



NEWSLETTER

Book for our Buffet Lunch on 15th May - see Page 7

April Meeting



Normally I would now give a brief resume of our April meeting but as those that attended will know, this meeting was so much more! We listened in awe to Sherry Scott MBE the wife of the late Lt Col Ray Scott but please now turn to Page 2 to see more from most remarkable woman.

Annual Act of Commemoration at Air Force Memorial, Runnymede

Sunday 12 May 2019 at 11.00 am.

The annual service will be held as usual at Runnymede and wreaths will be laid on behalf of the Commonwealth Air Forces and Ex-Service Organisations. It is open to all who wish to pay their respects and visitors are asked to be in position by 10.30 am. There is car Parking at

Cooper's Hill Lane, Englefield Green, Egham TW20 0LB. The car park is 200 yards from the memorial but you may drop off at the gate.

Attendance at Meetings

If the Chiltern ACA is to continue in its present form we really do need members to make a real effort to attend our monthly meetings. Bill George has arranged a programme of excellent speakers, but to be fair to them we really need 25 members at least to attend the meetings. We have tried to interest our widows but it has been of limited success. If you know any friends please invite them along (their future signing up for membership is not essential, although we would of course love them to do so).

We currently have a full programme until the end of the year but if we are to attract speakers of the right quality we must provide them with an audience. So please have a think about your own attendance and about encouraging some of your friends to join you. Your Committee will, towards the latter part of the year, have to decide whether we continue in our present format or just become a monthly Lunch Club, as so many other branches became in 2012.

For members with mobility or transport problems, please get in touch with our Welfare Officer David Bray and he will try and arrange a lift for you, if he is away on one of his many holidays then any committee member will do all they can to help - we are used to it! Talking of mobility please note there is now a ramp up to the door of Greenacres.



Remember 15th May 2019

Buffet Lunch

Greenacres 1200 Noon for 1230

Burma

This title is probably a little understated as we found out from Sherry Scott MBE on 17th April at Greenacres. We did not really know what to expect and in walked a very smart lady with a mannequin dressed in Burmese National dress under her arm. We were then mesmerised for the next 55 minutes, when without a single note Sherry told us her story. Well to be truthful it was more the story of her and her first husband.



She began by remembering her husband, Lieutenant-Colonel Ray Scott. "He was with the Burma Rifles in the Second World War, and did a lot of spying. He was behind the lines; he had to walk out, and in fact was alive, simply because his men took care of him.... Every time he asked me, 'Where would you like to holiday?' I would say, 'I would love to go to Burma.' And so, at the first opportunity of getting a visa, we went into Rangoon where word went around that he had returned, and his soldiers soon found him. How, I don't know. I never could work out how they knew who was there.... He was horrified to see that the men he knew as proud soldiers had not received an income since after the war. These men had very little left in their lives and of their pride. When we returned home he said to me, 'I believe I can afford to help my men and I want to give them back their dignity.'"

A year later, Ray was able to return to Burma. "This

was very important work to him, and so we returned... with cash, and he distributed it to the men who had helped him (during the war)."

Back in England, Ray approached other British officers in an effort to establish a fund for the Burma veterans. "I remember men saying to him, 'What makes you think you will succeed when two governments have failed?' Ray said, 'Just because you can't do everything is no reason to do nothing.' It's something that I live by."

An officer Ray served with was keen to help. Major Neville Hogan, believed he is one of only three remaining veterans at the time from the Burma Rifles. He remembered joining the cause and has warm memories of his old comrade. "I am a Burmese. My mother is a Karen, and my father is Irish. I was born and bred in Burma. I knew Ray Scott when I was about 12 or 13. I grew up with him. When I was commissioned as a Rifle, he was always one or two ranks higher than me."

While efforts were being made to establish the veterans' fund, Ray didn't just focus on the help he could get from old comrades. He dug deep into his own pockets and Sherry remembered his determination. "He said to me, 'I can help my men if we don't eat out, and we don't have foreign holidays.' I'm thinking, bloody hell! Not so good!"

This was the impetus Sherry needed to find a solution. Her work as a horse physiotherapist introduced her to British philanthropist Sir John Paul Getty II. During his lifetime, Getty was reported to have donated well over £140,000,000 to culture. "He gave me £25,000 just because his wife's father served with my late husband, so we used that."

This was a great starting point, but a more lasting solution was needed. Hogan and Lt.-Col. Sam Pope, who was secretary-general of the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League at the time, worked with Ray who became chairman of the newly formed **Burma Forces Welfare Association (BFWA)** in 2000. Around the same time, the association became a new member organisation of the BCEL later Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League (RCEL). As such, it is an autonomous organisation within the charitable status of the larger organisation, raising its own funds and setting up and running a welfare program.

