MY SERVICE YEARS.

Jock Cassels.
RAF - 1941-1966
RAAF - 1966-1979

AIR FORCE SERVICE AFTER THE WAR.

At this time I didn't know what my future would be and the Air Force left me on indefinite leave. Demobilisation of the Armed Services started and it was a case of first in first out. I can't remember when my "demob" date was but it certainly wasn't in the near future. After several months I became a bit tired of the inactivity and I'm not sure whether I contacted the RAF or they contacted me but I indicated that I wished to remain in the RAF and eventually I was told to report to No 7 Flying Instructors' School at RAF Upavon in Jan 1946 for training as a Flying Instructor.

No 7 Flying Instructors School.

No 7 FIS was located at RAF Station Upavon in Wiltshire. It was one of the original RAF airfields and originated just after the first World War. It was a grass airfield and was used mainly for training purposes. The course was unusual in that the students were mainly from the French, Dutch and Belgian Air Forces and those personnel who had been fighting alongside the Allies in the latter stages of the war. In fact, of the 20 students on the course only 2, myself and another officer, were in the RAF. All the instructors were, of course, RAF officers. Fortunately, all the foreign students spoke very good English so I had no problem when the students had to fly together. The aircraft involved was a Harvard 11B an aircraft with which I was well acquainted, having trained on it.

Halfway through the course there was a re-organisation of Flying Training Command airfields and the course moved to Central Flying School at RAF Little Rissington. This delayed the finish

date for the course and it was not until the end of June that we graduated as Flying Instructors after approx 100 hours training.

No 22 Service Flying Training School.

In July 1946 I started instructing at 22 SFTS. This was located at a place called Ouston which was near Newcastle in the North of England. The students were Royal Navy officers who were training to become pilots in the Fleet Air Arm and the RAF had the responsibility for training their aircrew.

Quite a number already had air experience having been Observers/Navigators in the Fleet Air Arm and were no strangers to aviation. Being single I lived in the Officers Mess (above), as did all the students and in no time flat, naval jargon had me going "ashore" when I left the base. I had no idea then but this was to be the start of a 5 year period as an instructor during which I would return to where I began my flying career - Rhodesia, and where an event would occur that would alter my life.

I soon settled down to life as an instructor and enjoyed my association with the Naval types. The only interruption to normal routine was when I was sent to No 1 Beam Approach School, RAF Watchfield in December 1946 for a week's course in Instrument Flying using the Beam System to make an approach and let down to an airfield in bad weather. Shortly after my return to Ouston I was attached to Empire Flying School at RAF Hullavington and started an Instrument Rating Course in January 1947.

Empire Flying School, RAF Hullavington.

Shortly after the end of the war the RAF realised that the force had to become more proficient in flying in bad weather conditions and instituted an Instrument Rating Scheme. This involved checking pilots on their Instrument flying ability and issuing them with a Green or White Instrument Rating Card. A Green card allowed a pilot to operate in more restrictive weather conditions than the holder of a White Card. The system required training pilots to be Instrument Rating Examiners and the first course was held at EFS which was the place where all Test Pilots were trained. The course I was on was the first course.

The weather conditions for the first course couldn't have been better, or worse, depending on how you look at it. The weather at the beginning of 1947 in the UK was awful - snow, low cloud and freezing temperatures. The first indication of how bad things were, was when the first aircraft, a Harvard, tried to take off. The pilot tried unsuccessfully to lift off but couldn't and abandoned the take off, he braked and ended up sliding off the runway and ended up just short of a parked Lancaster. Examination of the aircraft found that the wings were covered in a thin

film of clear ice which disrupted the airflow over the wings; this meant that there was insufficient lift at take off speed. Thereafter the wings of all aircraft were closely examined for clear ice before flight and the training continued.

The emphasis on instrument flying to the limit resulted in the death of two pilots. The instructor was a bomber pilot with a DFC and the student, also a bomber pilot had the DFC and bar. They put their aircraft, a Harvard, into a deliberate spin when in cloud and failed to recover. Another student was killed when low flying in a Spitfire.

It was an unusual course in that apart from concentrating on instrument flying the students had the opportunity to fly six different types of aircraft. They were -- Harvard, Spitfire, Oxford, Buckmaster, Lancaster and the Meteor Jet. We were given the Pilots Notes (details on how to fly the aircraft) for each aircraft and where necessary some dual instruction. Having flown the Harvard and Spitfire before I only had to be given dual instruction on the Oxford and Buckmaster (similar to but bigger than a Beaufighter) but I only had one flight in the Lancaster.

The Meteor was a different proposition for it had jet engines and a tricycle landing gear, both new to me. Being a single seat aircraft it was a case of reading the Pilots Notes and convincing the instructor that you knew your way round the cockpit i.e. where every switch, button and lever was located. In spite of the fact that I was a little apprehensive as I had never flown a jet aircraft and the weather was bad, I thoroughly enjoyed my first flight in a jet. The course finished at the end of March after 60 hours flying and I returned to my instructing duties at No 22 SFTS.

No 22 SFTS

I resumed my QFI duties on return to RAF Ouston and apart from the additional task of carrying out all Instrument Rating Tests, life settled into its previous pattern. I was to remain at 22 SFTS until the end of 1947 but before I move on to my next posting I feel I should relate an incident which occurred in October of that year. At the end of the war most communities held functions to welcome home the local servicemen. I was invited to attend a Welcome Home Dinner in my home town of Kirkintilloch on 29 October. Being midweek and very busy the only way I could attend was if I flew to Abbotsfield airfield near Glasgow. I had two student flights that morning and not having time to flight plan I asked the Navigation section to work me out a course and time to Glasgow. They left the information on the flight notice board which I memorised before hurrying to get my gear before take-off. If I remember correctly the course was 329 degrees and time 41 minutes.

When airborne I set course on 341 degrees. I was above a layer of cloud for most of the trip and still above cloud when it was time to let down. Through a small break in the cloud I glimpsed open countryside when it should have been city dwellings. I decided to continue on my heading for another 5 minutes and a good break in the cloud appeared so I let down through it. To my amazement I was in hilly country and in the vicinity of a large Loch. I had a feeling I had overshot Glasgow and when I saw a railway line heading South East I followed it. I saw a small railway station and lowering my wheels and flaps flew low enough to read the name on its large nameplate. It was Aberfeldy near the top of Loch Tay a long way north of Glasgow. Putting the wrong heading on my compass had taken me East and North of Glasgow. To add to a host of errors Glasgow was at the top edge of my map so I had no map for the territory I was in. Previously I had tried to call Abbotsinch control tower but had no success, no doubt due to being low and out of radio range. I knew Aberfeldy was north of Glasgow so keeping below cloud I headed South.

In the distance away to my left I saw a large castle which I soon recognised as Stirling Castle. Anyway, I was now in my home territory and soon after landed at Abbotsinch after a 90 minute flight which should have taken 40 minutes. When he asked why I was late I hadn't the guts to tell the Air Traffic Control Officer the truth. Why do I go to a lengthy explanation of this episode? Well it highlights the fact that when planning a flight make sure it is done properly in accordance with procedures and not a hurried last minute unprepared event.

