



# 202 Squadron Association

[www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk](http://www.202-sqn-assoc.co.uk)

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## NEWSLETTER

### The Loss of Catalina JX 242 in 1944

**202 Squadron's Catalina JX 242 was lost in November 1944 with only two of the crew surviving. Owen Bishop writes to Stewart Cameron-Forbes:**

I know little of the crash of JX242 save that it was out for some fifteen hours on an anti-submarine patrol and returned in foul weather and low cloud to crash on the top of Church Hill just a few miles from their base at Castle Archdale. There were two survivors: Flight Sergeant Charles Bowater – a member of the Association – now living in Dudley and Warrant Officer Moore who appears to have gone along for the ride. Charles Bowater survived with no more than a large bump on the head, having lost one flying boot, and has no clear memory of the crash.

I had just arrived at Killadeas at the time and my old crew were on their first operational flight with their new skipper, Flight Lieutenant Forbes-Lloyd, who was starting a second tour.

### Commemorative Ceremony

On Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> August more than two hundred people of Fermanagh attended a service of commemoration and dedication on an Irish hilltop not far from where Catalina JX242 of 202 Squadron crashed in foul weather on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1944, killing eight of the crew. Memorial stones bearing the names of the dead airmen and those of Sunderland W4034 of 201 Squadron, which crashed on nearby Lough Erne on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1943, were unveiled by the son of Warrant officer Ernest Slack who died in JX 242.

Group Captain Martin Sharp OBE ADC, Officer Commanding RAF Aldergrove, and Group Captain Tim Owen, RAAF, Air Force Advisor, Australian Defence Staff, were Guests of Honour and 202 Squadron was represented by Squadron Leader Ian Maclaren DFC. Guests included the brother, son and grandson of Warrant Officer Slack and the daughters of Flight Sergeant Charles Bowater, who survived the crash of JX 242.

A Sea King of 202 Squadron flew over the site precisely, as ever, on time. Protestant and Catholic clergy conducted a short service and Peter Slack added an appreciation.

Earlier in the day wreaths had been laid at memorials at the Church of Ireland and the Sacred Heart Church at Irvinestown and on the graves of two of those who did not survive the crashes.

The memorial stones came from the ruins of Magherena Castle, Near Belleek and bear the names of both crews. The memorial service was organised by the Church Hill and Tully Castle Historical Society with major contributions from local historian Joe O'Loughlin and writer and broadcaster Breege McCusker. Mrs McCusker's excellent book *Castle Archdale And Fermanagh in World War II* tells many stories of the personnel and achievements of 202 and several other squadrons which served in the Lough Erne area between 1939 and 1945. The warm-hearted people of Fermanagh were outstandingly hospitable to all of us and it is good to know how they have kept alive the memories for sixty years.

**Owen Bishop**

## Posh, or what?

The Newsletter has a new look this time, because I considered that we had to move into the twenty first century and be empathetically customer driven taking ownership of our medium. By proactively moving to a new corporate image, derived from blue sky thinking while remaining closely focussed, we creatively move towards our Aims and Objectives as publicly displayed in our Mission Statement.

In the last few of my working years I actually had to listen to pony-tailed gits, male and female, talking like that. The truth is I fancied a change and we can have a bit of colour. You will notice that I have not quite mastered it yet.

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### **There have been a number of queries to the website seeking information about relatives who served with 202 Squadron. Are you able to help?**

In all cases we have only an email address for the information seeker. Please communicate direct if possible, but, if you prefer, just pass your information to me and I'll get it to the respondent.

I have done a little editing, but the originals are available if you want them.

#### **Sqn Ldr Harry Tamblyn DCF** b. 1916, d 1995

RAF/RAAF World War Two then TAA and Qantas. [He doesn't seem to have been in 202 Squadron]

**Les Lee**

**lel@hyperlink.net.au**

#### **Ivor George Applin**

He joined the RAF around 1937/38 and served in 202 Squadron as a radio operator and then radio officer. He flew Catalinas and Serro-Londons and was stationed in Gibraltar, Ireland, Scotland flying throughout the war. He was transferred to become assistant chief radio instructor at a radio school and left the air force after the war.

Ivor Applin sadly died this year and I would dearly like to piece together his history. Could anyone help?