John Slim, retired colonel, trustee of the RCEL and president of the Special Air Service Regimental Association (SAS). As the son of General William Slim who commanded the 14th Army in Burma, he is dedicated to the

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(Burma Cont'd)

welfare of the men who served under his father during the campaign.

The story of that campaign is long and complicated. In broad strokes, it began in January 1942 when Japanese forces invaded Burma. By May they had driven the British, Indian and local Burmese forces out of the country and into India. It wasn't until 1945 that the 14th Army, was able to reclaim Burma. The 14th was made up of units from all corners of the Commonwealth, and has been referred to as the Forgotten Army because its operations were overlooked by the media and misunderstood at the time. The campaign was as grim as it was complicated. Burmese soldiers fought alongside the Allies, and Ray Scott felt indebted to these steadfast Burmese soldiers until the day he died.

She described an incident that occurred in a refugee camp in the Sangklaburi area, within a kilometre of the Thai border. "About seven or eight years ago we were in the camps when the Burmese army decided it would send in soldiers to chase the veterans.... The moment the Burmese army crossed the border into Thailand (in search of the veterans), Thailand sent their soldiers out to chase the Burmese soldiers back. We suddenly found ourselves in the middle of a fracas. I mean it's a small incident really, but we had to run—try to get ourselves out of the way.... We thought we would be safer in Burma than in Thailand because the Burmese were firing that way.... I remember putting our passports, and the money we had on my head because I thought, we're not going (to get across the bridge, and we're going to have to swim for it). Suddenly, Ray grabbed my hand and said, 'Run!' We all ran. Where we had been standing was a huge hole (from an explosion), and I said to him, 'How did you know?' And he said, 'These old instincts come back to you.'"

"When we got back to our hotel he had a stroke. He was 83 at the time.... I got him into a hospital in Thailand. We were due to go into Burma the next day to take a lot of money in and visit the nannies of all the families we knew," said Sherry. During the war, British families who lived in Burma were often able to hire 'nannies' for their children from the local population. The Scotts became the means by which they could contact these now elderly nannies and get a little money their way because, added Sherry, they were suffering from the same frailties as the veterans. "The nannies were waiting for money because it couldn't be sent the normal way."

At the hospital, the Thai nurses assured Sherry that her husband would live, but he would heal far quicker if they could stop him from worrying. "The one thing that was worrying him was to finish his work in Burma, and the nurses suggested that I go into Burma, and do it quickly. I got the money in by putting it in a bathing costume, and I remember my husband sitting up in bed...saying to the little Thai nurses, 'Now come on, pack it in.... You'll have to have more on the bottom than on the top or she'll fall over.'"

A plan was made to get the British pounds exchanged for local currency. Sherry remained amazed at how efficiently the 'grapevine' works in Burma. "Word went round about which hotel I was staying at and very quickly the veterans would gather round when I went out." With the help of these men and their families, Sherry managed to distribute the money in two days before returning to Thailand for her husband's recovery.

Lt Col Scott lived a further two years, still doing his work. By that time the association was linked with the BCEL, and was able to become more formalised. We now have committees all over Burma made up of old soldiers. Their sons and daughters are helping because we need the technology. We're able to use e-mail. We're able to have interpreters."

But even with Sherry's trustworthy networks in place, Burma remains a tightly controlled regime, and so she knows her movements can compromise the safety of the veterans she is trying to help. "During my trips over there I have always been followed and spied upon. When my late husband died, his soldiers went to the embassy in Rangoon and expressed their sadness.... They just sat in the British Embassy, down the steps, down the road, past the Strand Hotel. They all just sat there and the ambassador put the embassy flag at half-mast. But if too many people gathered together they shot them. The ambassador was really frightened, and he phoned me just as I was going to my husband's funeral. He said, 'I have an emergency here. I know the day it is, but what am I to say? I must announce something because these people must disperse. Because the flag is at half-mast, they're all holding posts with a handkerchief halfway down. They think that signifies something.'" Sherry advised him to tell the mourners she would continue her husband's work and that she would raise every flag lowered. The daftest words I've ever said, because, of course, they went home and put the flags up. So I have visited every soldier that we've got. I visited to take the flag down and say, 'You're OK.'"

(To be continued next month)

**Assembling the Mighty Eighth -
by: Leslie A. Lennox Lt./Col. USAF(ret)**



Of all the stories that have been written, and movies that have been shown, about the 8th Air Force, very little attention has been given to what was involved in assembling 1200 B-17's and B-24's each day, to get them in formation to carry out a strike against Germany. Certainly showing bombers under attack by fighters, or encountering heavy flak, was a reality, and are interesting to watch. Also, stories about some of the rougher missions make interesting reading. But what was going on over England, each morning, could get just as scary to the crews as the time spent over some of the targets. The planning, and coordination, that had to be accomplished during the night, by the operations planners of each Group, so that the crews could be briefed, was unbelievable. If the planners had failed to do their jobs properly, there would have been a free for all among Bomb Groups, in the skies over England. The rendezvous points, altitude, and times had to be precise, and known by all of the crews, before the Eighth Air Force could get in formation. The success of the planners, in accomplishing their mission, enabled the Eighth Air Force to become the most powerful air armada ever assembled. In my view, how this was accomplished is one of the major untold stories of the war.