My mistakes:

- I did not do any flight planning,
- did not check the en-route weather and
- had insufficient map coverage.

I deserved a "must do better" mark for this episode. My total flying hours while at 22 SFTS were 420.

Before I leave my time at Ouston, I must also mention that I had purchased my first car. I bought it from a fellow instructor for 100 pounds during a Christmas Mess function and planned to drive home for Christmas leave the next day. It was the same age as me, a 1923 Vauxhall 14 HP two seater with a "Dickie" seat in the back. It had an aluminium body and as I found out later the brakes were not the best. I set off late in the afternoon and it was dark when I found the road blocked by a large parked lorry. I went to pass it but another vehicle was coming towards me so I had two choices - swing back to the left and hit the lorry (the bad brakes) or swing right off the road. I chose the latter and hit a large telegraph pole. They obviously built strong chassis in those days for the only damage was a busted radiator, in spite of the high impact speed. To cut a long story short the car was taken to a local garage and I continued my journey in the car of a fellow instructor who fortunately was following me. I later sold the car to one of the naval students who drove it to London and on arrival had an accident - he went over a roundabout instead of around it. Probably those brakes again!

Now onto my next posting which to my delight was to No 4 Flying Training School (FTS) in Rhodesia.

No 4 FTS, RAF Heany, Rhodesia.

When I was posted to Rhodesia in 1942 I travelled by troopship and it took 6 weeks, this time I travelled first class by the Union Castle Line and it took two weeks. No need to say which voyage I preferred. On 30 December 1947 I arrived at RAF Heany which was located about 20 minutes drive from Bulawayo in the southern part of the country. It was while in Rhodesia that I bought a new car - a Morris 10, costing, I think, 400 pounds.

Flying Instruction in Rhodesia was quite different to that in the UK. Because of the heat and the resulting air turbulence, flying started at 0600 hours and finished at 1300 hours. This allowed the students better flying conditions in which to absorb their tuition. There were two stages of training at 4 FTS - Elementary on Tiger Moth aircraft and Advanced on Harvard aircraft. My duties were mainly confined to giving students their final Instrument Flying test on Harvards and examining the instructors for reissue of their Instrument Rating.

Apart from my instructional duties I had the opportunity to visit Livingstone and Lusaka in Northern Rhodesia to take part in an Air Display and to the Caprivi Strip in Namibia to search for a lost civilian aircraft. In the latter part of my posting I made quite a few week-end trips to Salisbury, landing at Cranbourne where I had gained my wings during the war. The reason for these trips I'll explain later.

On my return to Rhodesia I renewed my association with the Brown family, staying with them when on leave and whenever I visited Salisbury. This was the family who had been so kind to me during the war and I had great pleasure in meeting them again after 4 years. One of their daughters, June, was a nurse and she introduced me to her friend, another nurse named Maureen Stiles. In March I was due some leave and with a fellow instructor, Graham Baxter, we drove to South Africa in my car. One of our stops was in Durban where we spent a fair time on the lovely beaches. On return to the car one day who should be standing beside it but June and Maureen. They had recognised my car from the Bulawayo number plate and decided to wait beside it until we arrived. We had no idea they were in South Africa and neither did they know that we were also there. Talk about coincidences! We teamed up together and spent a lot of time on the beach and at dances and night functions. A very pleasant 7 days and it was during this time that I became attracted to Maureen and, I think, she to me. On return to my duties I decided to get to know Maureen a bit more, hence my frequent weekend trips to Salisbury. Through these Salisbury visits and correspondence I got to know Maureen well, so well in fact that I found myself in love with her. I drove to Salisbury on my last visit and in my car proposed to her. I can't remember how she said it but she obviously accepted and we discussed how we were going to organise our future. She wanted to finish her training as a nurse and I had to return to the UK. That's how things stood when I arrived at my next posting as an instructor at a Flying Refresher School (FRS).

Flying Refresher School.

The Flying Refresher School was located at RAF Finningley just outside Doncaster. Qualified pilots who had been serving in Administrative or ground jobs and who were returning to flying posts had to be given a period of refresher training and this was done at FRS. The aircraft used were the ubiquitous Harvard and the twin engined Wellington T10 a training version of the

Wellington Bomber used in the early part of WW2. There was also a Spitfire XV1 which I had the opportunity to fly and a Meteor 7 which was a twin seat version of the Meteor I had flown at EFS Hullavington in 1947. When I first flew the Spitfire and the Meteor there were no twin seat versions. I spent 5 months on the Harvard Flight and 5 months on the Wellington Flight. One of my "students" was a staff officer from Flying Training Command Headquarters and I mentioned to him about having been instructing for 5 years and that I would like a change. He said that he would contact a friend in the posting section of Flying Training Command Headquarters. Three weeks later I got a change. And what a change it was: to No 235 Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) to convert onto Sunderland Flying Boats and the start of one of the most satisfying periods in my flying career. It was all different. Flying a large 4 engined aircraft which was also a boat - no wheels !

No. 235 Operational Conversion Unit

235 OCU was based at RAF Calshot and located at the bottom end of Southampton Waters, opposite the Isle of Wight. It had been the home of all Flying Boat and Seaplane activity in the RAF for many years, dating back, I believe, to the mid twenties. It was a unit in RAF Coastal Command. My course was not due to start until May and having a couple of months to wait I was attached to the current course as supernumerary crew. This involved flying as 2nd pilot to a crew under instruction. The young pilot under instruction, who I was crewed with, was a Pilot Officer (rank) Chesworth who had just got his wings and when he finished the course was posted to a Flying Boat Squadron in Japan and served in the Korean War. I mention this for George Chesworth had a distinguished career in the RAF, retiring as an Air Vice Marshal.

My course started in May and finished in July and apart from the conversion onto type, involved operational training in Coastal Command activities such as Ship Interceptions, Radar Homings, Bombing and Gunnery. By the time the course finished I had flown about 200 hours on the Sunderland 5. and was ready for posting to a Squadron. However, before I leave the training phase I must mention the difference between operating a land-based aircraft and a flying boat.

In a land-based aircraft you sign the necessary papers, walk or drive to the aircraft, start up, taxi to the runway and off you go. On landing you park the aircraft, sign the necessary paper work and the flight is over and your work done. On flying boats, after signing the paper work, you take a boat trip to the aircraft, ensure the crew has disconnected the anchor chain from the mooring buoy thus leaving the aircraft secured to the buoy by the bow rope and then start the engines. As the aircraft is subject to both wind and tide these have to be taken into consideration before casting off and taxying to the take off point. Needless to say, the state of the sea is also a factor to be considered on take-off. On landing the aim is to approach the mooring buoy as slowly as possible with both inner engines shut down so that the crewman in the bow can attach the bow

rope to the buoy. This is not an easy job as the outer engines cannot be stopped until the aircraft is securely moored to the buoy, for if the buoy is missed, the engines are required to manoeuvre for another approach.

