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INTRODUCTION BY SOCIETY CHAIRMAN

Air Vice-Marshal Baldwin after the 11th AGM

Ladies and gentlemen it is a pleasure to welcome as our guest this evening Lord Merlyn-Rees, an ex-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Home Secretary and, just as important from our point of view, an ex RAF squadron leader.

I remember him as one of the Ministers in the MoD in 1967, another was Roy Hattersly as I remember. I was then ADC to the AOC 11 Group at Bentley Priory and I suppose he was the first Minister I ever spoke to in my Royal Air Force career. Looking back I can say quite truthfully he was quite the nicest.

One quote from his chapter in a book called *High Flyers* seems particularly apposite to me, commenting on one of his first postings as a very junior Operations Officer he wrote, 'Oh the misery of being first at HQ Fighter Command and then HQ 11 Group.' I went there at the end of a three year tour as one of Bomber Command's youngest Vulcan captains to be the most junior officer on the staff, so I know how he felt.

I do not know what our Speaker is going to say to us; I have offered him the widest possible remit, but we are delighted to have you with us.

SOME REFLECTIONS

Rt Hon Lord Merlyn-Rees PC

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen for inviting me, I hope I shall be of some use to you. I have an abiding regard for the Royal Air Force where I learnt much as a young officer and as a Minister. Now I have 20 to 30 minutes and I thought to talk a little about, I hesitate to say war experiences, for it sounds as if a great brave aviator is going to talk and that is not true, but nevertheless I was in the war so there is that experience whatever it is.

A word or two about that; I live by the Imperial War Museum and I buy Penguin-type books about the experience of a machine-gunner at Mons or something, a private, and it tells you more about the Battle of Mons than people who write about the battle itself. Maybe what someone like myself, not very important at the time, has to say may be of some merit in evaluating parts of the war anyway. So I will divide my remarks into two.

I served from 1941 to 1946; I was 1576563 AC2 and 119433; that last number serves me in great stead and I can use that number for all sorts of things because I still remember it almost every hour of the day. I was in the University Air Squadron and that did me the world of good, and that is why when I was a Minister I did my best to conserve the University Air Squadrons. Whether I agree with the argument that do not worry too much whether many of them go into the Air Force is a different matter, but that is open to disagreement. All my friends in the University Air Squadron – my first point – went to America to learn to fly second-stage aircraft under the Arnold scheme which came into being in about 1941, before the Americans came in the war, and they went in civilian clothes. I did not go because in the University Air Squadron you could get away with many things, but I could not get away for long because I could not see properly in one eye. So off I went to be an A&SD acting pilot officer, aged 20, in the Air Force suddenly pitchforked into things. Suddenly they said go to Fighter Command and observe, and sitting in the Senior Officers Mess as an acting pilot officer is not the greatest thing to do; then at 11 Group the same thing. I was very conscious of being a great failure, that all my friends were doing something important and I was not – it is no good my ignoring it – that is what happened.

Then, by chance, and it is what I want to talk about; by chance, everything happened by chance, I was in the Sector Operations room at 11 Group, I was at RAF Debden with 72, 111, 43 and an American Eagle

squadron, and eventually we had all the Eagles. Later they changed into khaki uniform and became an American Group I think; a Group and a Wing is, if I remember rightly, rather different in the two Services. Dissatisfied as I was, because the men I worked with were all about 30, as far as I was concerned they were age old and I was coming up 21, and it was not quite right, at least as far as I was concerned.

Then they began thinking about the Second Front and they set up X and Y Groups and they became 84 and 85 Groups, long after my time. They set up a mobile ops room and a mobile air reporting unit, and we wandered round the south of England. We were not allowed to go to officers messes, we were not allowed to bath in the officers messes, we had to live rough as it were and we did not do it very successfully – we were certainly not clothed for it. The idea of not giving you battledress instead of pale blue uniform when you are in muddy fields struck me as very odd at the time, and still does. Then we did an exercise called Spartan, I do not know if any of you remember Exercise Spartan; and we wandered round even more of the south of England. The next thing we took our vehicles up to Scotland and then on a boat and went to Sicily. After that we landed on the beaches at Sicily.

We had had a training course at RAF Chigwell, which was a balloon station, and the conditions at Chigwell were really quite extraordinary – thousands of us living in a balloon hangar with beds which seemed to go up and up. What I did not know at the time was that complaints were made in Parliament, but I did not read the newspapers in those days and certainly did not listen to the radio. I went and had a look at Hansard the other day, for early 1942, but I could not find any record of it, although I am told there were great complaints about it and the conditions were not of the best. I suppose they were saying well they will not be of the best where you are going, if they had told us where we were going.

We eventually got ashore dressed by this time in khaki battledress, more suitable for Narvik than for Augusta, Sicily and we went ashore in LCTs. The beachmaster, kicking us up the beach and not lingering, was Captain Denis Healey, and I always thought that the job he did there suited him in life – up the beach and get out of my sight.

What happened afterwards, I will not go into it, was that we were not royally welcomed by the Desert Air Force; they had had their own very good arrangements for two or three years and to have this lot from the UK did not suit them very much. However, the planners wanted to see how it worked because they wanted to do the same thing with the Second Front, I

suppose that was the reason. I did not linger long, but we did very well. I was not with them more than five minutes because one of the Desert Air Force wings was bombed and their operations outfit which was very, very small – four men were killed – I found myself going to a wing as an Operations Officer with a telephone and that worked very well.

We had to get food; my abiding memory is getting on a Harley Davidson motor bike which was more to my liking and going down the road towards Syracuse – tanks had torn up each side of these roads – and finding food for the outfit. We were not used to searching for food; in the RAF the food comes to your station and it is all laid on, but it was not laid on then. I soon discovered that the North Africa wings and the Desert Air Force wings that had come together had learnt the hard way.

I went to 324 Wing, back with 72, 111, 43 and 93 which was a new attack/reconnaissance squadron and we must have moved in the next two and a half years to something like 25 strips; usually, excepting Naples and Lyon, a bombed-out airfield where you could fill in the holes and use a strip. There were no buildings, but for Capodichino in Naples and Lyon Bron in the south of France.

It worked very well, everybody knew exactly what to do, everybody knew when they arrived to put their tents well away from the planking runway – we had moved on from the wire runways which blew the tyres up. The point I want to make is the Air Force had made a transition from typical RAF life with the officers messes, the billiards room and so on, to living rough and living rough for years on end and getting the food they wanted and cooking it and everyone was happy and content. Never known a happier outfit and very rarely did anyone get any sort of leave, except when Rome fell and there were some kind of leave facilities there.

We went from Sicily to Salerno and I shall never forget the Hampshires in September 1943; we were nearly driven off the beaches at Salerno, and it was not very well done. For the first time in my life I began to consider what happens tomorrow if all goes really wrong – is there somewhere a young man can escape and the answer was no, there was nowhere to escape. The Panzers were coming and we were being shelled and all the rest of it, but it went in the end. So we were at Salerno; we followed the army at close quarters and two of us liberated Sorrento. When I go back to Sorrento, I often think that two of us went with our revolvers and the Mayor of Sorrento greeted us – so if you want a holiday in Sorrento mention the names of two people and they will look after you.

We went into Naples and then up to Lago and then we went to Anzio,

we landed at Anzio on D-Day and that was another not very well carried out operation. It is not my job to go into that, except to tell you that they were flying from Lago and landing, if there was any problem, at Nettuno. There were five Spitfires there that could not get off from the beachhead and they were teasing the engineer officer about it – it's no good 'Spanner' you are useless, there are five of your aircraft up at Anzio, and from the back of a truck in which I had a table, a chair and a handphone up the runway went a Spitfire V and there was this chap in it very low, and 'Spanner' was taking-off without a parachute. He flew to Anzio, he had never flown solo in his life, but he went up the coast and turned right and came into land and landed perfectly despite the shell holes in the runway. Just before he landed a Squadron Commander of another outfit went prang into a hole – 'Spanner' who had never flown before landed perfectly. He was court-martialled, and I saw him a year or two ago before he died and he grieved about this court-martial, that said he was only doing it for the good of the RAF.

We learnt the hard way; eventually we broke off from Italy and went to Corsica and into the south of France. Last year, or the year before, I spotted in the paper that there was to be a celebration by the French forces of the liberation of the south of France. What concerned me, (and I take my hat off to the *Maquis*, the French *Maquis* behaved with great bravery); it was the American army, a mix of British parachutists and American parachute regiments, and ourselves with 322 Wing – we had five squadrons and they had five squadrons so there would have been about 160 aircraft. No mention of the RAF, so I wrote to the Prime Minister, for I thought that Duncan Smith who was our CO at the time ought to go there. Have to be careful because you write everything down; the French had played precious little part in the liberation of the south of France, but the RAF had, so I thought they should go. In the end I went with the Duke of York, the Chief of the Air Staff and the Chief of the Naval Staff. We went there and at least there was someone who had played a part in the landings.

When it actually happened in 1944 it was on the bombed airfield of Lyon where the various liberating forces were fighting each other more than they were fighting anyone else. At Lyon General de Gaulle landed, so Group Captain Duncan Smith and myself stood at the side when the great man landed – he took not the slightest notice of us whatsoever – and a chap calling himself the French Station Commander who I had never seen before in my life, and what he was commanding I had not the slightest idea, but he greeted and off they went. I was telling a senior Cabinet Minister, I will not

mention his name, about this and he said 'Well put yourself in de Gaulle's position, he had to bring France back after the war and to bow to anyone else that had played a part in it would have weakened his position'. Well that may be a good answer, but I did not think so at the time.

We went into the south of France and eventually thought we were coming home; we thought the war was ending and they folded up 322 Wing and back we went to Florence. At Florence in the dark we had the greatest catastrophe I have been involved in, because we got to a proper airfield which had been bombed to bits and runways had been filled in. It was a great catastrophe; crashing aircraft, fire and deaths; these things happen I suppose. There may have been a particular failure on somebody's part, but overall the mobile wings and the airmen who worked in it and the squadrons that worked in it were brilliant, and they worked with the Army and the Army and ourselves got on like a house on fire.

One thing that happened in the Rhone valley was that in this 'ops' truck, which by this time we had got, the Squadron Commanders came to see me and said we want to get on to the Americans and stop this carnage of horses – the Rhone valley was littered with dead horses. The opposing troops were not German soldiers; they were anything but German soldiers although they wore German helmets, but they were Croatians, Yugoslavs, and from Estonia and wherever else. The story that Europe was waiting for our liberation was not always true, there were large numbers who supported the Germans. We stopped killing horses because the road was blocked anyway, our job had been done.

Back we went to Florence and then we went the other side back with the Eighth Army for the first time since Sicily, and they put 500 lb bombs on the wings of the Spitfires and we became fighter bombers. In Italy every river was a battle, there are fifty-two war cemeteries in Italy, and each river crossing was a battle. The fighter bombers coming in under Rover David which many of you will know a lot about, far more than I do, but called in with the aid of a large scale map which the pilot had on his lap and picking out a farmhouse. 'Do you see that farmhouse? Farmer says there is a Tiger tank hidden behind there,' or that sort of thing, and it worked very well. By then it was only a matter of time before the German resistance in Italy, which had been carried out brilliantly, collapsed.

Up we went to Austria and we were with V Corps; if the German officers had let us go ahead instead of maintaining they had no instructions when it was quite obvious that the time had come to give in, then the Russians would not have been in Vienna.

So the mobile wings and the working with the Army; I regret that there now seems to be, as I understand it, only one place where the Army and the RAF are entwined with each other for working together and that is probably RAF Germany. It is a pity, because the Army and the RAF have to work together, and all the old arguments about an Army Air Force and the RAF should be forgotten; all those sort of things would be as naught because working together, through the Tactical Air Forces, as they all became, I remember they did it astonishingly well. I met some brilliant Wing Commanders; Duncan Smith, 'Sheep' Gilroy, Brian Kingcome and they transferred from doing their job in the south of England into doing it as a tactical force working with the Army brilliantly. The way the RAF transformed itself I have always remembered, and remembered with pride.

I learnt the value of air power while we were attacked at Sicily, at Naples and up the coast for a while, but I do not remember being attacked by the *Luftwaffe* as they told me they had been in North Africa. The air power won; when we were talking to German prisoners they looked over to see the RAF chap with an RAF blue hat on and khaki; they pointed; they knew that in the desert and up through Italy air power played a major part in the victory. Working together with the Army must never be forgotten; working separately in the Services is no use. That is all I want to say about my not very brilliant RAF career, but it is what I remember.

I now turn to something more general in more recent years – ministerial experience. There is luck whether you are a Minister or not; you can be out of office for 18 years, and you can be full flood in office and, little do you know it, but you can be out of office for 10 years. Politics is a hard taskmaster, because you are not dealing with certainty but uncertainty. I happened to go into the House of Commons when Hugh Gaitskell died in 1963. I became Parliamentary Private Secretary as an economist with the Chancellor, then Army Minister briefly, and then RAF Minister for three years, I think it was. But I had better explain that, and many of you here will remember it anyway; when we got there all the talk was about structural changes at the Ministry of Defence. The argument had gone on for years about having a Ministry of Defence which was a proper Ministry of Defence and not just as they had had during the war with the Prime Minister as Minister of Defence. When I arrived there was still a Ministry of Defence, the centralisation was taking place and there was a Minister of State for each of the three Services, but still acting as Secretary of State as it were for the three separate forces, with a Parliamentary Under-Secretary underneath. It changed pretty quickly – how many months I do not know,

and the Secretary of State pulling everything together at the top with a central military staff – Navy, Army and Air Force. Under the Secretary of State there were two functional Ministers of State for equipment and for personnel, and under that the Permanent Under-Secretaries. I occupied the room of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State, which was about the size of the Taj Mahal and far greater than my actual powers but the RAF badly wanted to keep the single Minister for the Services and I agreed with them. I was sad when eventually the Parliamentary Secretaries disappeared into functional Ministers themselves.

All I remember of those years is that there was a great deal of irritation about the changes. Changing any organisation takes a lot of doing. It is not just the Services; it is in hospitals, in education, in plants, in business – whatever it might be – change is not welcomed. There were mutterings about Duncan Sandys, that Duncan Sandys had caused all the trouble in the years before, and I make no political point about that, with his view that nuclear weapons would change the nature of the Royal Air Force and so on. There was a strong Secretary of State for Defence, and my job was very much administrative, dealing with all the Parliamentary Questions that came in to do with the RAF – everything under the sun. You know the sort of thing, from leave, from wives writing in and saying that I have not been with my husband for ten years and that it is the fault of the Royal Air Force; it's ruining our marriage. We found that one man had requested that he never should be posted home. I remember writing to the Member of Parliament with two letters; one he could read telling the man the truth and the other one saying the exigencies of the Service and the idiot sent the wrong letter to the woman. So that is about the most exciting thing that happened to me.

I was also on the Air Force Board which met regularly; the Air Member for Personnel and myself and the Permanent Under-Secretary had to deal with cases of people being dismissed the Air Force for all sorts of curious reasons. We would sit in a room and read them – does he go or doesn't he go? I must say that in this day and age, 20 or 30 years later it does not seem so surprising from what one reads in the newspapers, but it was a surprising thing to me at the time. Funny things that went on.

When I was the Army Minister very briefly I discovered one thing that I want to pick up on, the Territorial Army was altered. What I discovered was that all the knocking was against the Ministers – here is the wicked Labour Government doing away with the Territorial Army and setting up the TAVR, which was small groups to bolster the divisions in Germany.

This was the advice of the General Staff. I remember saying to Gerry Reynolds who was a Minister of State why should we go around being knocked for doing this when it is the view of the Services and not the political view. 'That is what you are paid for lad, that is what it is all about'. So that was the first time and I will come across other examples of it in a moment; the role of the Staffs.

Do some of you remember there was a concept when I got there for setting up a Defence College, on the basis of the American Defence College. We botched on with that for a year or eighteen months and perhaps longer, and reports came from well known educators and so on. In the end there was a simple answer; young officers could take a degree and then go to Cranwell – why set up a Defence College at very great expense? Why we did not think of that in the first instance I do not know but it rattled on for a long time. There were also the first incipient arguments taking place about coming out of the Far East and I will come to that in a moment.

TSR2 you have discussed and I was not involved in it at all, but this I do know; what I was told, because I was only Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Royal Air Force, was the argument you will have come across. Unless you can sell them and have a run of TSR2s then it is not going to happen, and somebody had to take decisions on the other aircraft, those that were in the pipeline. I seem to recall that I was told that Admiral Mountbatten had wanted to take the American Phantom for some years and the idea came up of putting a Rolls-Royce engine in it which added to the cost of the whole thing but the arguments had been taking place for some time and of course it was too expensive.

When I went to Australia at that time to try and play my part in getting the Australians to buy it, it was quite clear to me that the Australians did not want to know. When I was there in more recent years some Australians put to me, not everybody's view no doubt, that the link with the UK defence-wise had gone with Malaya and the sinking of the capital ships and they then looked to America to defend them. That it was the Americans who had defended them in the Battle of the Coral Sea, that it was the Americans with the radar station just outside Townsville on the east coast of Queensland which had first seen the Japanese battleships approaching Australia – no thanks to Britain it was not their fault – but it was the Americans who were there and defenders from now on. That is still the situation.

Now the other thing is the basic economic situation which I would like

to say a word or two about. During the war, and it is principally why in the very early days before the Americans really came in the war that Churchill, and I say Churchill because he was the great war leader and saw things lesser men would not see. So was evolved Lease-Lend, the American loan thereafter, then there was the Truman doctrine after the war when we pulled out of the far end of the Mediterranean.

What I discovered when I was on the Falklands Inquiry into the steps leading up to the Falklands War was I found that in 1952 Anthony Eden had minuted the Prime Minister to say that we should give up the Falklands to the Americans; it was not worth anything to us, because it was in the American sphere of influence. When we looked at all the papers – the Cabinet papers not the stuff in the House of Commons, and the papers coming from the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Defence – all the way through those years up to the time when the Islands were invaded, the strength of will of British Governments to hang on and to keep the Falklands was not there. The naval base in Simonstown and the Navy, principally, to defend it had gone, and the whole thing was the economic situation. I discovered one other thing in my time; I had always thought that in 1917 when the Coalition Government was formed under Lloyd George and Mr Balfour the Conservative leader was Foreign Minister, that he went to America to get them into the war. But no, it was to get money out of the Americans. We had reached the pitch in 1917 when because of our exterior financial situation we had not the money to carry on the war. That problem with our economic situation was one, to be fair, which Mr Chamberlain realised all the way through in his term just before the war broke out. It is not for me to defend Mr Chamberlain, I was one of his more vociferous critics, but the economic situation is one that cannot be ignored.

Right after World War 2 it took a long time to recover, despite the American loans and the Bretton Woods plan and so on. Our economic situation was far different from that of Germany, and in many respects far different from that of France and it irritates me, politically, and I do not care which government is in power. After that time the oil crisis hit the government of Mr Heath, I have no doubt the Labour party would have grumbled and said it was all his fault; but it was nonsense. The oil crisis which hit the first Wilson government and the political system does not help the analysis of the situation. It is always the fault of the lot in power and not proper analysis of the economic situation.

I represented an inner city industrial area for 30 odd years in Leeds and I miss it more than anything – far more than I miss the House of Commons.

It was full of engineers and engineering factories, all gone, our economic base has gone. Now that may be a good thing, I do not want to go into the economic arguments, but what I am pointing out is that underneath everything that happens in defence policy is the economic situation. The Germans procrastinating over the European fighter; but people forget with the Germans and, say, that they have taken on what is it 20 million East Germans? They have absorbed eastern Germany, a poor country which had been ruined by slavish, I nearly said Teutonic, but Slavonic and Teutonic together, policies. That is the problem the Germans face; I have no knowledge what they are going to do about the fighter, but the economic situation underlies many things.

I raise with you ladies and gentlemen the question of the roles of the Chiefs of Staff. Is the role of the Chiefs of Staff to protect their own Services, or is it to have people with a breadth of view that can see more than that? If it is the former, then I believe we ought to think hard about it. I had the great privilege of serving with Sam Elworthy, Andrew Humphrey, Neil Cameron and others of course, and they were great men and more than senior RAF officers; they had a breadth of view. The same sort of thing that Jack Slessor had, whom I certainly did not know, but I have read many of his books and the Air Force throws up from time to time people with a great breadth of view about the Military, the RAF, and the complete situation.

It needs also politicians who have knowledge, knowledge – no more – not to be defence experts that would be a grave mistake. The days in the House of Commons when 95% of the people in the House of Commons on both sides had served in the Services have gone. Whether there is anybody left now, I cannot think of one but there may be one or two. It's a pity; you cannot run defence arrangements in order that future MPs can have had military experience. It, of course, works the other way that the professional sailors, soldiers and airmen ought to know more about the political situation. Where one would find it I do not know, but the elementary discussion that we get about the political situation in the newspapers does not help. Whether more could be done at the Staff Colleges, and I do not mean just the structural government, the Monarchy, the judiciary, central government and local government and so on – I do not mean that. One of the young men who served me as PA when I was Parliamentary Secretary was 'Paddy' Hine and 'Paddy' knew about politics; he had hung around with me and he had seen how it worked. It is not nice and simple; the Cabinet meets and then the Cabinet Sub-Committee, etc, etc.

During the Falklands, before the Falklands war broke out, we were called to a Defence and Overseas Policy Committee and I went as Home Secretary, because the Home Secretary is responsible for ARP and all the rest of it. The Prime Minister was Jim Callaghan, and he said we have our own Intelligence circles and Argentina is going to invade the Falklands. The Chief of the Naval Staff was there, so Jim pulled out from his desk a very small scale map and I could see from where I was sitting a list of ships or a list of something, and he said, 'I want a nuclear hunter killer submarine down near the Falklands, two frigates 400 miles off the Falklands, and I want terms of engagement worked out straight away'. There was discussion; I cannot pretend the Navy was over eager to do it and quite properly, whenever politicians have ideas it's the Services job to at least pull back for a moment to see whether it is necessary and that is what happened. What I did not know, because he did not tell us, was that when he left us he had the Head of MI6 come in to see him and asked him to walk around the garden. They walked round the garden and he said 'I want the Argentinians to find out that there is a nuclear submarine and two frigates down off the Falklands' – they pulled off.

The handling of the later crisis was not well done; one of the reasons was the Foreign Office had a curious belief that a new government should not be told of secret action by a previous government. Lord Carrington was eventually told when it was all too late, and he said 'why have I not been told?' 'Well,' said the Foreign Office 'we do not tell the incoming Government what the previous Government did.' Well, I can quite see that with regard to political matters or legislation, but on the security of the realm it is the first thing one ought to have been told. You see Jim had been a sailor – 'Sailor' Jim and all the rest of it – he knew something and he had a feel for naval and defence matters. We are not going to have that from Members of Parliament and we cannot do much about it, except there are visits laid on increasingly to educate them as to what goes on in the various Services. Then some thought ought to be given to our Royal Air Force people knowing how the political situation and politics works.

Finally, as I get older and I am very old now – I am 76 coming up 77, and I get more irritated every day if you start telling people what went on. Then the teasing starts, my children go and play the violin and so on and we all have to put up with such attitudes. What I have learnt in life is that every new generation looks at life in a completely different way, and that is what is happening in politics at the moment, and politicians should not be surprised. What I have learnt is that it is not that problems end, but that the

nature of the problems change. One of the greatest mistakes we could make is to believe that if it is a problem of poverty that it is the same problem of poverty we had twenty years ago, and it is not. That the problem of education is the same we had twenty years ago, and it is not.

I was brought up in a pit village, most of my colleagues at school left at 13, and if they could read and write then they could leave at 12 and pass the labour exam – everybody stays on to 18 now. So when you are looking at education it is a different scenario from the one of 15 to 20 years ago, and so it is in defence policy.

I learnt a great deal as a young man in the RAF. I was offered a permanent commission in the RAF, I was not much use to the RAF in my first two or three years and I ought to have paid them to keep me in the Royal Air Force. Afterwards I earned my keep and I was offered a permanent commission; I was wise not to take it because even then I realised that an A&SD wonder would not get very far and that is the way it is. A number of times I have sat back since and said to myself ‘Why didn’t I stay?’, because I have an abiding regard for the RAF.

With regard to ministerial policy, never believe what you read in the books, never believe what you read in the newspapers, it is never completely true and the theory of relativity depends where you stand or the view you have of something, and there are other views of it as well. In terms of the Services I wish you well in what I hope will be a proper Defence Review and not one run by the Treasury.

I had a problem with prisons when I was Home Secretary and the rule is that Ministers lower in rank than yourself come to see you. They wanted to cut the money on prisons – only 52,000 people in prisons, now 65,000. I got very hot under the collar and said to my Private Secretary, ‘We will go over to the Treasury, you come with me. Let’s tell them’. The Chief Secretary said there have been no cuts, and that is what I was trying to achieve; he came from Manchester and I said to him, ‘Would you like to take over the prisons in the Treasury? You seem to know how to run prisons better than we do. You run them.’ Don’t ever ask them to run the Air Force. However, there is that element that the Treasury think they know all. What they have to do is look after the Nation’s finances. I hope that any Defence Review that is coming would bring in everybody that is possible – independent people – and have a wide-ranging look at what the Services are about at the turn of the century, not a Treasury led review.

DISCUSSION

Peter Montgomery: I would just like to say that I was a Beaufighter pilot in the Desert Air Force and completely agree with every remark you make about working with the Army and what a super time we had really; everything worked like clockwork. I can't say more than that.

Lord Merlyn-Rees: I am glad to have met you. You know the lovely story, on one squadron there were a number of Australian pilots and they were always taking the 'Mickey' out of the 'Poms'. Underneath bush hats one of them said 'I know you Poms', I know what happens, you are different from the Huns in this way; if you call for a squadron to rendezvous over Tobruk at 15,000 feet and the Bostons – or whatever they were at the time – are coming at 10,000 feet, you have got to be there at 10.00 hrs. You get there a bit late there are no Bostons, there is a mess-up'. Now he said 'The Germans if they do it – 10.00 hrs the fighters the bombers, perfect – that is the trick you Poms' have learnt; when you are in retreat you are still in a mess, you are used to it, but when the Germans are in retreat they are not used to it and they fold up, that's the clever thing about you Poms' you are used to problems whatever happens'.

**MINUTES OF THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL
GENERAL MEETING HELD IN THE
ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB ON 10th JUNE 1997**

Present: Air Vice-Marshal N B Baldwin (in the Chair) and 35 other members.

Apologies for Absence

In alphabetical order from: Gp Capt Lambert, Gp Capt Kingsley Oliver and Mr G J Shrimpton.

Chairman's Report

The Chairman said that since the last AGM the Society had organised two major events: the Air Navigation seminar last October in conjunction with The Royal Institute of Navigation and The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, and the TSR2 day at Filton six weeks ago. He thought both had been extremely successful and reflected much credit on the organisers. He particularly thanked Philip Saxon for masterminding the former and 'Sandy' Hunter for the latter. Regional events seemed to have become Sandy's forté; during the year the Society had published *Defending Northern Skies* – the record of the day he organised at Newcastle some 18 months ago – which the Chairman thought was a credit to the Society (as was the other major document this year on Air Intelligence). He wished to record formally his thanks to 'Sandy' and those who helped him to produce it, not least to the editorial team. He confidently expected that the Proceedings recording the Navigation and the TSR2 days would be equally satisfying. He also wished to put on record the Society's grateful thanks to Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace for their generous support to the TSR2 day and to Gp Capt 'Jock' Heron of R-R in particular for his personal contribution. As a result of that day at Filton the Society had welcomed 21 new members.

