a figure that would match an achievable running distance that could be completed within the year. Eventually we decided upon running one metre for every Commonwealth Service Person who died in World War One. This figure stands at 1 179 022 brave souls. This meant that we would have to run 1 179 022 Km or approximately 3.2 Km a day...each. We also hoped to raise £1 179 for the Royal British Legion in the process. So began our Every One Remembered Challenge. The only rules were that the distance was to be completed between 12 November 2017 and finish on 11 November 2018, the day that the Armistice was signed to end the War.

So, we had 365 days to complete 1 179 Km. Looking back on it now it still seems an awful lot of running. As with any challenge it is easier to break it down into small chunks. Knowing that I had to achieve 96 Km a month made it slightly more palatable. Each day we remembered an individual who died on that day during the Great War. We tried to remember as many local servicemen that died in the War and we aimed to complete runs that would include visiting someone who died on the same date as the run. We managed this on at least 15 occasions. In the process, whilst visiting relatives around the country, I was also able to complete runs that included visits to graves in Dundee, Tayport and Torquay.

Running through the winter was a hard slog due to the

low temperatures, but the freezing conditions did not stop our running, particularly when my son's football team, the Benson Lion Cubs Under 12s, supported our efforts. The Cubs and some of their families joined myself and Scott for a 5 km run around the home pitches. With the temperature not getting above freezing, it was hard going for everyone at times but everyone pushed on to the end, with some doubling back in true military tradition when they'd finished, to help their team mates over the line. The Cubs also helped to remember the British and Commonwealth Service personnel killed in World War One and to raise more than £350 towards our total. It was great to involve the youngsters and explain what it was all about.

On the most part our runs were approximately 7 Km during the week with a 10 Km plus run on a Sunday. As part of the Challenge we completed the inaugural Peace Run, a half marathon that started and ended in Ypres in May. The run started under the Menin Gate, followed the ramparts and then went out into the country, passing numerous Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC) cemeteries and well known World War One sites like Hellfire Corner, Hill 60, Hill 62, Sanctuary Wood and Caterpillar Crater. In May Ypres was enjoying unseasonable warm temperatures in excess of 29°C which made my time of 2:30:31 an incredible achievement. The hot weather made it the hardest thing I have ever done, which was evidenced by an average heartrate of 180 bpm for 2.5 hours!! I had my running partner, Scott, to thank for his encouragement at the 18 km point when I was at my lowest ebb. Yes, I hit the dreaded wall! Just before I started the run I received a generous donation from Association Member David Coombes which took me over my £1,179 target.

Not long after the half marathon, Scott departed to the Falklands to enjoy the winter weather and the hills down there, which left me with a bit of an uphill struggle to keep motivated to complete the challenge. Fortunately I found another running partner who

MAY 2018: the Great Peace Walk Run, starting from the Menin Gate....no lions?



The famous Cloth Hall in Ypres



Scott and Paul



ensured that I kept on going. As expected I fell slightly behind at the end of the summer, due to illness and holidays, and it took a bit to get back on track but I always had the final date of 11 November in the back of my mind.

As the months counted down it was a case of keeping enthusiastic and ensuring that I kept to my plan to keep the distance ticking over. Eventually I could see the end in sight and plans were put in place for my finale. At 07:15 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, 11 November, 2018 I completed the final run of my Every One Remembered Challenge under the Menin Gate in Ypres. Fittingly, my final run was 11.11 Km in length. My run was part of a six day trip to Ypres and The Somme and I visited various CWGC cemeteries. At each one I was proud to know that I had remembered each and every one of those brave soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

I completed the 1 179 022 Km in 130 separate runs, averaging 9.06 Km per run, and taking approximately 127 hours to complete the distance.

As we go to print I have raised £2 140.36, which has exceeded my original target by some margin. For those of you reading this and who donated to the cause I am truly thankful. Knowing how hard I had to work to complete the challenge it means a great deal to me to think that so many people have dug deep to support me. Thank you.

Loyalty

Editor's Note: Paul, on behalf of everyone in the Association, congratulations on this great achievement for a very worthy cause. Well done, we are all very proud of you.



Our Man in the North

Up in Yorkshire, Association member Tony Whitehead tracks down the final resting place of 33 Squadron's first fatality and visits an original hangar used by the Squadron in World One

Anyone flying or driving along the A64 dual carriageway between York and Leeds may have noticed at Grid SE 446 413 a significant barn-like structure set back in the fields from the road on the York side of Bramham junction. Researching this year's Battlefield Tour we were aware that 33 Squadron had deployed to Yorkshire in March 1916, and the building that was just visible from the road was an original World War One aircraft hangar, or 'General Service Aeroplane Shed' to give it its proper title, and 33 Squadron was the first squadron to be based at the new RFC Bramham Moor aerodrome. Unfortunately we did not have time to push north from Lincolnshire to visit the very first aerodromes and airstrips that the flights of 33 Squadron were flying from, and decided that the Squadron's move from Filton to York would be a good basis for a future tour. However, we were very lucky to have Tony Whitehead with us, and as a local in that area he knew exactly where this hangar was. After our trip to Gainsborough Cemetery, where eight of 33 Squadron's pilots are buried, the discussions turned to the other Squadron fatalities and it was pointed out that the very first man that 33 lost was a young corporal from Bristol called Cyril Butchers. Cyril died in May 1916 and was buried at Fulford Cemetery in York. Tony knew where that was too! So at the end of the Tour Tony agreed to do some research for us into Bramham Moor and Cyril Butcher. This following article is what 'Our Man in the North' discovered:

RFC BRAMHAM MOOR

Work began on the site in winter 1915. At least nine canvas Bessoneau hangars and some temporary accommodation was set up close to the road that later became the A64, while more permanent structures were constructed on the other side of the field. The airfield, hosting 46 Reserve Squadron, came under 8th Wing Headquarters, based at York. Despite its proximity to Tadcaster, it would be known as RFC Bramham Moor until 1 April 1918, when it became RAF Tadcaster. There were no concrete runways: the planes simply used a field which was recalled as being

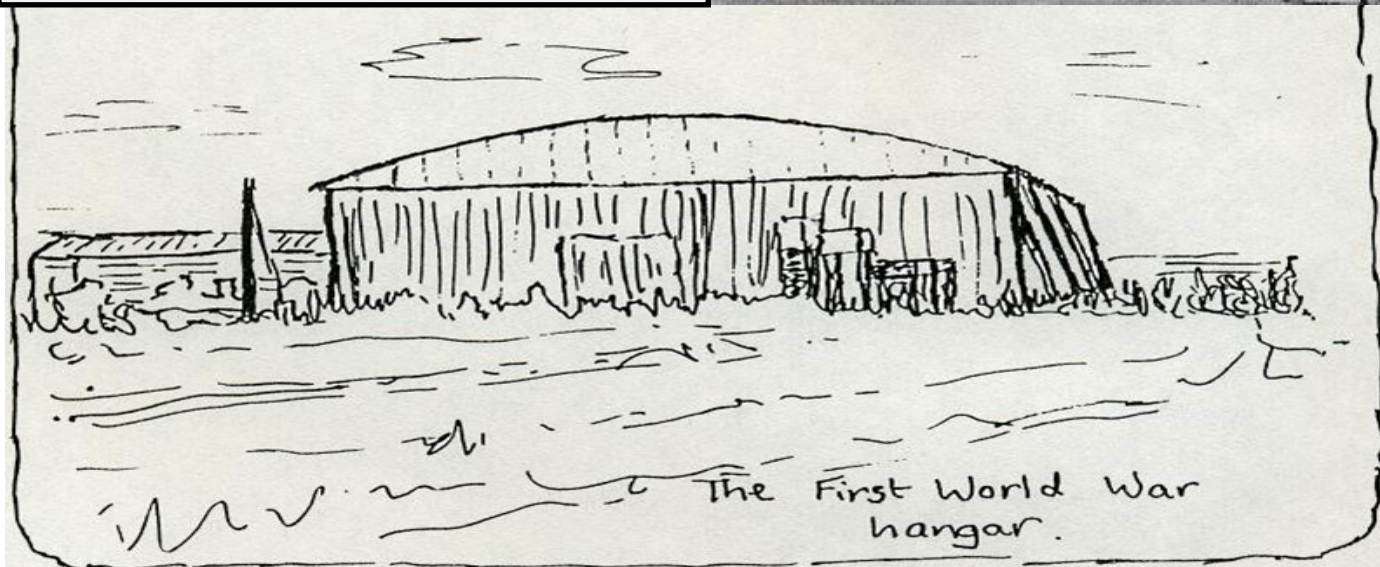
"...rather bumpy, as no attempt had been made to level it." Indeed, learning to avoid such natural hazards was essential. There were a lot of telegraph wires at the end of the runway area, and many pilots caught these on take-off or landing. It was only after several serious accidents had occurred that the wires were finally put underground.