**Graham Ivor Applin**

**graham@applinassociates.fsbusiness.co.uk**

#### **Sgt Alan Morgan**

I wonder if you could guide me to information regarding my uncle, Alan Morgan, a sergeant in the RAF(VR) serving with 202 Squadron during the Second World War. He was killed on The 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1942, I believe in a crash-landing at sea. At the time my Grandmother was sent photographs of his burial in Gibraltar, but in the event these turned out to be false, as his body was never recovered. I have always been interested in finding out the exact circumstances of his death, hence my mail.

I hope you may be able to help or at least guide me in the right direction.

Thank you,

**Gregor Morgan**

**greg.morgan@dial.pipex.com**

#### **Flt Lt Lloyd Jack Bishop**

Seconded from RAAF in 1942 and trained in Canada. Catalina navigator with 202 Squadron in Gibraltar and Lough Erne. Ditched in the Atlantic twice. Married Dorothy Woods in Belfast and died in 1991.

Son is keen to hear more and is particularly interested in anything that bears his father's name.

**Howard Bishop**

**bishop\_howard@hotmail.com**

#### **Bert Allan**

We note with regret the death on 16th August aged 84, of Bert Allan engineer at Coltishall in the 1970s.

# Life on 202

Hello everyone! For those of you that I have not yet met, I am your new representative on the Squadron. I arrived at Leconfield in January, accompanied by my wife Catherine and dog Archie. We had previously been living at St Mawgan whilst I was on the OCU. Leconfield, however, is by no means unfamiliar to either of us as Catherine and I both originate from York!

Martyn Williams has finally hung up his boots and has moved to Kinloss to become a controller at the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre.

Summer 2003 has been an especially busy one on 202 Squadron. It has seen personnel detached to Cyprus, the Falklands, Germany and Northern Ireland as well as Mountain Flying detachments in the Lake District and Scotland. There have also been many rescues and some personnel have received prestigious honours and awards.

Before going into detail on some of the more prominent rescues we have been involved with, I will expand on the detachments carried out throughout the summer.

## Northern Ireland

In August, a crew consisting of personnel from Boulmer, Leconfield and Lossiemouth flew a 202 Sqn Sea King to Fermanagh in Northern Ireland. The aircraft was in the province to provide a flypast at a memorial service. Together with Aldergrove's Station Commander, the newly appointed OC A Flt took the salute at the service in memory of the crew of a 202 Sqn Catalina that crashed in Fermanagh in 1944.

## Cyprus

Some of you will be aware that 84 Squadron retired the Wessex from service this summer. As the shiny new Griffins were being brought into service, the Sea King OCU provided SAR cover. 202 Squadron also provided personnel to ease the burden on the OCU. Unsurprisingly, there were quite a few volunteers for this one!

## Germany

During May, a crew consisting of personnel from Leconfield and Boulmer took an aircraft to EX BALTIC EYE, a NATO SAR exercise at Warnemunde in Germany. This proved to be very useful for exchanging SAR ideas and techniques.

## The Falklands

202 Squadron aircrew continue to do their annual 6 week stint down south while groundcrew work 4 month detachments every 2-3 years.

## Mountain Flying

The Squadron has carried out some very valuable mountain flying detachments this summer. Firstly, in May a number of personnel from the three flights detached to Plockton, a small airstrip near Kyle of Lochalsh in Scotland. The second detachment was to Wasdale in the Lake District. This was carried out in September enabling some essential night mountain flying training.

# Rescues

All 3 Flights have had a busy summer; here are a few statistics from the year so far.

Flight	Rescues	Persons Saved
A Boulmer	168	122
D Lossiemouth	168	164
E Leconfield	126	81

Obviously the editor will not be impressed if I list each and every one of those in detail, so here is a mention of some of the more memorable shifts:

### **A Flight Boulmer**

A Flight were diverted from training with Patterdale MRT to assist an injured walker at Langdale. Whilst the first standby crew were attending this task, the second crew were briefing at Boulmer for a role demonstration. In the middle of the brief they were scrambled to a bendy diver who was taken to a Hyperbaric chamber in Hull. When things had settled, the first standby crew were just sitting down to their evening meal when they were scrambled again. The crew were required to medevac a woman suffering from appendicitis.

### **D Flt Lossiemouth**

Both aircraft were scrambled from Lossiemouth following a serious RTA at Bettyhill. There were 7 stretcher cases and 39 walking wounded on the coaches. 9 were taken to hospital by Sea King.