The Chairman said that the Society's publications were its enduring monument, not least because they eventually reached all members world-wide, rapidly becoming source and research documents. He thought that the Society could be proud of its publishing record over its eleven year life. He assured the Meeting that he and the Committee intended to continue in that vein. Plans well under way for a day in September (the 9th) dedicated to 'Operations in South Arabia and the Withdrawal from Aden' under the guidance of the Society's Life Vice-President Sir Freddie Sowrey. Shortly afterwards, on 28th October, there would be a day devoted to 'Logistics

Support to Deployed Operations' held, appropriately enough, at HQ Logistics Command at Brampton, near Huntingdon. For next year AVM Mike Robinson had already put much effort into planning a day dedicated to 'Training in Peace for War – The Offensive', ranging from operations with the Fairey Battle to the V-Force and to Tornado in the Gulf War. For the more distant future, the Chairman said that the Committee is mulling over days on 'The RAF in Germany 1945-98' and 'The RAF and Nuclear Weapons'. Volunteers were needed as 'masterminds' to drive these days forward, together with ideas for other subjects.

As far as the planning and organisation of such events was concerned, the Chairman said that his policy was to agree, early on, a mastermind for the subject, co-opt him alongside the Committee during the gestation period, and generally give him his head within the constraints of venue and finance. This was a mechanism that had worked well for the past couple of years and he would like it to continue. The result should not only be a stimulating and historically important day out for those attending, but, conscious that it is always a minority of members that can get to events, an eventual record should provide much pleasure and satisfaction. A hardback book such as *Air Intelligence* costs about £4,000 to publish and £570 for postage and packing. The Society's aim was to publish two hardbacks a year and one (or more) softbacks, such as the Journal which cost about £2,900 to publish. Seminar days were planned to be financially self-supporting; but the much later costs of disseminating the Proceedings were borne by Society funds.

While the Society will continue to plan regional seminars such as Newcastle and Brampton, our main venue is likely to remain the RAF Museum at Hendon. Dr Michael Fopp, the Museum's Director, merits the Society's most grateful thanks for his unwavering support. Sadly, the Society's close linkage with the RAF Staff College at Bracknell is, like the Staff College, no more. However, the new Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC) was up and running at Bracknell (mainly in Portakabins) under a major-general Commandant. Close contact had been established with the Assistant Commandant (Air) and the Director of Defence Studies (RAF), who was resident at Bracknell, and was a member of the Society's Committee, but it would be wise to allow the new College to settle down before any approach on joint activity.

The Chairman reported that DDefS, currently Gp Capt Andrew Lambert, had played a leading role in the selection of the annual recipient of the 'Two Air Forces Award' – the two air forces being our own and the

USAF. The award had been an initiative of our American colleagues in the Air Force Historical Foundation, in Washington DC, with whom we were delighted to be associated. The Society's President, Sir Michael Beetham, gave the first British award to Sqn Ldr Peter Emmett for his work on 'Information Warfare'. The net is now being cast for this year's recipient.

The Society's President is likely to be approached by the President of the Air League, Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Knight, with a proposal that the League would fund the creation of a gold medal, to be known as 'The Air League/RAF Historical Society Gold Medal', to mark (in the words of the Council of the Air League) the Society's 'contribution to British aviation excellence' over the last eleven years. One of the Society's founder members, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Barraclough, a member of the Air League Council, has been at the forefront in encouraging the Air League to honour the Society in that way because of the reputation of the Society's seminars and publications. The offer was generous; sufficient to fund a die and the first medal. The medal was unlikely to be awarded often and must be seen to have been richly deserved. Nominations from members of possible Medal winners for the Committee's consideration would of course be most welcome. Sir John Barraclough would say a few words about the Medal after the Meeting. Next February Sir Michael Howard would be giving the Air League's Slessor Memorial Lecture. The Chairman said he was sure that the Lecture would appeal to members and more information would be sent out as soon as possible. The possibility of printing the lecture along with information about the Gold Medal in a Society publication was being examined.

While later in the agenda that evening the Chairman would ask the Meeting to appoint Committee members for the coming year, he said he would like to round off his report by putting on record his thanks to the present Committee for their loyalty and hard work over the past year. Especially he would like to thank 'Sandy' Hunter, Tony Richardson and Andy Brookes, who had stood down or intended to do so that evening, for their many years of generous service. He would also like to thank Edgar Spridgeon, who recorded Society events, including the Meeting, for his unique contribution. To all of his colleagues on the Committee, who so generously gave of their time and bore their travel and telephone costs on behalf of the Society, and without whom the Society could do nothing; he offered his grateful thanks. Finally he would like to add his thanks to the President, Sir Michael Beetham, and Life Vice-President, Sir Freddie Sowrey, who could not have been kinder or more helpful to him during the

first year as Chairman.

General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary (Gp Capt Joe Ainsworth) said he was very pleased to report that the Society had gained 64 new members since the last AGM and lost only 34, mainly due to anno domini, so that total membership now stood at 675, continuing the steady net increase of the past few years. It was noteworthy that while five of the new members were serving, 29 had no Service background. A majority of members now had no personal experience of the Service. Both the South Arabia and Logistics seminars were booking well, with over 100 members expected at the Museum in September.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer (Desmond Goch) presented the Report and Accounts of the Society for the year to 31st December 1996. He said that while the annual deficit was less than at the end of 1995, and was just still bearable, he advised that the membership should now give serious consideration at the 1998 AGM, to increasing the subscription to £20.

Accountant's Report for the Year Ended 31st December 1996

The Chairman asked if there were any questions on the Accountant's Report which had been distributed to all members. There being no questions it was proposed by AVM Hunter and seconded by Air Chf Mshl Sir John Barraclough that the Accountant's Report for the year ended 31st December 1996 be approved and adopted. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.

Appointment of Committee

The Chairman said that the present members of the Committee, both elected and co-opted, being eligible, were prepared to continue serving. He asked if there were any other nominations. There being none, it was proposed by Air Marshal Sir John Curtiss and seconded by AVM Robinson that the present Committee be elected or re-elected to serve until the end of the 1998 AGM. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.

The members of the Committee so appointed were:

AVM N B Baldwin CB CBE	(Chairman)
Group Captain J C Ainsworth CEng MR AeS	(General Secretary)
Dr Jack Dunham PhD CPsychol AMRAeS	(Membership Secretary)
D Goch Esq FCCA	(Treasurer)

*J S Cox Esq BA MA (Head AHB)
 *Dr M A Fopp MA FMA FIMgt (Director, RAF Museum)
 Gp Capt J D Heron OBE
 *Group Captain A P N Lambert MPhil RAF
 Air Commodore H A Probert MBE MA (DDefS)
 Roy Walker Esq
 Derek H Wood Esq AR AeS
 *Ex-Officio Member

Appointment of Accountants

It was proposed by Mr D Goch and seconded by Mr R Walker that Messrs Pridie Brewster be appointed Accountants to the Society and that the Committee be empowered to fix their remuneration. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.

This concluded the formal business of the AGM and the Chairman closed the Meeting at 6.50 pm.

Sir John Barraclough

At the Chairman's invitation Sir John Barraclough briefly explained the background and developments leading to the proposal of 'The Air League/RAF Historical Society Gold Medal' – essentially as a recognition of the Society's achievements and warmly commended it to the Meeting.

Discussion

After closing the Meeting the Chairman asked if Members had any points they would like to put to the Committee.

Talbot Green, a volunteer proof reader, apologised for errors which had crept into *Air Intelligence*; a different proof reading method had been tried which was now seen not to have been satisfactory.

A number of members raised points and suggestions about ways of possibly increasing the retail sales of the Society's publications. Derek Wood, Publications Editor, indicated that while commercial selling was an excellent idea in principle, each publication must be assessed individually for potential, and that the current market place was very unstable. The Chairman counselled caution; it must be remembered that members' interests must come first.

AVM Herrington said that it was sad to see the end of the Bracknell Series of joint seminars and asked if the Society should try to attract the interest of the JSCSC by seeking seminar topics of Land/Air interest. The Chairman replied that this was undoubtedly the route to take but the time would not be ripe until the JSCSC had settled down.

SOUTH ARABIA AND THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ADEN
‘DRAMATIS PERSONAE’

Gp Capt M J Beetham	Station Commander RAF Khormaksar
Air Cdre D J P Lee	Secretary Chiefs of Staff Committee
AVM D J P Lee	AOC Air Forces Arabian Peninsula
The late Donal McCarthy	Counsellor, British High Commission Aden and Political Advisor to the CinC
Lt Col J Paget Coldstream Guards	I/C High Commissioner’s Security Secretariat
Flt Lt R J Kemball	Squadron Pilot, 8 Sqn Khormaksar
Wg Cdr J T Jennings	OC Strike Wing, Khormaksar
Wg Cdr C A E Simons	OC Short Range Transport/ Helicopter Wing
Sqn Ldr S Hitchen	OC 84 Sqn, Khormaksar
Flt Lt M Murden	Engineer Officer, 8 Sqn Khormaksar
Air Cdre F B Sowrey	Senior Air Staff Officer Air Forces Middle East
Commander R I T Hogg	Staff Operations Officer Task Force 318

SOUTH ARABIA AND THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ADEN

Welcome by Society Chairman

Air Vice-Marshal Nigel Baldwin

Ladies and Gentlemen: it is a pleasure to welcome you all today, especially those of you who are attending one of the Society's events for the first time.

Today we go back almost 30 years to a place that, for the present day Royal Air Force, is hardly known. I am very happy to place the day in the hands of the President of the Society – Sir Michael Beetham, and of our Vice-President – Sir Freddie Sowrey. Neither could be better qualified for the task: Sir Michael was the Station Commander of RAF Khormaksar for much of the period we are going to talk about, and Sir Freddie was the Senior Air Staff Officer – the SASO – in the HQ. Doubtless he was responsible for much of the planning of the withdrawal; I certainly know he was on board the last transport aircraft to leave for the UK.

I am also delighted to see the AOC's wife in the audience. Lady Humphrey is the one person missing from the 'DRAMATIS PERSONAE' on the last page of your programme.

On behalf of the Society, thank you both Sir Michael and Sir Freddie; a huge amount of work goes into organising these seminars and it is very much appreciated. A big 'thank you' too, of course, to Dr Michael Fopp and his colleagues at the Museum. You always make us extremely welcome and we enjoy bathing in the atmosphere of the Museum as well as appreciating your efficiency. We would be lost without you.

Now, over to Sir Michael.

OPENING ADDRESS

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Michael Beetham

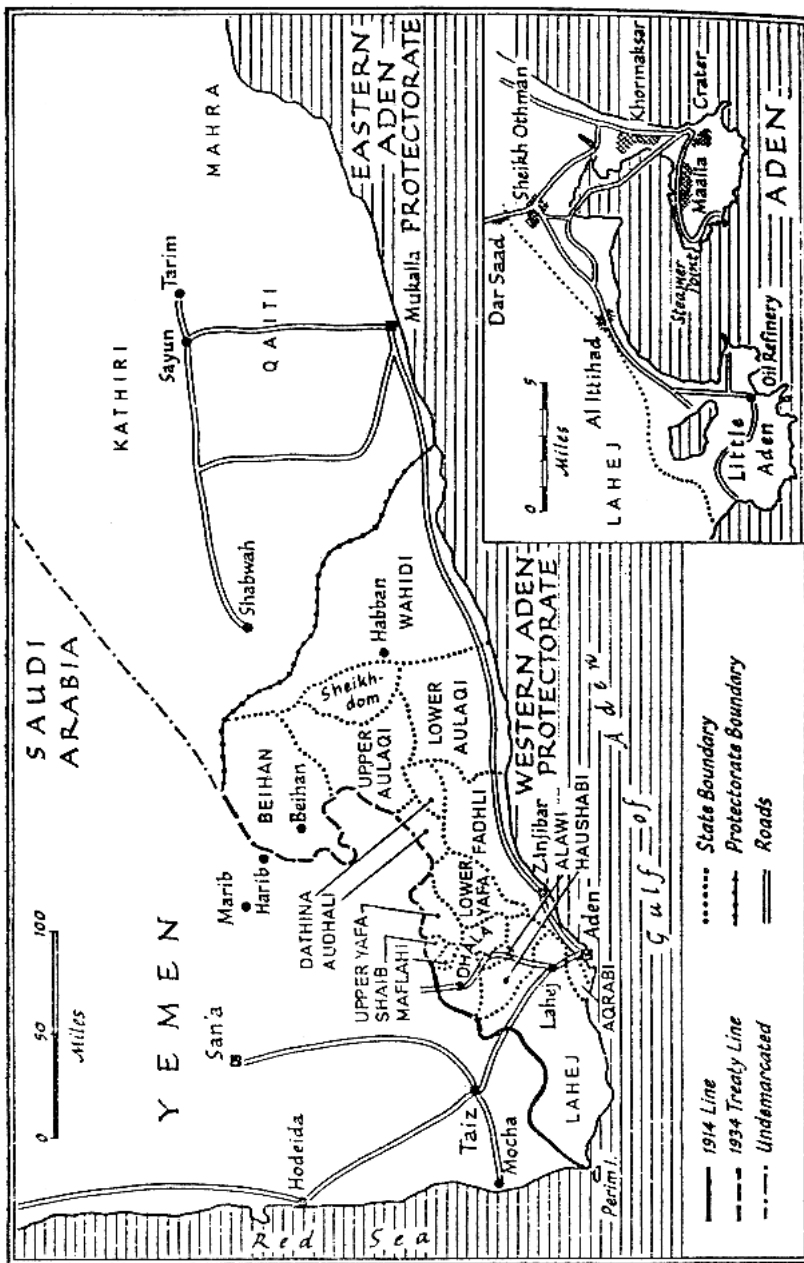
May I add my own welcome to that of the Chairman and say how nice it is to see so many of the old friends and colleagues who served out in Aden; it is a jolly good turn out.

We have got a full programme so I think we will move straight on. Of course, just to show the flexibility of air power the first speaker who is Air Chief Marshal Sir David Lee is held up in an eleven-mile traffic jam on the M4 so his arrival time is doubtful, so we will fit in Sir David, who was going to talk about the unified command in Aden, at a later stage.

We will start with the political imperatives. Now, after readily agreeing to speak on the political aspects of South Arabia, Donal McCarthy who had served as Counsellor at the British High Commission at Aden and also Political Adviser to the Commander-in-Chief tragically died of a heart attack, after committing his first thoughts to paper. These have been edited, but first I would like to ask Sir Freddie Sowrey if he would like to say a personal word.

Sir Freddie Sowrey: I approached Donal McCarthy as an old friend and someone I knew had a pungent wit, a straightforward pen and a mind very much of his own. He readily agreed and was honoured to speak at this seminar. In fact, so efficient was he that I got the first draft of his notes in January – a month after I had asked him with a note – saying that he knew the problems for organisers. He need not have worried, his notes were admirable as they stood.

Sadly, in the intervening period he died of a heart attack. He was a very capable and likeable person; one who was a thorn perhaps in the flesh of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as you will no doubt hear in his contribution today. He is much missed, a capable operator who moved up afterwards to be our Ambassador in the Gulf States. How wonderful that, having once been asked, he committed his thoughts to paper, and that they are now going to be covered by the Chairman of the Society and will be recorded for posterity in the edition of our Journal.



South Arabia

THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVES

The late Donal McCarthy – presented by Nigel Baldwin

I feel I must start by saying a little about the past to try to explain why the political disaster of South Arabia came to extrude the best joint command and operational structure HM Forces ever had; and why Aden itself had always existed on political sands, sands which started locally to shift round about 1952 and thus threaten the Unified Command well before its establishment.

First question: why did Empires (not only ours) work until 1939 but did not after 1945? In our case, there were five particular factors: decolonisation as a policy, the economic situation post-1945, the loss of Indian forces that had not cost the UK a penny, Roosevelt and a determination to destroy others' empires and, finally, our responsibility for Palestine.

And then there was the difficulty of selling the idea that our presence was for regional stability and checking the USSR, rather than purely for our own interests.

Thus any British regional base was likely to become the focus of attack wherever it was – Canal Zone, East Africa, and eventually Aden.

Aden was a series of accidents: Haines acquired it in 1839 by force. It was then administered as part of India. Haines was promptly reproved by the Bombay Presidency for collecting it. But the Raj found it useful. In the 1880s, influenced by the Afghan wars, the Raj decided that a policy of neutralisation would be better than one of close control in the remote tribal territories. The effect of this policy in the Gulf, Oman and the Aden Protectorates was neglect and fossilisation. As Turkish power in the Protectorates crumbled, we kept the 'rulers' in play but did nothing either to develop or control.

In 1937, it became a Crown Colony and the Colonial Office took over responsibility. It was too near WW II for anything to be done then; after WW II, there was no time or money to change much in face of the pace of 'decolonisation'. The Protectorate rulers lacked real authority, Lahej and Audhali and perhaps Beihan apart. The Raj would note and 'recognise' some man who seemed to have the local authority, whereupon his brother or cousin would nip off to North Yemen in opposition. The ensuing hostilities were somewhat farcical (any casualties meant a blood feud had occurred, so orders were to fire but not hit), but things ceased to be a laughing matter when, in particular from 1963 onwards, the NLF (National

Liberation Front) took a manipulative hand.

Then there was the neglect of EAP (Eastern Aden Protectorate). The British 'federative' effort was focused on that between the WAP (Western Aden Protectorate) and Aden.

HMG's eventual dilemma was how to decolonise while keeping the regional base intact? The only way seemed to be to join the Crown Colony of Aden with the six WAP states which had federated in 1959. The Aden Arabs under Asnag kicked up an international howl assisted by the Labour party in Britain about being subordinated to up-country barbarians in neo-colonialism. In fact, the Protectorate rulers were equally dubious; had the North Yemeni revolution happened a couple of days earlier, they would probably have decided against. But the merger took place and, at the end of 1963, Duncan Sandys enforced the further compact that we would go by 1968 (which, in private, appalled the Protectorate rulers), but have a defence agreement with the successor state which would include the retention of our base facilities.

If such a policy had ever been workable, 1963-64 was too late for it. Nasser had ridden high since Suez in '56. Everywhere transistor radios spread his message. His forces were in North Yemen from 1962 onwards. His humiliation by Israel and withdrawal from Yemen in and after June 1967 were unforeseeable. The United Nations was a bloody nuisance, uninterested in facts or solutions. Arab 'Vicars of Bray' thought that they could read the signs. Independence of Aden alone and the Protectorate separately was admittedly illogical. But really the whole complex of federation, decolonisation, defence agreement and base retention was devised as a *cordon sanitaire* for the Aden base. As I told the Foreign Office at the time, it was more like a chastity belt, uncomfortable without necessarily preventing impregnation.

It was in this phase, perhaps at and after the Radfan revolt, that the problems for HM Forces really presented themselves. On the one hand, the Radfan was the supreme example of the efficiency of **control** by, essentially, **air power** (which colleagues will talk about later) which had worked from Iraq and Aden from 1920 onwards. In essence, a good military outcome achieved with minimum casualties to the enemy as well as to our own chaps. On the other hand, it resulted in distorted accounts, an international political awkwardness – seized on by opponents at home and abroad to denigrate us with charges of imperialism, etc. The NLF correctly accepted it as a military defeat which, equally correctly, they thought worth suffering for political ends. At that point, the NLF changed tactics with the

ultimate objective of ensuring their succession over competing factions such as the Federalists and FLOSY (Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen). [In subsequent terrorist attacks], although they killed many of us, they need not have bothered because we had already said we were going by 1968. HM Forces, whether in Aden or the hinterland, found themselves building up to defend the base instead of using it; and the Army, in particular, found themselves in the thankless role of aid to the civil power where the latter scarcely governed, and the citizenry proved incapable at that point, at least, of self-government. As an aside, if anyone should reflect that that resembles Northern Ireland, this member of the southern Irish tribes would not dissent in either context.

All this precipitated the ultimate question: what is the point of a base for regional back-up having to be massively reinforced not to do its job but to defend itself?

How the decisions in London were made, we in Aden did not know. In July 1965, Healey – characteristically not in directors' weather – came out to grill us, and he knew his stuff. At the end of his trip, he told the CinC in my hearing, that it stood up: the base stayed. Six months later, in February 1966, HMG announced that the base was to go. [What exactly caused the change, Sir Frank Cooper might know] But I must admit that the final decision did not surprise me. The base existed to help over whatever problem arose in its command area. Its location was logical enough. But over more than a century, that location had not had any sound political foundations. Maybe that was beyond achievement. But it had not been attempted. Erected on shifting political sands, the base, through no fault of HM Forces, had become a major problem instead of a solver of problems.

Ironically, you could, with hindsight, argue that it would have been better off where the mini-base eventually substituted for it for a few years was, that is Bahrain. Admittedly Bahrain was further from our African responsibilities, but so what? If Prime Minister Wilson wanted a pretext for **not** acting against UDI in Rhodesia, he had it (and the files now open will show it); against anticipated resistance from the Rhodesian Air Force, our transport aircraft would have needed fighter escort. Nyerere, while outwardly demanding British action, refused overflight clearance. In the face of that, and other joys to come in Uganda and Kenya, I feel that distance from so-called friends in Africa was a sadness to wallow in. Bahrain is a different story in this context, the point is that its rulers, the other protected Gulf rulers, Oman, the Kuwaitis playing anti-imperialist at the UN, the Saudis being difficult bilaterally, even the Shah in his

delusions, all wanted us to stay even if – Oman apart – they were afraid to say so.

So that is my story. But I would rather like to finish by adding a civilian's tribute to the Unified Command and also to the MoD's critical path planning over the base's departure, partly to Bahrain and partly to heaven. I was pretty 'joint' myself having been trained by the RAF for the Fleet Air Arm, and spent time at GHQ Fayid in Egypt, as well as Aden.

THE UNIFIED COMMAND IN ADEN

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Lee

My talk is designed to explain the structure of the Unified Command which was formed in Aden for the last few years of British occupation of the colony.

I will begin with a little bit of history. During the last war the three Services had become ever more interdependent, and almost every operation required the participation of all three Services. In about 1942 Lord Mountbatten was given the new appointment of 'Chief of Combined Operations'. He went on to become First Sea Lord and then, for a time, was Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff. Throughout this time he was a great protagonist of closer association between the Services.

If I may now direct your attention to the Eastern Mediterranean. During the 1950s we felt compelled to move our Middle East Command out of the Canal Zone and transfer it to Cyprus. Whereupon President Nasser seized the canal and nationalised it. This gave rise, in 1956, to the Suez crisis. The campaign that followed may have been a military success, but it was a political disaster, and we were compelled to withdraw from Egypt. The canal was blocked by sunken shipping and Nasser introduced a non-flying zone over the whole of Egypt.

Some of our Middle East forces were in Aden and were thus effectively cut off from the Command in Cyprus, compelling staff officers from Cyprus to make a journey through Turkey, Iran, down the Gulf, round Arabia to reach Aden. It then became necessary to reinforce Aden due to aggressive activity from the Yemen support by Egypt, and trouble in Oman.

It was not practicable to command these enlarged forces from Cyprus and the Chiefs of Staff decided to set up a new Command in Aden. The question then arose as to what name to give to this new Command.

At this point there are four words which cause much confusion in people's minds when applied to military forces. These are – Combined, Joint, Integrated and Unified. Combined and, to some extent Joint, are generally applied to operations, and are inappropriate for a Command structure. An Integrated Command, if such a thing were to exist, would comprise a Commander-in-Chief, who could be of any Service with a large Staff in which each officer exercised his function over all three Services. Thus an administrative Staff Officer would administer the forces of all three Services in the Command. This was quite unacceptable to the Chiefs

of Staff and, indeed, their refusal to consider it was reflected in the Defence White Paper of 1962.

It is interesting to note that, at this time, the Canadians decided to 'integrate' their forces and put them into the same green uniform. It was not a success, however, and after a short period, they discontinued the scheme. When I was in the NATO Military Committee, my Canadian colleague, who was a Rear Admiral, refused to wear the green uniform and always appeared at meetings in his navy blue.

A Unified Command is one in which a Commander-in-Chief, usually of three-star rank, has a small Secretariat, and Intelligence Staff and a Joint Planning Staff. Then there are three Subordinate Commanders of two-star rank, each in command of the forces of his own Service and answerable directly to his Service Department in the MoD.

When the CinC requires an operation to be undertaken, the subordinate commanders are required to provide the appropriate forces, or obtain reinforcements if necessary.

A feature of a Unified Command is that it can include an 'Agency System' which allows a number of administrative functions to be controlled by one Service for the others. Examples of these functions are quartering, rations, housing and movement.

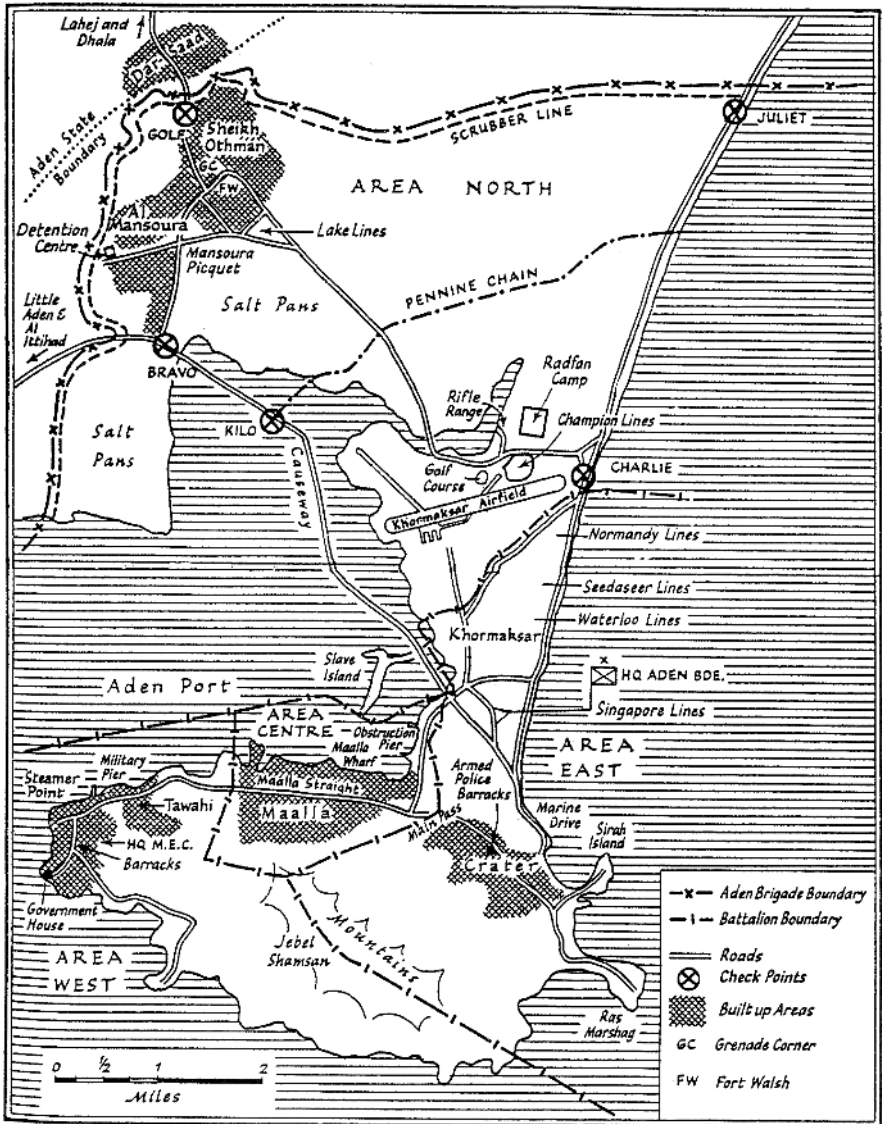
The first British Unified Command came into being in Aden in October, 1959 and was initially called 'British Forces Arabian Peninsula'. After running successfully for some months, various Command titles were changed. Aden became Middle East Command and Cyprus, Near East Command.