At night when there is a strong wind and the tide is running at right angles to the wind, getting onto the buoy can be a really difficult manoeuvre. Once moored, some of the crew, one of whom must be a pilot, have to stay behind to refuell the aircraft. This is done by dropping back on the anchor chain a long way, to allow the refuelling boat to tie up to the buoy, and the refuelling lines are then passed to the aircraft from the stern of the refueller. Only when the aircraft has been refuelled and securely moored can the crew then call for a boat to get ashore.

The crew of a Sunderland usually totalled 10 - 2 Pilots, 2 Navigators, 2 Engineers, 2 Wireless Operators and 2 Wireless Op/Gunners. The large crew was necessary as the aircraft was employed on long range maritime duties involving flights of up to 10-12 hours. The crew was divided into watches (Port and Starboard) so that non-flying tasks such as refuelling was shared. When airborne, domestic duties e.g. cooking and cleaning was usually undertaken by the off duty crew members. I found life as a flying boat pilot quite demanding, exciting, different, very satisfying and a posting to an operational squadron was exactly what I wanted. This was to be to No. 230 Flying Boat Squadron.

230 Squadron, RAF Pembroke Dock, Wales

RAF Pembroke Dock, located in West Wales and known in the RAF as "PD", was home to two Flying Boat squadrons - No 201 and No 230. It was a flying boat base during WW2 with the aircraft operating in the Bay of Biscay and the Eastern Atlantic sea approaches to the British Isles. Anti submarine patrols and convoy protection were the main tasks.

During the war, 230 Sqn had operated in the Far East being based in Ceylon and Singapore and this was reflected in the officially approved squadron badge which shows a tiger with a palm tree in the background. This was an exact copy of the insignia on the beer bottle of Tiger Breweries, the local beer company, and squadron members helped greatly in keeping the company profitable. Hence the connection.

To gain a captaincy depended on the posting out of existing captains to other units and it was 9 months before I gained my captaincy. This was in May 1952 and I was fortunate to inherit a good bunch of chaps and we stayed together as a crew for most of my remaining time on the squadron. After nearly 60 years I still keep in touch with a couple of the crew. Apart from the usual training flights around the British Isles we spent many happy times together in a number of foreign places:

- To Gibraltar on Navigation training trips;
- To Malta to exercise with the British Mediterranean Fleet;
- To Norway for NATO exercises and
- To Greenland to support the British North Greenland Expedition.

A couple of anecdotes about these trips. While in Norway we were based on an American depot ship based in a fiord near Trondheim and adjacent to a town named Hell. So, when we had a day off we had to catch a train and go through Hell to get to Trondheim!! While in Malta in May 1953 our exercises with the British Fleet were interrupted because of trouble in Egypt. It was

urgent that a Commando Unit of Royal Marines, which was based in Malta, be air lifted to the Canal Zone and as we were the only aircraft available we were given the task of flying them to Fanara near Ismailia on the Bitter Lakes to reinforce the forces there. As we couldn't remain in Egypt we had to refuel and immediately return to Malta, it was a long day. The Squadron involvement with the British North Greenland Expedition took place in the summer of 1953 and I'll describe this in more detail later but I must go back to December 1951 when I returned to Rhodesia to attend a major event in my life - my marriage.

On my return to the UK from Rhodesia in 1950 I had continued my courtship of Maureen Stiles by mail but so far had not given her an engagement ring. As I hadn't a clue about rings we decided that I would send her money and she would choose the ring. This she did and we considered ourselves formally engaged. Her family home was in Gwelo and I had only met her family once and that was just before I left Rhodesia when I had attended an Air Display at RAF Thornhill near Gwelo. I didn't tell them of our plans but visited them only as a friend of Maureen. It was when Maureen bought the ring that she told them of our engagement and it was then that I wrote to her father seeking permission to marry his daughter.

Getting Married.

Being a serviceman the first thing I had to do was get permission from the RAF to get married which was to be on 8 December. This was done by writing a formal letter to my Commanding Officer seeking his approval - things have changed since then and this formality is no longer necessary. Of interest is the fact that my CO at the time was Squadron Leader Jimmy Higgins who had married a Rhodesian girl during the war. The next thing I had to do was get myself to Rhodesia and bring Maureen back with me to the UK. This required a fair bit of money and I had to sell my car to pay for my air fare to Rhodesia and our honeymoon boat trip back to the UK. I applied for the necessary leave and set off for Rhodesia by BOAC on 3 December. I had to leave the international flight at Livingstone, N Rhodesia to catch a local flight to Bulawayo in S Rhodesia and from there I got a lift to Gwelo in an RAF Harvard flown by a friend.

While delighted to be reunited, I suppose that it would be fair to say that not having seen each other for 18 months, and 3 days away from getting married we were both a little nervous about what lay ahead. But we were sure of our feelings for each other and when her father asked us if we were certain that we wanted to go ahead with the wedding and not cancel, even at that late stage, we assured him that we did. So we were married on Saturday 8 December 1951 at St Cuthberts Church in Gwelo. None of my family in Scotland attended the wedding, mainly

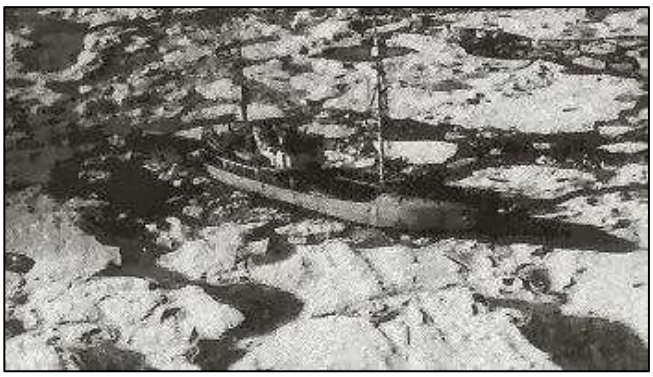
because of the travel expense involved, but there were many congratulatory telegrams. The best man was George Gellatly the fellow student from my training days in Rhodesia in 1942/3 and who had returned to Rhodesia after the war to continue his trade as a plumber. After the reception we left that night by train for the three day journey to Capetown. Following two days sightseeing in Capetown we embarked on the liner "Stirling Castle" and set sail for our 14 day honeymoon voyage to Southampton. We had Christmas on board and arrived in Southampton on 27 December. Another night on the train and finally I was home in Scotland introducing my new wife to the Cassels' family. As my leave was running out we only had a few days to celebrate the New Year at home before leaving to take up residence in our first home, which was a rented furnished house in Tenby, a coastal town near Pembroke Dock.

I needed a car to get to and from work and I had only enough money left from the sale of my first car to buy a little old Austin 7 from a local farmer, but it served the purpose. So back to work. at 230 Squadron.

