

Tiger News No 49

Compiled by Bob Cossey

Association President	Air Marshal Cliff Spink CB, CBE, FCMI, FRAeS
Honorary Vice President	AVM B L Robinson FRAeS FCMI
Association Chairman	Gp Capt Dick Northcote OBE BA
Association Treasurer	Rhod Smart
Association Secretary	Bob Cossey BA (Hons)

Squadron Reunion 6th - 8th March 2009

Many thanks, as always, to the 90 of you who travelled to the Hilton Hotel Warwick for this year's reunion which proved yet again to be a successful occasion. It's all you Tigers who make it so! We were delighted to welcome some new faces - Stu Thornberry and Caroline: Alan Bell and Jenny: Bill Mitchell: Jim Jolly and Angela: and Ed Durham.

We were also very pleased to welcome two special guests. Rob Walden is the curator of the City of Norwich Aviation Museum and as our first speaker he briefed members on the museum and their willingness to welcome us into the fold with our 74 (F) Tiger Squadron Museum display. He explained that they are currently in deep discussion with Norwich City Council over relocation issues as a new bypass is to be routed to the north of Norwich and plans are such that it is scheduled to segregate the museum from the airport (the former RAF Horsham St Faith) which is unacceptable. However the council have accepted that a move would be necessary and details are being worked out. It would have several benefits including better access and the opportunity to update and modernise the buildings in which the aircraft and wealth of aviation related artefacts are presented. The frustration is that the time scale is continually moving with a further delay in the road's construction being recently announced. But they are certain all will be resolved and the museum on a new site with us involved will take what is already an excellent collection a major step forward.

Our second guest of the evening was our Patron Dr Simon Cooke. Simon is the son of the late Mike Cooke who was a Tiger under John Howe's command in 1960 and who became the first supersonic Flying Officer in the RAF. Mike was a previous secretary of the Association and Simon recalled how as a youngster he found and played with the squadron's tiger skins in the attic of their home after Mike rescued and kept them for safe keeping after the Squadron's disbandment in Tengah. It is thanks to Mike that the Association remained intact during the years of inactivity and then blossomed again when 74 reformed on the F4J and it was on Mike's records and contacts that the Association as it is now was built. Simon has carried on involvement with his father's squadron by agreeing to be the patron of the Tiger Squadron Museum Appeal and we were delighted that he could join us this year.

The main event of the evening was the Draw held as part of the Appeal. Congratulations are due to everyone concerned in the selling of tickets and huge thanks are due to everyone who bought tickets, for by the time the Draw was made we had raised a marvellous **£3,179**. We must of course say a very big thank you as well to everyone who donated the superb prizes - Cliff Spink, Rhod Smart, Jon Mosen, Bob Yeomans, Colin Smith, Bob Cossey, Tiger Hobbies Ltd, Corgi Toys, Esmon George, Angela Cordell, John Freeborn, George Black, Matt Ford, Graham Clarke, Peter Clark and David Ketcher.

Tiger Museum Grand Draw

March 7th 2009

Prize Winners

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1. Harvard Flight & Tour of Spitfire Facility at Duxford | 018362 | Josephine Smith |
| 2. Pitts Special Aerobatics | 014659 | Hickling House |
| 3. A Day Out in Dorset | 017581 | Sylvia Guiver |
| 4. Framed colour drawing of John Freeborn by David Pritchard signed by John Freeborn | 013411 | Peter Carr |
| 5. Framed pencil drawing by David Bryant of John Freeborn's combat with Werner Molders signed by John Freeborn | 012065 | S Darlow |
| 6. 'Hammer Blow' by David Bryant signed by nine Battle of Britain pilots including John Freeborn | | |