The Army and RAF subordinate commanders were located together in Aden, but the Naval subordinate commander remained temporarily in Bahrain (HMS *Jufair*), moving subsequently to Aden to join his colleagues.

Although only a few years remained before the British finally left Aden, there was enough time to establish that the new Command structure worked very well. Perhaps the best example of its success came in 1961 with the Kuwait crisis but I will leave Sqn Ldr Murden to say something about that in his later talk.

There is no doubt that, should we ever have to establish another overseas Command, a form of Unified structure would be used.

(Due to traffic conditions Sir David Lee was unable to present his paper, but it has been included here to maintain the general sequence for the reader.)



Aden and Sheikh Othman

THE RADFAN CAMPAIGNS AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN ADEN

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Julian Paget

I am going to talk about two distinct periods of this campaign and two separate operations. One the full-scale military operations against rebels up in the Radfan, and second the internal security operation against urban terrorism in Aden.

It all began up country in 1964 when the rebels were occupying the northern part of the Radfan. Up in the north of the map is the very fertile part of the Radfan and the rebels occupied that which gave them easy access to the Yemen. And it was decided that action had to be taken to see them off and that was done by the Federal forces, the Federal regular army, in an operation called 'Operation Nutcracker' and it worked very well. They regained control of that area round Cap Badge and Coca Cola and Rice Bowl and dominated the area. However after a couple of months the Federal forces had to pull out due to other commitments and the dissidents moved back in again, declaring that they had driven out the puppet forces of the British. The Federal rulers then called on us, the British, to see them off again and it was agreed that we would. And it was also agreed that we would have a Brigade operation this time carried out by British troops and the scenario really was like one of those dreadful staff college exercises that one used to get, laid on by a particularly sadistic directing staff, and you can just imagine the opening paragraph;

'You are a Brigadier; you are commander of Aden Garrison; you are responsible for administration and internal security in Aden but have no operational commitments. You have heard there's been a bit of trouble up country but that's no concern of yours and in fact you are busy reading up the Queen's Birthday parade instructions as you are due to command the parade in a few day's time. The telephone rings and it's the GOC. He tells you that there is a bit of trouble up country and he's going to mount a brigade operation by British troops to deal with it. You are to command the brigade which will be called 'Radforce' and it's being assembled at the moment. Your task is to end the operations by the rebels in the area in the Radfan. I'm afraid there's no force headquarters at the moment and you'll have to set that up yourself without, of course, disrupting your headquarters in Aden. I'll help where I can,' says the General, 'I expect the operation to last three weeks', in fact it lasted three months. 'I want your plan in three day's time and you must be ready to operate in eleven days. Any

questions?’

Now that may sound an absolutely horrific, exaggerated story and decidedly unfair on any staff college student but in fact it’s what happened to Brigadier Louis Hargroves, Commander Aden Garrison, on the 14th of April 1964 – and it was for real! He faced formidable problems; his headquarters was non-existent as you’ve heard, and when eventually it formed it consisted of himself and three officers, about a quarter of what it should be. He had no intelligence staff until he was given an intelligence section from one of the infantry battalions in Aden. He was given command; he was responsible for a force of about two thousand five hundred mixed Arabs and British and all three Services. He had no administration up country at all, and not much in Aden, and just in case it was thought to be too easy he was told that he would have to remain on peace time accounting in Aden, which in fact, in the case of the Federal forces, meant that all their bills had to be referred to the Colonial Office in London for clearance. He did however get a very helpful political directive, telling him what the political aims were and civil/military co-operation was good all the way through. He had three days to produce his plan, set to work, and he held his first ‘O group’ which was attended by his artillery commander in immaculate white number three dress complete with sword having just been firing a salute for the Queen’s Birthday. Well he worked out a plan. There was no enemy that he could go and attack; nobody knew where the rebels were. So he tried to do the same as the Federal forces had done and occupy the vital ground with a view to cutting off their supplies and cutting off their route to the Yemen. On that basis his two objectives were Rice Bowl and Cap Badge, two high mountains which dominated the area. He had an ambitious plan, which was to seize Rice Bowl by landing 45 Commando on it by helicopter. But the plan was turned down for three main reasons:

First of all there simply weren’t enough helicopters to do both an assault landing and the supply side. Second there was so little information and intelligence, that the risks were unacceptable, particularly to the precious six helicopters; because you couldn’t fly them if you didn’t know where the enemy were who might shoot them up. And finally the logistic problems were overwhelming, particularly water and even if they cut the water ration by half from what is normally required it still could not be provided to the troops fighting in the front line.

So he had to think again. This time he planned to send 45 Commando up to Rice Bowl on foot with the helicopters being used for supply only and

at the same time a parachute company was going to land by parachute on Cap Badge and thus seize both objectives. This was accepted but it ran into trouble. A patrol of 22 SAS was sent out to mark the dropping zone for the airborne on Cap Badge. They got intercepted by the rebels and, despite magnificent air support, they were caught in daylight and they had to withdraw, and they had to leave two dead behind which you'll remember were then discovered beheaded and this caused a major political problem. Well 22 SAS tried to send out another patrol that evening to mark the DZ but they got shot up in their helicopter and were forced to return. 45 Commando were all set to go off on a seven-mile march to Rice Bowl on foot but at this point, when the second SAS party were aborted, it was decided to call the operation off as far as capturing Rice Bowl and Cap Badge were concerned, and to settle for the two more modest objectives of Coca Cola and Sand Fly and they were seized and held. But they still wanted to get onto Cap Badge because that was the absolute key dominating feature. And another plan was made to do a night attack on foot with 45 Commando plus the airborne on foot. And this worked splendidly and one of the big things about the Radfan campaign was that when we could and did operate by night it was extremely successful because the rebels didn't reckon to operate by night and it did mean that we could get onto the objectives before the rebels realised what was happening. So that attack was totally successful and we had got Cap Badge with only two killed and ten wounded.

That was one objective seized but they still wanted to do more and it was thought that the best way to dominate the whole areas was to seize Mount Jebel Huriyah, at the bottom of the map, which is a 5,500 foot mountain; never actually ever been climbed by an Englishman, it was a safe feature for the tribes and the rebels in the area. So if we could seize it that would be splendid. But it was obviously beyond the capabilities of Radforce, a very ad hoc organisation, and it was decided to send for 39 Brigade, then in Northern Ireland, and commanded by Brigadier 'Monkey' Blacker and they arrived in the Radfan on the 11th May. They were given a week in which to acclimatise, sort themselves out and above all sort out the administration. They consisted of seven battalions, quite a big brigade, and a troop of Centurion tanks from the 16/5th Lancers, first time that they'd been in action since Korea, and seven Wessex helicopters were produced which also made a tremendous difference. They also built some new roads which helped considerably by reducing the need for helicopter lifts.

The plan was to seize Jebel Huriyah by a two pronged approach from

north to south, one along the Bakri Ridge (which is in the middle of the map with the black arrow down it) and that was an advance made by 3 Para and they did extremely well seizing control of an area of 200 square miles and getting right down to the end of the Bakri Ridge (where the black line ends). When that was done the main attack went in down the western ridge (where the white arrow is), with the first East Anglian and second Federal battalions, advancing supported by a squadron of tanks. It went extremely well and they captured the mountain, Jebel Huriyah. And that in effect finished off the Radfan campaign as far as the rebels were concerned: they had lost control, they admitted military defeat, and we retained control of the Radfan. But we had to have a brigade there continuously thereafter and a brigade was stationed in Little Aden with the view of operating in the Radfan and keeping the peace. They did it very effectively and I'd like to just mention that one of the features was the very close co-operation with the Royal Air Force and there was one occasion for instance when an OP reported three rebels in a certain position and a standby platoon was scrambled straight away in two helicopters. They were off the ground, found the three rebels, shot them, landed, collected the bodies and were back at their base in forty-five minutes. And that was about as an efficient an operation as you could have and that was the sort of activity that was going on then in the Radfan.

There are four lessons I think that emerge from the Radfan campaign. The first is that certainly as far as Radforce is concerned it was a brilliant improvisation. Everything was done from scratch and it was done on a shoestring and a pretty frayed shoestring at times. That it worked was simply due to co-operation and flexibility on the part of all concerned but it is important that it is recognised that it was an improvisation and should not be accepted as something that can be done again without great difficulty.

The second thing was of course the importance of air control – air power. Everything hinged on that from the army's point of view and they particularly valued the presence of helicopters. A helicopter reduced the time that it took you to get from the bottom of a mountain to the top from three hours to three minutes and that's something the soldier appreciates: but there were never enough helicopters. The ones that were there did magnificent work and five Scout helicopter pilots were reckoned to have carried out 7,200 high altitude landings in the course of the Radforce campaign, and evacuated 89 serious casualties. That was tremendously appreciated by the infantry and was very good for morale, but it was a tremendous strain on the pilots and there just were not enough. The

command and control between army and air worked extremely well and got better and better as the campaign went on, but on the whole from the army point of view it was reckoned to have been splendid.

Third point of course was the lack of intelligence. There just wasn't enough of that and it was something that I think we should have thought of long before. We hadn't got a proper organisation; we hadn't collected intelligence; and we hadn't disseminated it, and that definitely hampered operations and lengthened the campaign.

And finally there was the question of propaganda. The rebels were infinitely better at this than we were, and we really had no response. We were under constant attack for being beastly to the freedom fighters, for being imperialists, for attacking poor helpless tribesmen and so on. And we, I think, lost that battle.

Well, I will now switch to urban terrorism in Aden. The nationalists had lost out in the Radfan and they admitted it and they turned to a different game, urban terrorism backed by Egypt. They were jolly good at it and it was extremely difficult for us to counter it; indeed they were totally successful in the end. They used two well known, well tried techniques that we'd seen already in Malaya, Cyprus and Kenya. Maximum propaganda from start to finish against the beastly, imperialist British and intimidation of the local population, which was extremely effective. The Arabs had never been particularly fond of us but they were loyal and once we said we were going, there was very little reason for them to remain loyal either to us or to the Federal rulers who, of course, they were always being told were our stooges and puppet successors. This was driven home by a carefully planned programme of assassinations, and anybody who showed loyalty to Britain was bumped off and left with a label on his neck saying 'the fate of all traitors'. And of course they concentrated on the intelligence staff, the police, and special branch. There were 36 such assassinations in 1964 and 1,250 in 1967 so that was a very effective weapon in the hands of the nationalists.

So from 1964 to 1966 the situation deteriorated steadily, and it was very difficult for the army to cope with no local support from the population. Increasing terrorist attacks made the nationalists' position stronger and stronger, and the influence of the Federal rulers decreased accordingly. Intelligence remained a major problem. There were 10 intelligence organisations involved; Federal, Aden State, British, Police, Special Branch, and so on, and they were not co-ordinated until a Director of Intelligence was appointed in 1965. There was a moment when the

situation came a little more under control when Sir Richard Turnbull arrived as High Commissioner and took a very firm line. He instituted emergency regulations which improved the situation considerably and he imposed direct rule. He sacked the Prime Minister, which was quite a tricky situation. Prime Minister of Aden State, Abdul Mackawee, was in the extraordinary situation of being an open nationalist who vowed that he would free his country from colonialism, and yet he was Prime Minister reporting to Dick Turnbull. So he eventually was sent on his way. The High Commissioner also brought Federal troops into Aden State to help keep the peace. This was good for the morale of the Federal rulers but, of course, it led to a lot of hostile propaganda from the nationalists. Then in February 1966 came the crucial turning point in my mind when Britain announced that we were not only leaving Aden in 1968, but that we would not after all maintain a base there. This was the death knell for the Federal rulers because they saw little future for themselves if there were no British left in Aden. The nationalists were jubilant and they became more and more aggressive as a result.

So we come to the final year – 1967. Terrorism increased, there were 35 people killed in 32 days at one stage. The army had to take over from the police because they were becoming demoralised and losing their loyalty, which was another blow to the Federal rulers. An interesting intervention was the Arab-Israeli war which took place in June that year. You might have thought that it would discourage the nationalists that the Arabs were so severely defeated but they managed somehow to put all the blame on Britain as having backed Israel, and the slogan of the day was ‘a bullet against the British is a bullet against Israel’, and that increased the resentment against us.

And then, on the 20th of June, came the Crater incident. I won't go into it in detail but I must just mention it because it highlights the conflict of aims between the political and the military and all the difficulties involved, just as we've got in Northern Ireland. On 20th June there was a mutiny in the Federal forces. This was unexpected and as a result British troops driving round Aden were suddenly opened fire on by Federal troops in various camps because they knew nothing about the mutiny. And at the end of the day the British army had lost 22 killed and 31 wounded, and this included 13 officers and men who had been shot in Crater (on the right hand side of the Aden map). The 13 officers and men of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and the Argylls were just changing over, and the bodies could not be recovered. Well, this caused inevitably very high

feelings in the army and they expected immediate action, but it didn't happen. They thought that every step should be taken to recover the bodies, to restore their authority and to restore their honour and act as necessary as retaliation. The political view accepted these points (I'm summarising this very briefly) and appreciated them, but such action would in their mind probably threaten the whole future of South Arabia, which it was still hoped to leave as a viable entity. It was their view that (in my mind rightly) won the day. Crater was sealed off, the bodies were recovered by negotiation the next day, and no further action was taken against the Federal forces until two weeks later when the British army re-occupied Crater. The Argylls went in with their pipes playing led by Colin Mitchell and he dominated Crater unquestionably thereafter. And this was very important because Crater controlled Khormaksar airfield. But the political repercussions nevertheless were enormous. Federal troops had mutinied and fired on British troops and killed them. The Federal rulers had failed to do anything about it and more and more Arabs now said, 'Well, our future lies with the nationalists.' A key factor of course was the Federal army. At this stage it still remained neutral, and then came an incident in November when Sheikh Othman (up on the north of the Aden map), a key town, which dominated the approaches into Aden, became the scene of a battle between the two nationalist organisations, NLF and FLOSY, to see who was going to rule after independence. It went on for 5 days and then eventually the Federal army moved in and declared themselves in favour of the NLF, and that was the deciding point. The NLF, backed by the army, now controlled 95% of the country and 95% of the votes. They followed that up by demanding recognition from the British government and on 11th of November, 1967, they were given it, and from that moment on there was no doubt what the future of South Arabia would be and in whose hands it would be. So the security forces had nothing left to do now, except to defend the remainder of the base and to finalise withdrawal. They still didn't know whether it would be opposed or unopposed and preparations had been made for every possible contingency, but there is a full presentation of that later.

AIR – THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT

Air Marshal Sir John Kemball

A simple, cursory glance at the geography of the theatre makes it obvious that air power has to be the essential element of any unified command. First of all there is the sheer size. It is over 3,000 miles from Kuwait to Dar-es-Salaam and 1,200 miles from Bab el Mandeb to Ras al Hadd. Not only is it a vast area, but it is also one in which population is sparsely scattered with no real centres of urbanisation, and there are no railways, and no trunk roads. Historically, the sea was the main communication route with no competition until the coming of the aircraft. The initial requirements for an air transport system resulted in a chain of staging posts around the periphery of the Arabian peninsular with airfields at intervals of every 400 miles or so.

The distances involved meant that the theatre was remote from Europe and from the reinforcement forces available in the UK and in Germany. Furthermore, while the range capability of the aircraft improved, the air distances involved were made greater by the aftermath of the Suez Canal crisis and the consequent unreliability of over-flying rights.

In looking at the use of the air power in the theatre over the years in question, and particularly the period covering 1960 to the withdrawal, there are two points I want to make. The first is that air was essential to the cost effective wielding of military power in the theatre. The second is to use the example of Aden to illustrate a fallacy which I believe has become perceived wisdom a number of times in the Air Force's history and that is that there is a need to have a fully developed and defined air power doctrine.

My belief is that doctrine mainly serves to constrain the imaginative use of the flexibility of air power. In every situation there are different circumstances and parameters. On one hand you have the aircraft that you have bought and the air power characteristics that it possesses. On the other, you have a military situation in which you wish to use the aircraft which reflects both geography and politics. How you use a weapon system should be a result of analysis of the situation that prevails at the time, and should not be dependent on a general doctrine that was developed without relation to specific situations.

Air Power Roles

Air Defence. The need to protect the main base at Aden and to provide

for the support of the Aden Protectorate against Yemeni MiGs required a flexible and long range air defence system. While the main radar was at Aden itself, there was the ability to deploy a mobile unit forward, as for example when it was positioned at Mukeiras to provide a counter when the Yemeni attempted to influence the Sheikh of Beshan by attacking his residence with MiGs. A further forward deployment occurred following Rhodesian UDI when a radar was moved to Dar-es-Salaam to provide air defence for Zambia in conjunction with a Javelin squadron deployed from the European theatre.

Ground Attack. The Hunters, of course, in the FGA9 version were fully converted for ground attack. This capability was used both to support army operations and also on its own in what by the 1960s was the traditional air policing role. In this role operational sorties included house demolitions, fire-power demonstrations, ‘flag waves’ and the enforcement of proscription orders on grazing areas.

Reconnaissance. The Hunters again, but this time in the FR10 version also provided a photographic reconnaissance capability to support all three Services. This was also supplemented by Canberras deployed from the UK, and their high level cameras were a very useful addition to the in-theatre capability, particularly in improving the mapping cover both of the peninsula and of East Africa.

Maritime Reconnaissance. The Shackletons were used extensively in the theatre. First of all to provide a capability for maritime patrol and for search and rescue. Operationally the maritime patrols’ most extensive use was in support of the Beira Patrol and the POL embargo on Rhodesia. However, the Shackleton was one of the most flexible aircraft in the theatre. Its long endurance gave it a good capability for providing top cover for patrols or convoys moving through areas where there was a definite internal security threat. It was able to provide suppressive fire power both using the nose turret mounted 20mm cannon and also by dropping bombs of various weights. In the press releases at the time, these were euphemistically referred to as ‘aerial grenades’.

Air Transport. All the elements of air transport were required within the theatre on a number of occasions to provide in-theatre capabilities to support operations, both military and political. Of great significance, strategic transport aircraft undertook the POL lift from Nairobi to Zambia to provide the support for the defence of Zambia against a punitive

Rhodesian threat. Tactical transport, both medium and short range, was essential both in supporting the various garrisons and staging posts throughout the theatre and also supporting the army on a number of operations, both policing and counter internal security. Finally the helicopter force provided an insertion capability for small patrols, including a number from the SAS. Furthermore, during this time, helicopter assault techniques were perfected in conjunction with army forces.

This brief résumé has shown that all the elements of air power were needed within theatre to meet a number of challenges. The distance of Europe and the lack of reliability of the air lanes of communication meant that it was important to retain at least a minimum capability for all roles within theatre.

Flexibility

However, in retrospect, perhaps the most striking aspect of all of these operations is the imagination that was shown by those directing air operations at the time. First of all there was the use of strategic transport aircraft as POL carriers and without this use it would have been impossible to sustain the air defence operations for Zambia. Then, as I have mentioned, the Shackleton aircraft had tremendous endurance and thus was able to maintain a fire power capability in the air for long periods. This was put to extremely good use in operations in Aden, particularly supporting convoys and patrols going up country when the reliability of lines of communication decreased. And indeed, really before this period, a predecessor of the Shackleton, the Lincoln, had shown how a strategic bomber could be used in an internal security situation against Mau Mau operations in Kenya. Finally, the capabilities of the Hunter could be used in many different ways. First, as it was designed, it could be used for air defence and air superiority; then, as in the Kuwait crisis in 1961, it could be used to pose a deterrent to armoured operations. Equally it could be used for close air support of army forces operating against dissident tribesmen. It could also be used to demonstrate a capability to destroy vital assets of the local community without any risk of injury to the British servicemen involved and finally, it provided a tactical reconnaissance capability. Passively it could also exert influence, simply by being seen in the air: such operations were known as ‘flag-waves’ and, in fact, one specialist form of this was to disrupt the dissidents’ rest patterns planting sonic booms on the target areas to provide the illusion of operations at night. I was involved in these myself and I can remember being somewhat doubtful about their value at a time

when the target area was covered in thunder storms, but I do believe they did have a practicality in more normal weather conditions in South Arabia.

This review of the inventive use of Air Power in the Aden area, and I make no claim that it is in any way definitive, shows the inherent danger in having a prescriptive air power doctrine based on a specific theatre of operations. This was clearly shown in the Royal Air Force's preparations for the Gulf War. However, there was still enough experience of operations outside Europe to allow changes of practice to be made in time.

STRIKE/AIR DEFENCE/RECCE AND MARITIME

Group Captain J T Jennings

When I arrived in Aden in March 1963 I was accused of bringing my own reinforcements with me, due to the coincidental arrival of No 43 Hunter Squadron from Cyprus together with the arrival of the first aircraft of No 26 Belvedere Squadron and the formation of a fighter recce flight.

Thus by 1st April 1963 the wing consisted of:-

Three Hunter Mk 9 Squadrons – Nos 8, 43 and 208

No 37 Shackleton Squadron

No 26 Belvedere Helicopter Squadron

No 1417 Hunter Mk 10 FR Flight

A Sycamore SAR Flight

No 225 GL Section

The Sycamores were replaced by Whirlwinds in the latter half of 1963 and both they and the Belvederes were transferred to the SRT Wing in March 1964. Their activities will be covered later by Cedric Simmons.

The three Hunter GA Squadrons constituted 50% of the RAF front line of these aircraft. One of the squadrons was always deployed to Bahrain and rotation took place at two-month intervals.

The GL section, which was Army staffed and commanded by a major, was responsible for liaison with the Federal Government, the FRA, and British Army units. Also the training of FACs and daily and general intelligence briefing of wing aircrews.

An Operations Room in the Wing HQ controlled and co-ordinated all tactical operational flying ordered by HQME and the operation staff were also responsible for briefing resident and visiting pilots and crews.

It was a considerable privilege to command this diverse group of squadrons and units with such famous histories – 8 Squadron for example had arrived in Aden in 1928 which was the year that the RAF was given responsibility for the protection of Aden and its hinterland.

That very same year the Radfani Tribes had united to repel a Yemeni invasion force and the RAF had supported them by bombing and strafing a number of towns in the Yemen including Taiz. A somewhat unique occasion, for in the many subsequent years 8 Squadron's wrath and its ordnance had been focused in the opposite direction.

The traditional air policing roles as described by Sir John were continued throughout 1963 together with an ever increasing number of land

and sea patrols by both Hunters and Shackletons looking for camel trains and dhows believed to be carrying Egyptian supplied arms.

One of the primary tasks of the Hunters was air defence and increasingly we were being found wanting in this regard due to our inability to deal with MiG fighters making border incursions and strafing attacks particularly in the Beihan area. The ruler, Sherif Hussein, was becoming increasingly angry at our impotence.

Following an incursion by the MiGs we would be tasked to carry out patrols over Beihan over a period of days. As you can see from the screen Beihan was a good distance from Aden and these patrols were very expensive in flying hours. They were also a complete waste of effort for as soon as we stopped the patrols a further attack would take place and we'd then start the merry-go-round again.

Protests to the UN about these incursions had absolutely no effect and following a further raid on March 13th I received a signal from HQME at 01.00 hours on March 28th with the task of destroying the Yemeni fort at Harib – which is just across the border from Beihan – at 06.15 hours that morning. It was quite a hectic night but the fort was duly destroyed on time as ordered.

However, this action stirred up an absolute hornet's nest of criticism in the British and world press and led to critical motions in the UN. It also focused attention on Aden just as Operation RADFORCE was getting underway.

The beheading of two SAS soldiers in the Radfan a few weeks later accentuated that interest and Aden was inundated with pressmen.

The close air support provided by the Wing in both Operation NUTCRACKER in January/February 1964 and to RADFORCE from March onwards has received unstinted praise both from the troops involved and their army commanders at all levels.

They have left no one in any doubt that casualties to the troops on the ground would have been very much higher without that support and those engaged have recounted a number of instances when fire support was provided within 150 yards of our troops and one notable occasion when a Para Company in desperate circumstances called for and received support only 25 yards from their position. A lesson the Army learnt once again in this campaign was the vital need of trained FACs within their units.

The Hunter FR Mk 10's contribution was invaluable. Apart from their normal recce missions they were used for pre- and post-strike photography, for leaflet dropping prior to a strike, as airborne FACs and for marking

targets with cannon fire as a formation of 9s prepared to strike. (Some examples of their photography clearly showing not only the results of Hunter strikes but also the very difficult terrain, are displayed on the notice board.)

I cannot speak too highly of the Hunter Mk 9. I had flown every RAF GA aircraft from the Hurricane onwards and this included the Mustang, the Tempest and the Venom, and in my book the Hunter was the Number One. It was rugged and reliable, highly manoeuvrable and a superb weapons platform.

Mark you, it needed to be in that formidable terrain where we were constantly pulling 7g and where the mountain peaks rose to 6,000 feet with deep and at times sheer sided wadis and there were alarmingly sudden changes to wind, cloud and weather conditions. The turbulence at times was quite startling and considered to be worse than that experienced in the Alps or the Pyrenees. Cloud could often tower to over 40,000 feet.

In the circumstances, operational sorties had to be restricted to the more experienced pilots, for a few weapons sorties at the tail end of an OCU course did not equip a young replacement pilot for the environment. They had to be given further weapons training and fed into operations very carefully indeed. It speaks volumes for the Squadron Commanders that no untoward accidents occurred.

The Hunter did have some problems. At that time with its four 30mm Aden guns, it was the heaviest gun-armed fighter in the world but the authority to use all four together was not given until early 1964 and the first time I used all four I lost the radio, all the electrics, and most of the circuit breakers had popped.

Even though these difficulties were overcome with stronger mountings and other measures, it was then found that due to the vibration, cracks were appearing in the front fuselage frame. Thereafter, we were restricted to two gun firing.

Gives one to ponder as to the extent to which weapons trials were undertaken prior to the aircraft entering squadron service.

We were also restricted to 450 kts below 10,000 feet – a speed that can be easily reached at the bottom of a rocket dive. This restriction was due to instances of runaway tail trims which had resulted in accidents and deaths and which will be covered later by Mike Murden.

In the right hands, astonishingly accurate and devastating results could be obtained with the Aden guns against light skinned targets, humans, livestock, etc. It was not, however, an effective weapon against stone or

rock targets and its main accomplishment was in keeping heads down.

For damage to stone built forts, towers, houses, sangars, etc. which were our main targets, we were equipped with the three-inch RP which were carried on four rails each side, double tiered to give a total of sixteen rockets.

This WW II weapon was not an easy one to deliver with precision in the best of circumstances and in that mountainous terrain the problems were compounded. It had a slow velocity, a large gravity drop, was highly sensitive to aircraft conditions at point of release and required about four seconds steady tracking prior to that point. A period of time not always available.