By 29 March 1916 33 Squadron had moved north from Bristol. As a Home Defence squadron, equipped with BE2c's and BE12s, 33 Squadron's main task was to protect Leeds and Sheffield from aerial attack by Zeppelins, and it set up its HQ in Tadcaster and based 'A' Flight on the Knavesmire in York, 'B' Flight and 'C' Flight at Bramham Moor - though not for long. A Zeppelin raid on York saw the airfield closed down and 'A' Flight moved temporarily to Bramham Moor. A reorganization of the defence of Great Britain was issued in May 1916, with 33 Squadron picking up the additional responsibility of defending the Humber, and by 24 June 1916 33 Squadron had flights based at Beverley, Coal Aston and Bramham Moor. There was another change of air defence policy in July 1916, which triggered the move out of Yorkshire and into Lincolnshire. By early October 1916 33 Squadron had established its HQ in Gainsborough, 'A' Flight moved to Brattlesby (Scampton), 'B' Flight to Kirton-in-Lindsey and 'C' Flight to Elsham (Elsham Wold).

57 Squadron was formed from a nucleus of 33 Squadron at Copmanthorpe in June 1916 and took over 33's part-time training role to allow it to concentrate on Home Defence. 57 Squadron based 'B' and 'C' Flights at Bramham Moor, and were joined by HQ Flight and 'A' Flight in August 1916. 57 Squadron deployed to France in October 1916. 46 Reserve Squadron, with eighteen aircraft of various types, arrived at Bramham Moor on 17 December 1916, moving to Catterick in July 1917. In early 1917 46 Reserve Squadron was joined by 14 Reserve Squadron from Catterick. On 31 May 1917 all Reserve Squadrons were retitled Training Squadrons, as the RFC made a concerted effort to train

Left: Temporary Bessoneau hangars, similar to those built on site when Bramham Moor was being built.

Below : Impression of the remaining hangar from WW1, with the detailed Grade II Listing description of the only former 1916 RFC hangar that remains at Bramham Moor on what would have been one of the largest aerodromes in Britain, home to a Training Depot Station.



Listing Text

BRAMHAM CUM OGLETHORPE SPEN COMMON LANE
SE44SW

LS23 (west side, off)

1/51 Former aircraft hangar approx. 200 metres south-east of Headley Hall Farm

II

Former aircraft hangar, now used as barn (etc). 1916, for Royal Flying Corps; slightly altered.

Timber construction, with wall panels said to be of steel and concrete laminate, segmental roof with felted cladding. Large rectangular structure approx. 50x30 metres, on east-west axis, with attached single-storey offices on north side.

Laminated timber wall posts with external buttresses of the same construction, horizontal ties to these passing through the wall at mid-level and raked ties likewise passing through to the roof trusses, continuous small-paned glazing between these ties; full-height sliding doors at both ends (altered, and replaced or faced with corrugated iron sheeting), with vertical windows and central ventilator in the segmental gable. Offices on north side of similar construction.

Interior: laminated timber roof trusses of segmental latticed girder construction, the outer end boarded, linked longitudinally by a pair of purlins mounted on the tie-beams, carrying closely-spaced purlins and diagonally-boarded cladding (said to be cross-diagonal laminate); some original wall lettering in the bays.

History: only surviving building of No 38 TDS (Training Depot Station), Tadcaster, opened in Spring of 1916 with arrival of B Flight of 33 Squadron, and later 46 Reserve Squadron, initially for air defence of Leeds Sheffield area; subsequently TDS (normally the largest 1st World War aerodromes, bases for squadrons mobilising for overseas service); closed June 1919, used as aircraft store, later sold.

Item is good example of its type and date; same construction as at RAF Museum, Hendon, and Duxford Airfield, Cambridgeshire.

References: Imperial War Museum (ref 105/SE/445 413) and Bruce Robertson Aviation Archaeology 2nd edition 1983 especially pp 41-44 and Appendix A.



the pilots and observers instead of providing them the opportunity to prove whether they could, or couldn't, fly.

On 15 July 1918 the aerodrome was expanded to encompass 200 acres, and 14 Training Squadron and 68 Training Squadrons merged to become No. 38 Training Depot Station, equipped with thirty six SE5A and Avro 504 aircraft. These were used for the initial training of the fighter pilots who formed the 38th Training Defence Squadron (TDS).

The late Charles Newham was posted to the station on 4 July 1918, and he related several incidents which took place. There was an old Maurice Farnham and some DH6 aircraft, as well as a few Sopwith Pups and Camels for advanced training. He found that the six or so flying instructors had been sent away to learn about a new aircraft. During this time, flying practise almost stopped and all the pupils could do was to attend a dull lecture or two! However, they did fire off thousands of rounds at the gunnery range at the east end of the airfield. The number of rounds was governed only by the number of magazines a man had the energy to load. At this time, every tenth round had to be incendiary or tracer, which often went high above the ten-foot earth bank....but no-one worried about damage to life or property.

By the end of July, the men's training had really begun. The new type Avro was used initially but more advanced work was done on the SE5A, the standard single-seat fighter on the Western Front. Flying accidents occurred daily, some of them fatal. But with the Officers' Mess being staffed by young ladies, there were other types of accident, Charles Newham recalled: "I remember one occasion, whilst at the Mess. There was a loud scream from the kitchen quarters, followed by a resounding crash of pottery. It was later learned that a young lady had entered a bathroom which adjoined the kitchen for a jug of water **WHILST ONE OF THE OFFICERS WAS HAVING A BATH!** She then turned and fled, dropping the jug. It was some time before she dared enter the Mess at the same time as the officer."

Flying between the twin chimneys then at John Smith's Brewery was also a popular venture, and Mr Newham had done this several times himself.

July 1918 also saw the arrival of a group of American

pilots and ground staff. When America had first entered the war in 1917, pilots had gone straight to France where their lack of training (and superior German planes) had caused heavy losses. It had then been decided that all American pilots should pass through a British aerial training school, hence the arrivals at Bramham Moor, now known as RAF Tadcaster. At about the same time the influenza epidemic hit the squadron and almost a third of the men were confined to bed. The others were turned into temporary doctors to help the sick. However, by the end of September several men had qualified, so they were given their wings and posted overseas as fighter pilots.

74 Training Squadron arrived from Netheravon on 15 July 1918 and had disbanded, its aircraft given over to 36 Training Squadron in Scotland. On 17 January 1919, 94 Squadron was reduced to a cadre in and arrived at Tadcaster on 3 February to be disbanded on 30 June 1919. The Ripon-based 76 (Home Defence) Squadron arrived in May 1919 as a cadre and were also disbanded in June. 33 Squadron suffered a similar fate; taking its Avro 504K (NF) aircraft to Harpeswell on 2 June 1919, it was disbanded on 13 June, the same day as 76 Squadron. The disbandment of so many RAF squadrons in 1919 signalled the closure of the airfield. Despite 38 TDS becoming 38 Training Station in August 1919 the unit was disbanded in December 1919 and the Station was closed.

Today, only one of the permanent hangars remains, together with a few out-buildings and the specially-constructed road from the A64, appropriately known to all as 'The Hangar Road'. The buildings and surrounding fields are now known as Headley Hall Farm, forming part of an agricultural station belonging to Leeds University, and Tony was shown around the site by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) National Field Trial Coordinator, Mr Ian Midgley, on 13 November. The hangar, used for grain storage, has a Grade Two listing due to its Belfast Truss roof structure, the name derived from the support used for the arched roof. The roof supporting structure is comprised of a lattice of diagonally interlaced pieces of thin pine. These are held in place by the use of trestle type structures spaced along the external walls of the building, all of which can be seen in the following photographs. After presenting Ian with a framed print, showing 33 Squadron's historical link with the airfield,



“ Laminated timber wall posts with external buttresses of the same construction, horizontal ties to these passing through the wall at mid-level and raked ties likewise passing through to the roof trusses, continuous small-paned glazing between these ties; full-height sliding doors at both ends (altered, and replaced or faced with corrugated iron sheeting), with vertical windows and central ventilator in the segmental gable...”



Tony asked about the possibility of a future group visit if we ever do a Yorkshire trip and Ian was more than happy with the idea. Committee - please take note!