	016360	Roy Smith
7. 12 signed portraits of Battle of Britain pilots by David Pritchard	015411	R Ploszek
8. 'Tiger Prey' by David Pritchard	014901	Dave Roome
9. 'A Tiger's Tale' by Bob Cossey	017323	Pat Thurlow
10. 'A Tiger's Tale' by Bob Cossey	012192	Bill Cunningham
11. 'Honour Restored' by Sqn Ldr Peter Brown	017319	D Lambourne
12. 'Upward and Onward' by Bob Cossey	012105	Jon Howard
13. 'Upward and Onward' by Bob Cossey	014943	Jeanette Ketcher
14. F4J diecast model from Tiger Hobbies	009596	Irene Skinner
15. F4J diecast model from Tiger Hobbies	014940	unclaimed*
16. F4J diecast model from Tiger Hobbies	015805	I G Taylor
17. F4J diecast model from Tiger Hobbies	018856	John Salisbury Jones
18. Hawker Typhoon diecast model from Corgi	014653	unclaimed*
19. Junkers Ju87 diecast model from Corgi	012809	Brian Harris
20. Scale aircraft model of winner's choice to be built by Esmon George	016363	Roy Smith
21. 'On The Alert' by Margaret Tacon	000100	Len Bellamy
22. Robot Hoover	013091	Angela Cordell
23. Cuddly Toy Tiger	013503	P Ethel
24. 60th Anniversary Battle of Britain print	013647	B Andrew
25. Lightning 'Tigers At Night' framed print	019258	David Pointer
26. Esso Centenary Celebration glass tankard	015805	Simon Davis
27. Wine bottle stopper	014933	unclaimed*
28. Bottle Glen Grant single malt whisky	019259	Becky Espin

Annual General Meeting

As is customary, prior to the Dinner the AGM was held and a summary of the minutes can be found below.

1. Apologies were received from Dick Northcote, Henry Lether, Chris Faux, Ian Cadwallader, John Loosemore, Mike Rigg, John Crow, Peter Carr, Doreen Haselwood, Henry Riley, Martin Loveridge, Derek Morter, Esmon George, John Yeo and Angie Cossey
2. In the absence of Dick Northcote (the meeting sent Carolyn their best wishes for a speedy recovery from her operation) our President Cliff Spink welcomed all present and thanked those involved in the organisation of the Reunion weekend.
3. The minutes of the previous meeting as published in *Tiger News* were agreed. There were no matters arising not covered in the present agenda.
4. The Treasurer's report was presented by Rhod Smart - a copy of the accounts is available on request. Pat Thurlow proposed that they be adopted: Graham Clarke seconded.
5. The Committee offered themselves for re-election. For the year 2009 - 2010 the Officers of the Association will therefore be:

Chairman - Dick Northcote. Treasurer - Rhod Smart. Secretary - Bob Cossey.

6. We have all been very aware of the medical problems which our webmaster John Crow has encountered over the past 12 months and which for the first time have prevented him attending a Reunion. Despite this he has continued to maintain the website. All were unanimous in their appreciation of John's achievement in doing this and their thanks to him are duly minuted as are their very best wishes for an improvement in his health so that he can rejoin us again in 2010. Since 2008 new features have been added to www.74squadron.org - namely *In Memoriam*, *Hot News* and *Technical Tips*. The *Mass Photo Archive* continues to grow and in the light of John's own sad experiences *Medical Matters* has been updated. To date there have been 6,500 hits - an average of 9 a day.
7. Progress with raising funds for the proposed museum has, as reported above, received a considerable boost with the successful Draw and on behalf of the Committee Bob Cossey thanked all members for their support for this, both by buying tickets themselves, selling tickets to others and donating prizes for the Draw. In particular thanks go to Cliff Spink, Rhod Smart and Jon Mosen for donating and arranging the top three prizes.

As far as progress with the creation of the museum itself is concerned, Rob Walden, curator of the City of Norwich Aviation Museum (CNAM) of which we are to be a part, later spoke to all members at the Dinner (as reported elsewhere in this issue)

8. Many members have asked the committee to consider a return to Stratford for the 2010 Reunion. Having agreed a return to the Hilton for this year, reports of improving performance at the Falcon have prompted its reconsideration. The meeting agreed that after the current weekend and depending on feelings about the Hilton` s performance, Bob should take a straw poll and book the appropriate venue depending on the result. It had also been mooted by one or two members that the date of the Reunion be put back towards the summer. This however could incur increased charges for the weekend and the majority were in favour of keeping it at the first weekend in March each year.