Wind in the mountains is never constant and feeding in the right allowance during the dive was often very difficult indeed; whilst delaying release until within the correct range could often lead to a fair amount of lip clenching on the pull outs.

With this weapon a quite disproportionate amount of weapons training had to be given to new pilots.

We also suffered from lack of suitable warheads. Apart from a few hollow charge and squash head rockets at the beginning of the campaign the only heads available were SAP/HE. We quickly found that these heads made a small hole on entry in the front wall of a structure and a larger one on exit at the rear. We really needed a weapon that would cause maximum impact on the front walls.

The SAP/HE did prove effective in the attack on the Harib Fort when, quite fortuitously, the aiming point I had chosen proved to be the magazine and the fort literally blew open when my first rockets struck.

I must conclude with some mention of that wonderful old war horse the Shackleton. Although a fighter pilot throughout my career I developed an affection for this aircraft and look back with pleasure to my sorties in them.

No 37 Squadron had firstly a commitment to CENTO, then a SAR responsibility for the Command area, and you've heard how large that was, and thirdly Internal Security operations. Its inability to meet all these commitments with 4 UE necessitated a reinforcement of a further two aircraft.

It was the only aircraft at Commands' disposal for dropping bombs or flares or for night operations and could carry a payload of fifteen 1000 lb bombs or fifty-two 25 lb bombs. 1,000 lb bombs were only authorised on four occasions for their use led to a great furore in the press and a political embargo was imposed.

Instead we had to use 25 lb bombs which were always referred to as aerial grenades in the press releases. With its long endurance the Shackleton could, by dropping 4 to 8 grenades an hour, keep a dissident area nicely disturbed all night long.

They were also used for dropping leaflets and flares to assist ground forces. The latter were most effective when dropped some distance beyond the objective.

With the withdrawal of the British Army units from the Radfan, control was exercised by the FRA and our operational activity continued unabated. In September/October 1964 and in March 1965 – the month prior to my departure – we were flying just as many sorties as we flew in support of the RADFORCE in May/June 64. As I departed the scene in April 1965 with the security situation also deteriorating steadily in Aden it was clear that we had not won any hearts and minds during my tour.

In 1967 I was back in the Gulf as SASO assisting in the withdrawal.

HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

Group Captain C A E Simons

Helicopters first arrived in Aden in 1955 with the formation of a Search and Rescue flight of four Sycamore single piston-engined aircraft at Khormaksar, a role which was soon to be extended to cover casualty evacuation from operations north of Aden and, in 1958, as labour troubles developed in Aden itself, to internal security patrols in the main base area. For a short period in 1958 Royal Navy Whirlwinds from HMS *Bulwark* were also used on troop carrying tasks in the Lahej area on the Dhala road, again north of Aden. The Sycamores however remained the only helicopters based in Aden until March 1963 when, with the need for a troop carrying capability becoming more evident, Belvederes, twin jet-engined, twin-rotor helicopters of 26 Squadron began to arrive. The squadron establishment of seven aircraft was completed by mid-1964 as the Sycamores' commitments were taken over by four jet-engined Whirlwinds. The only other helicopter element based in Aden at this time comprised just two Army Air Corps jet-engined Scouts.

The Belvederes, supported on occasions by Wessex helicopters from HMS *Centaur*, provided essential support for operations in the Radfan throughout 1964, despite increasing technical problems with the aircraft. These problems were due chiefly to engine starter motor fires which eventually prohibited night stops away from Khormaksar and also to rotor blade erosion resulting from the abrasive dust which was prevalent in the forward areas of operation. Considerable efforts were made to improve the Belvedere's reliability in the high, very hot, geographically hostile environment but, following the arrival by LSL of nine Wessex Mk 2 helicopters of 78 Squadron in June 1965, the Belvedere task was reduced and the squadron was eventually disbanded in October of that year. Despite the Belvedere's relatively poor serviceability record in the theatre, however, it was acknowledged by the Army and Royal Air Force that it had contributed much to the successes gained in the Radfan campaign.

At the time the Wessex arrived, infiltration by dissidents from the Yemen into the Radfan was on the increase and, therefore, the need remained to maintain ground forces in the area. The Wessex, which, incidentally, became part of a newly formed short range transport wing at Khormaksar which also included Twin Pioneers and Andover Mk 2s and one much loved Dakota of 21 Squadron, had advantages over the Belvedere which soon became significant. Firstly, despite having similar dust erosion

problems as the Belvedere with the engines due to the position of the air intakes, the engines when serviceable could always be started; and, secondly, whilst on occasions the Belvedere had to cease high altitude operations during the hottest part of the day, because of turbulence, the Wessex did not have to do so. Shapewise also the Wessex was better suited for rocky terrain, particularly that at hilltop landing sites.

No 78 Squadron was declared operational in June 1965 and, for the next two and a half years, before its withdrawal from Aden, its Wessex gave invaluable support to operations in the Radfan and Aden with almost daily tasking covering troop lifts, casualty evacuation, and food, water and ammunition supply. The aircraft also carried out several joint service operations with the Royal Navy when its aircraft carriers passed through Aden on their way to and from the Far East. Operations in the Radfan were mounted to a large extent from Habilayn, previously known as Thumier, with Wessex being positioned there at dawn and recovered to Khormaksar after dusk. Night detachments at Habilayn also were introduced toward the end of 1965 for urgent casualty evacuation, a development made possible by the building of blast and bullet proof aircraft protection bays – or sangars – at Habilayn. Thus, by mid-1966, the pattern of Wessex operations in the Radfan had become well established and routine and, at this point, two new tactical innovations were introduced. Firstly, cordon and search sorties were flown in which the Wessex were used to position troops around an area thought to contain dissident tribesmen and, conjointly with these activities, it became the practice for them to be led by up to three armed Scout helicopters; one carrying an Air Commander for the operation who was normally the officer commanding the SRT Wing at Khormaksar, an experienced helicopter pilot. A notable example of the cordon and search technique was an operation mounted in October 1966 which involved the transportation of five Wessex and one Scout over 500 miles on HMS *Fearless*, along with a battalion of Irish Guards, to the Oman border. The Guards were landed by the Wessex at dawn, with total surprise, at a village called Hauf where, after a disciplined and successful search, over 20 dissidents were captured.

The dawn of 1967 saw rapid developments in operational techniques and local modifications to the Wessex to strengthen security within and around Aden itself as nationalists from the north mounted small arms, mortar and grenade attacks in the town and on Khormaksar itself. Firstly, following successful trials with a cabin door mounted machine gun, another gun was mounted at the cabin portside rear window. These gave the

Wessex a welcome defensive capability. Secondly, a Shackleton flare chute was fitted at the cabin doorway to provide illumination for Hunter night attacks on targets in the Radfan. Twenty flares could be carried. Thirdly, searchlights were also fitted to the Wessex and were used to good deterrent effect on the regular air night patrols along the perimeter fence which bordered the Aden State. Finally, bomb racks, each holding four 20 pound fragmentation bombs, were made and fitted to the Wessex, two racks per aircraft. Successful trials of the racks were flown but, in the event, they did not have to be used operationally.

The Wessex remained operational in the area until October 1967, their final tasks of particular note being a four month, two-aircraft detachment to Riyan in the eastern part of the protectorate where rioting and local terrorism had broken out, and the re-positioning of South Arabian troops from the Radfan to locations on the north side of Aden. After this, the squadron was redeployed, by stages, by sea to RAF Sharjah in the Persian Gulf. Eight Wessex were moved initially with the remainder staying at Khormaksar until the end of November to assist the ferrying of men and equipment to ships for evacuation and also, alongside Wessex of 848 Royal Navy Squadron, to continue internal security patrols. The Wessex remained on active duty at Sharjah until November 1971, leaving there just weeks before Sharjah itself closed.

Finally, I mention one sad and unusual event for which 78 Squadron was tasked. In June 1967 a British Superintendent of Police had died, having expressed a wish to be buried at sea from the air. Only a Wessex helicopter would be suitable for this solemn duty which was carried out reverently some 30 miles out to sea from Aden. Some thirty years later I wonder whether a committal by helicopter is a unique event in Royal Air Force history?

THEATRE TRANSPORT

Wing Commander S Hitchen

Theatre transport aircraft consisted of: Twin Pioneers of 21 Sqn in Aden; Argosies of 105 Sqn in Aden; a small number of Andovers in Sharjah; and nine Beverleys – four with 30 Sqn in Bahrain and five with 84 Sqn in Aden. There was also one Andover and one Dakota in Aden for VIP communications work.

The Argosies were used mainly on trunk routes flying schedules throughout the command and operations in support of the blockade of Rhodesia. The Twin Pioneers and the Beverleys were both predominantly used in support of ground forces. The Andovers, destined to take over as 84 Sqn, had little impact due to their late arrival.

I commanded 84 Beverley Sqn at Khormaksar for the last year of the British presence in Aden. I will say little, in the limited time available, about the ‘Twin Pin’, ‘The Whistling Tit’ (Argosy) or the ‘Brown Banana’ (military Andover) and concentrate on the aircraft that looked like the packing case in which it was delivered. I will cover the Beverley’s main mission, some additional tasks, and problems in operating in a deteriorating internal security situation.

The Beverley’s rugged construction and excellent short field performance was ideally suited to air landing in up-country Southern Arabia. Its weakness was engines which were always working hard and, in the harsh climate and desert environment, engine malfunctions and failures were common. Engines rarely achieved their overhaul life.

Although some air drop re-supply was used, the far more efficient air landing method of supporting ground forces predominated. It is cheaper, a much greater load can be carried and, very importantly, there is a back load capability – essential for casualty evacuation.

The average payload available into an up-country strip was 15,000 lbs and a typical return load was 10,000 lbs. The Beverley could stop in about 500 yds. with this load and take off in about 800 yds with the return load. To achieve these payloads we operated to military operating standards. This means that at some stage of flight, normally on take-off and initial climb, there is no safe course of action in the event of an engine failure. Some single-engine pilots may say, ‘So what?’ – but in a four-engined aircraft the chance of a failure, and consequent catastrophe, is quadrupled. A Beverley was lost in just such an event at Beihan.

The up-country strips varied from flat, hard and stony surfaces with

adequate approaches and overshoots (Ataq and Mukieras) to one-way soft sand strips landing uphill towards a rock face with no overshoot (Dhala and Wadi Ayne). Heights varied up to 4,000 ft AMSL. Flying was all visual and ground contact essential. A high level of crew training and proficiency was required.

The strips were usually without radio and were unattended at night when the troops withdrew to their protected camp. Security consisted of spraying oil on the strip surface to lay the dust and to show if the surface had been disturbed overnight. Prior to the first landing an armour plated vehicle (Landrover filled with sand bags) would run up and down the strip to check for mines. Despite this in June 1967 one of my aircraft was destroyed at Habilayn when it detonated an anti-tank mine during its landing run (perhaps they had an oil can).

Weather could be a significant factor with poor visibility the main problem. Either early morning fog or blowing sand, depending on the time of the year.

As British units withdrew our customer became the Federal Army and security of our aircraft on the ground caused concern. One aircraft was on the ground at Beihan when the garrison mutinied. A brave Arab colonel drew the mob away from the aircraft while it made a hurried departure. After that we exchanged our revolvers for Stirling submachine-guns and always had a Hunter escort in 'sight and sound' while on the ground. (In September '67 my Hunter escort's pilot said that he had a coded message for me from Khormaksar Ops. The message was – 'Slotted Job Both Well' – first news of the birth of my daughter).

The threat from bombs was very real and two barbed wire enclosures connected by a wire corridor were erected at all strips. Return Pax and their kit were put into one enclosure, they and their kit were thoroughly searched by the aircrew, then they passed to the second, sterile enclosure. While this was time consuming it was effective. After Aden Airways lost an aircraft to a bomb in flight they adopted our methods. Sporadic ground fire was a constant threat.

Some of the many and varied other tasks undertaken were:

- Two aircraft were detached to Nairobi to relieve food shortages in Northern Kenya because of floods and guerrilla activity.
- Supplies were dropped to people operating the British Government radio station in Zambia on the Rhodesian border.
- During civil unrest and strikes in Aden aircraft flew in food from Ethiopia and fuel from Djibouti. At Djibouti we filled our outboard

tanks with AVTUR and our inboard tanks with AVGAS. Thus keeping the Hunters flying but turning the Engineering Officer's hair white.

- There was also a successful airborne assault on the WW II strip of Hadibo on Socotra Island, 500 nm from Aden off the Horn of Africa. Two aircraft, flying low over the sea, made a direct approach carrying troops of the Hadramaut Bedouin Legion. The dissidents were all captured and returned to the mainland. (The donkey grazing on the runway as we landed is probably still running).

The deteriorating internal security situation in Aden had its effect. One member of my aircrew was shot dead on his way home and another had a rocket fired through his bedroom window while his wife and new baby were in the room. Khormaksar's aircraft dispersal and power station were mortared. Aircraft revetments were constructed from water-filled oil drums.

It was a relief when the families were sent home in July '67.

However normal Service life continued. Deciding on the best site for the Air Training Corps camp for my Staff College qualifying course exercise competed with running a squadron and completing the air evacuation of up-country strips. Complaints of late submission were particularly irritating.

The last Beverley left Aden on 6 November 1967, followed shortly by the 30 Sqn aircraft from Bahrain, all to be scrapped on return to UK, as were the Twin Pioneers. The Andover assumed the Army support role. The Argosy squadron, which had moved to Bahrain some months earlier, played a major part in moving personnel and equipment to Bahrain.

My log book entry for 6 November 1967 reads 'Beverley – attacked by MiGs.' The next entry reads 'Varsity – stalling and general handling.' From 'hot' to peaceful training normality in a couple of weeks. We know that we can go from 'cold' to 'hot' equally quickly and that is why we are here today.

THE TECHNICIANS' BURDEN

Squadron Leader M Murden

There could not have been a sharper contrast between the job I left behind in Bomber Command and what awaited me on arrival at Khormaksar. In August 1960 I became Engineering Officer to 8 Squadron, a unit which had just converted to Hunter FGA9 aircraft to which were later added four FR10s.

A few hours after my arrival I was taken to meet the CO, Squadron Leader Rex Knight and his pilots. I was delighted to be made so welcome.

But the next day my mood turned to dismay when I met the NCOs and airmen, many of whom seemed shattered from working long hours in an appalling climate with inadequate resources.

All work had to be undertaken in the open because there was no room in the hangars except for aircraft on second line servicing. Engine ground runs were carried out on the crowded aircraft dispersals. On my first morning a corporal engine fitter had lost control during an engine ground-run, the aircraft 'jumped' the chocks and then collided with the end of the hangar. Such an accident should never have happened but, to a certain extent, the man was a victim of the circumstances at Khormaksar at the time.

Then there were dust storms and sand everywhere which caused much of the unserviceability including engine malfunctions, brake failure, electrical and undercarriage problems. The intense heat also added to our difficulties. On one occasion we waited weeks for replacement fuel bag tanks. Spares, sent out by ship as deck cargo, melted during the journey and fell apart when unpacked on arrival.

Much needed improvement came towards the end of 1960 when the squadron moved to a newly constructed headquarters and dispersal. Even so our established strength, based on previous UK experience, was totally inadequate for Aden.

Because of the exceptionally high levels of equipment failures and severe shortages of spares an unacceptable number of aircraft were grounded waiting for AOG spares. Command staff took firm steps to remedy the situation but it was many months before improvements reached the squadron.

These many problems did not stop us getting on with squadron routine including reconnaissance, practice on the range and supporting the Army on Dhala convoys which were accompanied by one of our pilots as Forward Air Controller. On these occasions we had armed aircraft standing

by for intervention.

On 13 January 1961 Flight Lieutenant Les Swain disappeared on a routine flight near the Yemen border. We were all very upset at the loss of such an experienced and popular pilot. Every available aircraft was sent out to search. Hunters, Meteors and Shackletons all returned with bullet holes. For several days the ground crew worked incredibly hard throughout daylight hours doing rapid turnarounds and rearming aircraft.

At times like this every possible serviceable aircraft was needed even though the majority had deferred defects. So before most aircraft could fly I had to impose limitations by making 'red line entries' in the Forms 700. I was often concerned about the airworthiness of these aircraft and the possible consequences of further failures during subsequent operations. Fortunately there were no such incidents during my time on the squadron.

When the whole squadron moved to the Gulf on exercises our place at Khormaksar was taken by 208 Squadron from Nairobi or carrier-borne aircraft of the Royal Navy. Ground crew usually travelled by Beverleys of 84 Squadron. On the way we would refuel at one of the route stations such as Salalah.

Following a most welcome visit by Air Cdre Ivor Broom, from the Air Ministry, the unit's manpower establishment was considerably increased. This change came just in time because by mid-1961 it seemed increasingly likely that General Kassim would send Iraqi invasion forces into Kuwait. By 30 June 1961 the threat was considered so serious that 8 Squadron, closely followed by 208 Squadron, were moved to Bahrain. There was a real possibility of a Gulf War.

The next morning we were ordered to move into Kuwait. I left with the ground crew in a Beverley, landing at Kuwait's new airport shortly after our CO, Squadron Leader Laurie Jones, who was in the first of three Hunters. As we came to a standstill we could see helicopters from HMS *Bulwark* coming in to land. Centurion tanks came out of hiding and moved to the perimeter.

The new airport was incomplete and had never been used before. We moved into the terminal building which had no windows, doors or services. Shortly afterwards a Kuwait government official came to see me to offer a large collection of cars, trucks and cranes which he had commandeered for our use.

Squadron pilots were quick to volunteer to help so we soon had vehicles available to unload the continuing stream of Beverleys and other aircraft. The build-up of forces seemed phenomenal and before the day was out

included aircraft from Cyprus and UK. The whole airfield became seriously congested and matters were made worse when we realised the Hunters were sinking into the perimeter track which consisted of newly-laid tarmac that was melting in mid-day temperatures of 125°F. We could not touch the aircraft. So much of the servicing, such as engine changes, had to be done at first light while it was cool. It was thirsty work and Flying Officer John Volkens was very popular when he managed to commandeer a truck load of Pepsi Cola for the airmen.

For several hectic days I remained the senior engineer at Kuwait and soon found myself drawn into all sorts of problems well outside my official duties with the squadron. Aircraft continued to arrive all day and throughout the night. On arrival from UK, Britannias sometimes stayed on the runway and kept engines running because no external power was available. Operating conditions could not have been more hazardous. Most of the time visibility was down to 400 yards at ground level. On the third night a newly arrived airman from Lyneham went out to marshal an incoming Britannia. In the dark, tired and blinded by blowing sand, he walked into a propeller and was killed. A few days later Flying Officer 'Flick' Hennessey, of 208 Squadron, took off on a local reconnaissance flight using an 8 Squadron aircraft. He became disorientated in the poor visibility and was killed. That same morning a bomb exploded on a Beverley at Bahrain so we then had additional worries about terrorism.

After the initial build-up of forces was completed, 8 and 208 Squadrons took turns to rotate between Kuwait and Bahrain and then between the Gulf and Khormaksar. On 22 November 1961, whilst we were in Bahrain, two aircraft took off on a routine training exercise. Only one returned reporting that his 'No 2', Flying Officer Dick Gaiger, had overtaken him in a dive and disappeared into cloud. A subsequent search found aircraft wreckage in Qatar. Dick had been killed on ejection.

The Qatar government would only allow one person to visit, identify the body and return with the remains. I was asked to go so that I could also use the only opportunity to visit the accident site and report back to the Board of Inquiry (since no one else would be allowed to visit at a later date). I flew as the only passenger on a Pembroke aircraft and was left on the runway with a promise that I would be collected the next day. I had only a few hours at the scene but managed to work out what had happened. Without a pilot on board the aircraft had hit the ground upside down, straight-and-level. I found it had suffered a nose-down tailplane runaway caused by a fault in the actuator circuit. In an emergency the pilot could use

the standby trim switch but it was first necessary to isolate the faulty circuit by pulling out the circuit breaker. Unfortunately the Pilot's Notes made no mention of the circuit breaker.

The next morning I returned to Bahrain with Dick's body. After the funeral I explained my findings about the accident to the pilots. That afternoon Martin Webbon took off as one of a pair. In a subsequent tail chase he found himself unable to pull out of a dive. Shortly after that we had a call from Air Traffic telling us that Martin had put out a 'May Day' call and mentioned 'tailplane runaway'.

Realising that he could not pull out of the dive, Martin pushed hard on the controls using his feet and then 'blacked out' from the negative g as he did an outside loop. He landed the aircraft safely but had two black eyes caused by his escapade.

Both tailplane malfunctions were reported immediately to Command Headquarters and to our colleagues on 208 Squadron. Local orders were issued to deal with the problem and I wrote an article which was published in the Command Flight Safety Journal. But, despite repeated requests from Khormaksar and Steamer Point, there was very little feedback of information from the Air Ministry during my remaining time on the squadron.

On 30 March 1962 Khormaksar held a station Open Day. The 8 Squadron contribution was by three Hunters. Two aircraft made low, fast passes from opposite ends of the runway whilst a third, piloted by Flying Officer Peter Blackgrove, made a supersonic dive to reach the centre of the runway at the same time. To our horror, Peter failed to recover from the dive and flew straight into the ground. Later that day we recovered the tailplane actuator from the wreckage and confirmed that the accident had been caused by a runaway tailplane.

I was not sorry to return to the UK at the end of my tour in Aden. By the time I left Aden six pilots had been killed including John Volkers and Martin Webbon. I had been deeply upset by the loss of each of these friends and also by the death of the airman. I am not sure that life was much happier for those servicemen who succeeded us.

MORNING DISCUSSION

Anthony Furse: I gathered from my host last night that there were two types of Brigands at Aden. When were they there and what was wrong with them?

Chairman: I know the Brigands were there in 1951 which was a bit earlier because most of our concentration has been on the period of the later years of 1964 onwards but Air Cdre Atkinson is now going to tell us.

Ian Atkinson: Yes, the Brigands came to Aden in late 1949, I arrived on the squadron May 1950, it was over a couple of years. The other squadron there was 84. They were moved to the Far East, to Tengah, to join 45, this left just 8 in Aden and this was a very quiet period with no offensive operations. There were tremendous servicing problems being at the end of the pipeline, the only way really to sort it out was to send one of our NCO's up to the MU in the Canal Zone armed with a list of spares and to go down the MU hangars and seize what he could and then return to Khormaksar. I suppose the only outstanding problem we had was chronic hydraulic failure which seemed to leave the gear locked half way down and after the second episode the Station Commander, Group Captain J C MacDonald, ordered that the next pilot from 8 Squadron who found himself in this predicament, would be Court Martialled if he didn't get his gear down. The adjutant – Ray Downs – found himself in this situation and called for a shorthand writer to be positioned in the tower to take down his evidence before a formal enquiry!

We had a couple of spells in Iraq in 1951 at Shaibah for the Abadan crisis, 8 was the first squadron to move up there. I think in a fortnight the commander of Shibah went from flying officer to group captain. We were joined by 6 Squadron Vampires from Habbaniya and 249. The other part of 8 Squadron's work then was internal transport into the Protectorate using Anson 19s.

Douglas Finch-Beavis: I have been living outside England now for nearly fifty years. I would like to ask the question – who were financing the rebels and supplying the arms?

John Davis: Mention was made of MiGs. Who operated them who flew them and how did they appear on the scene?

John Jennings: Answering the last question first, the MiGs were operated by Egyptian pilots and they were operating from San'a in the Yemen. The

arms and finance for the arms was also supplied by Egypt. By the end of 1963 it was reckoned that Egypt had over 30,000 troops in the Yemen. They were, of course, backing the republicans against the Imam and tribesmen from the Radfan would go into the Yemen join the republican forces for three months and then be given a nice new Czech-made rifle, etc and ammunition and come back to the Radfan. That was good business for them and so the dissidents in the Radfan were becoming better armed all the time by that method, and also by Egyptian trained leaders coming in from the Yemen, to organise these tribesmen who were generally quite disorganised until that particular period.

Stan Hitchen: If I could just go back to your question about where did the support come from. When we were searching the kit of every Arab soldier coming back, all his kit was in an ammunition box, that's what you were allowed, one each. You'd lift the lid and there was a picture of Nasser on every single one – and those guys were on our side! On the MiGs, I was actually intercepted on the way home. It was not long after the Six-Day War if you recall and because we were leaving, quite unexpectedly, Nasser said we could go back across Egypt. All previous aircraft had to go over Turkey on the way home with a safety height of, I think, 17,000 feet. All the crews had to have all their fillings re-done because of the height they had to fly. On the way home we got bounced by two MiGs who were going from an airfield – which wasn't even on our maps – to the range, and they saw our aircraft. It could only have been British, it looked so ugly and they thought it was Six-Day War Phase Two. So they decided to have a go at us and they had a go with air to ground rockets and then two passes with cannon before they were hauled off by this chap I was shrieking at over the radio.

Anon: I've heard that one of the dangers with helicopters was the rotors. There must have been a very strict control on the age of the rotors. The only other thing, were there established Operations Rooms to control in and out operations of aircraft for example? Because in the Observer Corps I learnt that when you know where your forces are, you know where the enemy is.

Cedric Simons: Well, on the rotors themselves in my time there and from what I gathered before, we had very little trouble except with the Sycamores. The Sycamore blades gave a little problem because they were really old-fashioned wooden blades with wooden formers and covered in a sort of plastic material which caused even more trouble in the Far East. But

as far as the blades were concerned we had no trouble at all; it was, as I said in my little talk, the erosion of the blades which caused the problem. I don't think that we had any reason at any time to my knowledge for replacing complete rotor heads or blades. But diverting slightly the major problem with the aircraft was the engines and particularly with the Belvedere in its early days with the AVTUR engine starter fires. The starters for the front engine were right behind the pilot and one small expedient was made to put armour plating behind the pilot 'just in case' on start up. And they were also wearing the normal security armour plated flak vests.

Anon: May I ask you what about the tropicalisation in the engine room?

Cedric Simons: These tropical problems came out in the sense which is different from the humidity problems in the Malayan campaign. The modification which was hurried along for the Wessex was with the engines. Both the engines were only about two or three feet off the ground with the intake almost on the ground, so it was just sucking up the dust there, and then they built this rather ugly dustbin type nose with the intake at the top. I had the privilege once of meeting Her Majesty The Queen, and to show how knowledgeable she was, the Wessex was mentioned, and she said 'That's one of our aircraft, which first of all had a vacuum cleaner at the bottom of the nose and now it's a big dustbin,' which I think sums it up. Once we got that new intake the Wessex served us well.

John Jennings: With regard to the control, in the early days of the operation they flew up a BASO from Nairobi and he operated in the Radfan at Thumier and he was responsible for controlling all the air activity that entered into that particular area. On our wing, the Tactical Strike Wing, we had an Ops Headquarters staffed by Ops Officers who did the briefing of all the resident pilots and all the visiting pilots and crews, and the GLO section provided all the intelligence of the positions of army units, etc. The BASO, of course, was very much overworked and was eventually supplemented with other additional BASO assistants.

Cedric Simons: If I might comment on the Short-Range Transport Wing we had a Ground Liaison Officer based with us as well.

Peter Saundby: My question is, what was our involvement in the Yemen's civil war which was going on at this time. I ask the question because I was up at Beihan one day and I saw a whole lot of loaded trucks disappearing in the direction of the Yemen border, and I was told that I hadn't seen this.