On his drive home from Headley Hall Farm Tony passed the turn off into Catterton Lane, the scene of the accident in May 1916 that took Corporal Butcher's life. In 1911 Cyril Ernest Butcher was living in Bristol with his elder brother and his family, and worked for a while as a clerk and a roller skating instructor at the Central Skating Rink on James Street in Bath. At some point Cyril appears to have taken on a trade that would be better suited to the fledgling Royal Flying Corps; on his attestation papers, signed in London on 4 February 1913, he gave his trade as 'Motor Engineer'. The following day Cyril reported to the Royal Flying Corps Military Wing at Farnborough.

In a newspaper report published in the Bath and Wiltshire Chronicle on 16 May 1916, just three days after Cyril's fatal accident, readers were told that Cyril had served in France 'with the Army' but had been invalided home, and had been at Filton before he moved north. To date we have not been able to find any information about his service prior to his time with 33 Squadron. From his Statement of Service we do

know that he was made up to Corporal on 1 February 1916. Presumably, while he was at Filton Cyril would have been able to inform his family about his promotion before he headed to Tadcaster with 33.

Cyril could have been in the Tadcaster area for about six weeks before his motorcycle accident happened on 13 May 1916. There had been time enough for the young airmen on their motorcycles dashing up to York for a night out to annoy the locals by riding too fast around the district, a point made at the inquest.

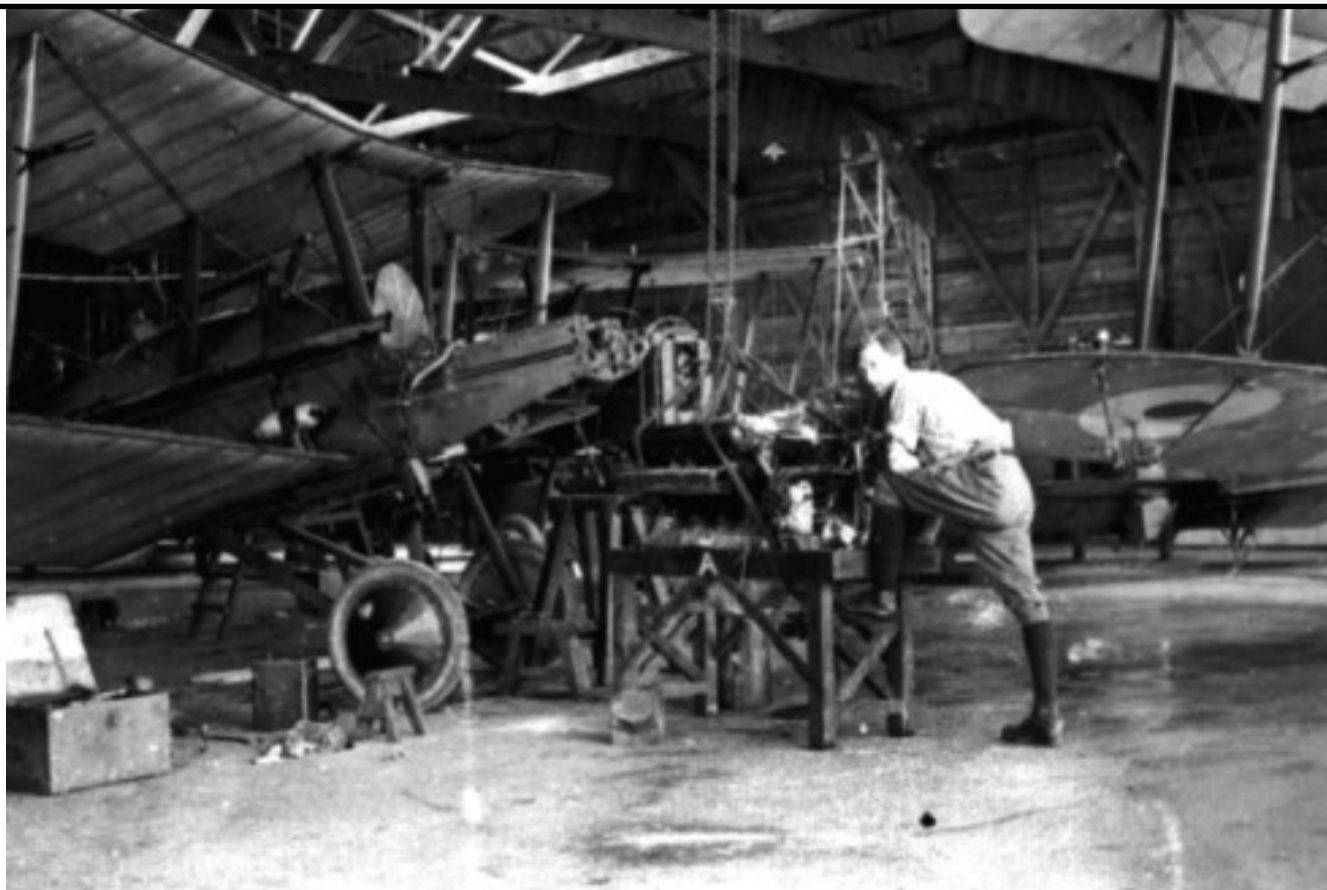
Cyril was laid to rest in Fulford Cemetery to the south of York, and it might have been at this point that Cyril's real age was scrutinised. In 1911 the census was taken in Britain on 2 April and Cyril's age was 17. On 4 February 1913, his Attestation papers recorded his age as 21 years and six months. He died three years later, in May 1916, yet his headstone shows his age as 21? Whatever his real age, Cyril Ernest Butcher was the first man that 33 Squadron lost after its formation four months previous, and we thank Tony for the time and effort spent in re-discovering forgotten facts about 33's formative years, and paying our respects at Cyril's grave side.





Above: "Interior: laminated timber roof trusses of segmental latticed girder construction, the outer end boarded, linked longitudinally by a pair of purlins mounted on the tie-beams, carrying closely-spaced purlins and diagonally-boarded cladding (said to be cross-diagonal laminate);..."

Below: An RFC ground mechanic working on the engine of an SE5a, unfortunately this photograph was not taken inside the hangar at Bramham Moor.



FLYING CORPS CORPORAL KILLED NEAR WETHERBY

Corporal Cyril Butchers, of the Flying Corps, was killed while riding with companions on Saturday night on a motor cycle from York, in the direction of Tadcaster. The cycle collided with a horse and vehicle at Catterton Lane End, and Butchers was flung on the road and sustained serious injury. One of his companions was also injured. The occupants of the vehicle were thrown out, and the horse was killed. Butchers was removed to the Voluntary Aid Detachment temporary Hospital at Tadcaster, where he died shortly after admission.



AIRMAN'S FATAL MOTOR CYCLE RIDE

At Tadcaster yesterday an inquest was held on Cyril Butchers (24) a native of Bristol, and a corporal in the Royal Flying Corps, who lost his life in a road accident at Catterton Lane End, near Tadcaster, on Saturday night.

The evidence showed that Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes, of Catterton, were driving home from Tadcaster in a low "tub," drawn by a pony. They had a candle lamp in front, and an oil lamp behind, both of which were burning, and they were driving close to their own side of the road. Just before they reached Catterton Lane End they saw the cyclist approaching some 200 yards away at a fast pace. He was evidently in the middle of the roads, and appeared to keep a straight course until a few yards away from the pony, when he suddenly swerved and collided with the trap. He was thrown off his machine, and received fatal injuries.

Major Jubert, officer commanding the 33rd squadron of the Royal Flying Corps, expressed the opinion that when riding at night, and meeting a cart with only one light, one was not certain whether it was a cart or a bicycle. One expected a bicycle to give way. He imagined that Butchers had not realised that it was a vehicle he was meeting until he was almost on top of it, and the sudden application of brakes caused the cycle to skid.

The jury agreed that death was due to an accident, and expressed the opinion that members of the Flying Corps cycled too rapidly through the district.



Original.

SHORT SERVICE.

ROYAL FLYING CORPS, MILITARY WING.

years with the Colours and 4 years in the Reserve, or if the man completes his 4 years' service with the Colours while beyond the seas, then for a further period, not exceeding one year, with the Colours, and the remainder of the 8 years in the Reserve.