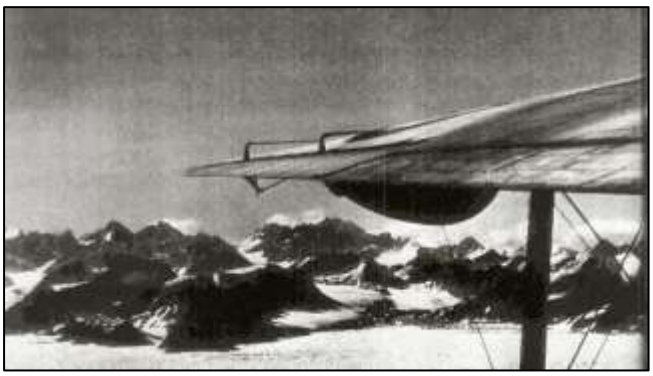
Greenland.

The routine activities continued until July 1952 when the squadron was given the task of supporting the British North Greenland Expedition (BNGE). The BNGE was a 2 year project whose object was to establish the depth of the Greenland Icecap, make Seismic and Gravity surveys of unexplored land and gain experience of living, travelling and operating in Arctic regions which would be of value to the Services.

This was an exciting and a very demanding task for the squadron as it required operating flying boats in a remote part of the Arctic.



MV Tottan, Off East Coast of Greenland.



The Barrier Sturstrummer Glacier.

Commander CJW Simpson RN, Leader of British North Greenland Expedition 1952-1954.

Zachenberg - Young Sound 1952
Stores awaiting airlift.

Meal time at Young Sound, Self & CO (backs to hut).

Before the task of the BNGE could begin a base had to be established on the East Coast of far north Greenland. In 1950 the expedition leader Commander C J W Simpson, a Royal Navy Officer, was a member of a Danish expedition exploring the East Coast of Greenland and during an aerial reconnaissance of the area, had spotted a small lake on the edge of the icecap. He established that it was usually free of ice for approx 6 weeks in the year. He named it Brittania Lake and its position was 77 N, 24 W and 888 miles from the North Pole.

Because of its proximity to the icecap he reckoned that this was an ideal spot to establish the base if he could get all the necessary stores and equipment transported there. The problem was that the Lake was about 50 miles inland from the coast and in between there was a glacier, the Storstrommer glacier, over which it would have been impossible to transport the heavy equipment and stores. A spot in an ice-free inlet on the coast was chosen to unload all the equipment from the MV Tottan a Norwegian ice strengthened ship which had previously been engaged in Antarctic expeditions. The inlet, called Young Sound, (190 miles from Brittania Lake) was only ice free for several weeks during the summer so time was a critical factor in getting the equipment to the Lake. This is where 230 Sqn enters the story, as an airlift was essential to move the equipment from Young Sound to Brittania Lake.

The first 2 aircraft (the CO and myself) flew to Reykjavik, Iceland on 28 July and waited there for news of the arrival at Young Sound of the MV Tottan. This came through two days later and on 30th both aircraft flew up the ice strewn coast of Greenland and landed at Young Sound beside the Tottan which had already laid aircraft moorings for us. A tented camp had been established ashore by the expedition members and the unloading of the supplies had commenced. More aircraft moorings were laid and 2 days later the remaining 3 aircraft arrived. A flight over the lake revealed that the ice had not completely cleared and it was another 4 days before the Airlift commenced on 7 August. Aircraft loads were assembled on shore, taken out on a pontoon and loaded into the aircraft through the bomb-bay doors in the side of the aircraft.

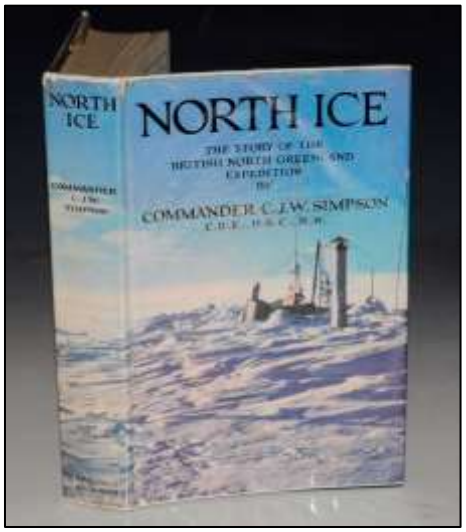
One load was the expeditions dogs who didn't take too kindly to the trip. Each load was between 3 and 4 tons. On the lake a pontoon had been assembled and initially the stores were hauled ashore by a connecting rope. Then a small dinghy with an outboard motor was used but this proved unsuitable in the strong winds. However this had been anticipated and arrangements had been made for a Lancaster aircraft to drop an airborne lifeboat onto the lake as it was too big to be airlifted by the Sunderland. This occurred on the 8th August but with disastrous results. The lifeboat had a parachute at the bow and stern but in this case one of the parachutes failed to open and on hitting the water the bow was torn right off and the boat was a wreck. This was a serious blow but had more serious consequences which deserves mention.

The Lifeboat Disaster.

When the Lancaster arrived over the lake a strong wind, known as a Katabatic wind, swept down from the glacier lashing the exposed surface of the lake into a short steep sea which looked nasty for a small dinghy. When the Lancaster was preparing to drop the lifeboat Commander Simpson was on a moored Sunderland, captained by Flt.Lt Stavert, discussing if Stavert would be prepared to use the aircraft to recover the lifeboat if necessary. Stavert said he was prepared to use the Sunderland if there was no other way but he did not like the idea. Simpson agreed that it was vital not to hazard the aircraft and as the wind had moderated a little he thought the situation justified him using the small dinghy. When the drop took place he was in the dinghy trying to get the outboard motor started but it was wet with spray and would not start. He asked an expedition member and the aircrafts engineer, Flt.Sgt Shelton Smith, to accompany him (the Flt.Sgt was familiar with the lifeboats engine).

They rowed out to the now dropped lifeboat but not having seen the drop did not know of the disaster. When they got to within 30 metres from the lifeboat they saw that it was a wreck. Just then the wind increased and they decided to go back to the Sunderland but a curling sea broke on board and the dinghy capsized and they were all in the icy water. Fortunately, they were close to windward of the lifeboat and managed to swim to it and scramble aboard. The lifeboat was waterlogged and the parachutes had failed to detach and were acting like drogues under the water holding the boat against the sea which was washing over it. Meanwhile Stavert had sized up the situation and had slipped his moorings.

After several attempts he skilfully manoeuvred the aircraft upwind of the wreck and close enough to heave a line on board. The line was attached to the boat and Simpson thought that Stavert was going to tow the boat, not realizing that the parachutes were acting like anchoring drogues and line would certainly break. When the line sprang out of the water and became taut he told the other two to jump in and haul themselves to the aircraft. They managed to do so but when it was Simpsons turn the line was so taut that he thought it would break at any moment so he undid the rope and jumped in holding the rope, hoping those on board would see what was happening and haul him on board. By now the aircraft was moving fast downwind and he was dragged through the water and forced to let go. At this point I'll let Simpsons words take up the story as he described it in his book on the Greenland Expedition called “North Ice”.....