Anon: I don't think we were intentionally involved in the civil war at all but it was difficult to escape it, and it was a matter really of trying to look after our own security rather than getting involved in the two sides. We had quite enough on our own plate I think without involving ourselves in the enemy side of it.

John Jennings: In Arabia you always have to ask yourself who is in partnership with whom and what comes first the chicken or the egg. There can be no doubt that the MiGs attacking the Beihan area were in response to the Sharif of Beihan assisting the Royalists in the Yemen where the Republicans were fighting the Royalists. There can be no doubt that other rulers on our side of the border were also assisting them and that triggered off the MiGs to attack them, that triggers us off to attack the Harib fort and so on, and that's the way it went. But I was not conscious, myself, at any time of any travel of arms from our side to the other side sponsored by the British and we could cover the whole area and see what was going on.

Peter Saundby: May I ask another question? When flying over the terrain in Aden was the turbulence very bad? I lost a very dear pilot friend in India; he had moved from Bomber Command over to transport and turbulence sucked him down and he crashed.

Cedric Simons: Turbulence was hell. The higher it was, the worse it became, particularly at the heat of the day and this is where the Belvedere really suffered.

Andrew Brookes: Looking always for the lessons now from all this experience, is it true to say that the sanctuary provided by the Yemen always kept two hands behind our back. You see this in Vietnam where the Americans were rendered impotent in the end. Would it be true to say that if we had been allowed to go into Yemen free range, the military situation would have radically altered, or is it true that air power, no matter how good, can't do anything if the media and the politics are all against you.

John Jennings: Yes, our arms were tied behind our backs, we have to face it: at the time of the attacks across the Beihan border we were getting very upset at the waste of flying hours, I did suggest to headquarters that we took the MiGs out at San'a's airfield on a dawn raid one morning. Well that went over like a lead balloon; as you can imagine it stood no chance at all. The same with attacking dissidents in single or little groups in the Radfan, it's like trying to kill wasps. It was pointless. What you really need to do is to wipe out the wasp nests, and the wasp nests were in the Yemen and you

couldn't get political clearance to do that. So our arms were tied behind our backs right through all these activities.

Sir John Kemball: If I could try a slight apology for the political side of this, where these barriers are drawn you can always see that people have a sanctuary beyond it and if you could only go that bit further this would be the turning point. I believe in a lot of these situations, particularly where you are dealing with a dissident force, the further you go the further they withdraw and you get sucked in further and further and you then have to commit more and more forces to either secure the area or achieving the objective. In some cases, as I believe John Jennings's suggestion of taking the MiGs out, that would work but I don't think against an internal security situation it does. I think, you can see this from Vietnam, how the Americans got sucked in further and further and always the military said if only we could go further. But I don't believe it would be true and I think, say from the Gulf War also, the suggestion if only we had gone on longer, we might have got a better conclusion to it. But you also get yourself more and more problems, so it's difficult to decide where you are going to draw the line, how far can you actually commit the limited resources that you have. And another example of that would be Israel and their incursions into the Southern Lebanon, where in fact they did this because it was going to be a panacea. All it did was to lock them into an on-going drain on their resources.

Alan Pollock, 43 Squadron: Two things. First of all I think we ought to remember there were our people in the Yemen and not only that, it was quite a distinguished person who has written a book – Johnny Cooper, who was actually with David Stirling. He was put down as David Stirling's driver but in fact he was his navigator. The marvellous work of Johnny Cooper and the whole supply train which did go through Beihan and certain other routes with camel trains ought to be acknowledged. Well worth reading about from the father of somebody here who asked a question. I think we ought not to forget some marvellous descriptions of the origins of the development of Aden by Peter Saundy's father who became Deputy Commander of Bomber Command because the initial operation and development of Khormaksar and air control was largely as a result of his posting there. One final thing I'd like to ask and that is on this political control because it just struck me that at many times Strike Wing aircrew did become extremely jaundiced with the length of time Whitehall would take to react to the simplest of things. I specifically refer to the stolen Ferret

incident, which might have occurred after Wing Commander Jennings left, I honestly can't remember but the amount of kerfuffle there was when a Ferret was stolen from Beihan and its whereabouts was known, and we could have taken it out just beyond the border, and Whitehall would not allow that. The border there was largely unmarked, and then of course the next morning they decided that we could go across the border and they gave us this ridiculous task of trying to find a stolen Ferret, in 2,000 square miles of desert. I was involved in both sorties and it took us an hour to get scrambled and be up there and loiter and we never got the clearance from Whitehall. The following morning the commanders wanted an impossible task when something relatively easy could have been achieved the day before. It had political ramifications because the Sharif really was quite disappointed about the whole affair and we didn't come out of it very well.

John Jennings: Well we were of course restricted politically in everything we did. That goes back to what I said about using thousand pound bombs – we weren't allowed to use them after they were mentioned in the press. Every time we reacted to an incursion at Beihan we didn't have cockpit readiness because it was too hot in the cockpits for the pilots. But when we did scramble to go up to Beihan (which was a waste of time because the MiGs had long gone), we weren't committed. If you look at the map it is possible to get to Beihan by cutting across the corner of the Yemen. We weren't allowed to do that. So here we are reacting to an incursion but we've got to fly the long way round to get there and had very little time once we were there. But in everything we did we were restricted. Now, I understand the political restrictions, but some of them within the protectorate seemed to me quite unnecessary. Restrictions in crossing the border were obvious, but we were tying our hands behind our back within the protectorate as well. The request to do things that you mentioned as far as we were concerned went to Steamer Point. Once the request was made to Steamer Point it was their problem: if they didn't give permission, we accepted it. Now, if it was sensitive, requests were going on to Whitehall and not getting clearance from there and you obviously knew that. But, we just asked or made request to Steamer Point and left it there.

Chairman: I don't know if anyone from Steamer Point would like to comment; Air Marshal Sowrey, it may not have happened in your time but I think this was really one of the things when you needed political clearance from Whitehall. It wouldn't come easily because communication with Whitehall was not all that good, which had advantages and, of course,

disadvantages. But, do you wish to say anything?

Sir Freddie Sowrey: Perhaps a couple of things. In terms of involvement in the war in the Yemen, I was asked on one or two occasions for that marvellous universal currency the Gold Sovereign to be transported by our aircraft to various places to oil the wheels for those who were helping us for the best outcome in the Yemen. On the question of political clearance, it wasn't only communications to London: one had got political advisors on the spot, which one had to consult first. There was the High Commissioner there, one had to consult him, he had his own adviser, Donal McCarthy (in the time that I was there), with the CinC. You had to thrash it out on the spot first of all, and then go back to London with the agreed military-politico view which you could say was the Commander-in-Chief's and the High Commissioner's recommendation. Now as I shall mention later we had a very intimate working relationship with the High Commissioner and his staff but to clear something as sensitive as a cross-border incursion, at that particular time with the United Nations interest, with the British government's position, it took some time to sort out in-theatre, and obviously very much more time when we had put the problem back to Whitehall.

Jock Heron: I was a trials pilot on the Central Fighter Establishment in the early to mid-60s over this period and was fairly well aware of what was happening. As a Hunter pilot, (although I was a Lightning pilot at the same time), we felt we were very much the poor relations. The Lightning was getting heavy concentration in its early days of development; the V-Force was getting enormous support; and yet the Hunter and its weapons and its equipment were sadly neglected. Now, some of the things that have been said by John Jennings supported this to a degree, we were firing twenty-five-year-old three-inch rockets at a time when the (twenty-five-year-old) thousand pound bomb was available. The Hunter was capable of carrying it and yet despite the best efforts of our headquarters at CFE we were not encouraged to develop the Hunter or indeed its weapon system, and my concern was that clearly it was yesterday's aeroplane in the eyes of perhaps Whitehall. But the question I have really is, from a Whitehall standpoint, was the Middle East sadly neglected as well, in relation to the equipment we were expected to use to fight the war out there?

John Jennings: The difficulty of firing this twenty-five-year-old rocket of course meant that we didn't have centre spot aiming; you had to fire on an imaginary circle and as you allowed wind the circle moved and you had to

keep one pipper above the target and imagine where the circle would be and so on. But what we were waiting for all the time, or what was supposed to be in the pipeline was the SNEB rocket and it never appeared but every month we got different reports that it was on its way. That would have made a tremendous difference but as I understood it, it was being developed and would have been available to the Hunter. Whether it ever was I'm not sure.

John Fry: I was the squadron leader with responsibility for BFAP and Aden and one of the first jobs I was given by Basil Lock was to find a replacement for the 3-inch rocket which I too had suffered inaccuracies firing off Meteors in Korea. So I was quite interested in this. And the rocket we first went for was a thing called the HSSR80, which in fact was a very, very good rocket indeed and I wrote a paper and recommended this with one proviso, that if we found it could not be stored in Aden, because we didn't know its temperature limitation, then the SNEB 68mm was the alternative. We then got the advice from Switzerland on the storage temperature and it really could not be stored in Aden or in the Gulf. It had a very low critical temperature and so we went for the SNEB 68mm, which was a good rocket and eventually did come in on the Hunter but it ran into a large number of problems. The British had reservations as to how it worked; the French said well it does, why are you worried about it. But we spent two or three years with the Ordnance Board going through this dreadful rigmarole. I thought, of course the rocket was clearly working but we couldn't get the Ordnance Board to agree. The Hunter 9, for which I was again responsible for modification, was the poor relation. I also complained about CFE who were running a trial 'many fighters versus many bombers' as priority, so ground attack was a dirty word. I was also involved with napalm, we ran into political objections on that score. I looked at the Hague conventions, I went to Sweden and got the fuses. But again we ran into political objections but I agree with Jock and with John that we were having great trouble getting the Hunter brought up to date. It was a continual battle and there wasn't much money being given for it.

Anon: On the question of napalm the Egyptians were using it against tribesmen in the Yemen.

Stan Bennett: Two points. Firstly on this military political point. We had a similar situation in the Far East during the Borneo campaign. The enemy were coming across the border doing a strike and rushing back over the border again. But it didn't take long to get the approval from Whitehall to

follow-up first a thousand yards beyond the border and then three thousand yards and then ten thousand yards, and this came through fairly quickly. That was the one point about the political side. The other one is, I commanded 34 Squadron in the Far East, where Wing Commander Hitchen was one of my aircraft commanders. We had a similar problem there, we had to keep the troops supplied on the ground. This was done mainly of course on air dropping, there just weren't any airfields. I believe in South Arabia everything was completely air landed. Obviously this is more efficient. Were you ever forced to do any air dropping, and what type of air dropping did you do?

Stan Hitchen: In my time, no. But some had been done before that. The only dropping I did was the Parachute Regiment who were going to lose their dropping pay if they didn't come down from an aeroplane so we did a deal and we rushed off and chucked them all out. I didn't get a cut either!

Robin Hogg: I was in both *Hermes* and *Victorious* during the Arab-Israeli war when the Navy was off Aden with a helpful contribution. I think one of the problems in getting clearances, certainly from our point of view, was the rotten state of intelligence as to what was going on in the Yemen. I'll give you a very good example. We received a signal to carry out Operations TORQUIL and THRUSTER at one stage, and this was the evacuation of British nationals from small towns up the eastern coast of the Red Sea. I was told by Admiral Mills, who was then the FO2, to prepare a plan and we looked at doing it with minesweepers, and we looked at doing it with a submarine, and both were extremely difficult. We then discovered that there were no British residents in any of these towns, but the FCO was totally unaware of it. The second point I'd like to make concerns these rockets, about which I know nothing. In later life I attended the *Belgrano* Cabinet meeting as the technical adviser to Admiral Lewin and it's a point of historical fact that even though we had an SSN with Sub-Harpoon and enormous performance, we sank the *Belgrano* with a torpedo that was accepted into service on my birthday in 1932.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE WITHDRAWAL

Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey

In his book *Aden under British Rule*, R T Gavin described the Aden of 1945 as being quite familiar to anyone who had seen it in the late 19th century. However, in the next twenty years, to bring it broadly into our period, the civil population trebled; the Little Aden refinery was built; the airfield extended and modernised; the port dredged and mechanised; and the compact areas of Crater and Steamer Point joined by the sprawl of M'aalha and the causeway to Sheikh Othman, Al Ittihad (the Federal Capital) and Little Aden. In 1962 the one thousandth married quarter was opened at Khormaksar – less than six years earlier there had been fewer than one hundred. It was this expanded infrastructure which had made it possible to absorb the unprecedented build-up of military forces on the withdrawal from Suez, the Brigade from Kenya and the formation of the Unified Command. Aden had become the pivot of our military power in the Middle East with the dual role of defending the oil rich dependencies in the Persian Gulf and acting as a staging post on the island route to Singapore. And if anyone with the advantage of hindsight feels that the Services should have read the signs that a withdrawal of some sort was on the cards, and tempered their build-up accordingly, there was no indication other than a job to do in the area. The Command stretched from Kuwait to Botswana and Uganda to Madagascar with the Eastern and Western Aden Protectorates as an absorbing series of operations on the doorstep.

The Conservative Government's 1964 statement that South Arabia would be granted Independence 'not later than 1968', but that we intended to maintain a military base in Aden, caused some modest rethinking but there was not much that could be done immediately. Hence the result of the Labour Party's Defence Review announced in February 1966, that HMG did not think it appropriate to maintain defence facilities after Independence and would withdraw forces from Aden at the same time, showed the extent of the task facing us: to withdraw in safety and good order in the face of an increasing terrorist campaign; to maintain as far as possible law and order in the Protectorate until Independence; and to try to leave something constructive for the new nation state whilst ensuring the smooth transfer of our own military responsibilities elsewhere – notably the Persian Gulf. So an early decision was made that, as well as planning for an administrative withdrawal, it could also be opposed on the basis that whichever of the two terrorist groups – FLOSY or the NLF – was most

successful in seeming to eject the British (whatever the reality) they would have stronger credentials in the eyes of the population of post Independence Aden in forming a government of sorts.

The approach to all of the planning for the withdrawal had to be flexibility and inventiveness. Firstly because of the uncertainty about a final date and, secondly because of the possibility of terrorist strikes and events on the international scene – what transpired was of course the Arab-Israeli war. As with all good plans, some date had to be chosen in 1966 for the final withdrawal, and 1 January 1968 had a rounded feel to it. The MoD was told that Ministers had to make up their minds by May 1967 what was the final date. In the event it was late June before 20 November was notified as Withdrawal or W-Day and at the beginning of November it slipped to 30 November, and mid-month it came back to the 29th. I mention this to draw the lesson that it is pointless saying, as we did, that a minimum of twenty-eight days warning of the date of W-Day was necessary to ensure that the plan worked successfully when in the event all we got was fifteen days – and still managed it.

The fundamental decision on movement was that the heavy and bulky items, including ammunition, should go out by sea, and people (which included families) would go by air together with the smaller valuable items.

The first task in 1966 was therefore to see what could be done to thin our ammunition, aircraft spares (particularly the holdings from 114 and 131 Maintenance Units), and barrack stores – basically office and married quarters furniture and the like – what was not economic to send elsewhere was sold locally.

It was fortunate that the bases in the Persian Gulf would remain, particularly Bahrain, Masirah and Sharjah, as these offered support from relatively close at hand and extra works services were installed. As 1966 progressed the shedding of tasks continued. By June the AFME Calibration Centre had transferred to NEAF. Also the major commitment of the Petrol, Oil, and Lubricant (POL) lift to Zambia with Britannias full of 40 gallon drums of fuel thumping on to the main one undulating runways of Lusaka and N'Dola came to an end and the Mobile Radar, Javelin squadron and RAF Regiment returned to the UK.

The Ministry of Defence provided a joint quartering team to begin a detailed study of the re-deployment to the Gulf and to help with withdrawal planning. The backing from Whitehall and elsewhere was superb. There was no compunction about staff officers and Board Members visiting in the hottest and stickiest weather and the help provided in producing a 15ft

critical path analysis was invaluable. Similarly, the operational Commands at home and abroad recognised the pressures we were under. For example, my opposite number in Cyprus – Mick Martin – detached a PR Canberra to Bahrain after a personal signal to fly a recce in the Dhofar for us. This was invaluable for the surveillance systems it carried and also in relieving the pressure on Khormaksar's aircraft. But we also had to make hard decisions ourselves. For example, the Air Ministry Works Dept reported that they could not guarantee the integrity of the Khormaksar runway at the likely intensity for the period of the withdrawal without resurfacing. The equally frugal minded AOA – Freddy Ball – and I cavilled at this expense. In the event an assessment was made of the likely areas of runway failure; the windows of opportunity for repair, particularly during the cooler night hours, and the materials and workforce needed. This was accepted by the senior commanders as being a justified risk but a risk for all that, and the materials for repair located and stockpiled and the workforce earmarked.

The pattern of the air withdrawal planning began to take shape. The decision to fly out all the families direct to the UK by six months before W-Day freed all the quarters, their furnishings and administration. As Air Support Command would provide many of the aircraft to enable the tactical withdrawal to take place, the obvious destination for a shuttle was Bahrain – the focal point of their control cell for Operation JACOBIN. That very perceptive AOC, Andrew Humphrey, recognised that the critical point of the whole air withdrawal was the 'elbow' at Muharraq between a tactical lift from Aden and a strategic lift to the UK, and that is where he should be for the last few days. The overall need was to keep the operational strength of Aden well up for as long as possible and then accelerate the rundown in a cascade effect in a matter of days or even hours as the shrinking perimeter closed on Khormaksar – literally the vital element which must be secure at all costs, and it was reckoned that it needed two Battalion Groups to do so. What took the final load off our backs was going to be the involvement of a naval task force with a fleet carrier *HMS Eagle*, and the helicopters and marines of *HMS Albion* and *HMS Intrepid*. Not only were they going to provide power projection if needed but also air defence. More especially the helicopter lift and the Royal Marines' pickets around mortar range of the airfield were going to be the stalwarts to cover the departure of the last fixed wing RAF aircraft.

So the air plan was a lift by Argosy, Belfast, Beverley, and predominately Hercules, (on its first major test with the RAF) with troops embarking with their weapons and, on arrival at Muharraq, showering,

changing, telegraphing home, exchanging their money and relaxing before a Britannia or VC10 flight back to the UK. We were determined not to leave any hostages to fortune. To avoid the possibility of a transport aircraft being left unserviceable on the ground on final withdrawal, only those aircraft which could take off empty on three engines would be employed for this phase. This then ruled out the Belfast which was an aircraft much in demand for bulky loads. So a Belfast engine and engine-change team were positioned at Khormaksar and the Belfasts operated until forty-eight hours before W-Day – the maximum length of time it would have taken to complete an engine change and fly it out. Similarly, if an airfield has to be kept operational until the departure of the last aircraft, how many people are necessary for this final act? The first trawl round asking for bids for seats on the final take-off amounted to nearly one thousand! In the event the number was whittled down to seventy five.

The first major airlift was families – Operation RELATIVE – announced in 1966. The UK had done its best to promulgate postings in advance, and families moved to quarters where the husband would ultimately be stationed, or if this was not possible, near friends. From January 1967 the families were told of the fourteen-day period during which they would travel to their next posting or to a chosen destination in the UK or to temporary accommodation if that was more appropriate. No praise can be too high for the Joint Services Air Trooping Centre who handled them with tact and efficiency. From January to April 2,691 passengers were flown out and the move was accelerated in June because of the security situation. From 1 May to 20 June, 6,605 shuttled to the UK and the total count from January to July was 9,706 from all the Services, including those seconded to the South Arabian Army.

The departure of all the families was a load off everyone's mind, although well recognised that press reporting of the terrorism in Aden was going to be a worry for those on their own in the UK. Perhaps I can give my view as to why Aden was such a successful Command. Apart from the personalities involved, the old Headquarters building with its tiered open verandas; redolent of the Indian Army, lent itself to joint working. On the top level was the CinC with his single-Service commanders and the Chief of Staff – Roly Gibbs. The next level down held the BGS and SASO in a shared office with the Air Staff on one side and the G Staff on the other. Thirty seconds round the corner were the Naval Staff and the Joint Planners. The Administrative, Technical and Supply Staffs were within hot, dusty walking distance. Political Advisors, Intelligence, MI5 men and MI6

men were up and down the wide stairways in the open sun and the High Commission was half a mile away. Our office had the outside double doors permanently open to show solidarity with those working in the heat outside, but with the air conditioner full on to offer some comfort for the same visitors. With the families gone, the BGS – that great soldiers' soldier – Charles Dunbar, and I moved into the same bungalow on the basis that if we were going to be woken in the night with an operational problem, it was likely to be a Joint Service one and we might just as well start in some comfort.

As Julian Paget has chronicled, 1966 saw the beginning of a massive increase in urban terrorism. It also coincided with labour unrest, port strikes, disruption of fuel delivery and was a rehearsal for what would follow to an increasingly greater degree the following year. The security of Khormaksar was augmented; the RAF Regiment's 37 Field Squadron, 48 Field Squadron and 51 Field Squadron, who bore the brunt of this commitment, were reinforced by the Loyal Anglians. On the positive side, work services started at Sharjah and Muharraq for the expansion that was to follow and absorb the units deploying from Aden.

In the effort to leave a cohesive country behind us, talks started with Airwork on the formation of a small South Arabian Federal Air Force after Independence – equipped with BAC 167 Strikemasters. Similar discussions took place about a small Coastal Navy and the running of the airfield post Independence by International Aeradio.

The increased terrorism of 1967 drew the press in increased numbers, particularly to events in Crater and the security of Khormaksar where the possibility of damage to aircraft by mortars was always on the cards. In the event, the only damage there was some peppering of a Shackleton tailplane but it was enough to send shock waves through the civil operators flying into the airfield and efforts to play it down backfired when the BBC figured it prominently in their news bulletins. Incidentally, flying in the Arabian Peninsular was serious aviation. In 1966-67, no fewer than 23 aircraft were destroyed or damaged by hostile action, including the Beverley already mentioned and a Hunter fire in the air from a hydraulic pipe severed by a single rifle bullet.

So 1967 continued at an increasing tempo. In May, strikes closed the harbour to commercial shipping and the closure of the Suez Canal on 6 June from the Arab-Israeli war compounded the difficulties – particularly on food and fuel. Commercial shipping left food supplies at Red Sea ports, especially Djibouti, where it was collected by a shuttle of Beverleys. The

Royal Fleet Auxiliaries brought in potatoes, eggs, bacon and sausages, and to bridge the gap, eggs and tinned and dried potatoes were flown from the UK by RAF and civil aircraft. All this was necessary as at the end of June there were 16,000 mouths drawing daily on the Aden Supply Depot.

The port did not re-open until after Independence and in the meanwhile was run by the Services – mostly the Army – as a Military Port organisation, loading, unloading and refuelling ships up to 12,000 tons. Output was up to 7,000 tons a week which *The Times* estimated was better than any civilian organisation could have done, and six times the rate of the local workforce. The supply of fuel was compounded by an Arab boycott of all Petrol, Oil and Lubricants to Aden. A Fuel Cell was set up and RFAs delivered fuel to a temporary fuel jetty run by the Army. Fuel was then delivered from Khormaksar's bulk supply by bowser to Army and RAF user units. The Engineering Staff were asked to come up with a formula to mix AVGAS and AVTUR to make MT Gas to reduce the number of blends required to be shipped in and this seemed to work without dire results. And again, to fill the gap, unconventional methods. On 16 June the AOC sent me to Djibouti to arrange a supply of fuel with the French Commandant. Both Beverleys and Shackletons isolated combinations of their fuel tanks to carry AVTUR which was then drained out at Khormaksar – a laborious business – and one needing infinite care by the aircrews supervising refuelling their own aircraft at Djibouti and the engineers and suppliers at Khormaksar to ensure the right fuel went into the right bulk fuel installation. Fuel provided a bonus for security. With fuel being used at one million gallons a month and much of this being supplied in forty gallon drums, there were a lot of empty drums. These empties were filled with water and used to protect aircraft at Khormaksar. Piled up with the height of walls designed to protect the pressurised fuselage, they would have absorbed mortar fragments, and mobile walls on bomb trollies closed the gaps. The threat to the airfield was a very real one, contained by constant ground force patrols and also the helicopter security patrols.

As an aside, amongst all this, units still managed to arrange for professional exams, HNC, City and Guilds and the like. Still in June the withdrawal from the hinterland took place and security there handed over to the South Arabian Army. It was important to show support for them but equally to take no chances. As Stan Hitchen has described, no unaccompanied load was ever accepted and Hunters were overhead whenever RAF or Army aircraft were on the ground at up-country strips. Photographic and visual reconnaissance of all major South Arabian Army

units by 8 Squadron continued up to the end.

The mutiny of the armed police in July, and the murder of British servicemen was a blow to confidence as to whether some hotheads might try to get some notches on their guns as we withdrew. As the perimeter shrank, Army units kept the South Arabian Army close to them so as to make it more difficult for such a situation to develop. In the same month Coastal Command Shackletons took over our commitment for the Beira Patrol from Majunga in the Malagasi Republic. In August 3 Wing of the Army Air Corps moved from Little Aden into Khormaksar to continue the concentration there. The formation of the new Headquarters British Forces Gulf in September/October was a godsend as it progressively unloaded the burden from the staffs in Aden – the first Commander, Vice-Admiral Martin, has contributed a paper which will be published with today's proceedings. The Argosies of 105 Squadron moved up to Muharraq to carry out their share of the final airlift and the responsibilities for tasking maritime and transport aircraft passed to the Gulf as did the Middle East categorisation team. Headquarters AFME Operations Room closed and transferred to the Gulf and OC Khormaksar became essentially the Air Defence Commander. Air defence of the Protectorate had been undertaken over the years by 43 Squadron's Hunters. As part of a deterrent strategy to ensure that the Yemen could not be certain that one of their MiGs would not be shot down over the Protectorate, a mobile radar, UPS1, had been moved to a mountainous peak at Mukeiras and Hunter patrols were flown at random height, times, and places along the frontier. The arrival of the Naval task force under Rear Admiral Edward Ashmore was a comforting presence, and more of Khormaksar's commitments could now be shed as the perimeter of British units inexorably shrank back on the airfield.

On 27 October Andrew Humphrey left for Bahrain, leaving me as Commander RAF Aden. Early in November we watched with nostalgia the last Beverley of 84 Squadron lumber into the sky and set course for England as did one of the few Dakotas still flying. No. 78 Squadron's Wessex continued flying IS Patrols but also practised deck landings on HMS *Intrepid* for their move to Sharjah. HMS *Eagle* took on the Air Defence Commitment on 7 November and up to the 9th of the month Hunters were still supporting the South Arabian Army by attacking dissident ground targets with cannon fire and rockets.

The uncertainty over the final date of withdrawal has already been covered, but as a reminder, from June it had been taken as 20 November; on 2 November politics changed the date to 30 November; and as late as 14

November brought it back to 29 November – the final W-Day.