No. 580 Name Cyril Ernest Butchers Corps Royal Flying Corps, R.F.C.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT TO THE RECRUIT BEFORE ENLISTMENT.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. What is your Name? | <u>Cyril Ernest Butchers</u> |
| 2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? | <u>Buckingham</u> in or near the Town of <u>Buckingham</u> the County of <u>Buckinghamshire</u> |
| 3. Are you a British Subject? | <u>Yes</u> |
| 4. What is your Age? | <u>21</u> Years <u>6</u> Months. |
| 5. What is your Trade or Calling? | <u>Motor Engineer</u> |
| 6. Have you resided out of your Father's house for three years continuously in the same place, or occupied a house or land of the yearly value of £10 for one year, and paid rates for the same, and, in either case, if so, state where? | <u>No</u> |

You are hereby warned that if after enlistment it is found that you have given a wilfully false answer to any of the following seven questions, you will be liable to a punishment of two years' imprisonment with hard labour.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 7. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? if so, where? to whom? for what period? and, when did, or will, the period of your apprenticeship expire? | <u>No</u> |
| 8. Are you Married? | <u>No</u> |
| 9. Have you ever been sentenced to Imprisonment by the Civil Power? | <u>No</u> |
| 10. Do you now belong to the Royal Navy, the Army, the Royal Marines, the Militia, the Special Reserve, the Territorial Force, the Army Reserve, the Militia Reserve, or any Naval Reserve Force? If so, to what unit and Corps? | <u>No</u> |
| * 11. Have you ever served in the Royal Navy, the Army, the Royal Marines, the Militia, the Special Reserve, the Territorial Force, the Imperial Yeomanry, the Volunteers, the Army Reserve, the Militia Reserve, or any Naval Reserve Force? If so, state which unit, and cause of discharge | <u>No</u> |
| 12. Have you truly stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? | <u>Yes</u> |
| 13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Military or Naval Forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? | <u>No</u> |
| 14. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? | <u>Yes</u> |
| 15. For what Corps are you willing to be enlisted, or are you willing to be enlisted for General Service? | <u>Royal Flying Corps</u> |
| 16. Did you receive a Notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you? | <u>Yes</u> Name <u>Ralph Hopkins</u> Corps <u>Rem. Cond.</u> |
| 17. Do you understand that, although you enlist for the military wing of the Royal Flying Corps, you will be liable, when so required, to be employed for Naval purposes? | <u>Yes</u> |
| 18. Are you willing to serve upon the following conditions provided His Majesty should so long require your services? | |
| (a) For the term of eight years, for the first four years in Army Service and for the remaining four years in the Army Reserve, or if at the termination of such period of Army Service, you are serving beyond the seas, then for a further period in Army Service of one year, or such lesser period as may be determined, after which you will be sent home with all convenient speed to complete the remaining portion of such period of eight years in the Army Reserve. | |
| (b) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service a State of War exists, then, if so directed by the Competent Military Authority, to serve in Army Service for a further period not exceeding 12 months. | |
| (c) If, at the expiration of the above-mentioned term of Army Service, you are so required by a Proclamation from His Majesty in case of imminent national danger, or great emergency, then to serve in Army Service so as to complete your term of eight years, and for a further period not exceeding 12 months. | |
| (d) If the above-mentioned term of eight years expires while you are on service with the Regular Forces—(i.) beyond the seas, or (ii.) while a state of war exists with a Foreign Power, or (iii.) while Soldiers in the Reserve are required by proclamation to continue in, or re-enter upon Army Service, and you, in accordance with such proclamation, have re-entered upon Army Service, then to serve for a further period not exceeding 12 months. | <u>Yes</u> |

I, Cyril Ernest Butchers do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Cyril Ernest Butchers SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
Ralph Hopkins Signature of Witness.

I, Cyril Ernest Butchers do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.

The above questions were then read to the Recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said Recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at LONDON on this 4 day of FEB 1913

[Signature] Signature of the Justice or Attesting Officer.

* If so, the Recruit is to be asked the particulars of his former Service, and to provide, if possible, his Parchment Certificate of Discharge and Certificate of Character, which should be returned to him conspicuously endorsed on the (Date) re-enlisted in the (Regiment)

STATEMENT of the SERVICES of No. 580. Name Cyril Ernest Butcher.

Corps	Battn. or Depôt	Promotions, Reductions, Casualties, &c.	Army Rank	Dates	Service not allowed to reckon for fixing the rate of Pension		Service in Reserve not allowed to reckon towards G. C. Pay		Signature of Officers certifying correctness of entries
					years	days	years	days	

Service towards limited engagement reckons from 4. 2. 13.
 Joined at S. Hamborough on 5. 2. 13.

Royal Flying Corps, attested 2nd Lt. 4. 2. 13.
military wing.

- 1 - Appointed 1/lt. 1. 2. 15

- 11 - I.R.S. Promoted Capt. 1-2-16

- 11 - 33 Accidentally Capt. 13. 5. 16
Span killed

W. E. Butcher,
Major,
Assistant to O. i/c Records,
Royal Flying Corps, Military Wing.
W. E. Butcher,
Assistant to O. i/c Records,
Royal Flying Corps, Military Wing.
W. E. Butcher,
Assistant to O. i/c Records,
Royal Flying Corps, Military Wing.
W. E. Butcher,
Assistant to O. i/c Records,
Royal Flying Corps, Military Wing.

1914 STAR
B W M
VICT MEDAL

Total Service forfeited as above									
Total Service towards Engagement to _____ (date of discharge) _____ years _____ days									
" " " Pension " _____ (") _____ " _____ "									

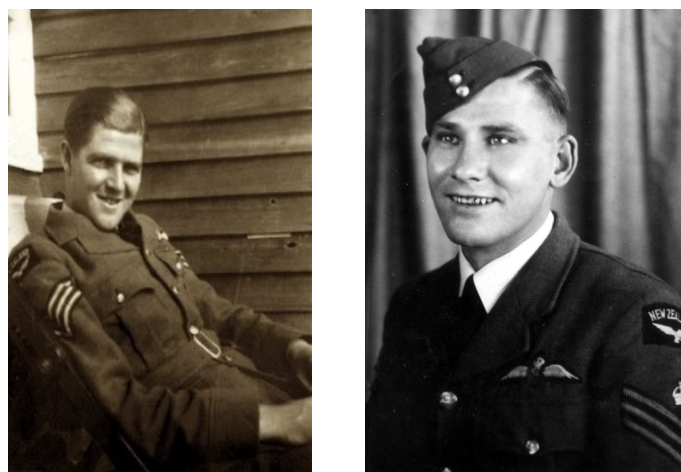
Mixed Pickles story bears more fruit

**WO Neil Evan McLeod MacDonald RNZAF 33 Squadron RAF
Family ties discovered after George Roney's story hits Australia**

Regular readers will recall us unearthing the story about RNZAF pilot George James Roney, who spent a short term at Tangmere with 33 Squadron before heading over to Caen-Carpiquet and then moving forward to Eu/Le Treport and then Merville. Unfortunately George was one of three pilots who were shot down on 6 October 1944, the first day of the operation to capture the Scheldt Estuary and open the port of Antwerp, and the only one of the three who did not survive. During our research we were honoured to receive several photographs from the Roney family, a number showing pilots whose identities we did not know. Fortunately, Jan Linzel's book had several photographs that named some of them, while another source was a letter written after the crash to George Roney's family by his best friend, another RNZAF pilot called Neil Evan McLeod MacDonald. Having found pictures of Evan MacDonald, as the family called him, on the Auckland Online Memorial site I was able to get in touch with his nephew, Scott Beal, who sent me some more photographs of 33 Squadron's time in France and Belgium, many of which have been used in previous Newsletters articles covering 33's time at Merville and Maldegem.

After our battlefield tour to Walcheren in 2017, Chris Perkins gave a presentation to his PROBUS group in Basingstoke about 33 Squadron's activities in Europe, which was stored on the PROBUS website. Months later Chris received an email from a chap called Ian MacLeod in Sydney, Australia, who had found and watched Chris's presentation online. Ian informed us that he had been named after his uncle, RNZAF pilot Ian MacLeod, who had been shot down by flak while attacking a train on 25 December 1944. Ian said that he had recognized the George Roney from a photograph in his uncle's belongings, and he sent over some research that he had carried out on his uncle. In that documentation was the photograph, centre right, showing George and Ian, both Flight Sergeants, sat together.

This was the first time that I had seen Ian MacLeod's face and he seemed familiar, so I had a look through the photographs that had been sent to me by Scott Beal. One of them, rather grainy, showed three people next to a Spitfire. Two men are standing either side of a young lady, perched on the wing. Scott told me that the man on the left was his uncle Evan, but the identity of the other two people was unknown. Having enlarged the photograph on my computer as much as possible,



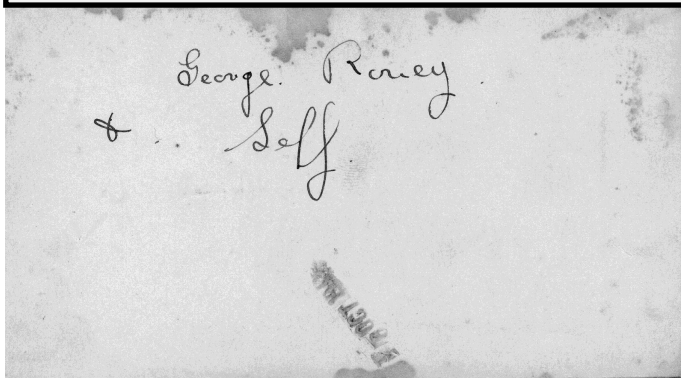
Neil Evan McLeod MacDonald (left) and George James Roney (right)

Photos: Scott Beal and the Roney Family.