I was a pilot in the 95th Bomb Group, in late 1944 and early 1945, and what follows is a typical mission, as I remember it, from a crew member's perspective.

Early in the evening, our Squadron Operations would post the names of the crews that were scheduled to fly the following day. There were two ways we could be notified if the Group had been alerted to fly. One was by means of lights on the front of the orderly room, and the other with raising of coloured flags. If a green light was on, the Group was alerted, if a red light was on we would fly, and if a white light was on, the Group would stand down. The light was monitored frequently throughout the evening to learn our

status and, normally, we would know before going to bed if we would be flying the next day.

On the morning of a mission, the CQ (charge of quarters) would awaken the crews about four or five o'clock, depending on takeoff time. The questions we always asked were, "What is the fuel load?" and, "What is the bomb load?" If his answer was, "full Tokyo tanks," we knew we would be going deep into Germany. Shortly after being awakened, "6-by" trucks would start shuttling us to the mess hall. We always had all the fresh eggs we could eat, when flying a mission. After breakfast, the trucks carried us to the briefing room. All of the crew members attended the main briefing, and then the Navigators, Bombardiers and Radio operators went to a specialised briefing. At the main briefing, in addition to the target information--anti-aircraft guns, fighter escort and route in--we received a sheet showing our location in the formation, the call signs for the day and all the information we would need to assemble our Group and get into the bomber stream.

After briefing, we got into our flight gear, drew our parachutes and loaded onto the trucks for a ride to our plane. We were now guided by the time on our daily briefing sheet. We started engines at a given time and watched for the airplane we would be flying in formation with to taxi past, then we would taxi behind him. We were following strict radio silence.

We were now parked, nose to tail around the perimeter, on both sides of the active runway, and extremely vulnerable to a fighter strafing attack. At the designated takeoff time, a green flare would be fired and takeoff would begin. Every thirty seconds an airplane started takeoff roll. We were lined up on the perimeter so that the 12 airplanes of the high squadron would take off first, followed by the lead and then the low squadron.

Each Group had a pattern for the airplanes to fly during climb to assembly altitude. Some would fly a triangle, some a rectangle and our Group flew a circle, using a "Buncher" (a low frequency radio station) which was located on our station. The patterns for each Group fit together like a jig saw puzzle. Unfortunately, strong winds aloft would destroy the integrity of the patterns, and there would be considerable over running of each other's patterns.

Many of our takeoffs were made before daylight, during the winter of '44 and '45, when I was there, so it

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was not uncommon to climb through several thousand feet of cloud overcast. Also it was not uncommon to experience one or two near misses while climbing through the clouds, although you would never see the other airplane. You knew you had just had a near miss, when suddenly the airplane would shake violently as it hit the prop wash of another plane. It was a wonderful feeling to break out on top, so you could watch for other planes, to keep from running into each other. To add to the congestion we were creating, the Royal Air Force Lancaster's, Halifaxes, and Wimpy's would be returning from their night missions, and flying through our formations. Needless to say, pilots had to keep their heads on a swivel and their eyes out of the cockpit.

After take off, the squadron lead would fire a flare every 30 seconds, so that we could keep him located and enable us to get into formation quicker. The colour of our Group flare was red-green. The first thing you would see, when breaking out of the clouds, was a sky filled with pyrotechnics, so you had to search the sky for the Group flare, which would identify the lead airplane of your Squadron. Once you had it located, you could adjust your pattern to climb more quickly into formation with him. As each airplane pulled into formation, they would also fire a flare, with the lead plane, making it much easier for the following aircraft to keep him in sight. I think most crew members would probably agree that the pyrotechnic show, in the skies over England, in the morning when the Eighth was assembling, was a rare sight to behold.

The order of progression for assembling the Eighth Air Force was to first assemble the Flight elements, the Squadrons, the Groups, the Combat wings, the Divisions and, finally, the Air Force.

As soon as the four Squadron elements were formed, the high, low and second elements would take up their positions on the lead element, to form a Squadron. When the three Squadrons had completed assembly, it was necessary to get into Group formation. This was accomplished by having the three Squadrons arrive over a pre-selected fix at a precise time and heading. The high and low Squadrons were separated from the lead Squadron by 1000 feet and, after getting into Group formation, they would maintain their positions by following the lead Squadron.