The last ceremonial took place on W-1. Humphrey Trevelyan (who had left Government House for HMS *Eagle*) flew in to inspect a magnificently turned out Joint Services Guard of Honour with Admiral Sir Michael Le Fanu – that most human of CinCs. One verse of the National Anthem and a fly past of 43 Squadron Hunters en route to Muharraq was the nearest anyone got to a hand-over of sovereignty, and when the Royal Marines band struck up *Fings Ain't What They Used To Be* they could not have been nearer the truth. The withdrawal was now coming to the edge of the precipice with everyone being moved out as quickly as possible. On that day over 1,300 Service personnel and civilians left in twenty aircraft. On the next day, W-Day, the skeleton Joint Headquarters on the airfield closed and 45 Commando was lifted by helicopter to the Naval Task Force leaving 42 Commando holding the shrinking perimeter around the airfield with armed helicopter support. The last aircraft into Khormaksar were a freight Hercules and a freight Argosy for ground equipment; a passenger/freight Hercules; and overhead two airborne reserve Hercules. The RAF airfield was closed down between the landing of the last Hercules and its departure at 13.45 – a 25 minute turnaround compared with the average of 15 minutes – leaving a modest civil organisation behind. The aircraft left, not with 1,000 passengers, but 75 – two Air Traffic Controllers, two single side band operators, Mobile Air Movements Section (withdrawal not possible without them), Police baggage handlers and a dual Argosy and Hercules qualified rectification team and, of course, the Army. With Desmond Brown, the Station Commander, went the Commander Aden Brigade, the late Dick Jefferies, and last in, the late Charles Dunbar and myself.

The GOC – Philip Tower – and the last seven positions of 42 Commando were flown to the Task Force around 14.50 and their CO – Dai Morgan – was the last Briton to leave. British rule was manifest until midnight in the White Ensign of the Task Force in territorial waters.

Since April, 24,000 servicemen had been airlifted from Aden – 6,000 of these since the beginning of November, 2,000 in the last forty hours and 800 in the last nine all with arms, ammunition and freight.

So ended one hundred and twenty-eight years of British rule in Aden. The Navy annexed it, the Army pacified it and for the past forty-eight years the Royal Air Force had operated theatre-wide from it. All three Services had contributed equally to the success of the withdrawal which has been described as one of the best planned and executed operations in British military history.

THE NAVY'S CONTRIBUTION – TASK FORCE 318

Rear Admiral R I T Hogg

Our prime responsibility in the Navy was to provide a covering force during the withdrawal and to remain poised in international waters for a month, or whatever period was necessary, to protect the putative new Ambassador and his tiny staff.

We were involved for a comparatively short period from the middle of October until W-Day. The really important dates as far as the Navy was concerned was the 4th November, that was when Admiral Ashmore came in and went aboard HMS *Eagle*. He quickly realised that that was the wrong place to be – he had to be in HMS *Fearless*, that was the Commando ship – a clever decision which we have subsequently followed in all major operations of this sort since because of the communications and the types of people there. He very quickly made certain that he was no longer responsible to Singapore and managed to get permission to go direct to CDS. Again another very wise decision which has subsequently come to be used more often.

We took over the air defence of Aden and the retaliatory strike responsibility on the 7th. We then had a personal tragedy when Admiral Ashmore's daughter was killed in a train crash and he had to fly home to the UK. Commodore Place VC assumed command temporarily. We were all gone precisely at 23.59 on W-Day, 29th November, the last British presence being HMS *Appleton* a very small minesweeper sitting right on the edge of the maritime zone.

There were numerous attachments and detachments to the naval forces involved during this operation as shown on the charts which demonstrate the enormous support effort that it takes to maintain a naval Task Force for any length of time off the coast. Three of the Fleet Auxiliaries – *Sir Geraint*, *Sir Galahad* and *Sir Bedivere* – belonged to the Army but Admiral Ashmore arranged that they should be transferred to his operational control, so we controlled a very large force which, in truth, was mostly there for logistics support.

What were the lessons learnt? We were operating as a Task Force 3,600 miles from our base in Singapore and we drew all our support from the UK and from the Far East Fleet of RFAs for whatever was necessary for fuel and so on. It is not generally realised that Admiral Ashmore was the flag-officer second-in-command Far East Fleet. Ten years ago I was a flag-officer of a flotilla, an identical job, but I had very little administrative

**THE
WITHDRAWAL
FROM ADEN**

**NAVAL FORCES
INVOLVED**

WARSHIPS

LONDON
AJAX
PHOEBE
MINERVA
INTREPID
AURIGA
BARROSA

RFA's

DEWDALE
RELIANT
SIR GERAIN
SIR GALAHAD
SIR BEDIVERE
LYNESS
BRAMBLELEAF

EMPIRE FULMAR
EMPIRE TERN
EMPIRE GUILLEMOT
EMPIRE GREBE
EMPIRE PETREL
TIDESPRING
TIDEFLOW

**THE
WITHDRAWAL
FROM ADEN**

**NAVAL FORCES
INVOLVED**

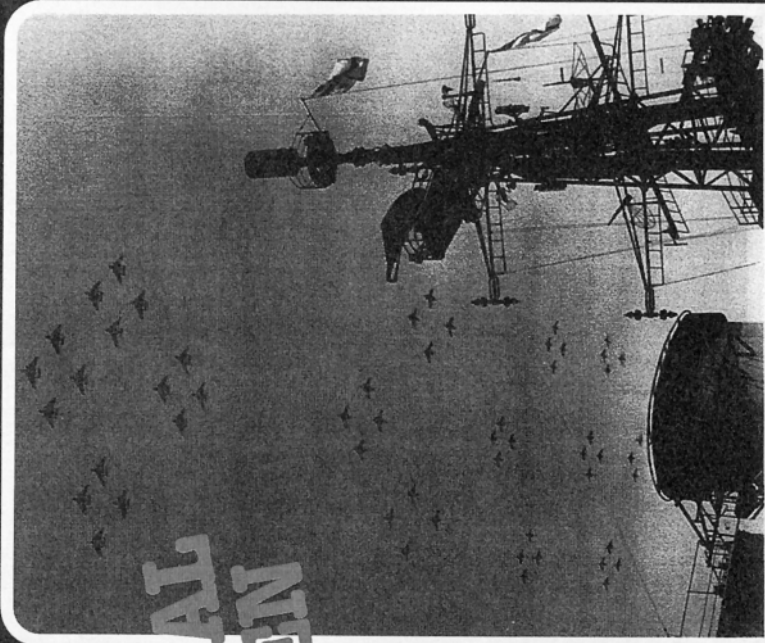
WARSHIPS

**EAGLE
ALBION
FEARLESS
PHOEBE
APPLETON
BULWARK
(+ Embarked Cdo)**

RFA's

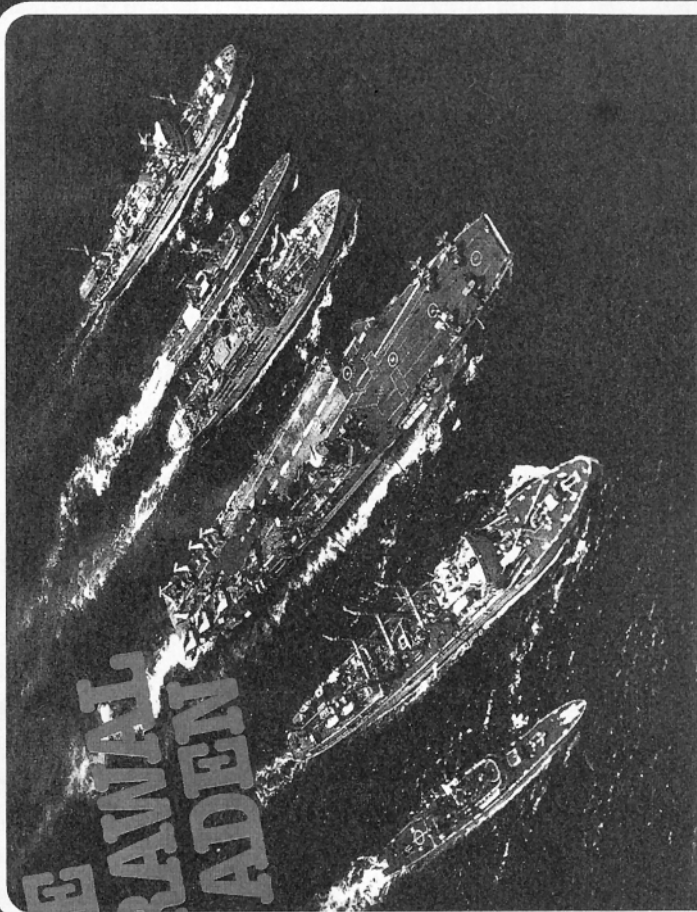
**OLNA
TIDEFLOW
STROMNESS
TIDESPRING
FORT SANDUSKY
APPLELEAF
RESURGENT
RETAINER
TYPHOON**

THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ADEN



A joint fly-past off Aden seen from HMS *Hermes*, whose Sea Vixens and Buccaneers lead the formation.

THE WITHDRAWAL FROM ADEN



*Minam, Tregjoni, Stormos, Rehani, Galaten, Kelainex,
en route for Australia August 1967.*

responsibilities. As the second-in-command Admiral Ashmore had huge administrative responsibilities, as well as operational ones. We were also responsible for operations in Borneo and we had a very large compass as well as a huge administrative responsibility, and by modern standards he had a tiny staff consisting of:–

Staff Operations Officer	A Seaman Commander (self)
A second Commander	In his first job
Flag Lieutenant	Lt Cdr also responsible for communications
A ‘Mr Fix It’	Another Lt Cdr who was also an ASW specialist

When I became a flag-officer flotilla I had a staff of 47 and it was certainly not as efficient. In those days we ran large operations as a nation with tight, small well-integrated staffs, and I am afraid that it has much declined since then.

We were down in Perth when we got the instruction that we were to support the withdrawal from Aden. I was dispatched to Singapore to write the Operation Order for the withdrawal which you all know was called Operation MAGISTER and I was given temporary acting two-star status by the CinC Far East so that I could have some clout. I particularly take the points that Sir Freddie Sowrey made about the wonderful organisation in Aden; for those of you who served in Singapore will remember that ‘Sleepy Hollow’, the Navy headquarters in Sembawang, Changi and Phoenix Park were 20 miles apart and I spent most of my time racing from one headquarters to another trying to get agreement on what we were going to do. It was a very unwieldy organisation.

Logistics – you have already seen the very large number of ships we had in support of this operation. For us at sea, logistics is the Achilles heel of all naval operations and we had a big problem with the fresh water. It has been referred to already by others. The Royal Fleet Auxiliaries were unable to make potable water; only the Fleet Tankers could do this and we had a serious water problem at sea and we had to rely on the LSLs to bring it out to us from shore on some occasions.

We had a very nasty experience in the Arab-Israeli war when, as you heard before, the Arab nations stopped all fuel to the fleet and the only source of aviation fuel was in Kwinana, Western Australia. We had tankers during this operation freighting from there to make absolutely sure that we

never ran out of aviation fuel.

The RFAs did not have engineering support built in; one thing we learnt which benefited us in the Falklands – after this operation we set up a means of supporting them properly. Communications was another area which was extremely important for us; in the Arab-Israeli war communications were an absolute pain, if Mauritius was not on-line on HF we had great difficulties in talking to London and it really made the case for the early ‘SATCOMS’. The fact that the Royal Navy, when I was the Director of Operational Requirements, had ‘SATCOMS’ in every ship stems from this time when we found them absolutely invaluable. On-Line ‘RATT’ at HF also critical for us, the equipment that some of you may remember called ‘Alvis-Vendor’ was then widely fitted in the fleet as the result of this, and secure speech ‘Delphi’ for Admiral to MoD conversations was also found to be critical.

On the aviation front, and I am not an aviator, the carrier operated in a 10 mile box 25 miles off Khormaksar and we kept one Sea Vixen at Alert 20 when the carrier was operating and two Sea Vixens at Alert 20 when the carrier was stood down from standard operations. These aircraft were armed with two Red Top missiles and a 2" Rocket Pod so that they could respond either to ground attack or air defence requirements. We were also able to provide excellent early warning to the south and west; we had very good radar in those days and the AN/APS-20 of 849 Squadron’s Gannets is the radar that subsequently went into the Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft.

Amphibious Forces: again we learnt some big lessons there, they had to be at sea for long periods without any real training, and keeping them fit and motivated was extremely difficult. But again something from which we learnt many lessons which were useful later.

On the intelligence front; I referred earlier on to the poor intelligence we had earlier on to the north and east of us during the Arab-Israeli war.

We had a Major Burnip appointed to our staff and he had a very good grasp of what seemed to be going on and we were well supported there. I would like to pay limitless praise to the Headquarters Middle East; in a single compound the liaison was both swift and very easy. You paid a tribute to Mike Le Fanu, the CinC, a quite extraordinary officer, but I think the quality of everyone in this operation was quite remarkable.

As a tailpiece, I would like to say that we made endless plans for many contingencies; one of them for instance Operation BOBBIN was that if we required naval reinforcement aircraft, many of our aircraft alas did not have

an ability to navigate ordinary international airways through lack of kit, and we were going to use RAF Canberras to shepherd replacement aircraft down through Masirah. That was another weakness which we discovered all too late and put right later on. There was of course no threat to our forces. Operation MAGISTER went through like clockwork and Operation MONITOR, which was the month standing off to support the fledgling Ambassador and his tiny staff, proceeded without incident.

Delegation worked extremely well, when Admiral Ashmore managed to get a direct link when we were being controlled by the Chief of Defence Staff directly from London, this proved hugely advantageous. The First Sea Lord of the day was constantly trying to withdraw the attack carrier for other reasons and to lessen strain on the Fleet, and it was due to CDS who overruled him time and again that it remained there throughout the operation. There were a lot of small scale operations, some covert and some overt, but by and large this operation ran like clockwork and it is a great tribute to those who planned it ashore.

I think the historic role of the air arm of defence in control of the Protectorate continued to be discharged to the very end. Our first Ambassador some of you may know, Sir Robin Hooper, was a wartime wing commander and he was just the man for the job; robust, steady and appreciative of the resources MOD put at his disposal at a very difficult time for him.

For me in a way, because I had been commanding a minesweeper for two and a half years around Cyprus when we had been trying to get out of that withdrawal from Empire, I think it is salutary to remember that though these were distinguished operations for the 'Brits', on a global scale they were pretty small in spite of the large forces which certainly the Navy committed to this. In Cyprus 393 deaths; in Aden 382 during the entire withdrawal process, bearing in mind that Algeria was a total mess and the Americans were sinking ever deeper in Vietnam. It makes one realise the scale of the operations we were undertaking and maybe it is the good planning and the serious commitment to forces that we were able to do it so well. The problems facing the British run Police Force were merely echoes of what we saw in Cyprus and earlier on in Malaysia.

For the Navy, the long range from our Main Fleet Base in Singapore and the long stay time in the area provided a lot of lessons which were to stand us in very good stead years later in the Falklands war.

To me, looking back through all the old records, it is interesting to go into the Naval Historical Branch and look at the Operation Orders which

one wrote and the comments; and I am very sad to hear that Sir Freddie Sowrey's have been pulped. Ours remain sometimes waspish, but most of the time appreciative of our opposite numbers.

The 'Two Year Warning' time of our withdrawal produced many difficulties, both political and military, but for us the Arab-Israeli war, in retrospect, was an enormous help. We got the communications right; we were forced into looking at alternative logistic sources, and we were also forced to look at what we would have to do if the sea off both coasts became unfavourable. I think for the Navy our very early embrace of 'SATCOM' was entirely due to this period off Aden and it has since proved entirely beneficial.

The real lessons at the end of the day for me were those of close inter-Service co-operation. I have always seen quite a few people in this audience as my natural enemy when I was serving in the Ministry of Defence; the fight for funds and difficulties over Defence Reviews and so on, but I have to say that in this withdrawal from Aden it was the smoothest and best planned operation with which I have ever been involved. And Sir Edward Ashmore asked me to say to everybody that if we forget these lessons in the future then we shall be in serious trouble.

My last slide shows HMS *Hermes* with aloft a 'Balbo' of aircraft mainly from RAF Khormaksar; that was how it worked and it was a great success.

AFTERNOON DISCUSSION

Alan Sylvester: My question really is addressed to this morning's speakers. In retrospect was it wise to conduct a Brigade-scale operation in the Radfan when there was no prospect of holding on to the ground or maintaining our control for an extended period?

Sir Julian Paget: This one has been raised before. It was not only an unjustified use of military force but also excessive use of military force. The origins were political as usual, in that the Federal government was demanding that the flaunting of their authority in their territory by rebels, including their enemies and their own tribesmen, was unacceptable and something must be done about it. If you are going to launch an operation of this sort at all, there are two requirements at least. One is that you must succeed and the second is that you must succeed quickly, and the longer you let it go on, the more the problems, the casualties, hostile propaganda, and everything else grow. And this was very much I think in everybody's minds in the Radfan where there were only probably five to seven hundred rebels operating. They were operating as rebels, there was no way in which you could attack them physically on the ground and the only way that you could deal with them was by forcing them out as we did – occupying the vital areas that they needed, and that all took troops. And linked to that was the overriding factor that we must not ourselves suffer set-backs and we didn't want the operations to go on any longer than absolutely necessary. Something short and sharp was the answer, and that is why a high powered, large-scale operation was mounted.

Joe Ainsworth: Viscount Slim telephoned me a few days ago to apologise for not being here and he was an SAS officer during this time, and he told me that on at least three occasions he owed his life to the RAF. Two occasions it was because a helicopter picked him out of a very, very difficult situation and the third was when the Hunters gave him the necessary cover so that he could escape himself. He stressed that the activities of the SAS forces in the Radfan, thought very highly of the Royal Air Force.

Anon: You heard earlier on Sir Julian talking about the parachute drop that didn't take place and he mentioned the SAS patrol that was caught. In fact what had happened was they were going to go overnight and mark the area for the parachute drop and they didn't make as much distance as they wanted to, because one of their men was sick or unwell, and so they holed-

up as dawn approached. Unfortunately during the course of the morning they were observed by a boy, a shepherd if you like, with some sheep or goats. He spotted them and, as they put in their report, he gave the alarm before they could kill him. They were then surrounded by a number of dissidents who attacked them, and they radioed for assistance. That request for assistance was communicated through the BASO. I happened to be over the Radfan at that time on another mission, and I heard of this location, and managed to find where it was – they had put out some panels. They carried panels with them for this purpose, and I gave what support I could. I was running out of fuel and then Hunters from Khormaksar came and took over and they fired in support of this patrol for the rest of the day. When night started to fall the patrol of course realised there would be no more Hunter support so they decided they had to break out, and it was hand to hand fighting with something like fifty dissidents. The lieutenant was killed as he gave the order to leave, as was the wireless operator. The other six fought their way back fighting on a rearguard action. General de la Billière mentions this incident in his book about this rescue and he's written telling me that they all owe their lives to the support given by the Hunters, and that wasn't the only occasion that we heard from Viscount Slim. There was tremendous close support given right throughout the operation.

'Jeff' Jefford: I still get the impression, despite the slickness of the planning and the withdrawal, that it was a Movement Order rather than an operational one. There were no action incidents involving incursions that I am aware of. If there had been some sort of attempt to throw the British into the sea, rather than us withdrawing, do you think that we still could have coped?

Sir Freddie Sowrey: Yes, I think we could because such a possibility had been anticipated in the way that the withdrawal was planned with the shrinking perimeter onto Khormaksar with the Commandos holding the ring. This was designed with the British army holding the South Arabian army close to them, so there was no distance between them, there was thus no possibility of them mounting an operation to push us into the sea. As the perimeter shrank, so we brought the South Arabian army with us. Also the British army was well aware of what the possibilities might be and had taken every precaution to make sure that if there was the slightest sign of major trouble they could have stamped it out. Anyway we had some very robust commanders like Colin Mitchell with the Argylls who would stand no nonsense whatever anybody said about them afterwards. They were very

thorough and Mike Walsh with the Parachute Regiment, very robust, tactical, operational commanders. Of course withdrawal under fire would have been much more difficult and there obviously would have been casualties, but we should have still got out in reasonable order with the help and support of the Commandos. The underlying presence of the Naval Task Force ensured that we didn't have to fight the last aircraft out – that was the great thing. There were seventy-five on the last aircraft which did include twenty or so Argylls but they in fact were covered still by the Commandos on key positions around the edge of the airfield and being air lifted back to the Task Force.

Robin Hogg: I'd just like to add one minor point. I mentioned the fact that our Ministry of Defence, the First Sea Lord in particular, was very keen to get the carrier withdrawn for what he considered to be more important operations. It was the fact that Aden really depended on control of the air, which was a tribute to the huge influence of air power in Aden and in the whole Aden withdrawal, that the argument was overruled by CDS. He saw that of all the ships that were down there (and there were a lot of them), the only one that really counted was in fact the ability to produce air support and air defence. Manifestly there was no threat at any time at sea.

Douglas Finch-Beavis: May I ask, in spite of the awful conditions in Aden, were you able to keep a high standard of health for all forces?

Sir Julian Paget: I don't think there were tremendous medical problems from the health point of view. One of the big problems was dehydration because of these very high temperatures and problems of getting water to everybody, and this was throughout the campaign a major problem in that several of the operations were carried out on three quarters of a gallon of water per man per day, whereas the accepted ration was two gallons and that obviously caused difficulties. But in general it was a dry, hot, climate and I think apart from battle casualties there were no major restrictions.

Chairman: I can confirm that as far as the air force side at Khormaksar, Aden, may have been an unpleasant climate but it was really generally a pretty healthy climate. We were free of mosquitoes, mostly free of flies. It was, as Sir Julian has said, extremely hot and we had to take salt to keep our energy up, but we had a fairly strong medical team out there and I think that generally the health and fitness of people was of a very high standard.

Anon: One of the reasons everything worked so well up-country was what was later called the District Officers, who had an incredible degree of local

intelligence. Some people thought it wasn't probably quite so good but I was always very impressed with it. The other thing of course was the Royal Engineers because everywhere you seemed to go you would see the engineers and that Dhala Road to this day is providing an extremely useful thing, and if we left nothing behind we should be proud of the Dhala Road as a tribute to those Royal Engineers and the way they worked up country. A little story about the SAS. I went up country with them and I was very impressed by the chap that took me forward in the patrol – there were only two of them, the rest were FNGs or FRA, all little fellows. This chap had been invited back three times into the SAS and he was forty and of course I thought he was an old man but I was so impressed with the maturity and the confidence that was engendered when you were all by yourself on a dark night, conscious that you were twice as tall as the nearest FNG.

Sir Freddie Sowrey: As I think everybody is well aware, the Royal British Legion have done a pilgrimage to Aden. There are two other sides of Aden which have survived ever since the withdrawal. One is the Aden Reunion, which has a lunch at the Royal Overseas League every year. The other is very much smaller and is called Christchurch Reunion which is the congregation who over the years worshipped at the church at Steamer Point, which is now being restored.

John Price: An amusing story post our withdrawal. The executive of a company I worked for was in Aden a couple of years ago, missed the aeroplane back to London, looked in his British Airways flight directory, there was an aeroplane from San'a, he hailed a cab and went to San'a and caught the aeroplane. I said to him forty years ago the whole might of the British army could not have enabled you to do that journey. But a question: I think there was a Soviet or a Russian transport aircraft probably operated by the Egyptians, which landed on our side of the border. I know that Ted Mellor went out there and flew it because he said it was unserviceable and he couldn't hand it back to the Egyptians. Has someone got the story of how it happened, and what we did with it?

Chairman: I'd heard about it when I was out in Aden but it was before I actually took command, I don't know if there is anybody out here who does remember. John Jennings we always turn to you?

John Jennings: I'd forgotten the actual make of the aircraft, we did intercept it and escort it and we were not given permission to shoot it down, and it did land, but not at Khormaksar. I've been trying to remember where

it actually landed.

Anon: I'm pretty certain it was Mukeiras but I cannot recall the outcome.

John Jennings: One story to follow. In May '64 I was tasked to fly Claire Hollingsworth, the well known war correspondent, over the Radfan and she wrote subsequent articles in the *Guardian*. In one of her articles she wrote about an interview she'd had with a tribesman from the Radfan. This tribesman told her that their reason for attacking the road up through Dhala was the fact that they hated roads because they hated wheeled vehicles. These were depriving the tribesmen of their trade in camels and all sorts of other things associated with travel by four-footed animals. But he went on to say, according to her article, that the tribesmen considered aircraft to be all right, because after all the prophet travelled on a carpet. But that didn't stop them shooting at every aircraft they saw!

SEMINAR CHAIRMAN'S RETROSPECTIVE

Sir Michael Beetham

Well ladies and gentlemen we have had a full day and a comprehensive coverage of a presence in Aden particularly in the later stages, the 1964 to 1967 period, but I was glad we did have a look right back to the days of 8 Squadron and the Brigands. And I think we've been very fortunate today in the excellence of the presentations and also the presence here of so many of you who served out in Aden at one time or another and who, in turn, have made such a valuable contribution to our discussions. We've heard today how we acquired Aden more or less by accident in 1839, how it was administered from India for the first hundred years, and eventually, post-World War II and post-Suez, assumed great importance as a staging post through to the Far East, and as a focal point for influence in a turbulent Middle East and down into Africa.

I first went to Aden in the spring of 1951. I was based down in Kenya on 82 Squadron doing photographic survey and I was sent at short notice with a detachment of three Lancasters up to Habbaniya in Iraq to do a complete survey of the country. Mossaddeq had just taken power in Iran and at home the British government suddenly discovered they'd got no up-to-date mapping at all of Iraq. I staged en route up to Habbaniya at Khormaksar and I stayed overnight in the mess. Well Aden was then a sleepy, neglected, backwater, although 8 Squadron were there flying Brigands and perhaps they might call it a backwater but they certainly did their best so that it wasn't sleepy. What a contrast was Habbaniya, one of the best equipped overseas bases I've ever seen. It had every imaginable facility; polo, tennis, golf, swimming, whatever you mention they'd got it. But how different was Aden in 1964 when I returned to command Khormaksar. By that time we'd pulled out of Iraq, Habbaniya had gone back to the desert and now Khormaksar was the biggest and busiest airfield in the Royal Air Force. Over a hundred different aircraft of eleven different types permanently based there and a busy staging post for Transport Command, and locally the war still going on in the Radfan and the developing internal security situation that we've heard about today. With such a rapid build up post-Suez, the facilities, accommodation, etc were bound to be under strain and it showed. But everyone buckled down and got on with it; they had to, and they did. Obviously there were complaints when you have accommodation so crowded and facilities really not up to the normal standards we had by that time come to expect in the RAF, but

morale in fact was, I thought, very high. Perhaps this is really typical of the British; when under pressure as a nation; it brings the best out of us.

Of course we heard today some of the problems about spares and a slow sort of Whitehall reaction, and it is important perhaps to put all this in a wider context. If you remember at the time we had enough going on in Aden but don't forget at the same time Far East confrontation was going on, 1963 to '66, and so Britain had got herself involved in two overseas operations at the same time. This is something that governments through time have tried to avoid, and don't forget too that priority at home in the Services was given to the strategic nuclear deterrent. That was where the major strategic threat was coming from, and that meant from the Royal Air Force point of view, the RAF bomber force. In fact when I went to Aden, I had been for several years in the bomber force, where when we wanted something we generally got it and it was quite a shock to see the difference, when I got out to Aden. So perhaps it's no wonder that we were not getting the priorities that we out in Aden felt that we really deserved.