Above: Flight Sergeant George Roney (left) and Flight Sergeant Ian McLeod (right).

Below: Information on the back of the photograph.
(Photo: Ian MacLeod)



I thought that the other man looked like Ian McLeod. So I sent the photograph to Ian in Sydney and Scott in Invercargill and suggested that, in my opinion, the men in the photographs could be their uncles.

Eventually I received an answer from both of them, and I was pleased to read that they agreed with me. Following my email and the suggestion, Ian and Scott decided to get in touch with each other and after further research they now think that there is a very strong possibility that Evan and Ian were related. It turns out that both of their families lived in a place called Hedgehope on New Zealand's South Island, some 25 kilometres north east of Invercargill. They think that Evan's grandfather, Andrew MacDonald, married a 'Christina McLeod' who is a relative of Ian McLeod. They think that either this is a huge coincidence or there is a real family tie, which is why the two men had the photograph taken. The families are continuing to research their family trees and will keep us posted.

We know that No. 66 Squadron was based at Tangmere, Funtington and Ford from June to August 1944, flying Spitfire IXs, while 33 were at Tangmere, Funtington and Selsey, also flying Spitfire IXs. George and Ian were presumably training together, as both were Flight Sergeants at the same time. Having travelled halfway around the world to join the RAF it is hardly surprising that the New Zealanders would stick together, especially if they had discovered family links. Such bonds may explain the photograph, centre right, which, if Ian McLeod ever grew a moustache to make himself look older than his years, has the McLeod boys standing next to each other in front of a Spitfire, with their chum George next to them. We will see!

Christmas Day 1944
2nd TACTICAL AIR FORCE
132 Wing, 84 Group
Armed Reconnaissance over the Utrecht area,
Netherlands
66 Squadron, RAF (B.79 Woensdrecht)

Spitfire LF.XVI SM211 took off at 0830, with others attacked an ammunition train between De Steg and Dieren. Returned on its own for a second pass and hit by flak from a flatcar seconds before the train blew up. The aircraft came down at 0915 in a field adjacent to Parallelweg, De Steeg's main street. The severely injured and mutilated body of the pilot was removed from under the engine and buried by the villagers in the nearby General Cemetery Heiderust at Rheden.

Pilot: NZ 242429 Pilot Officer Ian Douglas McLeod
R.N.Z.A.F.

Age: 23

664 hrs, 72nd op.



Neil Evan McLeod MacDonald (left) and Ian Douglas McLeod (right). The woman on the wing, the date and the location, are unknown. (Photo: Scott Beal)





Operation AGILA Rhodesia 1979-1980

In 1923, the white settlers of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) held a referendum and opted for Home Rule rather than a union with South Africa. The Rhodesian settlers at the time were highly patriotic and loyal to both the King and Empire, many Rhodesian men having recently returned from the carnage of the First World War. Over 6 000 white Rhodesians saw active service on behalf of the Empire during that great conflict, and this figure represented over two thirds of the white male population aged between 15 and 45. Of this figure 732 were killed in action.

Just 20 years later, during the Second World War, some 11,000 European Rhodesians saw active service, including 1,500 women and of these figures, 1 in 10 were either killed in action or died on active service. Rhodesia supplied more troops per head of population than any other country in the British Empire and understandably felt that they had paid for their own country (Rhodesia) in blood and sorrow, on behalf of the Mother Country. However in 1947, India gained her independence and from then on it was simply a question of time as to when each and every British Colony sought self determination. 1953 saw the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland and this was to last some ten years; upon its demise it looked very much to the white Rhodesians as if Britain was intent on handing the country directly over to black majority rule, without any safeguards for the white minority.

UDI - Unilateral Declaration of Independence

In October 1965, Rhodesia's white Prime Minister, Ian Smith held talks with Harold Wilson and when these broke down, the white Rhodesian government proclaimed Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence on the 11 November 1965. Almost immediately the Rhodesia War began between black communist terrorists seeking a black ruled homeland, and the Security Forces of the Rhodesian government.

Rhodesia, a 'heart shaped' country located just above South Africa, was basically divided into three distinct cultures. The bottom third of the heart was Matabeleland and inhabited by the descendants of the

Zulu warriors of Matabele King, Loengula; while the top third of the heart was occupied by the descendants of their traditional enemies; the Mashona. Their third of Rhodesia was known as Mashonaland. The Matabele and Mashona had been enemies since the dawn of time. In the centre of the heart, between Salisbury and Bulawayo, lived the descendants of the original white settlers. All three cultures were actually immigrants to the region, and all three arrived in Rhodesia at about the same period in history, roughly the mid 1800's. The actual inhabitants of Rhodesia being small bands of hunter-gatherer "Bushmen".

The Rhodesian War

From the moment UDI was declared Britain enforced sanctions on the Rhodesian government, and this slowly but surely tightened the noose around the everyday infrastructure of Rhodesian society. The only real friend Rhodesia possessed during the war was South Africa, who continued to trade and assist with exports and also war materials. The terrorists on the other hand, were split into two main factions and these were based on the tribal loyalties of old. The Matabele were under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo, and they sought weapons, training and assistance from Cuba, East Germany and Russia; while the Mashona, who were led by Robert Mugabe, were trained in North Korea and China. Throughout the war, Rhodesian farmers grew enough corn, tobacco and cattle to not only feed their own population, but to also export it to their near and starving neighbours in Botswana, Zambia and Mozambique; and who, in return gave succour and comfort to the guerillas.

The war dragged on for some 14 years, from 1965 until 1979, being largely overshadowed by the television driven Vietnam conflict. The Rhodesian War was virtually ignored, until the guerillas committed atrocities at various Missionary stations. The war was both bloody and brutal and brought out the very worst in the opposing combatants on all three sides:

RSF (Rhodesian Security Forces - Smith's Army)

ZIPRA (Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army - Nkomo's Army)

ZANLA (Zimbabwe National Liberation Army - Mugabe's Army)

Lancaster House Talks

During the war there had been many attempts by Smith, Nkomo, Mugabe and Britain to broker an honourable peace deal guaranteeing the rights of the white Rhodesian minority. These meetings were all to no avail until the Lancaster House talks in mid-1979. In April 1979 an election was held in Rhodesia in which 63 percent of the black population voted, and on 1 June 1979, Bishop Able Muzorewa was sworn in as the first black Prime Minister of Rhodesia. Meanwhile at Lancaster House the Peace talks continued in a rather 'on again - off again' fashion. This state of affairs continued until October and then as the light began to appear at the end of the tunnel, Britain sent out feelers to various Commonwealth nations that troops might be needed for a special operation.

In New Zealand, selection and training began immediately and a force of 75 officers and men were selected and moved to Papakura Camp for specialist training. Other countries did similar training. None of the soldiers were formally told where they might be headed but initially the 75 strong contingent was called 'R Force', similar to 'K Force' (Korea), and 'V Force' (Vietnam). They were also instructed to listen to BBC world news at 0700 each morning so the possibility of a Tour of Duty to Rhodesia was an open secret. Originally, both Mugabe and Nkomo did not want any New Zealanders in the Peacekeeping Force as they were thought to be American puppets. However, when it was pointed out that one man in every four in the New Zealand contingent was 'coloured' (Maori), the New Zealanders became very acceptable.

Operation AGILA

On 5 November 1979, the British Ministry of Defence named Major General John Acland (later Sir John), as the Commander Monitoring Force (CMF). The Headquarters of the Monitoring Force (MF) was based on HQ 8 Field Force from Tidworth with the GOC South West District (General Acland), holding the following three appointments:

Commander of the Monitoring Force (CMF)

Military Advisor to the Governor of Rhodesia

Chairman of the Ceasefire Commission.

Brigadier John Learmont was appointed as Deputy Commander (DCMF), and Brigadier Adam Gurdon was appointed Chief of Staff. The Operation was named 'Operation AGILA', and the Monitoring Force operational patch was a red, white and blue diamond with a golden sunburst in the centre and a Pangolan (small anteater), with claws extended centred in the sun. This was to be worn on a white brassard. It was also decided that the uniform that was to be worn by all members of the MF was to be 'Jungle Green' fatigues, and that berets would only be worn in camp and 'Jungle Hats' would be worn by all members of the MF serving in the operational areas. This would serve to distinguish them from the Rhodesian Army who wore a very distinctive pattern of camouflage.