### **E Flt Leconfield**

As the duty crew were just about to tuck into Spaghetti Bolognese Vindaloo, carefully prepared by the shift captain, a Mayday call was heard over the Ops room radio. Hearing the stricken aircraft's wingman mention Leconfield in his transmission, the crew were already running to the helicopter before the scramble phone went. The aircraft turned out to be a Hawk from Valley flown by a solo student. The student had ejected safely and landed in a field near Pickering. After treatment from the Winchman and Radop the ejectee was flown to Scarborough and subsequently to Queens Medical Centre in Nottingham.

## **Awards and Honours**

Six personnel from 202 Sqn have been honoured recently for their role in 3 notable rescues.

**Lt Bill Sasser** USCG was awarded the AFC as Captain of Rescue 131, the aircraft sent to the aid of MV Rosebank. The Freighter was on fire with a potentially deadly cargo of fertiliser. The Winchman, **Sgt Neil Finch** was awarded the George Medal. After he came off the hook on the deck he remained with the injured whilst the aircraft was forced to fly away due to intense thick black smoke. He was eventually recovered to the aircraft. The other two crew members, **Fg Off Andy Smith** and **F/S Al Hegarty** were awarded Queens Commendations for bravery for their role in a very dangerous rescue. The crew will also receive recognition for their efforts at the Vodaphone Life Savers awards, due to be held shortly in London. As part of this award, they will meet the Prime Minister at 10 Downing St on 23 October.

**Sgt Taz Gilbert**, another Boulmer winchman, received the Queens Commendation for bravery following his recovery of an unconscious person in the water. He recovered the person in a very difficult sea state resulting in Taz himself being submerged on numerous occasions.

**FS John Carrigan**, a winchman at the time serving with 202 at Lossiemouth has received the AFC for his part in the recovery of 18 Fishermen from the stricken trawler '*Le Parrien*.' In 70 mph winds and 30' waves he rescued all crewmembers with minutes to spare.

## **Summary**

As I said at the beginning, it has been a busy few months for the Squadron. That's all for now until the spring. I hope to meet as many of you as possible in Gibraltar and to those of you who can't make it, plans are in full swing for a Leconfield reunion in 2004.

**Tim Brooks**

## Things that go bang

**In the Spring edition John McCubbin told us of his early experiences with A-bombs, H-bombs and Lindholm canisters full of crabs. The story concludes . . .**

The next operation I flew on was called "Operation Antler" and was the last A-bomb test the M.O.S. did in Australia. 204 Squadron at Ballykelly were chosen this time and myself and three other Met observers joined the squadron at the end of July 1957. These were Mk II Shackletons and the Met Observer's position was in the nose gunner's seat. The two 20 mm cannons were never used and were removed for our operation. This seat was not as comfortable as the old Mk I "sofa" type which seemed to have been specially designed for Met observers to lounge in!

We flew 'Bismuth' type triangular reconnaissance tracks daily down to 40 degrees south with the top leg along the 40° S latitude line. These flights lasted about 8-9 hrs and the last one I flew on was the final Met flight before the A-bomb was exploded about 20 miles from the airfield at Maralinga; our last leg was from the descent position to the airfield to watch this thing go off on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1957. The operation was now complete, so we returned to Pearce the next day.

After flying another four Bismuths from Aldergrove, bringing my total to 246, we had the call from Ballykelly again! Myself and 3 other met observers joined 240 Squadron on the Mk I Shackletons again. This operation was the last but one H Bomb test at Christmas Island and was called Grapple Y. About 6 hours out from Lagers for Bermuda we were struck by lightning and lost HF/MF radio. We pressed on hoping to get into VHF contact with Kinley Airforce base. As the navigator was now on DR we descended to about 1500' breaking cloud about 2000

hoping to drop a smoke float and get a drift, but when we all saw the massive great "white horses" dead ahead, we decided that there was no drift either way!

The navigator worked out his new ETA - about 2 hours to run - and we climbed to 4000' and managed to get into contact with Bermuda control - who told us that the airfield was closed due to strong cross winds and heavy thunderstorms and that we were to fly on to our first diversion which was Charleston (South Carolina) - about six hours away on the east coast mainland of the USA! When we got this message the captain shouted a few strong words over the VHF and told them we had about half an hour's fuel left and we were coming in now! - so stand by! We finally "splashed" down on the runway after 13 hours from the Azores and had to stop the engines at the end of the runway to be towed to dispersal by a massive great tractor. When we went into debriefing, the Yanks would not believe that we had flown the last four hours at 1500 feet- they thought it was 15000!

