



NEWSLETTER

Last chance - Book for May Buffet Lunch - see Page 7

April Meeting

We were pleased to see a better attendance at our April meeting and we all enjoyed an excellent presentation by Dusty Miller on Operation Infatuate.

Operation Infatuate, the codename for the invasion of the Dutch Island of Walcheren, was a major Combined Operation's amphibious landing against very heavily fortified and entrenched German positions. The island stood at the mouth of the River Scheldt and blocked Allied access to the captured port of Antwerp some 60 kilometres inland which was needed to supply the advancing Allied armies.

Prior to talking on Infatuate, Dusty showed us photos taken from his father's landing craft on D Day. He was captain of the landing craft and did a number of sorties across the channel over the ensuing days. It was however later that his father was involved again. The city of Antwerp and its port had fallen to Dempsey's 2nd British Army in early September 1944. Montgomery's attention at the time was on securing several bridge crossings, including the Rhine at Arnhem in operation Market Garden. If successful, it might have ended the war by Christmas 1944 by opening a clear route to Germany and Berlin. There was no sense of priority given to securing the approaches to Antwerp which would require the island fortress of Walcheren, with its formidable array of weaponry and the Fifteenth German Army garrison, to be removed.

Between 1 - 8 November 1944 Walcheren Island was secured by British and Canadian troops.



Vehicles off loading from the Landing Craft

The bombing of Walcheren in October by RAF Bomber Command had deliberately breached the dykes around the island and had turned it into a massive lagoon, rimmed by broken dykes. The Germans had installed defences on the dykes to virtually turn them into a continuous fortification bristling with guns of every calibre. The British Marines placed great reliance on Weasel and Buffalo amphibious landing craft.. The RAF provided air support and the 79th Armoured Division provided specialist vehicles in support of the ground assault, naval gunfire support was from warships and landing craft equipped with artillery (e.g. Landing Craft Tank (Gun)) and Land Mattress multiple-rocket launch systems.

The success of this operation eventually allowed the troops into Germany and to many the battle was harder than that of D Day. The British and Canadian forces never received due reward for their efforts.