Rhodesian Reconnaissance

Due to the war, there was virtually no 'good', up to date information or maps available on Rhodesia, and much of the initial planning was a series of lectures by ex-school teachers and missionaries who had served out there, and usually before the war. On 22 November 1979, the British Chief of Staff, Chief Signals Officer, Air Advisor and several other key personnel flew to Rhodesia to carry out a detailed recce, including the thoughts and feelings of both the white and the black populations in regards to how a Commonwealth Force would be received should one arrive in-country. This recce group travelled the length and breadth of Rhodesia and gathered much vital information on how the war was being conducted by all three sides and where the various bases and camps were located. One concern that was taken note of was the liberal use by the guerillas of land mines, it was recommended at this early stage that all Land Rovers used by the Monitoring Force would need to be mine proofed.

On 8 December 1979, a nine man British advance party was deployed to Rhodesia and began establishing a logistics base in preparation for the Commonwealth Monitoring Force main body, which would include some 1,500 Peacekeepers, including 150 Australians, 22 Fijians, 50 Kenyans, and 75 New Zealanders. Britain provided 800 soldiers, some 300 Royal Air Force personnel and a small number of Royal Navy and Royal Marines, the Royal Navy contribution being mainly

Doctors.

Main Body Arrival

On the 12 December 1979, Major General Acland and Brigadier Learmont arrived in Salisbury with a small staff and began meeting Rhodesians at all levels at the Operational Headquarters of the RSF. This provided the much needed information on the size and strength of the various teams of Peacekeepers that would be inserted into the various operational areas throughout Rhodesia. The Rhodesians were very much of the opinion that it would become a bloodbath and the cost in Peacekeepers lives would be high. An air of grave concern and tension hung over all aspects of the initial phases of in-country planning and preparation. The man destined to be the last British Governor of Rhodesia, Lord Christopher Soames, also travelled to Salisbury, later describing his dangerous venture as "a leap in the dark".

Meanwhile at Lancaster House the talks continued to drag on through December, and this delay was actually advantageous to General Acland and his staff providing them with valuable time to select the various 'Assembly Areas' and 'R/V's' that would soon dot the country. It also allowed HQ UKLF time for the packing of stores and equipment and the marking of vehicles and aircraft to be used during Operation AGILA.

On 20 December 1979, the New Zealand contingent which was the most distant from Rhodesia flew out from RNZAF Base Whenuapai and over the next several days the various nations began to arrive at Salisbury Airport (between 22 –24 December). Upon arrival each plane load of troops was processed through a reception tent, given an initial briefing and issued with anti-malaria tablets which were known locally as the 'Tuesday Pill' as the entire nation was reminded every Tuesday on both radio and television to take their pill. Troops were also given the opportunity to exchange money and were given the location of their billets. The Rhodesian Army built a tented transit camp which accommodated the majority of the troops with the exception of the Fijians, Kenyans and New Zealanders who were accommodated at Morgan High School, the main Headquarters of the Monitoring Force. During this phase of the operation, which covered a five day period, more than 60 aircraft sorties landed at Salisbury Airport off-loading more than 1,500 men and a

veritable mountain of stores and equipment.

Preparation and Planning

The next several days were packed with detailed briefings, O Groups, and the issuing of stores, ammunition and equipment. Due to the height of Rhodesia above sea level, every soldier was required to attend a range shoot and re-zero his personal weapon, as the altitude definitely made a difference to sight settings. Amongst all ranks of the Monitoring Force, from the Commander down, there was a very real air of trepidation in regards to the daunting task that lay ahead. At this time the CMF, General Acland, went out of his way to personally meet and make himself known to every single member of the Monitoring Force during his initial briefing which was usually held at the RLI Barracks at Cranborne.

The Ceasefire Monitoring Force was made up of about 1,500 soldiers from Australia, Britain, Fiji, Kenya and New Zealand, and command and control was maintained at three in-country Headquarters:

Main HQ, located at Morgan High School, responsible for all detailed planning, preparation, forward deployment, redeployment, day to day running of the operation. Located at the Main HQ was DCMF, all National Contingent Commanders, the operations room, air tasking cell, communications centre, and the A and Q staff.

Government House HQ: The CMF, Chief of Staff and four Staff Officers operated out of Government House and were responsible for liaison with HQ Combined Operations (Rhodesian Security Forces), the HQ Patriotic Front (communists), the conduct of the Ceasefire Commission, and briefing the Governor on military matters.

The Airhead HQ, located at New Sarum Airfield, was responsible for all air tasking matters to and from all Monitoring Force teams in the operational areas.

The Operational Areas during the Rhodesian War were:

- A. Operation Ranger - North West Border.
- B. Operation Thrasher - Eastern Border.
- C. Operation Hurricane - North East Border.
- D. Operation Repulse - South East Border.
- E. Operation Grapple - Midlands.
- F. Operation Splinter - Kariba.

G. Operation Tangent - Matabeleland.

H. "SALOPS" - Salisbury & District.

The Peacekeeping Forces on the ground, were broken down as follows:

Patriotic Front (communist) Teams -

Operational Area MF HQ = 1 x Lieutenant Colonel and 10 men.

Assembly Places* = 1 x Major/Captain and 16 men. (+ 1 x GPMG).

Rendezvous Teams** = 1 x Captain/Lieutenant and 9 men. (+ 1 x GPMG).

* There were 16 Assembly Places (AP November and AP Quebec later closed).

** There were 39 RV's during the Ceasefire period.

Rhodesian Security Force Monitoring Teams -

Joint Operation Command (JOC) HQ = 1 x Lieutenant Colonel and 10 men.

Sub JOC Teams (Battalion HQ's) = 1 x Captain/Lieutenant and 4 men.

Company Based Teams = 1 x Lieutenant/Warrant Officer and 1 man.

Border Liaison Teams = 1 Major and 4 men.

Forward Deployment

The decision to deploy the Monitoring Force was made on the 24 December 1979, and the forward deployment took place over the next three days with the Ceasefire coming into effect at 2359 + 1, on 28 December. This was an extremely tense time as no one knew how the communist guerillas in the operational areas might act. Perhaps fortunately for the Monitoring Force, the world at large was starved for News coverage and a great many reporters were in Rhodesia. They were spread widely throughout the country, and their efforts tended to keep everyone honest. During the forward deployment phase the weather was atrocious and RAF aircrew flew missions that would never have been authorised under normal circumstances. There were a number of contacts during this phase of the operation, including: A Rhodesian Escort AFV (Crocodile) was destroyed by a mine near Bulawayo, an RAF Puma helicopter crashed, killing the 3 man aircrew, a Hercules aircraft was shot up by small arms fire near Umtali, and an RV Team was ambushed in the Zambezi Valley but escaped without casualties.

The Assembly Phase

The Assembly Phase was a seven day period when all of the communist units and cells spread throughout Rhodesia, and in several of the neighbouring countries were guaranteed unhindered movement into RV's and Assembly Places. Once in the Assembly Place all communists, both Regular Force and Guerillas, were required to register their name, weapon and that weapon's serial number. Both the ZIPRA and ZANLA had played down the size of their forces and over that seven day period more than 22 000 communist soldiers marched into the sixteen Assembly Places. The sheer size of the various ZIPRA and ZANLA units created something of a logistics nightmare and to avoid 'under issues', if any communist unit required some special item (eg sanitary pads, female underwear), then a drop was immediately arranged to all of the Assembly Places, sometimes causing much hilarity to the troops on the ground. (ZANLA had quite a sizeable force of female guerillas). The communists were to arrive at the Assembly Places carrying all of their own equipment, however for the most part, most of them carried little more than an AK47, a couple of magazines and the clothes they stood in. Many wore no boots. Food and meat shortages caused major problems on a number of occasions and almost resulted in the deaths of a number of Peacekeepers who were taken hostage. It had been understood that the communists lived on 'Sudza' (corn mealie meal), and initially no meat was provided for them. This was quickly rectified, by the CMF importing several planeloads of South African beef.

Once in the Assembly Places, the communists troops became very lax and always carried their personal weapon "locked, cocked and ready to rock"; that is several magazines taped together on the weapon, the weapon cocked with a round in the tube, safety catch 'off', and sights set to maximum range. This resulted in a plague of UD's (unauthorised discharges) and numerous casualties. It also caused tremendous stress and tension amongst the MF Teams. There were even UD's with hand grenades and RPG's resulting in injury and loss of life. As well, there was the ever present danger of mines which continued to take a toll during the entire operation.