“About what happened in the next ten minutes, my mind is a little blurred. I am normally a confident swimmer, but for now, for the first time since childhood, I realised that conditions were too much for me and I was near being drowned. Heavy arctic clothes drew me down and made swimming impossible. Desperately I trod water trying to keep my face above the surface, as waves washed over my head. Dimly I was conscious that the aircraft was approaching, then it sheered away again and receded. I saw the flurry of spray as a wing engine roared to turn the boat quickly. The end was very near now; I seemed to have

lost all my strength and knew I could not last much longer. Once more I was conscious that the aircraft was approaching. Its bows seemed to loom overhead, and I saw that the bowman was reaching down to me with the picking-up rope. I was just able to hook my arm through the rope; then I was washed against the bow door. Hands reached out and I was grabbed by the scruff. The next instant I was landed and lay gasping like a fish in the aircraft. Once before only, in a mountain accident, have I been so near my end. Ten minutes later, in dry clothes, and wrapped in somebody's sleeping bag, I thawed out and came to rapidly, as did also the others; but for half an hour I shivered violently and uncontrollably. None of us suffered any ill effects, and a few hours later we were all back at work with the rest. But there is no doubt that we owed our lives to Stavert's skillful handling of his aircraft"

The airlift continued for the next 2 weeks and it was a round the clock effort as we had 24 hours continuous daylight, the sun never going below the horizon. My last trip was a parachute drop of stores onto the icecap which later were to be picked up by the sledge parties on the way to establish a base in the middle of the ice-cap.

A few days before the airlift completion a major problem occurred when one of the aircraft had an engine failure on the No 4 outer starboard engine. This meant that a 3 engine take off would have to be made if the aircraft was to be saved. Normally this is not a major problem when the failed engine is an inner engine but directional control is impossible on take off with a failed outer engine. The solution was to remove both No 3 and No 4 engine and swap them over. Back at Pembroke Dock the aircraft would have been taken ashore and the problem easily fixed but in a remote Arctic location it was a monumental task. Using the pontoon, the ground crew, operating with minimal technical facilities, somehow removed both engines and swapped them over while the aircraft was at its mooring. A truly magnificent effort on their part for if they hadn't succeeded the aircraft would have been lost when the Sound froze over. With minimum fuel on board, to reduce weight, the aircraft did get off and returned to PD via Reykjavik.

The weather, which throughout the airlift had been fine, began to deteriorate and ominously large pieces of ice began floating up the Sound. The captain of the Tottan advised the CO that we had better get out before the ice situation got worse. On 22 August there were three aircraft left and we made preparations to leave. The CO got off just before a bank of fog rolled in and prevented Flt.Lt Stavert, the Flight Commander, and myself following. The fog lifted slightly, but not sufficiently to see if the take off path was clear of ice. I positioned myself near the ship and using a gyro compass heading, taxied along my chosen take off path. It appeared clear so I returned to the ship and took off on the same heading. A few seconds after we got airborne we cleared the fog and to our amazement looked down on a huge patch of solid ice coming up the Sound. I called Stavert and advised him of the situation and what I had done and he quickly

followed. A night stop in Iceland and we were back at PD the next day 27 August. I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that we got out just in time.

I've gone to great lengths to describe the part Sunderlands played in the BNGE, for our involvement was critical to the success of the project and it was the first time that flying boats had operated to the extent that we did, at such high latitudes, in such a remote area and under difficult conditions.

The remaining months of 1952 were taken up with routine training and involvement in the NATO exercise in Norway. But there was a major change on the domestic scene in November when I was allocated a married quarter and we moved onto the base. At the same time our first daughter Carol Stiles Cassels was born in the local hospital on 4 Nov 1952. So, the year ended with a happy event. Another major event occurred in 1953, when to celebrate her coronation, the Queen reviewed a major fly past of the RAF on 15 July at RAF Odiham. This involved hundreds of aircraft - slow piston to fast jet - from all over the country arriving at a precise spot, precise time and in precise order and consequently required many rehearsals - 14 rehearsals over a period of 5 weeks. The squadron provided 3 aircraft, flown by the CO, the Flight Commander and myself and after the Fly Past we retired to the bar to drink the Queens health. It was my final flight with the squadron for on 1 July 1953 I had been promoted to Squadron Leader and posted to Air Ministry, London.

You can see a video of the event HERE.

I've written a lot about my time on flying boats, for I left the Squadron with great regret as it was the happiest and most rewarding flying appointment of my career. While at Pembroke Dock I had flown Sunderlands to many different countries, taken part in many interesting and exciting operational tasks, loved the life of a flying boat captain and at the end got promoted. On the domestic scene my time at Pembroke Dock was also rewarding for while there I got married and had my first daughter. Altogether a rewarding and interesting period of my service career. So off to Air Ministry, but this time to fly a desk !

Air Ministry, London.

I was posted to the Organisation department in the Directorate of Administration Planning with the job title of Organisational Planning 3 (OP3). The job involved maintaining the details of all airfields in regard to their structural suitability for operating various types of aircraft and which units were located on these airfields. A lot of the information was contained on large wall maps which were covered with draw curtains and because the work involved classified information access to our offices was restricted. I was like a fish out of water to start with and must confess that, while I eventually settled down and got on top of the job, I never really liked it. Also, I didn't really take to my boss, a Wing Commander in the Administration Branch.

Jimmy Higgins, my old CO, had been promoted to Wing Commander and arrived at Air Ministry a few months after me so we met occasionally for lunch. One of these occasions landed me in an awkward situation for it was the habit of my Director, an Air Commodore, when he went to lunch to always leave the keys to his office with one of the officers in our secure area. This day, I forgot to pass the keys to another officer before I went to lunch, a rather long lunch with Jimmy Higgins, and when I got back my irate Wing Commander advised me that his boss, the Air Commodore, was very upset about being locked out of his office. I have no doubt that this incident was not forgotten by my boss when he filled in my annual confidential report.

While at Air Ministry pilots were expected to avail themselves of any opportunity to maintain their flying proficiency. The nearest unit for Air Ministry was the Communication Flight at Hendon where I got myself checked out on Anson aircraft. Every few months I would get a day off and have a few hours in the air. Rather than just fly around the local area I would often fly to Jersey in the Channel Islands, have lunch and return with a couple of bottle of "duty free"; On several occasions I did this trip with Jimmy Higgins. In April 1954 I returned to Pembroke Dock for 2 weeks for what was called "refresher training" and had 25 hours flying my favourite Sunderland. I looked forward to getting back in the air as it was a pleasant break form the dull routine of organising airfields.