It can be confirmed that the 2010 Reunion will indeed return to The Falcon at Stratford upon Avon. Full details will appear later this year.

9. Any Other Business. Bob flagged up the themes for the next Reunion i.e. 50 years since 74 introduced the Lightning into RAF operational service: 50 years since 74 Sqn and the 79th TFS met at RAF Woodbridge and the idea of fully fledged Tiger Meets was born: and the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

Membership Matters

We are delighted to welcome **Geoffrey Ratcliffe** as a new member. Geoffrey was a Tiger who served in early 1942 and then again from May 1944 to May 1946, so he saw the transition from Spitfires to Meteors at the end of the war. He was an AC1 Fitter 2A (airframe and engines on Spits with 74 and Hurricanes with 126 Sqn).

A warm welcome too to **Chris Stott**. Chris was a Tengah Tiger, serving from April 1969 to September 1971. Memorable 74 Squadron moments for him are the Darwin detachment in 1969 and a week or more at Butterworth in support of the Bangkok deployment. An additional two aircraft were selected to fly up to Butterworth en route to Bangkok in case the original two went tech - but that didn` t happen and the additional support personnel who went with the aircraft enjoyed a holiday as their services weren` t required! Chris joined the RAF in Feb 1954 as a boy entrant at Cosford and served at Leconfield, Boscombe Down, Coltishall, Wattisham, Sealand, and Bruggen as well as Tengah. He was demobbed in 1977.



Chris and seven of his mates on holiday (sorry - detachment!) at Butterworth in 1971. Left to right - 1 Chris, 2 & 3 not known, 4 Pete Button, 5 Murray Cook, 6 possibly Don Pilbeam and 7 Gus Turnbull. Does anybody know who 2 & 3 are?

Farewells

Russ Allchorn writes: 'On the 12th March the Tiger fraternity, the Royal Air Force and, most importantly Sue, were forced to say their farewells to an irreplaceable officer and gentleman, **Sqn Ldr Pete McNamara**, known affectionately to all as M Squared. Pete was taken from us following a 18 month battle fighting cancer. For those of us that were lucky and privileged enough to have known and worked with Pete he will leave an enduring memory. A true gentleman he combined professionalism, compassion, loyalty, friendship and an unrivaled sense of humour in a character that no one could fail to love, respect and aspire to replicate; his acidic wit and infamous ability to 'banter' and deliver hilarious one-liners will endure forever.



Pete (left) arrives on an exchange visit to Poland when he was with 100 Squadron

There are numerous anecdotes that one could recite from Pete's time in the RAF but one in particular stands out for me. Whilst flying the Phantom F4 at RAF Leuchars Pete was tasked to fly a Royal Navy helicopter pilot in the back seat of his aircraft as part of a liaison visit. Whilst in the air they worked with a Royal Navy Sea King Airborne Early Warning Helicopter. Upon checking in with the helicopter the Royal Navy crew said to Pete 'Have you got one of our chaps in behind you?.' Pete's lightning quick, yet professionally calm response, was a classic, 'Negative, we don't go in for that kind of behavior in the Royal Air Force!'

As an aviator Pete was the consummate professional, always on top of his game, yet completely humble as to the quality of his own abilities. In my early days on 74 (F) Sqn I was lucky enough to be taken under Pete's wing, made to feel human and part of the team. He gave me a confidence in my own abilities that was lacking but also taught me at the same time. It was like an osmosis effect with Pete - he was so natural you never realised straight away just how much knowledge and experience you were taking in. Pete's love of flying was unquestionable. He lived for aviation in the RAF, so much so that he fought relentlessly against the numerous calls for career progression knowing that such a path would restrict his opportunities to continue flying. He was never once posted to a ground tour and flew right up to the day he was diagnosed with this cruel and indiscriminating disease.