Well what did Aden teach us? Of course Admiral Hogg in his presentation this afternoon has covered the lessons the Navy learnt, significant lessons, from the withdrawal. Freddie Sowrey too, covered some of the lessons, but I think what came out clearly was, once again, the crucial importance of air power in any military operation and particularly one in a theatre like Aden. And the importance being brought out to have jointery, all three Services were heavily engaged and they all worked together splendidly. That was certainly helped from the setting up of the first unified command in the Middle East at Steamer Point, and Air Marshal Sowrey commented on this and of course so did Admiral Hogg and this had all come from the lessons that had been learnt through World War II out in the desert, 8th Army, etc that were carried on through Europe. It's difficult now we haven't got any overseas bases to keep that same degree of co-location. We try with various joint headquarters that are set up today whenever the Services do work together on an operation and they do work together closely. There's really no substitute for doing it on a day to day basis such as one was doing in a place like Aden. Actually, I thought it was interesting what Admiral Hogg said about his comparison between the Whitehall battle and how things were going out in Aden, and I think probably all our experiences mirror that. The Services since World War II, when they've had an operation to do, whether involving two or all three, always worked absolutely splendidly together, but when you are in Whitehall and there's a defence budget that has not got enough money for

all the things that we all know need to be done, you'll all have inevitably to be fighting over a pot of jam when there isn't enough jam in the pot. That's just one of the facts of life I'm afraid.

Now, when you command in the Royal Air Force, when you command a station, I think it's surely the most challenging and rewarding of jobs. I certainly found it so, and you learn an awful lot of things, perhaps primarily I think you learn the importance of people because you can bash away on the staff if you like, but it's down on the station where the fighting has to be done. But I think what was brought home to me; additionally was the importance of that old principle of war: security of the base. It's something of course any Station Commander is aware of wherever he is but it was brought home absolutely to the forefront of one's mind as a Station Commander in Aden. Khormaksar as we've heard, and you all know, was under threat from terrorist attack, grenades, mortars, throughout my few years in command and right through to final withdrawal the following year, when in that last year it got even worse. Khormaksar was the key to every operation out there, indeed to our very survival in Aden and my most important task when I was there was to see the place was not blown up and it taught me the importance of the RAF Regiment in ground defence. They did a most marvellous job, as did the army units who were brought in to supplement them when there weren't just enough RAF Regiment to keep them rotating through and keep the place protected. Incidentally, when I reached a higher rank and got into Whitehall I was so keen myself to see them slightly expanded which I'm glad to see we had done by building up the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment squadrons, so that we got the people available that can be called up and make resources available in times of crisis.

Aden was a tough posting; the climate, you've heard about; the overcrowding; the lack of resources; but it really was also a marvellous operational training ground. For a period Aden played a key role in the history of the British Empire and it formed, I believe, a very interesting chapter in RAF history.

The planning and execution of the withdrawal was a model. I wasn't involved at that time, it's been described to you today, but it really was a model. Many of you here were involved and I think you do deserve the greatest credit. I don't know whether it's that we've got so much experience that we do withdrawals so well, but I think in fact it's probably the standard of our people and the standard of staff and the staff work and the training that we've always insisted upon and built up in all our three

Services.

We thank you, all of you, for taking part today, particularly our speakers of course who've had to do preparation. Thank you also to the Museum for the facilities. We're very grateful to you Edgar for the recordings. And finally I don't think we should leave without giving a special word of thanks to Freddie Sowrey; he put the whole thing together, got all the speakers, planned the programme, not only gave us his own presentation but gave another one and then answered questions as well, so thanks to you all.

The Audience

Thank you Sir Michael for guiding it so admirably; you're a wonderful Chairman.

THE LAST YEAR IN ADEN – THE ROYAL NAVY

Vice-Admiral Sir John Martin

I was appointed Flag Officer Middle East in September 1966 and took over from Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Howes at the end of the month. CinC Middle East's station, as far as the Navy was concerned, was a huge one; stretching from the African Coast to Malaya and south to Mauritius but his Naval Force was a minute one and consisted of two frigates and three minesweepers permanently stationed in the Gulf, with the naval HQ at Bahrain, under a Commodore in Command. One CMS was stationed at Aden and was available for anti-gun running operations. There were three frigates on the Beira patrol and a fourth at Mombassa on R and R. These frigates were under operational and administrative control but were replaced as required by the MOD and were not to be used for other purposes.

On arrival I found that the RAF and Army were heavily involved in anti-terrorist activity, although the position in the Radfan had been stabilised. Terrorist activity in Aden itself was still causing trouble but seemed to me to be well contained. Civilians and military personnel were targets but, if the security rules were followed as promulgated, the terrorists were unwilling to take chances. Nevertheless, the place was a powder keg but I got the impression that the lid was firmly held in place as far as the military were concerned.

The political position was not easy. The effort to bring all the tribes in the Protectorate under a federal system in the new capital at Manama whilst at first successful, was already running into difficulties; sniped at by Nasser who was assisting the Yemenis, undermined by inter-tribal jealousy and a lack of finance, and experiencing considerable problems in organising a Federal armed force.

It was apparent to me that, apart from making certain that gun-running did not occur and intelligence confirmed this, the Navy at this stage could not assist much except to make certain that our own personnel obeyed the security rules, so I concentrated on getting to know this vast area, and spent the first 4-5 months visiting the Gulf area, the ships on the Beira Patrol, the Oman and the Straits of Hormuz, and making contact with the Far East Station planners at Singapore. In doing this I was immensely helped by Air Marshal Sir Andrew Humphrey who could not have been more co-operative with aircraft when required. He was a good friend to me and the Royal Navy in Aden and the Gulf. I would say that co-operation between

all three Services at Aden was exceedingly good.

By early 1967 it was clear that the Government in the UK were getting considerably concerned with the British economy, with the security position in Aden, and with the political position in the Federal Government and eventually a decision was taken to leave Aden.

Admiral Le Fanu was told to set up a base in the Gulf to support the rulers there who were facing propaganda and threats from both Nasser and the Iranians. He decided that the RAF and the Army were too heavily involved in anti-terrorist activity, and would be until the evacuation of Aden, and therefore that his remaining Flag Officer who was not so concerned with anti-terrorist work should be put in charge of setting up the new base in the Gulf and subsequently become the first Commander British Forces Gulf.

Meanwhile a Carrier Task Force had come through the station on the way to the Far East and the opportunity was taken to anchor this force in Aden Bay to illustrate to the terrorists that we had considerable force if we required it. This culminated with a fly past of the entire carrier flying strength followed by the somewhat faster RAF fighters. Word got back to me from Crater and Aden itself that these aircraft were RAF being chased by Russian aircraft! Despite this I am convinced that this was a worthwhile operation and illustrated that our co-operation was excellent.

A combined staff was set up in Aden with two prongs. One came from London and comprised civil servants and construction engineers and the other was inter-Service lead by a major from the Sappers. A PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) management system was quickly set up and this, coupled with a most efficient management team from London who handled all the contract side in the Gulf, led to the quick perception of bottle necks and their resolution. Contracts in the Gulf, amounting to about £12 million, were let to Arab contractors in the Gulf to extend the RAF airfield at Sharjah in order to operate more aircraft, to build an air-conditioned barracks at battalion strength near RAF Sharjah and to move the Trucial Oman Scouts into new quarters near the village of Sharjah. A new barracks was also built in Bahrain to house a further battalion together with a joint HQ for the Gulf Command.

The amount of air conditioning at Sharjah would grossly overload the electrical supply and it was realised that a new power station would be required. It was soon clear that building a new power station in the time available was impracticable, and a decision was made to dismantle the power station at Little Aden and ship it to the Gulf. This was done with the

help of a contract with a Russian merchant ship!

Our very popular Governor was called back to England for talks with the Government, and very shortly afterwards it was announced that he was clearly exhausted and would not be coming back to Aden. This was a complete surprise to us although it was apparent that, before he left for England, Sir Richard Turnbull was beset with problems and was very tired. A short while later Lord Shackleton arrived to hold the fort temporarily and we then learned that Sir Humphrey Trevelyan would come out to arrange the political side of the turnover of Aden to the Federal Government. Each of the three senior officers in turn had an interview with Lord Shackleton at which he explained the Government's policy and asked us to give our loyalty and help to the new Governor. I am afraid this grated with me somewhat and I believe with the others as well . . . I felt that we had done our best so far and there was no need to think that we would do otherwise, no matter who was Governor. In the event we found that Sir Humphrey Trevelyan was most decisive and helpful and we gave him whole-hearted support.

I finally flew up to Bahrain in early August and set up the Gulf Command. I maintained close liaison with CinC and with Andrew Humphrey who was to organise and carry out the evacuation, and gave what support that I could. This was mainly the use of what facilities we had at Sharjah and Muharraq airfields which remained under AOC ME Command until the final evacuation from Aden. Andrew set up a small advanced HQ in Bahrain for the air evacuation using the Gulf HQ and communications.

The final period of the evacuation was supported by a force of two aircraft carriers and a helicopter carrier with 45 Commando embarked, all under command of Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Ashmore. The Naval base at Sheba was closed, but a small Naval staff and communications unit under Captain D E P George remained at the Round House and Naval HQ until about two days before the final evacuation, which took place by air from Khormaksar.

NB This paper was presented after the seminar.

AIRMAN'S CROSS – POSTSCRIPT

by Air Vice-Marshal Barry Newton

An open air ceremony was held on Salisbury Plain on 5th July 1996 to celebrate the restoration of Airman's Cross and to re-dedicate the monument to the memory of Captain Eustace Loraine, Grenadier Guards, and Staff Sergeant Richard Wilson, Royal Engineers, who were killed when their Nieuport monoplane crashed nearby on 5th July 1912. They were the first members of the Royal Flying Corps to lose their lives while flying on duty.

The Cross was erected by the officers and men of the Royal Flying Corps and unveiled and dedicated at a ceremony held on 5th July 1913. Unfortunately no trust fund was established and, unloved and unlisted, one of the earliest monuments to military aviators in Britain fell into a state of total neglect.

In December 1993 I happened to visit the Cross, which I have known since boyhood, and found it so badly encrusted with lichen that it was not possible to make out who or what it commemorated. No one had any idea who owned it or felt in any way responsible for it. Over the next two years I campaigned various bodies and organisations with a view to restoring the Cross and equally, if not more importantly, caring for it in the future. In 1995 my efforts bore fruit in that the Cross was scheduled as a Grade II listed building and, in December of that year, the Wiltshire County Council gave permission for it to be removed for restoration by 'military means'. In February 1996, Royal Engineers of Central Volunteer Headquarters RE moved the monument to their workshops at Camberley, where it was carefully cleaned and the lettering of the inscription renewed, and then in June, returned it to its site in splendidly restored condition.

The re-dedication in July 1996 was conducted by the Venerable P R Turner, Chaplain-in-Chief Royal Air Force, and followed on similar lines to the original service in 1913. Among the 80 invited guests were Lieutenant General Sir Maurice Johnston, the Lord Lieutenant for Wiltshire, Viscount Ridley, Viscount Trenchard (whose grandfather attended the original service), Lord de Saumarez, a distant relation of Captain Loraine, and senior representatives of the Royal Engineers, the Grenadier Guards and the Royal Air Force (who each contributed to the costs of the restoration and of the ceremony). Mrs Joy Brocklington, a niece of Staff Sergeant Wilson, unveiled a plaque donated by the Friends of the Museum of Army Flying, Middle Wallop, who have taken on

responsibility for the future care of the Cross.

Last Post and Reveille were sounded by Trumpeters of the Royal Engineers, the Grenadier Guards and the Royal Air Force, and a Harrier T10 of No 3(F) Squadron flew past in salute.

During his address, the Chaplain-in-Chief said that Airman's Cross commemorated two gallant and brave young airmen, both of whom possessed outstanding ability as well as courage. He went on to say that Richard 'Bert' Wilson's qualities as a leader and his skill with aero-engines were recognised by his promotion to Staff Sergeant and appointment as Senior Technical NCO on No 3 Squadron at the early age of 29 years. In June 1912, taught by Captain Loraine, he qualified as a pilot; the second non-commissioned officer in the British Army to do so.

Eustace Loraine was commissioned into the Grenadier Guards in 1899 and served with distinction throughout the South African War. On promotion to Captain a few years later he was posted to the West African Frontier Force, where he quickly earned the respect, and as time went on, also the friendship of Hugh Trenchard his commanding officer. Loraine was among the first Army officers to learn to fly and, with his lively personality and strong character, he became one of the best known military aviators of his time. He has a special place in the annals of this century as the man whose courage and enthusiasm for flying inspired Hugh Trenchard, at the age of 39 and with only one lung, to turn airman; an event which changed Trenchard's career and, in turn, the course of military history.

Editorial Note: The original article entitled Airman's Cross was published in Journal 16.



Dedication of Airman's Cross, 5 July 1913

Museum of Army Flying



Rededication of Airman's Cross, 5 July 1996

SAC J Kelley, RAF Odiham

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR DENIS SMALLWOOD

Air Chief Marshal Sir Thomas Prickett

We are here today to pay tribute and especially to give thanks for the very full and colourful life of Denis Graham Smallwood, otherwise known as ‘Splinters’ throughout the Royal Air Force and to his many friends.

He was one of the most successful and endearing characters of our Service. His humour, charm and zest for life gave him the ability to light almost any situation – be it just entering a room, addressing a meeting or giving a briefing or during a crisis and, not least, at a party.

His distinguished career in the Royal Air Force is well documented in his obituaries in the *Telegraph* and the *Times* and his decorations and double knighthood speak for themselves and I will only mention some of the highlights.

He and I first met when we were both learning to be flying instructors at the Central Flying School at Upavon. One night when I finished upside down on the flare path in a crumpled Hawker Hart, ‘Splinters’, who was the Duty Pilot, was first on the scene. He was shaking with mirth at my foolishness while he pulled me out of the wreckage. We became close friends from that night and have worked and played together over a period of almost sixty years. A privilege and lots of fun.

He was an outstanding fighter pilot and was engaged almost throughout the war on fighter operations and commanded Nos 87 and 206 (*sic* **CGJ**) squadrons and later a Spitfire Wing. He took part in the unfortunate raid on Dieppe and throughout the Normandy battles. He was a much loved and respected Squadron Commander. There are many stories remembered by some of his pilots, most of which are not repeatable here. There is one which I think can be told. Towards the end of a party in the mess ‘Splinters’ was missing. Worried where their boss was they went to his room to see if he was OK. They found his two Corgis fast asleep on his bed and he was curled up fast asleep in their dog basket.

In 1956 he was involved in the Suez affair which he later described as a ‘monumental political cock-up’. He was always forthright and outspoken and was on another occasion reprimanded by a well known politician who told him to keep his mouth shut on sensitive matters. Needless to say this had the opposite effect and did not stop him speaking out on any matters affecting the well-being of the Royal Air Force. He had a spell in Bomber Command to let him see that there was another Command other than Fighter Command.

He had a series of high ranking posts including CinC Near East, Vice-Chief of the Air Staff and finally CinC Strike Command and CINUKAIR in NATO. He was an ADC to the Queen.

After his retirement from the Air Force he joined British Aerospace where he spent five years as their Military Adviser where, as usual, he left his mark.

He continued to exert an authority on aviation in general through his forceful Chairmanship of the Air League and later as their President. Perhaps his most lasting achievement was the League's Educational Trust by which young men and women are given the opportunity to learn to fly. Today about fifty such awards are made each year.

Another of his activities, which is not so widely known, was his patronage and close interest in a charity known as PACE which was started in 1990 and provides intensive daily programmes for young children with motor disorders such as Cerebral Palsy. He was also Patron of the Philip Green Memorial Trust which raises money to support charities like PACE and were largely responsible for building the new Pace centre in Aylesbury. It is gratifying that he lived to see Lord Carrington open the new Pace centre in May this year. In a letter I received from PACE they said and I quote 'It is fair to say that without Sir Denis, PACE might never have become the internationally recognised establishment that it is.' Another example of his interest in the well-being of the young.

He willingly took on the office of President of the Friends of St Clement Danes and worked hard to persuade a lot of friends to become Friends of this church. He would have been pleased to have seen so many of them here today.

He and Jeanne were devoted to one another and in his retirement they were able to enjoy together their love of horses and would attend any activity in the horse world, be it racing, three day events, dressage and pony club events.

When Jeanne died after 52 years of life together he was shattered and went very much into his shell. He was persuaded to come to South Africa where he quickly made friends in a new environment which helped him to face life without Jeanne. This then became a yearly pilgrimage. It would have made him happy that some of his friends from Hermanus are here today.

When he moved from the Flint House, which he loved, to Phyllis Court he looked for another interest to occupy himself. It was his old friend Raymond Baxter who was responsible for him buying a boat on the

Thames. He knew nothing about boats or the river or how to operate them. His enthusiasm took over, and instead of starting off with a small motor launch he invested in a 35ft motor cruiser with six berths and needing a crew of two to negotiate the numerous locks. After some expert dual instruction from Raymond he was eventually allowed to go solo. He soon became dedicated to the river and his new acquisition. He spent many happy hours entertaining his friends from all parts of the world on his boat. He had four of his friends from South Africa on board with him the day before he died so suddenly. His approach to the locks sometimes caused surprise and anxiety to some of his guests. It was more like a fighter pilot's approach to land. There were some minor incidents, nothing serious. However with his usual humour and good nature he soon became a popular figure on the river and a friend of all the lock-keepers up and down stream from Henley.

We extend our sympathy and condolence to Anna and Christopher and to his granddaughters of whom he was so proud.

He loved people and to be with them. But he didn't much like his own company. As he had so many friends he didn't have to suffer it very often.

He gave so much time in his life to the service of his country, to charity and to his many friends, particularly those less fortunate than himself. He was fun to be with and the sort of Peter Pan of life who we all thought was indestructible. His sudden departure was a shock to all of us. That is the way I am sure he wanted. Living in the fast lane to the end.

He will leave a vacuum behind but be remembered with affection by those who served with him and all those who knew him.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Air VCs – VCs of the First World War by Peter G Cooksley. Sutton Publishing Ltd 1996. Price £19.99.

Accounts resulting in the supreme gallantry award will continue to fascinate and those dealing with the first nineteen flying VCs occupy a special place, albeit there have been some other books written in years gone by.

The author, a former Vice-President of Cross and Cockade International (The Society of Great War Aviation Historians), commands an experienced pen, and in an informative and well balanced book he has been careful not to over eulogise without leaving the reader in any doubt about the level of valour involved. There is, however, a disappointing number of proof-reading errors for a book of this quality.

RW

Free To Fight Again – RAF Escapes and Evasions 1940-1945 by Alan W Cooper. Airline Publishing Ltd 1997. Price £12.95.

Originally published in 1988 by William Kimber, this edition by Airline is very welcome in bringing these remarkable accounts to the fore again. An extensive introduction contains much of interest concerning the work of MI9 in developing and supporting the escape lines abroad. This is followed by the stories of seventy airmen who successfully completed a 'home run', three of whom, quite incredibly, managed it twice having come to grief again on later operations.

Inevitably, many of the accounts relate to North West Europe, but there is a good selection from other theatres including the Far East. The epilogue details the formation and subsequent good work of the Royal Air Force Escaping Society which still continues.

Individually and collectively full tribute is paid to the many brave 'helpers' in the occupied countries who risked their lives, and at times lost them, in giving shelter and assistance. Most evasions and escapes were crucially dependent on such support.

An interesting book at an attractive price.

RW

Through Adversity – The History of the Royal Air Force Regiment by Kingsley M Oliver. Forces & Corporate Publishing 1997. Available only from RAF Regiment Shop, RAF Honington, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 1EE. Price £15.99 plus £4 p&p.

The RAF Historical Society needs no reminding of the need to neutralise the opposition's air power by counter-air action, whatever its form. The Royal Air Force was, however, first to recognise the value of a counter-counter-air capability under RAF command. Forged of necessity in war, the inspirational stroke that gave an apparently unglamorous, thankless role an extraordinary sense of purpose and consequent success was the decision to create a special force for the task, with a title designed, in the words of the original memorandum, '....to inculcate a fighting spirit....'. The force was, of course, the Royal Air Force Regiment.

Against such a background, *Through Adversity* is not simply another, albeit excellent (light blue) regimental history. It addresses the history of counter-counter-air measures as an integral component of air power, controlled by the parent Air Force, so adding a fresh dimension to Royal Air Force history.

Through painstaking research, characterising the whole book, the author has elicited a fascinating raft of evidence on the evolution of post-1918 air power, leading to the emergence of RAF Armoured Car Companies. Initially conceived as an economy measure to supplant formations of troops, the Armoured Car Companies gave the RAF early experience of ground operations. So, when Rashid Ali, even if he did not realise it, was operating counter-air in his assaults on Habbaniya in 1940, No 1 Armoured Car Company, an integral part of the RAF, was thrown onto the defensive as a counter-counter-air unit. Likewise, RAF armoured car operations in the Western Desert were conducted as part of the Desert Air Force, with clear priorities. How different from the agonising dilemmas faced by commanders in every other theatre, where Army forces assigned to airfield defence were repeatedly withdrawn to stave off a collapse of the front, at the expense of denuding the enemy's counter-air target – the RAF.

Through Adversity (from the Regiment's Motto 'Per Ardua') reveals wrangles, inertia and myopia surrounding the evolution of RAF ground-based self-defence over the years. Meticulous footnotes to each chapter document appalling naivety, complacency and inter-Service politics even at times of National crisis, although happily countervailing pressures usually prevailed. Nevertheless, today's staff officer will repeatedly recognise lessons forgotten and battles re-fought half a century later. The wheel has never more often been re-invented. This is a useful contemporary staff officer's handbook!

As if the policy birthpangs were not enough, the RAF itself was not geared to managing ground-fighting units in the 1940s. Individuals in the

field were probably quite unaware of the Whitehall battles, but they were affected drastically by the RAF system of individual postings, assuming the tradesman's ability to take his skills from place to place, fitting into the unit on arrival. The RAF Regiment Gunner is part of an integrated fighting team, collectively trained for life-and-death combat at the foot patrol or gun-pit level, wherein each has to know, understand and anticipate his colleagues' reactions to anything. The RAF system was quite unequal to this, with a result that thousands of men were constantly beset with arbitrary soul-destroying changes in their own and their units' dispositions. Squadrons would be disbanded or assembled and individuals deployed untrained to make up numbers. In one appalling episode, with total disregard for their self-respect and no attempt to preserve their integrity as fighting units, thousands of seasoned, often decorated, RAF Regiment troops were transferred piecemeal to the Army and treated there as though raw recruits. Only the leadership of their officers and NCOs can have averted mutiny.

Perhaps most significantly, the book sheds light on the RAF's wider evolution in the alien ground combat environment. The RAF invented its Regiment as a short-term answer to a particular emergency. In retaining it, not only has a formidable counter-counter-air force developed in its own right, but the RAF has become a world leader in contemporary 'survival to operate', due largely to the RAF Regiment's ability to bring relevant RAF expertise to bear in policy, planning and training across the threat spectrum. In the process, as the author makes clear, the Army gains from a secure RAF.

Kingsley Oliver has filled a niche in Royal Air Force history that has remained empty for too long. How much more could be told had this book not been confined only to material already in the public domain! *Through Adversity* is very readable, a well-illustrated, well-indexed, serious history book leavened by widely-drawn personal experiences and anecdotes. Almost every chapter could seed more chapters, whether on the personal level, on the RAF's evolution, on the individual engagements recounted or on the RAF Regiment's Associated Overseas Forces.

Read this book as a regimental history, but read it first and foremost as a hitherto missing volume in the history of Air Power.

MSW

The Starkey Sacrifice by Michael Cumming. Sutton Publishing 1996. Price £18.99.

On the night of 8 September 1943, 200 aircraft of Bomber Command attacked the German heavy gun batteries on either side of the small French town of Le Portel, near Boulogne, but the bombing was inaccurate and in consequence some 500 civilians were killed and the town largely destroyed. Like other wartime attacks on French towns, this has since occasioned much local controversy and Michael Cumming's detailed studies have led him to conclude that the town's sacrifice was not only tragic but unnecessary. He explains that the bombing was planned as part of a much wider deception operation code-named STARKEY, intended to cause confusion to the Germans in the run-up to D-Day and to draw the *Luftwaffe* into intensive combat. Harris, at this stage trying to concentrate all his resources on the bombing of Germany, strongly opposed the diversion of his bomber force and also doubted that these targets were suitable, but his objections were overridden, the attack took place, the OBOE marking went wrong and the bombs went astray.

Cumming is to be congratulated on the depth of his research, his referencing and the amount of information he has assembled but the structure of his narrative does not make it easy to follow or understand. There are long excursions into Le Portel's earlier history and its rebuilding which completely break the flow of the main story, and the tedious description of how the raid was actually mounted contributes little to the central theme. The author also becomes repetitive and overemotional, and his conclusion that the people of Le Portel were sacrificed to subterfuge in a tragic yet ironically ineffectual milestone down the long road to victory does not quite fit in with what he approvingly quotes Professor R V Jones as writing to the Mayor in 1983: 'The Allied Air Forces learned from the mistake and were thus led to improve their techniques to the stage where they contributed so effectively to the D-Day landings. In a sense we should remember the citizens of Le Portel as amongst those whose sacrifice helped ensure the success of the invasion when it came'.

This is an important story but not as well told as it could have been.

HAP

Bader's Duxford Fighters – The Big Wing Controversy by Dilip Sarkar. Ramrod Publications. Price £19.95 UK only.

I freely admit I approached *Bader's Duxford Fighters* expecting that it would be another in a line of uncritical accounts of the exploits and achievements of the Duxford Wing and its leader in 1940. My fears seemed about to be confirmed by the book's dedication to 'the inspirational

memory of Group Captain Sir Douglas Bader'. And so it was with some resignation that I settled down to read my way through it, simply to fulfil a promise to review it. Within a matter of only a few pages, I realised how wrong I had been to doubt that this might be a book to look dispassionately at a brief period in Royal Air Force history that created and destroyed reputations and has since been reported in a highly partisan way.

Dilip Sarkar has approached his subject with a forensic skill that owes much to his professional background. He has assembled much original information which sheds new light on what became a bitter *cause célèbre*, like the Duxford Wing itself, on the fringes of the Battle of Britain. His unconcealed admiration for the courage, gallantry and leadership of Douglas Bader does not blind him to the reality of the part played by a relatively inexperienced RAF officer whose often dogmatic opinions influenced superiors and subordinates alike.

Bader may be seen through the pages of this excellent book to have played a significant and probably unwitting part in the unseating of both his Commander-in-Chief, Dowding, and Park, AOC 11 Group. To an extent, he may be seen as having been used by those who sought that outcome, for Bader's passionate advocacy of his Big Wing theories was heard in high places. After the event, both he and Woodhall, the Duxford Sector Commander were shielded by those whose cause they had aided.

Dilip Sarkar gives a highly convincing account of both the 'inspirational' nature of Douglas Bader's leadership and of his ability to persuade others – in a very black and white way – of the correctness of his tactical doctrine.

This book also sheds penetrating light into folklore reputation of the Duxford Wing and its leader's tactics which, on occasion, bordered on indiscipline. The apparent over-claiming by squadrons of the wing makes for interesting reading. Most of all, Dilip Sarkar's painstaking research has turned up clear evidence of Park's tactical acumen and of his willingness to employ squadrons, pairs of squadrons, or wing formations, as the tactical situation allowed. Sadly, no similar evidence appears to have been unearthed to spell out the tactical credentials of Leigh-Mallory, nor any accounts of his discussions with Bader himself. What seems clear is that Leigh-Mallory resented his role 'in the wings' and was, apparently, willing to risk the defence of the Midlands for a piece of the action in the South East.