We lived in a RAF hired civilian flat in Enfield, North London for a year but as it was a bit damp and affecting Carols health we got permission to move to another place in Tottenham, this time to a house near an underground station with reduced the travel time to my office. Around this time, I bought one of the cheapest new cars available, a Ford Popular, having sold my little Austin 7 while at Pembroke Dock, so we were mobile once again. While at Tottenham another major family event occurred when our second

daughter Anne was born on 30 May 1955 at a Maternity home which had previously been the home of Gracie Fields the famous music hall singer. We weren't without friends while in London for I had an Aunt (my mother's sister) who lived in Palmers Green and a cousin, her daughter, who lived in Waltham Cross, both places very adjacent to Tottenham. We exchanged many visits with each other.

Towards the end of 1955 Maureen wanted to return to Rhodesia to see her parents and show them their first grandchildren so we arranged a return passage by boat and she left in December for a 6 month visit. I moved into RAF Kidbrook, East London, which was the nearest unit for officers working at Air Ministry. I didn't enjoy being separated from my family but I was comforted with the knowledge that my time at Air Ministry was coming to an end.

In June my posting came through and it was to RAF Habbaniya in Iraq to be Officer Commanding a Flying Wing. Needless to say, I was delighted that it was a flying appointment and an overseas posting. This required me to undergo a two week Jet Refresher course on Vampire aircraft at RAF Oakington which I did in July. In the meantime, Maureen had returned from Rhodesia in early June to be greeted with the unhappy news that she would not be able to accompany me overseas until a Married Quarter was available at my new station. This was a bit of a blow but being part of Service life it had to be accepted. In situations like this, the RAF provides accommodation at vacant Married Quarters at temporary inactive stations and we were allocated a Married Quarter at RAF Middleton St.George which was near Darlington in Yorkshire. After the Jet Refresher Course, I went on pre-embarkation leave which we spent in Scotland before travelling to our new married quarter in Yorkshire. (When I said farewell to my father then, little did I realize that I would never see him again). I spent a week getting Maureen and the children settled in the new house, drove to London, quickly sold my Ford Popular, jumped on a RAF Transport plane and arrived in Iraq in the middle of September. I often reflect on this period and how unfair the situation was - me very busy settling into my new post with lots of company and Maureen, living on her own in an unfamiliar area and having to look after two small children.

RAF Staging Post, Habbaniya, Iraq.

RAF Habbaniya, located about 60 miles West of Baghdad, was an active airfield before and just after the 2nd World War but by the late forties or early fifties it became a staging post for RAF Heavy Transport aircraft flying between the UK and the Far East. From memory the route was UK - Cyprus - Habbaniya - Ceylon - Singpore. After the Suez crisis in 1956, Syria closed its airspace between Cyprus and Habbaniya so aircraft had to fly via Turkey. While glorifying in the title of OC, Flying the only aircraft I had direct control over were 1 Pembroke and 1 Meteor Jet. My primary task was to ensure that the necessary staging and flying facilities for the transiting aircraft were available.

The Pembroke was a twin engined Light Transport plane (10 Passengers) used as the station communication aircraft and the Meteor was used mainly by the CO and myself for local flying. The most frequent use of the Pembroke was flying passengers and mail between Habbaniya and Baghdad. The Commanding Officer of the station was Group Captain Hughie Edwards VC, an Australian in the RAF who eventually, when he retired as Air Commodore, became Governor of West Australia.

The base was located beside the Euphrates River and there was plenty of water for irrigation of trees and lawns so the base really was an oasis in the desert. There were plenty of social amenities available for all ranks and many sporting activities catered for. Because of the heat the working day began at 0600 hrs and finished at 1300 hrs so there was plenty of time to pursue leisure activities.

There were two airfields at Habbaniya. The original airfield was controlled by the Iraqi Air Force and the Staging Post airfield, located on a plateau beside Lake Habbaniya was built and controlled by the RAF. The Iraqi Air Force used the "lower airfield", as it was called, as a Jet training unit (Vampire and Venom aircraft) and had several seconded RAF pilots as instructors. These pilots had no connection with the Staging Post but on a few occasions I helped out by flying their Meteor aircraft towing a target drouge for their air to air firing practice. The co-operation between the two air forces was part of the Baghdad Pact.

In December1956 my Instrument Rating was due to be renewed and I had to go to Cyprus to be examined. As it was near Christmas and me being in Cyprus, the CO gave me permission to take 2 weeks leave which enabled me to get a return ticket by civil aircraft to London and then onto Middleton St George to have Christmas with my family. It was a most welcome break and I managed to do a bit of shopping for the Group Captain, bringing him back two shirts from his London tailors. It was another 7 months before I was allocated a married quarter and Maureen and the children arrived by Hastings aircraft via Cyprus on a fairly normal 40C day. She said that as she stepped out of the aircraft it was like stepping into an oven, however, she and the children soon settled into their new abode and me to my usual service duties. Apart from flying to many areas within the country occasionally I had to fly to places outside Iraq like Jordan, Bahrain and Aden. I enjoyed these breaks from routine and on one occasion I visited Bahrain with Maureen and the children and met up with Jimmy Higgins who was now the CO of the RAF base there.

One event which got me into a spot of bother was when 3 Venom aircraft were transiting from Aden to Cyprus and night stopped at Habbaniya. Their route to Cyprus required a refuelling stop at Diyabakir in Turkey and although the formation leader was responsible for his own pre-flight briefing, as he was unfamiliar with this airfield and the route, I decided to attend and advise him. About mid morning a call from the Iraqi authorities in Baghdad advised us that they had received information that some aircraft had crashed landed near the Syrian border in northern Iraq. This was later confirmed to be the 3 Venoms. What had happened was that when they reduced altitude for landing at Diyabakir they were unable to find the airfield because of cloud so decided to climb back up and return to Habbaniya. Unfortunately, having let down and spent some time looking for the airfield they had insufficient fuel to make it back to Habbaniya so they tried to divert to Kirkuk, an oilfield airfield North of Habbaniya, but were unsuccessful and running out of fuel, were left with no option but crash land in the desert. The pilots were uninjured but at the subsequent Court of Inquiry the formation leader was held to be responsible for the loss of the aircraft. The Inquiry also found that as the weather forecasters at Habbaniya were uncertain of the conditions at Diyabakir I should have interfered to prevent the flight taking off. It recommended that I be reprimanded. The result was that I had to fly to Cyprus to receive the reprimand from the Air Officer Commanding. I have a suspicion that the AOC (an Irishman) was somewhat sympathetic towards me for after the formalities he invited me to sit down and we had a very pleasant chat about family life in Habbaniya and other generalities.

My job in Habbaniya wasn't very demanding and I had plenty of time to enjoy the social life with Maureen and the two girls. Each married quarter was provided with an Iraqi servant, so Maureen had ample opportunity to engage in the camp social life and Carol's education was catered for at the station school. Life went along smoothly until March 1958 when I learned of the death of my father, who died on 14 March 1958, but to my regret I was unable to return to Scotland for his funeral. A little later two other events happened. One was pleasant the other not so.