I know I speak for all who were lucky enough to have known and worked with Pete when I say that it was a huge privilege and honour to have socialised and worked with him and to have played a small part in his life. He was that one in a million and his memory will endure forever. We will miss him terribly, always. So long 'Bruv'!



Pete's wife Sue chose this picture as 'one that shows his character as people will remember him - and of course it involves vodka!'

I discovered earlier this year that **Group Captain Sammy Hoare** passed away in June 2007. Nineteen year old Sammy arrived at Hornchurch and 74 Squadron on 4th September 1937 as a Pilot Officer in company with Don Thom, the two young pilots having just finished their training at Netheravon. He recalled later.....

..... reporting to the squadron office where we were greeted by the Adjutant Tom Rowland who was very pleasant and began to tell me what a good squadron I was about to join. It was all very exciting for a youngster but I was disappointed when reaching the hangars to see mostly Gauntlets and a few Demons.



It would be 18 months before 74 received Spitfires. On 24th May 1940, during the fierce fighting over France, Sammy was forced to land at Calais-Marck when his aircraft was hit and began losing glycol.

Although our instructions were to patrol the Channel coastline we were told we could go inland if we were investigating any aircraft. I managed to collect a bullet from somewhere. It may have been a German infantryman or light flak or it may even have been from our troops on the ground. I

was intending to go back to base but Mungo Park called me up and said I was streaming glycol. I thought the sensible thing to do was what Squadron Leader White had done the previous day – go into Calais Marck airfield.

Sqn Ldr White had been rescued from Calais Marck but Sammy was not so fortunate and after lying amongst the Calais sand dunes for thirty-six hours and trying unsuccessfully to get onto small boats he was picked up by an SS Panzer unit. He spent the next four years in POW camps, survived the war and finally left the RAF with the rank of Group Captain.

The photo above was taken sometime before April 1938 at Hornchurch – Sammy Hoare is on the left with Charlie Meares, Temple Harris and an unidentified dog.



We also sadly have to report the passing of Tiger **Bill Longman** on December 28th last year at the age of 89. Part of Bill's service career as an airframe fitter was working on Sailor Malan's aircraft and he was doing so when Sailor was 74's CO at Hornchurch. Bill also spent time in the USA with Curtis Wright and in Canada for training prior to returning to the UK as an instructor - or so he thought. However this didn't happen for Bill found himself in North Africa at the time of El Alamein instead. He stayed there for the duration. After demob (by which time he had reached the rank of corporal) Bill joined BOAC and was licensed Cat A for work on Avro Yorks and Handley Page Hermes. He later moved to de Havilland and the old Airspeed works at Somerford near Christchurch. The last aircraft Bill worked on was the Sea Vixen FAW1 and FAW 2.



Tiger Aubrey Derrick Ping died on 24th March 2009. Aubrey joined 74 at Droppe in Belgium during April 1945, maintaining Spitfire XVIIs. He had joined the RAF in 1941 and following training on one of the last FME courses at RAF Cosford (all engine courses were soon to be transferred to Halton) he was posted 501 Squadron maintaining Spitfire Vbs (one of the aircraft he maintained, EP120, still flies with the Fighter Collection at Duxford). In 1943 he was posted to 660 (AOP) Squadron servicing Auster 3s & 4s and also flying on operations as an observer. In late June 1944 Aubrey landed in Normandy and with 660 Sqn took part in the battles of Caen and the Falaise gap. After the Rhine crossing he was posted to 74. At the war's end he was given a brief course

training on the Welland jet engine - but then along with others was given a crash course at Rolls Royce Derby because the Meteors the squadron began to receive were fitted with the Derwent.

Aubrey's son Robin writes: 'My first memories of 74 were during 1961 when I was taken by my father to see nine bright silver planes with tiger's heads on their tails take off and climb vertically into the sky. The last memory I have was when dad was invited to attend one of the last 74 Squadron family days at RAF Wattisham whilst they were still flying the Phantom.'