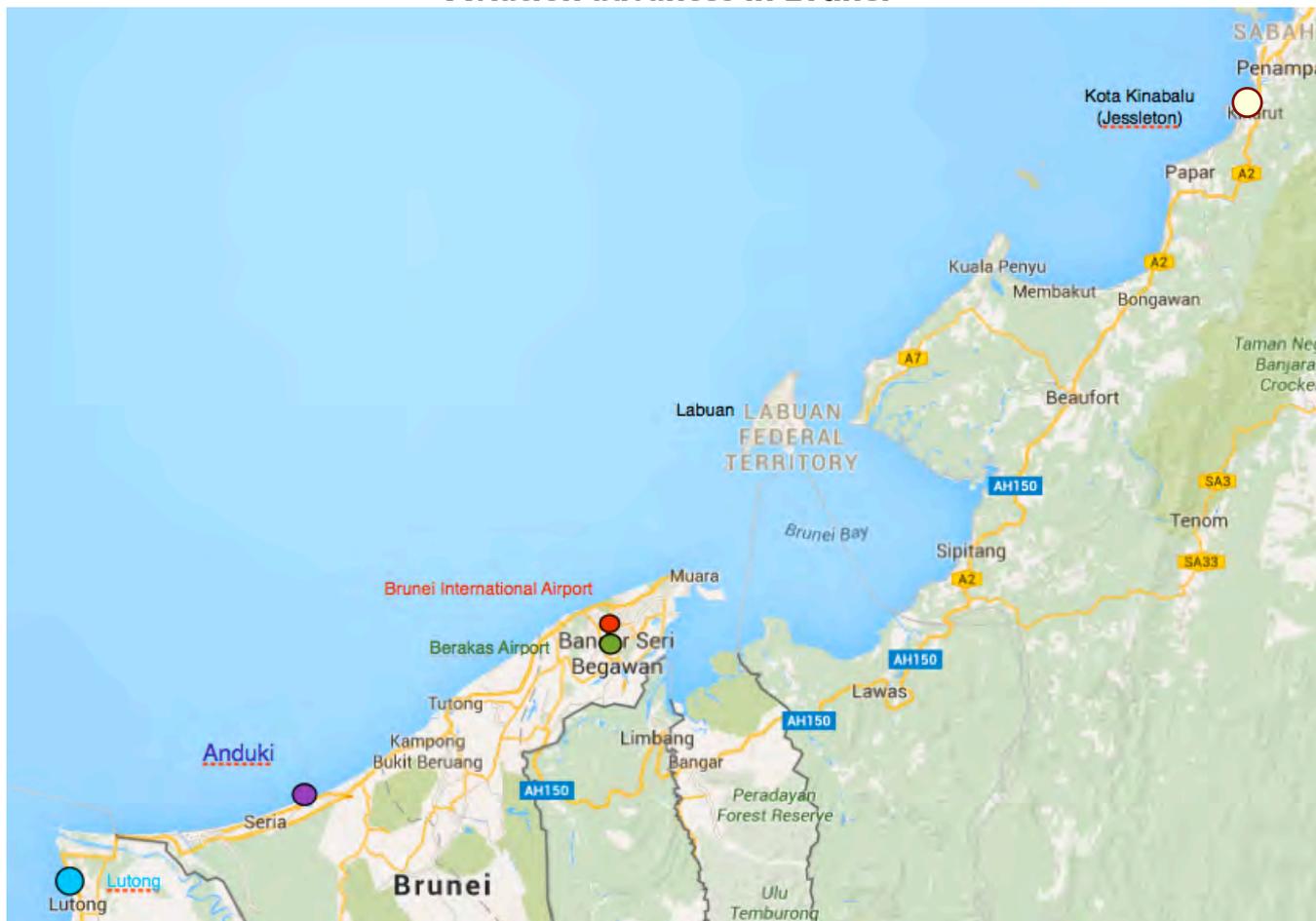
Remember 18th May 2016

**Join us for
"Buffet Lunch"**

£8

Greenacres 12 Noon for 1230pm

Aviation advances in Brunei



Graham Laurie writes:

I was stationed in Brunei with 7 other RAF pilots on 'Loan Service' to the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment between 1973 to 1975. I was fascinated by what was already being called 'The Old Airport' or Berakas Airport.

Despite the current modern international airport being built nearby, not many people knew that just over sixty years ago, prior to the Second World War, there were no airfields whatsoever in the entire country of Brunei Darussalam.

The first runway was constructed during the Japanese occupation in the Second World War and that was where our 748 was based. This was first used by the Japanese fighter planes coming to defend their occupied territory.

After the end of the war, despite being heavily shelled by the Allied Forces, that runway was repaired and improved by the same forces and a proper airport was planned and built. The first commercial air transport in Brunei Darussalam only began in 1953 with the establishment of internal air service links connecting Brunei

Town (now Bandar Seri Begawan) with Anduki (near the oil town of Seria) It was not until the early 1960s that road connections with Seria and Kuala Beleit were established. By the time I arrived the road journey still took about 2 hours and not a dual carriageway in sight.



A Shell, Percival P50 Prince at Berakas Airport in the 1950's

(From Page 2)

Most Bruneians who travelled overseas for their studies had to fly via Jesselton (now named Kota Kinabalu) to catch a connecting flight to Singapore. At first it was Malayan Airways, using DH Rapides, that operated local flights between Brunei Town, Anduki, Miri and Labuan with over 4,300 passengers using the Brunei Airport in 1955. The airport was only able to serve airplanes like the Rapide, the DC3s and later the Fokker Friendships and from 1971 our HS 748.

The Anduki Airport in Seria in the meantime played a very significant role in the aviation history of Brunei. Constructed soon after the end of the Second World War, it served the Shell company operating in Seria. It was completed sometime in 1951 and the first plane to land there was a Vickers Supermarine Type 309 (VR-SOL) or better known as the Sea Otter Amphibian, owned by British Malaysian Petroleum.



Vickers Supermarine Sea Otter

The Sea Otters played a very significant role in Brunei aviation before being replaced by the Percival P.50 Prince. Anduki played a big part in the "Brunei Rebellion" in Dec 62. A force of Gurkhas was flown into Brunei by Twin Pioneer and Beverly aircraft. Two Twin Pins flew into Anduki and the soldiers thus secured the oilfields of Brunei Shell Petroleum and also thwarted the rebel forces.