Redeployment of RV Teams

The Ceasefire ended on 4 January 1980 at 2359 + 1, and as most of the communists were now gathered at the various Assembly Places, the RV Teams were disbanded and those men were then added to various Assembly Places so as to boost the numbers there. Assembly Place 'November' and Assembly Place 'Quebec' were both closed as no communists had been recently operating in that area (Northern border), and the Commonwealth troops at those locations were redistributed to some of the larger Assembly Places that were holding several thousand communists. Assembly Place Foxtrot held over 6,000 communists.

The Election Period

This part of the operation lasted from 5 January 1980, when the Ceasefire ended, until 3 March 1980, which was in fact after the elections had been held, but before the results were announced. The election results were announced on 4 March 1980. During this period, a contingent of British 'Bobbies' were flown into Rhodesia and they served as observers at the many polling places scattered throughout the country. There were many breaches in the Ceasefire as all three sides attempted to gain a position of strength, as well many guerillas drifted in and out of the Assembly Places, virtually at will and continued their usual programmes of intimidation, rape, robbery and murder.

The elections were said to be about giving the black population a free and fair vote, however, many, many black Rhodesians wanted to vote for Ian Smith but were barred from such a vote under the terms of the Lancaster agreement. This left a two horse race, and as Mugabe and Nkomo jostled for power, it became commonplace for hand grenades to be thrown into the interior of each other's beer halls by supporters.

The Withdrawal

On 2 March 1980, all Monitoring Force personnel were pulled back to a tented camp in and around New Sarum airport, and immediately the RAF began flying sorties of men and equipment back to the UK and various other Commonwealth countries. Many Rhodesians, and most especially the white population, had been hoping that Joshua Nkomo would win the election, as he was considered the more stable of the two candidates. It came as a shock for most whites when Robert Mugabe

was announced as the winner, swiftly changing the name of the country to Zimbabwe. The whites began leaving in droves. Those who remained were mainly farmers, as they stood to lose everything, as the first law Mugabe passed was that anyone leaving Zimbabwe, could take no more than a couple of hundred dollars with them. Those Rhodesians who left the country were virtually penniless.

By 16 March 1980 all of the Monitoring Force had departed from Zimbabwe, apart from a small volunteer group (about 40 men) of British Infantry Instructors who were to train the new Zimbabwe Army. Three weeks later, on 18 April 1980, at a ceremony that was attended by HRH Prince Charles, the Union Jack was lowered for the last time from Government House in Salisbury, and the new African nation of Zimbabwe declared itself a Free and Independent country.

Post Script

Almost as soon as the Monitoring Force left the country, Mugabe and his henchmen set about settling a few of the old scores; not with the whites at that stage, but with his old 'comrade' Joshua Nkomo. Incidents and murders rapidly escalated over the next month and then a short civil war broke out between ZANLA and ZIPRA. As Mugabe was the lawful elected leader of Zimbabwe, he ordered all Units of the old Rhodesian Security Forces into the field and over a period of three days the old RSF units, supported by Gunships, fought open battles with Nkomo's ZIPRA Army. As soon as Nkomo's men melted back into the veld, Mugabe requested military assistance from North Korea, as he had been supported by Korea and China during the war. Shortly afterward the North Korean-trained 5th Brigade arrived in Zimbabwe and over the period of the next three years committed genocide throughout the Tribal Trustlands of Matabeleland.



Memories of Operation AGILA

By Mike Hodgson



After the recent 230 Sqn Association meet I was asked if I could provide a few memories of my time on 230 Sqn. Here are a few, but names have been omitted to protect the guilty and innocent! I apologise if any facts are slightly wrong but it was nearly 39 years ago and it's all from memory.

In December 1979 I had been on 230 Sqn little over a year. As a 'retread' from the fixed wing world I was an experienced pilot and QFI but my helicopter experience was limited to one tour in NI and the normal exercises in the UK and Germany. In the run up to Xmas a few of us on 230 Sqn were informed we were to spend a few months in Rhodesia supporting the 33 Sqn detachment in the build-up to the election process. We were to provide support to the British Army in setting up camps for the return, disarming and repatriation of 'Freedom Fighters' before the elections.

I managed to have two birthday parties with the family since our departure was twice delayed until after my December birthday. We were eventually bussed to South Cerney where we were presented with a mozy net, antimalarial tablets and some talcum powder to prevent 'dhobi itch'. We were then taken to Brize where I was appointed Senior Officer in charge of the travelling element and we boarded a USAF C5 Galaxy with a few Pumas, Land Rovers and 60-odd personnel. It was not a pleasant night flight to an Egyptian airfield near Cairo. The flight crew disappeared to a hotel in Cairo to rest overnight and we were dumped in an old derelict building still bearing the bullet scars of the

Suez crisis. I wasn't happy and threatened the USAF colonel with a diplomatic incident if he couldn't do better for us. We managed to re-board the aircraft where we had at least a seat, toilet and some water.

On our arrival in Salisbury (Harare) we were all accommodated in a motel which was very noisy at night with doors slamming at all hours. It was later rumoured to be a well-known local brothel and we were quickly moved on! It was only a couple of days before Xmas and we were all very busy getting the aircraft re-built and serviceable for the task in hand. The only light-hearted moment was watching the Army Warrant Officer QHI doing practice engine offs with his young pilots in a Gazelle where they obviously forgot the very high density altitude and flared too late, planting the aircraft very heavily. The Gazelle, now resembling a banana in shape, was towed in to a round of applause from the Puma pilots on the balcony of the control tower.

On the morning of Xmas Eve, I air tested my aircraft and was immediately tasked with a recce trip round most of the country to choose C130 landing strips. It was before the cease-fire and we had no military intelligence reports to work with so we flew everywhere fast, at tree top height as we had limited rumours about SAM 7 activity. Sadly, this technique probably led to the loss of an aircraft and crew some days later. (Flt Lt Archie Cook (33 Sqn), Flt Lt Mike Smith and MALM Bob Hodges, both of 230 Sqn. Killed on Ops on 27 Dec 1979.)

We later found out the risk was low and the Rhodesian



Air Force (RhAF) pilots flew high above small arms range. At each airstrip, we dumped out a C130 pilot with a pogo stick contraption to test the surface. We survived this long trip and I was promptly detached with aircraft, crews and engineers down to RhAF Thornhill near Gwelo and Bulawayo.

On arrival, the aircrew were proudly escorted to our new accommodation, a collection of wooden huts on concrete bases in the middle of a field about half a mile from the Officers Mess. The engineers were in brick built barrack blocks on the base. We stayed one night until it rained and flooded all the rooms with thick red mud. Luckily all our kit was hung on the 6 inch nails we had hammered into the walls. A terse conversation with our superiors in air conditioned hotels in Salisbury followed and we decamped to a hotel in Gwelo with a hire car.

The flying was quite interesting since we had no navigation kit beyond a stopwatch and compass! We still had no cease fire until New Year and still had problems getting intelligence from the RhAF since they were still conducting offensive air operations. We quickly worked out the army needed Mars Bars and water to survive so we were frequent visitors to local shops for stock. We steam-cleaned our onboard long range fuel tanks and flew with them filled with water where possible.

We relied heavily on fuel from drum stock at local police stations, small bush airstrips or strategically placed pillow tanks dropped in by C130. My experience was that it worked, most of the time! One evening with the sun setting we landed by a pillow tank in a deserted area and connected up our fuel pump to find it wouldn't work. I asked the crewman to check the circuit breaker to find the A/C didn't have one and it was a rogue that had escaped the checks before departing the UK. Animal noises from the bush hastened our decision to take out the aircraft battery, cut off the pump plug and bare the wires. Once the wires were wedged into the battery we refuelled without a problem, apart from a few sparks and the fire risk!

Another pilot managed to taxi his Puma rotor disc into a telegraph pole supporting anti-mortar netting on a small airfield. However, it was put down to operational hazard and the resourceful engineers had it airborne in two days after a gearbox and four rotor blades were replaced. I was a bit apprehensive when doing the air test! On New Year's Day 1980, with a cease fire now in force, myself and another VIP qualified pilot flew the Governor General, Lord Soames, on a visit to the troops. How his staff managed to include a top ranked and very well-known ex 'guerrilla' on the visit I shall never know but the RhAF personnel on the bases where we refuelled were not impressed. We managed

to convince him to stay on the A/C. The rest of the trip is a story in itself.

On getting back to Salisbury we were immediately re-tasked to casevac multiple ex-guerrilla dead and wounded from a grenade incident at an Army base. We all had to help with the first aid and when running out of medical supplies had to open the two aircraft first aid kits as there were so many casualties. On return after an eight hour flying day we met the SMO back in Salisbury whose only comment was that we had broken the lead seals and used the morphine stock, making life difficult for him as he didn't know how to restock the first aid kits!