[Peter Matthews](#)

Peter Matthews is the often forgotten Commanding Officer of the Tigers. He was with them for a short while in the Middle East - from 7th February to 10th July 1942 in fact. A year previously the war artist Cuthbert Orde had drawn his likeness, portraying him in the classic pose of a Royal Air Force officer and pilot of the day. He was with the Tigers at the time they were bereft of aircraft and were waiting for replacements for Spitfires which had been lost in the Mediterranean when the ship carrying them had been sunk. Squadron personnel had sailed via South Africa. Peter Matthews went on to command 73 Squadron.

Pilot Officer Peter Charles Fasken Stevenson DFC

Craig Brandon takes a brief look at the career of Peter Stevenson who became a Tiger in February 1940. His father was at that time a Group Captain and on the verge of becoming ADC to King George V.

Peter Stevenson was born at The Priest's House, Wellingore in Lincolnshire into a military family with his grandfather a Lieutenant Colonel and his father, Donald, a Flight Lieutenant and probably based at nearby RAF Cranwell. Donald's career was already under way to one of high rank in the RAF but had actually started in the Army, transferring from the Sherwood Forresters to the RFC in 1916, retaining the rank of Captain. Flying with 12 Squadron over the Western Front he was awarded the Military Cross and bar in 1917 followed by a DSO in 1918. During the inter-war years Donald held a number of staff jobs which included tours in Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine as well as commanding 12 Squadron for three years. In 1939 he became ADC to King George V and in October 1940, by now an Air Commodore, he was Director of Home Operations. On 17th October 1940 he was one of those who met with Sir Hugh Dowding and Keith Park to discuss the tactics used during the Battle of Britain, a meeting which led to the shameful dismissal of both Dowding and Park. Coincidentally, the sons of both Stevenson and Dowding were Tigers at the time. In February 1941 Donald was appointed AOC 2 Group and was responsible for ordering spectacular low level operations which led to a very high casualty rate amongst the crews of the obsolete Blenheim which equipped the majority of 2 Group's squadrons. The losses led to Donald Stevenson earning the nickname of Butcher Stevenson. He was also instrumental in introducing Hurricats, fighters carried aboard merchant ships in an attempt to combat dreadful shipping losses in the Atlantic. Donald was later posted to the Far East to become CinC India-Burma Air Force. It was here that he became very well known to ex Tiger H M Stephen who was then serving on Lord Louis Mountbatten's staff. In 1948 Stevenson retired from the RAF as an Air Vice Marshal having been awarded the OBE and made a CBE. He died in 1964.

Son Peter meanwhile was educated at Clifton College and in 1938 entered the RAF College near the family home. After the outbreak of war the training courses were shortened and Peter graduated in December 1939. The London Gazette of 23rd December confirmed his permanent commission as a Pilot Officer. He joined the Tigers at Rochford on 15th February 1940 and with Peter St John and later Peter Chesters became one of the three Peters who with Don Cobden were pals with John Freeborn. John remembers Peter Stevenson as 'a lovely fellow but a bit of a ditherer'.

Peter was very active in the fighting over France. Over Dunkirk on 22nd May 1940, flying as Malan's Red 2 with Tony Mould as Red 3, he shared in destroying a Ju88 which crashed into the Channel ten miles north of Calais. On the 27th he claimed a Bf109 as a probable. On the same day his aircraft was hit by return fire from a Do17 and as it was losing glycol he decided to make a forced landing on the beach at Dunkirk rather than risk a potential ditching in the Channel. He returned to Hornchurch on the last day of the month, flying on to Leconfield to rejoin 74. He achieved further successes during July 1940 with a 109 shot

down into the sea on the 8th followed by two probable 109s on the 10th when flying as Red 3 to Tony Mould protecting Convoy Bread over North Foreland. His victories were followed by an He111 shared on the 12th over the Thames estuary protecting Convoy Agent and a probable 109 and two others damaged on the 28th. Also on the 28th he was pursuing Major Molders of JG51 over the Channel when he was attacked by Oberleutnant Leppla and had to carry out an emergency landing at Manston when the engine of his Spitfire (L1084) seized. Fortunately he was unhurt. Molders was wounded but managed to get back to France where he crash landed at Wissant.