About two hours out from Travis to Honolulu we had a fire in number one engine and had to return on three engines. The Captain and Flight engineer decided - together with the ground crew engine fitters - that it was an engine change! After some frantic signal exchanges between us and Ballykelly, we were told that Transport Command could not spare a Hastings to fly our replacement engine out and 240 were going to bring it out in another Shackleton captained by F O Howard. They managed to fit this power plant in the bomb bay but found that the bomb doors could not be closed until they had cut parts out. This also meant that they could not carry the overload tank in the bomb bay. They set off, however, and were stuck on Lagers for a few days waiting for the head winds to ease off between the Azores and Bermuda. They finally made it

to Charleston with hydraulic failure and landed with no flaps.

Half way over Texas they had a fire in one engine and had to make an emergency landing at Austin USAF base, where the crew and engine fitters did an engine change using the engine they were bringing out to us! They actually took off the next morning, after one of the quickest engine changes on record, and landed at Travis that afternoon with a burnt out engine in the bomb bay! It had taken them two weeks to reach us at Travis, so we all had an enjoyable time in San Francisco.

Operation Grapple Y continued until 28<sup>th</sup> April 1958 with the Shackletons flying a met reconnaissance once a day until the Vickers Valiant dropped the H-bomb on the eastern end of Christmas Island, using a visual marker visible from 30,000' with the burst timed for 10,000 feet. All aircraft were airborne at this time, flying in a circle, 50 miles from the island in their own designated areas at 5000' and when the shock wave hit us, the aircraft leapt up a few hundred feet and then settled down again minutes later

I flew back to UK with Flt Lt Williams and crew arriving in Ballykelly on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1958, just in time for 'demob' from 202, and back to the Met Office. In all I flew 77 MET RECCE on Shackletons so, add in that to 246 Bismuths in Hastings, makes a total of 323 MET sorties, I suppose it was quite a total, but I never caught up with the "Bismuth Aces" such as Iggy, Frank Radina, Jim Stratton, Jock Moyes, etc who all flew over 400.

I hope these Shackleton experiences make a bit of interesting reading; they should raise a bit of a laugh because they are all true (honestly).

**John McCubbin**

## Diary Date

Next year's reunion will be at the  
Officers Mess Leconfield Barracks  
on  
Friday 30th April till Sunday 2nd May 2004

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## Apology

This Newsletter was meant to be published well before the reunion, but was delayed for various reasons [not my fault, guv].

One of the problems is that some of our members who are not lucky enough to be properly retired are expending as much energy on the work they are paid for as for the Association.

I bet it wasn't like that in the old days.

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## From The Secretary

Due to publicity of the Gibraltar Reunion, membership has increased to 153 - welcome to all the new members.

The arrangements for Gibraltar are going well, I hope a good time is had by all. My thoughts are now turning to the next one – May 2004 at Leconfield. I will be sending something out just before Christmas.

Those of you that pay annually by cheque, please ensure that the cheques are made payable to "202 Squadron Association" and not to me. If you prefer to pay by direct debit, let me know.

If you have any questions on membership or subs due please contact me.

My Snail Mail address for Cheques is:

Please make sure your name and address is on the back of the cheque.

Hopefully see you all in Gib in October, if not then at Leconfield in 2004.

Regards,

Jules

A girl walked into a bar and said to the barman, "I'd like a double entendre please". So he gave her one!

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

## The Flight Shop

The A Flight Shop has a lot of very attractive items of Squadron Memorabilia that are available to Association members.

202 Squadron Plaque	£24.00 *
202 Squadron Embroidered Badge	£4.00
Sea King Enamel Badge	£3.00
Large Sea King Print	£2.00
Sea King Mountains Print	£1.00
Sea King Postcard Print	£0.25
Tankard	£15.00*
Pen	£0.40
Key Ring	£1.00
202 Squadron Sticker	£0.50
RAF Crest – Enamel Badge	£3.00
Bookmark	£1.00
202 Squadron Crest Enamel Badge	£3.00
Sea King Sticker	£0.50
Sea King Embroidered Badge	£4.00
T Shirt (all sizes)	£8.50
Polo Shirt (all sizes)	£14.00
Tie	£7.50
Cummerbund	£20.00

\* To order