The first, a pleasant event, which brought us great joy, was the arrival of our son who was born in the station hospital on 3 July 1958 and whom we named Charles after my father. The second event was an uprising in Iraq in which the pro British government was overthrown and resulted in the removal of the RAF from Iraq.

The end of RAF Habbaniya.

On 14th July I went to Flying Wing Headquarters to start the day only to find Iraqi soldiers guarding the building and refusing me entry to my office. It quickly transpired that the whole base had been taken over by the local Iraqi garrison and that we were locked in. News soon arrived that there had been a coup d'etat in Baghdad during which the King, Faisal 11, had been murdered along with his uncle the Crown Prince and that the Prime Minister Nuri a Said had fled. The coup was carried out by the Ba'ath party whose leader eventually became Sadam Hussein. Later news revealed that the Prime Minister, having fled disguised as a woman, had been caught then murdered and the body of the Prince Regent had been towed naked through the streets of Baghdad behind a Jeep with his genitals secured in his mouth. Other than being denied exit from the base and access to the airfield and certain buildings, the Iraqi soldiers did not interfere with any RAF personnel or their families. The base Armoury and the Communication Centre had been seized and contact with Middle East Air Force Headquarters in Cyprus cut. Later, communication was restored but all traffic was censored.

The Iraqi Brigadier in charge of the soldiers assured the CO that no harm would come to any personnel and that we would have to wait further negotiations. However, Hughie Edwards had a problem. Some of the airmen were becoming restless and were baiting the Iraqi troops, which was a worry, for he had 1200 men women and children to look after, keep safe and keep occupied. After about a week he called a meeting of Department heads and said he was going to hold the annual Garden Fete and that they were to keep their men busy preparing for the event. While initially being a bit skeptical about the idea we soon realised that it was the sensible thing to do and set about the task. Admin Wing had to prepare the venue on the large Sports arena, Tech Wing had to organise the swings, roundabouts, flying fox cables and side shows, and Flying Wing, my job, was to provide suitable venues for refreshments.

I obtained a large Marquee from the Equipment store, rearranged the shape and painted it to look like an English pub and called it the Prince of Wales Arms. An appropriately large sign was erected with the POW in large letters and the rest in very small letters. A hint of barbed wire in the background finished it off. When the CO inspected our efforts he stood for a minute in front of the sign, gave me a bit of a look, stifled a small grin then walked away. With tables and chairs outside and plenty of refreshments, obtained from the NAAFI stores, ours was a pretty popular venue. In a masterful touch the CO invited the Brigadier and his officers to attend but they declined. However, all aftenoon the Iraqi soldiers were peering out from behind the bushes, no doubt wondering how these stupid British people could be having such a good time - didn't they realize that they were locked up !!

Finally, arrangements were made to allow us to be evacuated by civil aircraft from Baghdad, small groups at a time. The first to go, after about 3 weeks, were those who had been at Habbaniya the longest. My turn came shortly after but not before a rather anxious event arose. When Maureen arrived in Iraq in 1957 her passport had the names of our two daughters on it but of course not that of Charles. Normally his birth would have been notified to the British Embassy and the passport annotated accordingly. But the British Embassy had been burned down in the rebellion, so we had a problem, for we couldn't take our son out of Iraq as he was not on Maureen's passport and we had no proof that he was our son. The Swiss Embassy meantime had taken over the task of looking after British interests and luckily were in possession of the seals and stamps necessary for the certification of official documents. Permission was obtained for an officer to take the hospital certification of birth and the passport into Baghdad and the problem was solved. Our journey into Baghdad by coach was not without problems for we had to pass through a town near the base called Fallujah whose occupants were very hostile and stoned the bus. Unfortunately our aircraft was cancelled so we had to return to Habbaniya that day, ducking more stones. The following day we repeated the process and finally left Baghdad on a Middle East Airline Viscount and got back to London via Beruit. I didn't realize it at the time but my job in Habbaniya was my last full time flying appointment in the RAF.

Headquarters 19 Group, RAF Mountbatten.

After a short period of leave in Scotland I completed an Intelligence Course at Air Ministry in London and took up my new appointment which was as Group Intelligence Officer at HQ 19 Group RAF Mountbatten, Plymouth. Fortunately, there was a vacant Married Quarter available and we soon settled into our new abode which was at Plymstock a small village just a few miles from the base. RAF Mountbatten overlooked Plymouth Sound and was a most pleasant place to be stationed, being close to beaches and the congenial Devon countryside. Our Married Quarter was large and well furnished and suited our requirements admirably. Altogether a most welcome change from Iraq.

My job was more routine then demanding and I took every opportunity I could get to visit the 19 Group Communication Flight, located nearby, and keep my hand in by flying the Anson aircraft. I also managed to get a month's break from my desk when I attended a Joint Anti Submarine Course at Londonderry in N. Ireland. While on this course I had the opportunity to spend a day on a Royal Navy submarine on an exercise which involved the submarine, while submerged, trying to avoid detection by a searching aircraft. While it was quite an experience to be a submariner for a day I'm glad I joined the Air Force and not the Navy.

While I was not very enthusiastic about my job, from a family point of view it was a very pleasant posting and we enjoyed our two and a bit years near Plymouth and the pleasant Devon countryside. Towards the end of my tour I had an opportunity (unofficial) to speak to the posting branch at Air Ministry and casually mentioned that while my previous posting had been overseas I would be quite happy to have another overseas posting. To my great surprise when my posting came through, not only was it overseas but it was to a location which, if I had been given the chance to select, would have been my first choice. It was to RAF Kia Tak in Hong Kong which at that time was one of the better overseas postings in the RAF. My appointment was to be Officer Commanding Administrative Wing and, while not a flying appointment, it was one which I was happy to receive.

RAF Station Kia Tak, Hong Kong.

This time there would be no family separation, for the appointment carried with it an ex-officio married quarter, so Maureen and the children were with me when I embarked on the troopship HMT NEVASSA at Southampton in August 1961. The ship was built as a troopship and carried 1500 service personnel and families. While the term troopship is usually associated with hardship travel, in this case the voyage for us was more like a voyage on a cruise liner, everything first class. What a difference from the troopship I sailed in on my way to Rhodesia in 1942 - six weeks in a hammock below deck. Our stops on the way to Hong Kong were at Naples, Suez, Colombo, Penang and Singapore. When in Naples I had the opportunity to show the family the house I stayed in when there in 1944 and we also climbed to the top of Mount Vesuvius and visited the ruins of Pompeii. While in Singapore I caught up with an old fellow instructor from my days in Rhodesia in 1948 who was serving at Far East HQ. Altogether a most enjoyable 4 week voyage at Government expense.

The airfield at Kia Tak was the main airport for Hong Kong and had been developed by the civil authority after the war. RAF Kia Tak was located adjacent to the main runway which was used by both service and civilian aircraft. The only RAF aircraft at Kia Tak was a squadron of Venom fighter aircraft which were later replaced by the much more up to date Hunter aircraft. There were a few other non flying units located in the colony for which RAF Kia Tak provided administrative support.