In the first combat on the famous August 14th Stevenson was shot down into the Channel one mile off Dover following his solo attack on twelve Bf109s, one of which he was credited with as destroyed. He had to bale out of P9393 and was almost drowned before being rescued by an MTB after drifting eleven miles out to sea - but only after he attracted the attention of the boat by firing his revolver into the air. He was awarded the DFC on 27th August 1940, the citation reading:

This officer has flown continuously with his squadron since May 1940. He participated in the Dunkirk operations and has since been engaged throughout the intensive air operations which have occurred whilst protecting shipping in the Channel and Thames estuary. He has destroyed three enemy aircraft and assisted in the destruction of others. This officer has been forced to abandon his aircraft by parachute on account of enemy action but this has merely increased his determination to engage the enemy on every possible occasion. His coolness, courage and spirit are of the highest order.

On 20th September 1940 Stevenson was posted away from the Tigers to 5 OTU Aston Down as an instructor. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant on 23rd December 1941. On 13th February 1943 he was shot down whilst flying with 64 Squadron during a sweep over the Boulogne area. His body was not recovered and he is commemorated on Panel 121 of the Runnymede Memorial.

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[Rules Pilots Live By](#)

Shared with us by **Graham Clarke**

- The scientific theory I like best is that the rings of Saturn are composed entirely of lost airline baggage.
- Both optimists and pessimists contribute to society. The optimist invents the aeroplane, the pessimist the parachute.
- Airlines have really changed. Now a flight attendant can get a pilot pregnant.
- If helicopters are so safe, how come there are no vintage/classic helicopter fly-ins.
- Real planes use only a single stick to fly. This is why bulldozers & helicopters -- in that order -- need two.
- There are only three things the co-pilot should ever say. Nice landing, Sir. I'll buy the first round. And I'll take the ugly one.
- As a pilot, only two bad things can happen to you and one of them will. [a] One day

- you will walk out to the aircraft knowing that it is your last flight. [b] One day you will walk out to the aircraft not knowing that it is your last flight.
- To become a jet pilot, one must be an egomaniac with low self esteem.
 - The medical profession is the natural enemy of the aviation profession.
 - Ever notice that the only experts who decree that the age of the pilot is over are people who have never flown anything? Also, in spite of the intensity of their feelings that the pilot's day is over I know of no expert who has volunteered to be a passenger in a non-piloted aircraft.
 - Before each flight, make sure that your bladder is empty and your fuel tanks are full.
 - He who demands everything that his aircraft can give him is a pilot; he that demands one iota more is a fool.
 - There are certain aircraft sounds that can only be heard at night.
 - The aircraft limits are only there in case there is another flight by that particular aircraft. If subsequent flights do not appear likely, there are no limits.
 - Flying is a great way of life for men who want to feel like boys but not for those who still are.
 - Flying is a hard way to earn an easy living.
 - Hopefully a pilot never runs out of airspeed, altitude and ideas all at the same time.
 - In the Alaska bush I'd rather have a two hour bladder and three hours of gas than vice versa.
 - It's not that all airplane pilots are good looking. It's just that good looking people seem more capable of flying airplanes. Or so seasoned observers contend. A matter of self confidence? No doubt, no doubt.
 - I've flown in both pilot seats. Can someone tell me why the other one is always occupied by an idiot?
 - Son, you're going to have to make up your mind about growing up and becoming a pilot. You can't do both.
 - There is nothing in the world more useless than runway behind you!!

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Singapore

Sid Simpson has been looking back at his days with 74 at Tengah - not just from a Squadron perspective but from a personal and family one too.