Bader's Duxford Fighters is a splendidly objective book. Its conclusions are all the more fair-minded and worthy, given the high esteem in which its

author holds Douglas Bader. Such sentiments will strike a chord with many who will see him as having been magnificently over-confident and ‘inspirational’. At the same time, his inexperience and political naivety probably allowed him to be used by those in high places, in the Air Ministry and in the field, who had set their sights on targets closer to home.

AFCH

The Turrets of War by Douglas Eades. Janus. Price £15.99.

As long as there are manned aircraft, most of the many aircrew categories that have fallen into disuse could be reinstated, but there is one category that it is impossible to envisage ever arising from the ashes, the Air Gunner.

From the front seat of a Henry Farman pre-First World War, through the back seat of a ‘Brisfit’ or Hawker Demon to the front, mid-upper and tail turrets of a Lancaster, the Air Gunner has been with us quite a long time; sometimes in the guises of an observer or combined with other duties such as a WOp/AG, so it is fitting that a number of excellent records of their work have been set down.

This is not quite the ‘Unusual’ story of flying operations that the dust jacket blurb proclaims except that perhaps everyone’s story is unusual, but nevertheless it is a very readable account of one man’s war.

Volunteering in 1939, Douglas Eades started his RAF career in the Balloon Section re-mustering to an Air Gunner sometime late 1942. A tour of 24 sorties in Lancasters of 12 Squadron between March and June, 1943 was followed by the usual ‘rest’ period spent instructing. A conversion course to the Halifax – and, yes gunners did require a conversion course; the armament of the ‘Halibag’ was very different – and an interesting trip to India was the run up to a second tour, but this was a bit of a non-starter with the war suddenly being over.

A book that I very much enjoyed.

AEFR

Tail Gunner by Sqn Ldr R C Rivaz DFC. Alan Sutton Publishing. Price £14.99.

Officers’ mess RAF Hawkinge, end of 1944. Dick Rivaz having by this time qualified as a pilot, was chatting over a pint and was being gently chided about only being a ‘driver’, when he suddenly turned back the lapel on his jacket to reveal an Air Gunner’s brevet sewn underneath. He was inordinately proud of this badge.

Unfortunately he was killed in a flying accident towards the end of 1945, but left this unusual and interesting autobiography first published in 1943. A bit disjointed here and there, but twice rescued from the sea -the accounts of these exploits alone make the book worthwhile.

What I suspect is an editor's slip on page 34 which refers to a 'loading toddle', I am sure this should be 'cocking toggle': I was also quite amazed to read on page 36 of 'cans of beer' being drunk in the mess, as I cannot remember ever coming across canned beer during the war, not even in the desert; but fifty plus years is a long time ago and memories are notably unreliable after such a time.

Another strange thing to my ears were the number of 'Sirs' and references to crew positions when calling up on the intercom, but I put this down to the number of different crews Dick Rivaz flew with despite a number of trips with Leonard Cheshire, his preferred captain, a compliment that was reciprocated.

Nowhere in the book does Rivaz take a wind drift, quite an important part of a tail gunner's job early on, so no wonder on page 51 they are hopelessly lost to the extent of going in to land on a Dutch island thinking it was England. My final criticism which I am sure experienced air gunners will note, is the great amount of time Rivaz spends looking down and commenting in great detail on what he saw rather than scanning the skies.

Enough of this nit-picking; it was a book that I thoroughly enjoyed and there were some passages that took me back a long way; the exaggerated swing on take-off which only the chap in the tail feels to any great extent and at the same time the rattle of the 'ammo' in the racks, and a whole lot of other small things that bring it all to a life that was.

AEFR

Living With Japanese by Terence Kelly. Kellan Press 1997. Price £15.95.

Among the many books I referred to when researching *The Forgotten Air Force* were two by Terence Kelly who wrote some years ago about his experiences of flying Hurricanes over Sumatra and Java in early 1942. Had his new book been available I should certainly have wished to refer to that also, for it vividly records what happened to him after falling into Japanese hands.

Living With Japanese is a compelling read. It begins by recording his seven months in a Javanese gaol – the disease-ridden conditions, the punishment beatings, the frequent deaths. Then he and 1,200 other prisoners spent a month aboard the ancient, rusting steamer *Dal Nichi Maru*

sailing from Singapore to Japan in conditions of such horror as to beggar description; only 800 of them survived. Of these about a hundred RAF personnel, mainly from 605 Squadron, found themselves at Innoshima, not far from Hiroshima, where they spent the rest of their war working as dockyard coolies alongside ordinary Japanese of widely different backgrounds and sharing with them the experiences and emotions of the dreadful years in which Japan moved from victory to defeat. Much of the book is therefore devoted to perceptive reflections on a far wider cross-section of the Japanese population than those witnessed by most prisoners of war, and is an invaluable contribution to the knowledge of an alien culture that the Western Allies found so hard to understand. Some aspects of the Japanese culture are still impressed on his memory: 'an insensitivity to suffering in others, fascination with barbarity, blind obedience to orders given by those of higher standing and an apparent inability, sometimes amounting to crass stupidity, to see things other than from their own blinkered standpoint.'

The other side of the coin was, of course, the behaviour of the prisoners themselves, cooped up for three years in seemingly hopeless conditions. On arrival 'their spirit was at its nadir with life reduced to a state of sheer existence. With recurring stomach cramps and diarrhoea a constant reminder that death was lurking in the wings, with bodies numbed by cold, with freedom lost and choice removed, in thrall to a strange, incomprehensible race and the only seeming variety offered for endless years ahead, hours of toiling in a drab, grey dockyard through which swept a bitter Siberian wind, hope had all but been abandoned.' Yet survive they did, and not least thanks to the inspiration of a hundred or so British civilians from Hong Kong who had been taken prisoner while serving as military volunteers and also found themselves at Innoshima. Ultimately, however, it was the atom bomb that saved them. Kelly has no doubts: 'had it been necessary to invade Japan the carnage on both sides would have been astronomical – and amongst the first to die would have been the prisoners.'

I strongly recommend this unusual and fascinating book not just to those with an interest in the Far East but also to those who wish to learn more about how ordinary Servicemen cope when they fall into enemy hands.

HAP

Man Is Not Lost – The Log of a Pioneer RAF Pilot/Navigator, 1933-1946 by Gp Capt 'Dickie' Richardson. Airlife Publishing Ltd 1997. Price

£22.95.

In the first half of this book ‘Dickie’ paints an absorbing picture of the life of the young RAF pilot overseas in the 1930s. Following his training in Egypt he was posted to the prestigious 216 (Bomber/Transport) Squadron based at Heliopolis. It is made obvious that, whilst they were trained to become very professional pilots, the development of navigational skills was not thought to be particularly relevant. Nevertheless, 216 was probably more navigation-minded than most RAF squadrons of the time since the CO was Philip Mackworth, who had graduated in December 1921 from only the second Long N Course at Calshot. Whilst being regarded as a ‘bit of an old woman’ by some, he was clearly an influence on Dickie’s subsequent career.

Some of the early pioneering flights in Africa, including the first ‘West African Cruise’ to Takoradi and back (where man was very nearly lost!), are described in fascinating detail. But the carefree off duty life is certainly not neglected, and will bring back memories for some. Mention of the joys of Heliopolis and Gezira Sporting Clubs, as well as the delights of Groppi’s and the St James’ Restaurant, tends to show that some things do not change.

‘Dickie’ opted for navigation specialisation and attended the School of Air Navigation at Manston, where he graduated from the Spec N Course in mid-1938. In 1940 he accepted the task of rewriting the Manual of Air Navigation (AP 1234) which he carried out brilliantly. ‘Dickie’ is very dismissive of the loose-leaf form of Service Manual (‘tied together by bootlaces’), and his resulting book was a splendid production, but the necessity for frequent amendments required the RAF to revert to the loose-leaf form. My own grumble about AP 1234 was that the Middle East appeared to miss out in its distribution, and I did not see a copy until the end of 1944. During training, Bennett’s *Complete Air Navigator* had been our bible.

The book goes on to describe ‘Dickie’s subsequent wartime career: CO of 502 Squadron, Chief Navigation Officer at Coastal Command HQ and, finally, Deputy Commandant and Director of Studies at the new Empire Air Navigation School at Shawbury, in the last mentioned post serving under his old CO Philip Mackworth. It is said that ‘Dickie’ is chiefly remembered for his revision of AP 1234 but, in my opinion, some of the innovative work that he carried out at Coastal Command was of outstanding value, particularly the introduction of navigational drills, which were copied by

both Bomber and Transport Commands.

These were instrumental in setting operating standards (for the first time) and did a great deal to enforce good navigation practice. 'Dickie' always said that he had a splendid band of young staff officers at Coastal, but his leadership must have been critical.

'Dickie' Richardson achieved the rank of group captain less than ten years after joining the RAF; he retired fifteen years later in the same rank. As the title implies, his book tells us little of the post-war period, but it must have been somewhat anti-climactic. His great services to air navigation in the RAF were achieved, in the main, during that brief wartime span. He also set us a splendid example of recording and making available a great deal of information on navigation topics for posterity, so valuable for researchers. His autobiography adds to our debt to him in that respect, and it is also a jolly good read. There are one or two minor factual errors, but 'Dickie's memory for people and names is remarkable.

Perhaps the last words of this review should be left to his old friend Francis Chichester, who wrote of him, 'Dickie was one of those sterling, stalwart citizens who make a country great if there are enough of them.'

PHS

The Red Eagles – A History of 23 Squadron 1915-1994. Author and Publisher: Peter Rudd, Stone Cottage, Pound Bank, Buckeridge, Rock, Worcs. DY14 9DG. Price £13.50 (post free to Society members).

The history of a squadron is always welcome; none more so than 23 Squadron, one of the early formations, who not only fought with great distinction in both world wars but, in modern times, was involved in Operation GRANBY in the Gulf and later with Bosnia. Apart from a very few years after the first world war it has an almost continuous record of service; last disbanding as recently as 1994. Thus, to a large extent, it covers much of the period between the wars and most of the period since 1945.

This is a thoroughly researched and very readable book produced to a high professional standard by a Society member. If you have connections with 23 Squadron or merely, like myself, enjoy squadron histories this is one for your bookshelf.

RW

RAF Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War – Volume V 1944 by W R Chorley. Midland Counties Publications 1997. Price £19.95.

Some readers will be familiar with this important series of books, but this is the first time the Society has published a review. The series commenced with the publication of Volume I covering 1939-40 in 1992.

This volume details 3,527 aircraft losses, thus over one third of the Command's total war casualties occurred in 1944. The entries appear in date order; each summary with the squadron, aircraft type, serial, crew names and the circumstances in which the loss occurred. These are complimented by extensive Appendices, much other useful information and perceptive forewords by the author to each chapter of the campaign.

These volumes have been widely acknowledged in many historical circles, as well as by those who took part in the events, their friends and relatives. It is a testimony to the unselfish sacrifice and unwavering resolution of thousands of young men from all parts of the Commonwealth and the occupied countries. Of no less importance, it is also a standard work of reference compiled with meticulous care and planning; both the author and his publishers are to be congratulated.

RW

Bomber Command 1939-45: Reaping the Whirlwind by Professor Richard Overy. Foreword by MRAF Sir Michael Beetham. Harper Collins. Price £20.

This is the book of the TV film – *Reaping the Whirlwind* – produced at the behest of RAF veterans outraged by the mawkish revisionism and whinging about our bombing offensive against Germany 50 years after the war. It follows the TV style with personal recollections and action photographs and Professor Overy's commentary serving rather like a connecting 'voice-over'. Despite that popular style, its authoritative and well documented content commends it as an important work of reference. Overy tells of the Command's woefully inadequate beginnings; with the costly discovery that losses from daylight bombing could not be sustained, leading on to the next reality that bombing inaccuracies of five miles and more were the norm at night. From there he traces its astonishing development to the formidable force that, from 1943 under Sir Arthur Harris, was to lay waste the industrial cities of the Ruhr and others like Hamburg and Dresden.

In his authoritative account Overy brings a welcome openness to the controversial matters of effectiveness, target selection, and the directives issued to the Command as the war went on. From these latter it is difficult to see (as is so often alleged) any ways in which Harris exceeded his

warrant. Indeed there are plenty of instances where he clearly had to swallow his convictions and direct his force accordingly – not least during the Normandy campaign. It is especially noteworthy that Harris did not support taking civilian morale as a primary target, even though this was included in his directives; not out of squeamishness but because he just did not see it as an effective war-winning objective.

Full rein is given to criticisms of the bomber offensive and especially to those of J K Galbraith, the American economist and diplomat. But Overy counters most of these effectively in his telling last chapter ‘The Balance Sheet’. Not much is made of the public slights that Harris suffered after the war which so outraged those who served under his command. But with the known fickleness of politicians when faced with the unexpected consequences there is little point in trying to explore that thicket further.

Overy spells out the little appreciated fact that slightly less than half of the Command’s war effort went into the strategic offensive. Those critics who urged a greater contribution against U-boats over the Atlantic sea lanes are reminded that through the Command’s attacks virtually all the German Navy’s major surface units were sunk or kept out of commission, save for the *Bismarck* (found by Coastal Command and sunk by the Royal Navy). In this and other ways, like the major sea mining campaign, the book makes clear that Bomber Command was a multi-role force throughout the war, operating flexibly within its various directives.

Nevertheless the title *Bomber Command* is a bit misleading because, with its film origins, it is largely about the night-bomber offensive and daylight operations get scant mention. So members of No 2 Group squadrons who took part in some air-war epics by day may feel a bit short-changed. But in the main, those who cherish the memory of a great air Commander-in-Chief, Sir Arthur Harris, and the 55,000 young men from the British Commonwealth and Empire who died in Bomber Command in defence of freedom should feel placated by this fine story so well and so honestly told.

Sir JB

Men Behind The Medals by Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork. Leo Cooper. Price £25.00

Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork’s finely researched work tells of the exploits of some 22 Second World War aircrew, the *Men Behind the Medals*. His selection covers all wartime aircrew categories, operating in many roles and gives a kaleidoscopic impression of individual skills and

gallantry. Most striking of all is the fact that none of those presented in the chapters of this excellent book is a household name. Instead, they are a reminder of the huge scale of a world war in which countless ordinary people rose to extraordinary heights of courage and achievement.

The great strength of this book lies in the author's evident sympathy with its subjects and in his knowledge of the Royal Air Force and its history. Graham Pitchfork has chosen well and has done justice to each of those whose experiences describe so dramatically the part played by the Service and its people in so many campaigns. Meticulously researched, copiously illustrated and well written, this book will be a welcome addition to the shelves of anyone with an interest in air warfare and those who waged it. This will certainly be so for members of the Aircrew Association.

AFCH

Bomber Squadrons at War – Nos 57 and 630 Squadrons by Geoff D Copeman. Foreword by Air Mshl Sir Ivor Broom. Sutton Publishing Ltd 1997. Price £17.99

Originally formed in 1916, 57 has a long history of distinguished service in peace and war. In contrast, 630 Squadron was in existence for some 20 months from November 1943 until disbandment just after the end of the war in Europe; long enough however to play a significant part together with its parent squadron, when the Command campaign was at its zenith.

While the book concentrates on the period when both squadrons were operating from East Kirby, there is good coverage of the whole life of 57 Squadron in what is a well researched and very nicely produced volume. A welcome addition to individual squadron histories which deserves to be well received, particularly by those associated with either squadron.

RW

Our Tribute to Air Chief Marshal Sir Augustus Walker GCB CBE DSO DFC AFC by Dennis Sawden. Foreword by Lady Walker. Yorkshire Air Museum, Halifax Way, Elvington, York YO41 4AU. Price £11.50 inc p&p.

It is fitting that this book should be published by the Yorkshire Air Museum for whom Sir Augustus Walker was a distinguished Patron during the Museum's formative years; happily for the Museum Lady Gus Walker, as she prefers to be known at Elvington, continues the patronage.

There are contributions from many sources within and outside the Service which have been skilfully drawn together by Dennis Sawden as

Editor. It is generously illustrated and the result is an attractive and highly readable book which conveys the humanity and versatility of a personality so many regarded as unique. Respect and indeed affection from one's peers is not so uncommon, but the ability to uplift morale and get the best out of the ordinary man and woman is leadership of a very special order. This was never seen to better advantage than during his period commanding 42 Base in 1943/44 when his Halifax crews had to withstand some daunting losses and the ground staff needed all their fortitude working on the bleak and windswept dispersals of those Yorkshire airfields.

Needless to say his distinguished contribution to first class Rugby over a lifetime is covered, as indeed are his many charitable works. While this is not a full-scale biography, it is the next best thing and should be widely welcomed.

RW

Flying to the Limit by Roland Beamont. Patrick Stephens Ltd. Price £17.99.

Sub-titled 'Reminiscences of air combat, test flying and the aircraft industry' this is Bee's eleventh book, covering a wide range of subjects.

His description of his entry to the RAF and flying training is of particular interest, graduating from Tiger Moths, through Harts and Audaxes onto Hurricane I's (with two-blade, fixed pitch, wooden propellers). Early test flying involves the Typhoon and Tempest. This is followed by post-war testing ranging from the Vampire to TSR2 and subsequently to light and vintage aircraft.

The author has some pungent comments on the cancellation of TSR2 and the decline of the aircraft industry in the late 1960s and 1970s.

DW

Night Fighter Ace by Tony Spooner. Foreword by P B 'Laddie' Lucas. Sutton Publishing Ltd 1997. Price £18.99.

This is a biography about J R D 'Bob' Braham, one of the most successful fighter pilots, who earned three DSOs and three DFCs.

Bob's own story '*Scramble!*' predominantly dealt with his wartime experiences and was first published in 1961, with a new edition following in 1985 eleven years after his tragically early death. Starting his operational career on Blenheims, through different marks of Beaufighters on to the Mosquito FB VI until being shot down himself in June 1944 and spending the remainder of the war as a prisoner.

This book, again rightly concentrating on the wartime period, also provides information about his early life and goes into more detail about the post-war years when he was awarded an AFC in 1951, emigrating later to Canada and serving with the RCAF.

RW

CORRESPONDENCE

From Dr Jack E G Dixon CD MA PhD, Victoria, B C.

I feel that Professor Max Hammerton is altogether too lenient in his review of John Ray's book, *The Battle of Britain: New Perspectives* (Journal 17). I disagree fundamentally, for example, with his summation that, 'Ray's book is a ... valuable contribution to our understanding of (*the*) stupendous events' which constitute the Battle of Britain. Indeed, I think that the very sub-title, *New Perspectives*, is misleading.

Ray sets out with the express purpose of recounting the events which culminated in Dowding's removal from his command. In his introduction he itemises seven – yes, seven! – 'reasons' why the Air Council retired, ie sacked, Dowding. It is important to list them. They are: age (at 58 he was an old man); he had held his command for four years (and had to make way for others' promotion); poor personal relations with senior officers in the Air Ministry; failure to resolve the Park/Leigh-Mallory dispute; failure to counter the night blitz; he was unsuited for the fighter sweeps over France (supposedly being planned by whom? and when? – besides Dowding was not consulted); and finally Churchill (Dowding's staunchest champion and admirer) was persuaded of the need for a change. In his analysis of these factors Ray nowhere suggests a hierarchy of importance, presumably implying that they were of equal weight and exerted a cumulative effect. This is poor stuff: it is shot-gun history: if some shots miss, maybe one or two will hit their mark.

Let's take the Blitz: 'It was felt that night raiders were attacking almost with impunity, and that Dowding was failing to stop them.' Ray does not mention that it was the agreed policy of the Air Ministry and Fighter Command that there was no defence against night attacks, and that all resources were devoted to countering daylight attacks. Moreover, enlightened opinion, eg Tizard and Dowding, held that night attacks could not defeat Fighter Command which was the sole strategic issue. When the Air Staff and the politicians, more out of panic than sober reflection, began to criticise Dowding for 'not doing enough to counter the night attacks', and for rejecting most of Salmond's committee's recommendations, they betrayed their own policy and, in a two-fold double-cross, failed to give Dowding the support and assistance he desperately needed, while accusing him of being uncooperative. When the arch-schemer Sholto Douglas took over, he found that Dowding et al, had been right all along, but in his *Dispatch* failed even to mention them, let alone give credit to them.

Now the manner of Dowding's dismissal. There are two separate and distinct aspects to this question. First, when and how Dowding was informed that he was to be relieved of his command; second, when and how he was told he was to leave Fighter Command. (1) Dowding had an interview with Sinclair on November 13th, at which Sinclair informed Dowding that he was to be replaced. But no date was mentioned. (2) A few days later Sinclair telephoned Dowding to tell him that he had to leave his command immediately. There is absolutely no disputing this telephone call. Dowding's memory in that respect was beyond doubting. The abruptness and incivility of it produced and left on Dowding's mind an inextinguishable impact and memory of shock and horror. All the more since Dowding had a document, dated August 12, formally cancelling any time limit to his tenure as AOCinC; and since he received no written confirmation either of his interview with Sinclair or of their telephone conversation. (Not only that, but already on July 10 Sinclair had written to Dowding to say: 'I could give you no higher proof of my confidence in you and ... the assurance of my full support.') The great Sir Henry Tizard, who was equally ill-treated by the Air Ministry, went on record as agreeing with Lord Rosebery who thought that 'politics is an evil smelling bog'.

In 1942, when Dowding was finally retired, at his own request, the King wrote to Sinclair to recommend that Dowding be promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Royal Air Force. Sinclair demurred and replied that, when the war was over and awards for service were bestowed, the name of Dowding would surely be among those considered. Of course, as we know, he wasn't. Yet on January 1, 1946, none other than Harris and Sholto Douglas were awarded the great distinction of promotion to Marshal of the Royal Air Force. (The parties responsible were Sinclair and Portal). Even at this great remove in time, the injustice of it all makes one rage.

On one point I will agree with Professor Hammerton: Ray's book shows 'a mastery of sources and a clarity of presentation.' It is scrupulously researched and makes full use of both published and unpublished sources, and enlists the co-operation of contemporary witnesses and participants. Ray marshals an abundance of facts, documents and evidence to buttress his thesis. But sadly, he accepts them all at their face value; not once does he subject them to critical analysis. Seldom has one seen such a marshalling of facts and resources and such a battery of impeccable references serve as a substitute for thought.

Ray is clearly an Air Ministry apologist who has let himself be convinced of the rightness of their decision to sack Dowding. He presents

no arguments in favour of Dowding's continued service; and he does not even attempt to examine the questions of who put forward what arguments to sway Churchill against Dowding, let alone recount the many efforts made by Churchill in 1941 and 1942 to get Dowding appointed to another operational command.

From John Barton, Auckland NZ.

I do appreciate the Society's publications and wish I could attend the functions. I did appear on one occasion years ago.

For the last nine years our group of ex RAF chaps (largely RNZAF) have been working on the Memorial Lancaster at a museum. We are now in the position of restoring the interior to September 1944 standards. Each Wednesday – rain, hail or shine – never less than twelve, and sometimes twenty, volunteers work on the job, which includes twenty panel display cases of support material.

Fitting a mid-upper turret has been a major effort, but it is nearly completed. All being achieved by money and labour of Bomber Command Association (NZ), currently 550 members Dominion-wide.

From Frank Card, Freelance Writer. 25 Heycroft Drive, Cressing, Braintree, Essex CM7 8JN

Gratified as I am for the kind review of my book *Whensoever – 50 years of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service* (Ernest Press) in Journal 17, there are a couple of errors of fact which I feel I should correct, if only to prevent the bruising of mountain rescuers' tender feelings.

The origins of the service in the '40s were not just, as your reviewer says, in the Border country and Cumbria, but more influentially in North Wales (RAF Llandwrog) and the Peak District (RAF Harpur Hill). In both cases, teams were formed by Medical Officers as private enterprises to meet a need.

The book does not conclude with the Service's activities abroad (which ceased in 1976), but goes right on to the early '90s, to include such massive operations as the Lockerbie and East Midlands Airport disasters.

May I take this opportunity of appealing for help. The MO concerned at RAF Llandwrog was Flight Lieutenant George D Graham, and because of his Mountain Rescue and other activities I am anxious to write his biography. I should like to hear from anyone who knew him, particularly during his subsequent posting to India, and especially during 1945.

Editorial Note: Please reply direct to Mr Card if you wish to answer his appeal.

NOTICES

First World War Conference at the RAF Museum

Faces of War: a conference to be held at the RAF Museum on Saturday 19th September 1998. Subject of talks will include: aviator Prisoners of War, the Independent Air Force, the RNAS at the Dardanelles – 1915, the British experience on the Salonika front, air-tank co-operation and the Liverpool Territorial Battalions. Tea, coffee and a buffet lunch will also be provided. For more information, contact the Marketing Department, RAF Museum, Grahame Park Way, Hendon, London NW9 5LL. Tel. 0181-200-1763. Fax 0181-205-8044. <http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk>

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Contributions are invited from members of the Society and others; articles based on original research are particularly welcomed. It is the contributor's responsibility to obtain any necessary permissions regarding copyright. It may be helpful to mention that passages of up to ten lines may usually be quoted from a book without the need for formal prior negotiation, so long as an appropriate attribution is made in a footnote. While the Society's publications are issued under our copyright, the contributor's prior agreement would always be sought before granting a third party permission to reproduce material.

Articles should be typed on one side only of white A4 paper, double-spaced with margins of at least 3 cm on each side. Please conform to the styles we use; eg no full stops after rank or other abbreviations; pages should be numbered at the top right-hand corner of each page. Care should also be exercised with aircraft designations.

The contributor's name, address and telephone number should appear at the top right-hand corner of the first page. Sources and a list of captions for any photographs, maps or line drawings should appear on the final page.

Photographs to accompany an article should be of good quality, but please do not send valuable original material in the first instance. Maps or line drawings should be in black Indian ink, a good photocopy may suffice in this instance.

The preferred length of articles is between 1,500 and 2,500 words, although occasionally items are longer. Shorter pieces, say 500 to 1,000 words, are often useful as 'fillers' and such contributions will also be welcomed.

Contributors are invited to include a short biographical paragraph about themselves for inclusion with the article as desired. The Society does not offer payment for articles but, as with speakers who present papers at our seminars, contributors do receive a complimentary copy of the publication in which their item appears.

Articles should be submitted to the Publications Manager whose address appears on the next page. Both he and the Editor will be pleased to answer any enquiries.

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ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Royal Air Force has been in existence for over 75 years; the study of its history is deepening, and continues to be the subject of published works of consequence. Fresh attention is being given to the strategic assumptions under which military air power was first created and which largely determined policy and operations in both World Wars, the inter-war period, and in the era of Cold War tension. Material dealing with post-war history is now becoming available for study under the 30-year rule. These studies are important to academic historians and to present and future members of the RAF.

The RAF Historical Society was formed in 1986 to provide a focus for interest in the history of the RAF. It does so by providing a setting for lectures and seminars in which those interested in the history of the RAF have the opportunity to meet those who participated in the evolution and implementation of policy. The Society believes that these events make an important contribution to the permanent record. The Society normally holds three lectures or seminars a year in London, with occasional events in other parts of the country. Transcripts of lectures and seminars are published in the *Journal of the RAF Historical Society*, which is a publication free of charge to members. Individual membership is open to all with an interest in RAF history, whether or not they were in the Service. Although the Society has the approval of the Air Force Board, it is entirely self-financing. Membership of the Society costs £15 per annum and further details may be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Dr Jack Dunham, Silverhill House, Coombe, Wootton-under-Edge, Gloucester GL12 7ND (Tel: 01453 843362).