Then it was necessary to get into the Combat Wing formation. We were in the 13th Combat Wing, which consisted of three Bomb Groups: the 95th, the 100th and the 390th. Whichever Group was leading the Wing that day, would arrive over a pre-selected point, at a

precise time and heading. Thirty seconds later, the second Group would pass that fix, followed by the third Group, thirty seconds later. We were then in Combat Wing formation. The navigators in the lead airplanes had a tremendous responsibility, to ensure that the rendezvous times were strictly adhered to.

There were three Divisions in the Eighth, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The 1st and 3rd Divisions consisted of B-17s only, and the 2nd Division was B-24s. The B-24s were faster than the B-17s, but the B-17s could fly higher, therefore, the two were not compatible in formation. As a result the 1st and 3rd Divisions would fly together and the 2nd Division would fly separately.

Now that the Groups were flying in Combat Wing formation, it was necessary to assemble the Divisions. This was usually accomplished at the "coast out"--a city on the coast, selected as the departure point "fix." The Group leader in each Combat Wing knew his assigned position in the Division, and the precise time that he should arrive at the coast out departure point, to assume that position in the Division formation. The lead Group in the Division, which had been selected to lead the Eighth on the mission, would be first over the departure fix. Thirty seconds after the last Group in the first Wing passed that point, the second Wing would fall in trail, and so on, until all Combat Wings were flying in trail and the Division would be formed. One minute later, the lead Group in the other Division would fly over that point, and the Combat Wings in that Division would follow the same procedure to get into formation. When all of its Combat Wings were in trail, the Eighth Air Force B-17 strike force was formed and on its way to the target. At the same time the 2nd Division B-24s were assembling in a similar manner and also departing to their target.

Meanwhile, as the bombers were assembling for their mission, pilots from the Fighter Groups were being briefed on their day's mission. Normally, 600 to 800 P-38's, P-47's, and P-51's would accompany the bombers to provide protection against enemy fighter attacks. Fighter cover was not needed by the bombers until they were penetrating enemy territory, therefore to help conserve fuel. fighter takeoffs were planned to give them enough time to quickly assemble after takeoff, and climb on course up the bomber stream to the groups they would be covering.

Ed: *We will complete this article next month but wondered if anyone would be willing to write a similar article re the RAF Bomber operations?*

Recruiting for the RAF 1918 - Today



Then came WW2 and Bomber Command



Then the 'own your own Nav Bag' era 60's/70's



This was the real 1918 recruiting poster



The Royal Air Force performs a wide range of duties to serve and protect the UK and the world. We provide all personnel with a varied range of training and activities to make sure you're ready for anything.

Now nearly all on line

Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 15th May 2019 at 12 Noon for 12.30

We will be holding our usual Buffet Lunch at Greenacres instead of a usual May Meeting.

Please book below and then post to Ian Mason or if you prefer book by a BACS payment quoting Buffet Lunch as your reference.

Please reserve me tickets for the Buffet Lunch @ £ 10 per person
Widows @ £ 5 per person

Name

Address

.....

Postcode Tel No

Name of Guests

.....

Please send your order to:

Ian Mason
65 Sunnycroft, Downley, High Wycombe, Bucks
HPI3 5UR
Tel: 01494 439845
Email: ian.mason197@ntlworld.com

Cheque payable to I M Mason or
BACS, to I M Mason 09-01-28 41009326

Programme 2019

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

- 15 May Guest's Lunch*
- 19 Jun More tales from Dennis Swains
- 17 Jul A new slant on Shakleton's Endurance Expedition - John Dudenay
- 21 Aug Luftwaffe in WW2 - Ian Thomson
- 18 Sep Visit TBA*
- 16 Oct The Tragically Short War of a Topping Fellow - David Hearn
- 20 Nov Visit TBA*
- 18 Dec Christmas Lunch*

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Chairman

A spell binding talk this month on Burma by Sherry Scott. It was a pity that numbers were down and if we are to encourage such speakers, we should attend when we can. We should also do what we can to foster membership.

Des

Welfare

This seems like a regular comment but I will be away most of the month, so if you have a problem please speak to any committee member. I think it is Japan this time?

David

Membership Secretary

Please see details re Buffet Lunch on Page 7. We welcome new member Ray England, please add him to your Membership List:
512 ENGLAND R.H. (Ray)* 8 McIndoe Drive, Wendover, Aylesbury, Bucks HP22 5GF, 01296 625034

Ian

Secretary/Editor

I have so far had no complaints re the Membership List issued to members with the April edition but before I give myself and Ian Mason a pat on the back, please double check your entry.

Graham

Treasurer

I am glad to report that our accounts for 2017 and 2018 have now been certified by Mr E J Wooton MAAT and we thank him for his due diligence and ensuring that everything is in order. Copies are available from me.

Rod

Ed: Our thanks too to Rod for his excellent book keeping

President

Please see the details of the Runnymede Service, which used to be a feature of the ACA year but it still continues and deserves our support.

Geoff