Arriving in Singapore and after my first equatorial breakfast and a quick change into my very smart fawn coloured lightweight KD uniform with knee high stockings and well polished shoes, I self conscientiously walked out of the hotel to the nearby road to wave down a pick-up taxi. This mode of public transport was multi-racial, super efficient and usually full of Singaporeans, Indians, Malayans, Chinese and the occasional European. On waving down a cab the driver just stopped and invited the new customer to find a seat on entry. If your destination was not on his planned route you were told to wait for another cab. If it was you were rarely refused a seat - one was always somehow found. Fares were paid on leaving the

cab and I can't remember any dispute over cost. On this occasion Tengah was on his route and so I sat down in the vacant front passenger seat, noting the rear seat to be full of what I suspected was a family of five Chinese people. 'What a beautiful morning,' I thought as we set off in his smooth Merc full of excitement at at last seeing RAF Tengah and drove through the village of Tengah, a typical array of poor wooden, corrugated, unattractive tin houses with the locals sitting at small tables eating minimal meals off small rickety tables.

Then we arrived on base. After a warm welcome handshake I was asked whether I had got my boots, referring to my soccer footwear. 'We want you to play tonight for Tengah under floodlights against the top team in our league,' I was told. But my squadron commitments had to be checked first and I also had my wife and baby son to consider back at our hotel in the city. The squadron hanger was a short walk from the main gates It was about 9.30am, quite humid and slightly uncomfortable walking. Soon a glistening new hangar came into view with two Lightnings standing majestically on the concrete dispersal. I checked into the admin office and discovered my first week of shifts would be 08.00-17.00hrs. 'Day shift,' said my operations controller. This meant I could get back to our hotel, see Lesley and Simon and exchange first day experiences. This caused the first altercation of my Far East tour!

Lesley was still a relatively shy service wife, a redhead and fair skinned. Her day had been uncomfortable and awkward although she had made acquaintances with other squadron wives and children, but overall it had been a difficult day for her which I didn't improve when I told her that after a light meal I was to return to Tengah to represent the station soccer team in the floodlit match. I reflect that a better course of action would have been to delay my Tengah debut for maybe a week at least, get acclimatised, settle down to our new routine and improve my tan from the mottled white skin I had brought with me. But instead off I went with my kit bag down the noisy drive, buzzing with insects and damp, sweaty foliage. The humidity level was only just bearable. '90 minutes of football in this?' I thought as the first pick-up taxi stopped.

I had already seen the pitch during the day on a drive around the unit on a familiarisation tour in a squadron Land Rover. It had a good playing surface and a super floodlight system which helped the standard of football played. My debut was successful. I had a good game and lasted the match okay. My friend Clive Jones had advised lots of water intake and plenty of salt on food eaten. I remember perspiring profusely and sucking the life out of our traditional half time orange. After the match, which we won 3-1, I was congratulated on a fine performance by our manager and some of our squadron's single men who lived in camp accommodation near to the pitch. I had enjoyed my first representative game in the Far East very much but resisted the invitation to post-match drinks as I was desperate to return to our hotel to see my wife and young son. Pick-up taxis were always available in abundance outside the camp gates so I was soon on my way. Lesley was pleased to see me and Simon was in his cot asleep, well fed and I'm sure wondering why he was being washed down so often. The humidity levels were new to us all! Lesley understandably was still feeling awkward with new friends. As this routine continued for about another four weeks Lesley was getting increasingly very tired of being on her own in the evenings with Simon needing more attention as he was growing and beginning to crawl.

I had been told of available accommodation in the village of Bukit Timah near to where my good friend Clive lived with his wife and young daughter. This village overlooked the main dual carriageway running from Singapore City across the island to a bridge over the Johore Straits to the most southern tip of Malaya. The Bukit Timah road as it was called was extremely busy and had lots of settlements branching off along its route housing Chinese and Malaysian families, mostly in squalid conditions. After viewing the bungalow we felt it would benefit us as a family. The taxi journey to work would be halved, there were shops nearby and the Jones's were just around the corner. There was a separate room for Simon and a garden of our own with a drive but no garage. The four sides of the garden were simple borders with bushes and exotic plants. Butterflies and birds were a common sight feeding off the buds of flowers. Mynah birds were the most common, a black bird with a bright yellow beak, noisy and very industrious, feeding at every opportunity. I clearly remember one day hearing an awful racket in the garden. A stray cat had pounced from the foliage and caught one of the flock. Within seconds the rest were diving at the petrified cat which soon gave in and scampered off never to mix with Mynah birds again.