We had some amusement when we decided we needed some firing range practice with our 9mm pistols. This was vetoed at first since there were only 13 rounds per person for the whole detachment. Using my initiative, I asked the RhAF armaments officer if we could have four boxes of 9mm. "No problem," he said and promptly delivered four wooden crates of some thousands of rounds!! We probably didn't need the practice since we were forbidden from having a magazine in the weapon when flying. His lordship in Salisbury obviously hadn't had a rusty AK 47 pushed into his face (like me) after landing in the bush. I did manage a weekend R and R at the Kariba Dam in a guest house. The hotel guest information behind the door read, "*In case of mortar attack take refuge under the bed*".

Our return trip was a little difficult since our return lift didn't turn up. We were now masters of innovation and flagged down a passing C130 on the airstrip radio. We went out in a Land Rover to help chase elephants off the strip before leaving for Salisbury in style. Back at work we were on a casevac task to bring two guerrillas to hospital in Bulawayo when the crewman stood on the foot of the casualty who had a dirty bandage part-covering the some of his foot wound with the bones of his toes protruding. I could hear the scream with rotors running and a bone dome on. In an effort to lighten the situation the crewman was heard to ask the other casualty, who had a bullet hole through his mouth and both cheeks if he could still whistle!!

We were probably a bit blasé about the animal population and potential risk. We once landed at a remote little outpost for our passenger to meet a local mayor. Whilst waiting, the two of us wandered down to the river nearby to view the scenery. A local farmer shouted at us it may not be a good idea to be where we were. As we turned to return to our A/C a Hippo flashed a toothy yawn at us from about 25 metres away! "You didn't see any crocs as well, did you?" he laughed. I must look up the stopping power of a 9mm pistol before trying that again!

Eventually it was time for me to fly home. This time in comfort in a VC10. I had probably crammed more experience into those two months than I ever did in my whole career. At a final wash-up meeting with the AOC back in the UK we were asked if we had any operational points we would like to make. Our major problem had always been fuel and we asked for thought to be given to installing an onboard fuel pump like the RCAF helicopters had to speed up operational refuelling. "That's a minor problem, put it in via normal channels," was his reply! The silence that followed that remark heralded the end of the meeting.

With hindsight, I think we all subsequently felt it was a shame we were in some way instrumental in releasing Zimbabwe into years of misery...

Mike Hodgson

This story generated a bit of comms to-ing and fro-ing, especially regarding the loss of the personnel from both 33 Sqn and 230 Sqn on combined ops, a terrible echo from the past; a selection of the comms and pics are below:

"A guerrilla having a bath in a tin shack; the heat melts the wax that holds the safety pin (matchstick) in RPG; it goes off! A Nun, medically qualified, does a sterling job, but he dies; and a guerrilla who dies from 'self-inflicted wounds'. Multiple wounds, from a bolt action rifle...?!" (Andy Swetman)

"The C5 bringing you guys home. We gathered at 33 Sqn. Could see the a/c many, many miles out, biggest we had ever seen! Landing gear could be wound offset for crosswind. Threshold speed "same as a JP". Used barely half the (6000'ft?) runway. Puma did not have to be broken down, as per Herc. Carried 2 Puma (3?). The future, in 1980! "You wanna eat - take a box, You wanna eat..." The AK 47 is on the Sqn wall. We used to play with it! The funerals... I was at two of them... Mike is buried at Odiham. Brian Wright (OC230) was fantastic at both. I drove down the same road they crashed on, in the mid-90's! Bob Hodges is in a photo instructing Bob Farley and I in winching on 14 Dec 79. He was subsequently rushed out to Rhodesia, and was 'gone' a couple of weeks later - very tough..." (Simon Heighway)

"I only have hearsay knowledge of the incident itself as I didn't go to Rhodesia, much to my disgust, as that was the third 'event' involving the Sqn that I didn't get on. Memorable because it gave rise to Adrienne's heartfelt "Thank God for that!" comment just before 'Gulf I' kicked off, when she heard I was going to deploy; "I don't think I could live with you if you missed out on yet another Operation...!"

An aside about Mike Smith. A brilliant musician and a great loss to Friday night singsongs but I have never



The author, Mike Hodgson. The old style Puma ferry tank can be seen in the cabin, forward left.



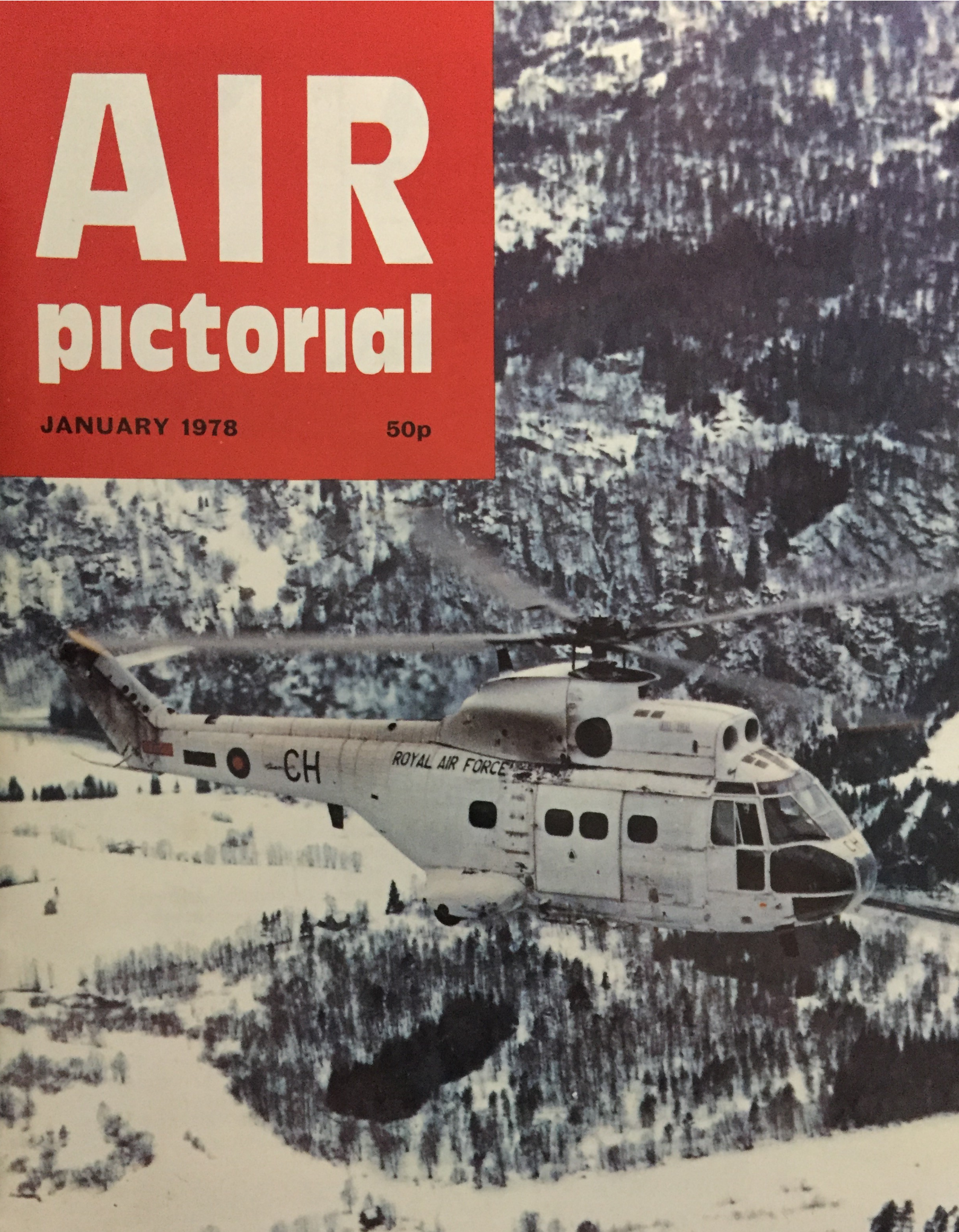
known anyone get so drunk on so little alcohol. Once in Belize he was trapped in the Crewmen's Lair one evening and when he finally made it back to the OM he arrived through the veranda doors, sideways, and fetched up leaning 'heavily' on the side of the bar. Unfortunately as the 'flap' was up he fell through the bar (think Del Boy in Only Fools and Horses) and was finally arrested by the large double chest freezer. The freezer moved a good 6 inches (or 15cm for the younger members) where it stayed, I think, until we left Belize; it couldn't be moved without emptying it of beer, etc. No obvious damage to any part of the man himself. Much missed; we lost a very good man there. And as for his wake..." (Dave Waring)



AIR pictorial

JANUARY 1978

50p



Whatever happened to the AMF?