Air Force HQ Hong Kong was located on Hong Kong Island itself while Kia Tak was on the mainland at Kowloon. Although it was a non-flying appointment, OC Administrative Wing was a demanding job and I relished the task and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge. The fact that there was a flying unit on the Base, No 28 Squadron, was a bonus, for I had the opportunity to fly both the Venom and the Vampire aircraft although not quite as often as I would have wished.
About 30 mins drive from the base there was a small boating harbour called Hebe Haven where I had a small 5 meter boat built which was powered by an outboard engine. We spent many enjoyable weekends sailing to nearby islands which had lovely swimming beaches. Unfortunately, the boat, named Shoofti, was destroyed by a typhoon which I will mention later.

I had another boat built (Shoofti 2) at the insurer's expense and we continued our pleasant sailings. The name Shoofti was Arabic for "have a look" which we did a lot of while in Hong Kong.

Two events occurred which resulted in the deaths of two members of the base. One was the death of a pilot of 28 Sqn who inexplicably crashed into a hillside in good weather in his Venom aircraft. The other was a young airman when he was taking part in the annual Round the Island foot race between the Services. This was a marathon run over a long hilly course and in this case during hot weather. The young lad collapsed and died on a hillside from dehydration.

Typhoon Wanda.

Being somewhat isolated there was no place for unmarried personnel to go to when they had leave. This mainly affected the young airmen who would spend their time in down town Kowloon or on the Island and the dubious attractions they offered. I got permission from the CO to set up a campsite on one of the remote seaside spots where the men could spend a few days swimming and fishing in the more healthy atmosphere of the outdoors. The marine craft section was used to transport the men and supplies between the base and the campsite. The site chosen was near an old deserted stone building with no roof and because of the intervening hills communication with the camp had to be via a radio link with a Signals unit located high on a hillside near Kia Tak.

On Saturday 1 September (1962) a devastating Typhoon named Wanda swept down on Hong Kong with extremely high and destructive winds which gusted to 140 knots. Click HERE. Being a Saturday both the CO and myself were at home but decided the situation required us to be on hand to deal with any problems should they arise. We managed to get to the base before conditions prevented any outside travel. Later when inspecting the base in a car the conditions became so dangerous, with flying sheets of corrugated iron, that we had to retreat to the Headquarters building for safety. There was not much anyone could do except seek shelter indoors. The storm lasted well into the night and it was not until the next morning that we were able to make an assessment of the damage. While quite a bit of damage had been done it was not as severe as expected and the base got off lightly compared to the rest of the colony which suffered severely. There was tremendous damage to property, 130 people killed and over 600 injured. 20 small ships were also driven ashore.

My immediate concern was the fate of our 6 airmen on the campsite for we had had no communication from them. It was decided to send the Mountain Rescue Team, led by the station doctor, to make contact. As the route was over rugged terrain it took the team several hours to reach the camp but when they radioed their findings it was devastating news. All six airmen were dead. They were found under the collapsed walls of the stone building where they had

sought shelter after their tents had been blown away. The resulting Court of Inquiry found that the deaths of the airmen was due to an accident caused by a severe weather event. The bodies of the airmen were returned to the UK. The wrath of Nature can result in terrible events and the words of Robert Burns might seem appropriate in this case when he said "The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft agley" (Go often wrong).

Leaving Hong Kong.

In 1961 while at HQ 19 Group in Plymouth I had been advised that unless selected for promotion to higher rank, I would be retiring at the age of 43 which was then the retiring age for a Squadron Leader in the GD (Pilot) Branch. I obviously was not being considered for further promotion, my unhappy posting at Air Ministry and the loss of the 3 aircraft in Iraq didn't help - so, before I left Kia Tak I received my final appointment in the RAF which was to be Operations 2 at HQ 18 Group, RAF Pitreavie Castle in Scotland.

I was sorry to leave RAF Kia Tak for it was one of the best posting in my RAF career. I was happy in my job and had a great social life and which my family also enjoyed. So, in June 1964 back to the UK in a chartered aircraft, operated by Eagle Airways.

HQ 18 Group, Coastal Command, RAF Pitreavie Castle.

As usual a new posting involved the usual problem of domestic issues; housing, schools for the children and getting settled after an overseas posting being some of the things. Fortunately, we were able to stay in my sister's house for a few weeks while I negotiated the purchase of a house in Dunfermline. This was done fairly quickly, as in Scotland house purchase and mortgage is done through a solicitor, so when my leave ended we were settled in the house before I went back to work. This was the first house we had ever owned so it was with great excitement that we took possession. We bought the house from Jock Stein who was the manager of Dunfermline Athletic Football Club and who was moving to take up the job of manager of a more famous Scottish Football Club, Glasgow Celtic. The house was a fairly new bungalow style house which we partly furnished with items of furniture we had bought in Hong Kong. Once the children were enrolled in local schools in Dunfermline I was ready to take up my new appointment.

The job was fairly routine and not nearly as satisfying as my previous appointment in Kia Tak, however it still enabled me to keep my hand in at flying as there was an Air Experience Flight (for Air Training Corps Cadets) at Turnhouse, the civil airport for Edinburgh. The aircraft were Chipmunks, a low wing 2 seat light aircraft and I spent a lot of time giving the cadets air

experience. At one point I did manage to free myself from my desk when the CO of RAF Macrihanish, a small holding unit near Campbelltown on the Mull of Kintyre, wanted to take leave and I took over his job for 2 weeks. This was a nice break for I took Maureen and the children with me and they had two weeks at the seaside.

As retirement was looming I had to think of the future and what I was going to do. I still wanted to fly so I decided to get my Commercial Pilots Licence and try my luck in Civil Aviation. I had obtained my Civil Private Pilot's Licence in 1965 and in early 1966 went to an Aviation school near Perth to sit the ground subjects for the Commercial Licence - Navigation, Aviation Law, Meteorology, Flight Planning, Radio Aids. I passed these subjects but had to have a flight test. I did this on a Chipmunk with an examiner and obtained my Commercial Licence just before I retired. I now had to obtain a job and I applied for two. One was with the BOAC and BEA flight training school at Hamble near Southampton, staffed mainly by ex RAF Flying Instructors. I had an interview and was told I would be contacted later. I also applied for a job as First Officer on Viscount aircraft with BEA and after submitting my details was advised that they would accept me but the chances of promotion to Captain were unlikely because of my age I didn't fancy sitting in the co-pilots seat for years to come so I turned this down.

A few days before my 43rd birthday I was "Dined Out" of the RAF at a Dinner held in the Officers Mess and on 11th August 1966 I finally retired from the RAF after 25 years' service, having enlisted on 9 September 1941. During those 25 years I had served in Europe, the Middle East, Far East, Africa and Greenland and during that time had experienced many high points and many low points but it was a great venture and I certainly had no regrets in joining and remaining in the RAF for those years.

Next issue, Jock leaves the UK for the RAAF at Richmond.