To be continued.

I



'Lightnings standing majestically on the concrete dispersal.' Photograph by John Greaves.

Incidentally, Tengah Tigers Pete Johnstone, Robert Johnstone (with Linda and Caryn). Bill Cunningham (with Carol) and George Woodhall (with Christine) are going back to Tengah in June to rekindle old memories. Full report to follow!



Tiger Go Kart

Lightning Tiger Russ Peart lives in Cyprus and races go karts there (he has recently won the Paphos Pro Kart Championship).

Three years ago he was allocated the race number 74 and the opportunity to customise his new kart was too good for Russ to miss.

The result is pretty spectacular as you can see!

HMS Victorious - Part Two



Those of us who have never done it probably question the sanity of FAA pilots who choose to land their aircraft on a tiny moving runway in the midst of an otherwise empty sea in often hostile conditions! And pictures of the consequences of getting it slightly wrong do nothing to change the questioning. This sequence was taken by **Roger Hopson** when he served on HMS Victorious in the late 1960s - you saw some in the last issue of Tiger News - and they

speak eloquently for themselves and illustrate very nicely the dangers of carrier flying. With thanks to **David Earl** for passing them on to me.



Landing a Martlet

The photos published of HMS Victorious in the last edition of Tiger News prompted **Derek Morris** to put pen to paper to recount his experiences of Royal Navy aircraft carriers.

In the '60s and '70s I paid a few duty visits to aircraft carriers, but it was my wartime experience of carriers in action which has caused me to hold their fliers and seamen in high regard ever since. One of the first reactions following the loss of Singapore in 1942 was to send two heavy bomber squadrons to operate against the Japanese advance towards India, the first one being 215 Squadron. This was to be a newly formed unit and while Bomber Command was grudgingly parting with 16 Wellingtons (Mk Ics as these were now surplus to requirements as the Command was re-equipping with the more powerful Mk IIIs) and trying to rustle up crews for them, a motley collection of all trades was arriving at the West Kirby transit camp to form the squadron's ground staff and I was one of them. We had hardly got to know one another before we were staggering up the gangplank of HMT *Ormonde* at Greenock. When I boarded the ship a character came over and said 'what trade are you sergeant?' 'Armament,' says I to which he replied 'good, that makes two of you. Your job during the voyage is to man the anti-aircraft gun pit up on the boat deck!'

We sailed out of the Clyde the following morning (it was Friday 13th February) into the beginnings of a top class Atlantic gale. It took a day or two for the convoy to assemble and then to our surprise we were joined by our escort whose size gave us an inflated idea of our importance. There were two aircraft carriers - HMS *Eagle* and HMS *Formidable* plus a cruiser HMS *Birmingham* and twelve destroyers. They were to stay with us for about a week before peeling off to join the Mediterranean Fleet (where *Eagle* was later torpedoed) leaving us with just two destroyers.

The sea was very rough with water breaking over our liner's bows and the destroyers disappearing through some of the big waves - their crews must have been soaked all the time. Both carriers operated aircraft in spite of the weather, mostly Grumman Martlets with the occasional Swordfish. To watch the Martlets take off and land was something I have never forgotten. The carriers were both pitching and rolling heavily when Martlets were taking off and they often dropped towards the wave tops before they managed to climb away. Landings were always fraught. With the carriers rising and falling alarmingly, sometimes an aircraft's wheels were just about to touch when the deck dropped twenty or more feet away from beneath them. That would result in a heart stopping overshoot or a heavy thump onto the deck and if it was rising again it occasionally caused the Martlet to bounce off the deck into nets rigged along both sides. Several aircraft suffered that fate.

Incidentally, we never did get to take up our air defence role. Going up to the boat deck one morning after a particularly rough night we found that the gun post - a concrete and timber affair - had disappeared over the side!

To be continued