The first Borneo Airways, known as 'Borneo Airways Limited', was founded in 1957 as an airline serving British Borneo. Its history could be traced back to 1947, where it was previously known as Sabah Airways Limited, founded by the Straits Steamship Company Limited and the government of British North Borneo. In 1962, the assets of Sabah Airways Limited were absorbed by Borneo Airways, after its registration in 1957. Before the acquisition, all air services in Borneo

were handled by Malayan Airways. It was absorbed by then Malaysian Airways Limited (later known as Malaysia-Singapore Airlines, precursor of present-day Singapore Airlines and Malaysia Airlines) in 1965. At the time of the takeover, Borneo Airways' fleet consisted of de Havilland Dragon Rapide, Douglas DC-3, Douglas DC-4 and Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer aircraft. In the 1970s there was a very significant growth in popularity of air travel. The old Brunei Airport was swamped with activity, operating beyond its capacity. This prompted the authorities to scout for a new site to build a modern airport, in order to cater to the needs of the growing number of users. The new Brunei International Airport in Berakas, began construction in 1970, was completed in 1974.



Royal Brunei enters service with Boeing 737-200's

The national airline, Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) was also formed in November 1974. The initial fleet was two Boeing 737-200's. The early crews were ex patriots, many coming, including the Chief Pilot, from Singapore Airlines, whilst others joined from Britannia. In its first year of service they flew 36,000 passengers. The early routes were mainly to Hong Kong and Singapore. Relationships with Malaysia improved and eventually Kuala Lumpur and other Malaysian cities were included in the route structure.

Gradually aircraft fleets increased with B757 and B767 wide bodied jets meant RBA could expand their route structure. Their current Fleet consists: 1 Airbus A319, 6 Airbus A320, 4 Boeing 787 Dreamliners. Quite a jump in 40 years and the International Airport has expanded and is currently one of the top airports in SE Asia.

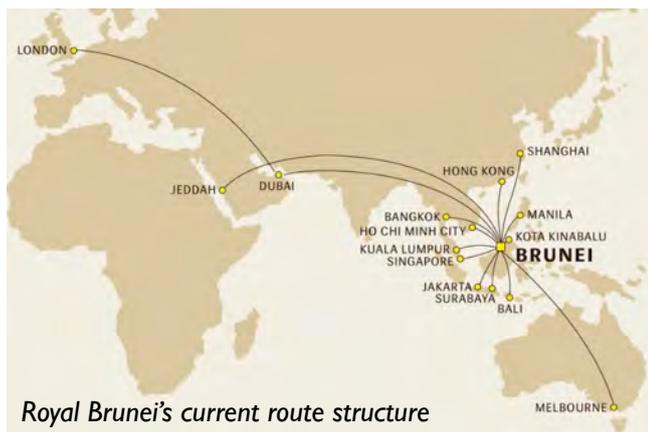
An all-female pilot crew from the Royal Brunei Airlines made history by completing a landmark landing in Saudi Arabia, a country notorious for its laws against women. Ironically, despite this historic feat, the pilots will almost certainly be restricted from driving motor vehicles at their destination!



*Captain Sharifah Czarena and Senior First Officers
Dk Nadiah Pg Khashiem and Sariana Nordin.*

The all female cre marked their country's independence day by flying 'flight BI 081' to the Middle Eastern kingdom on 24 Feb 16. This feat stands out to highlight the many strides women have made in modern times, particularly Muslim women.

Captain Czarena trained at the Cabair Flying School in Cranfield, Bedfordshire, and is routinely tasked with flying to a number of the airline's major international destinations. Three years ago, she created history by becoming the first female captain of a South-east Asian airline ever. In the succeeding year, she became the first Royal Brunei pilot to fly out of London Heathrow in its 'flagship' Boeing 787 Dreamliner.



Royal Brunei's current route structure

The present Royal Brunei Air Force was first established in May 1965 with the creation of an Air Service for the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment. Initially equipped with three Whirlwind helicopters flown by foreign pilots under contract, the unit transported army doctors to remote areas. In 1966 the Whirlwinds were replaced by three Wessex 54 helicopters manned by British RAF

crews and the unit became known as the Helicopter Platoon. In the following year five Bell 206 JetRanger helicopters were received. In 1971 the first fixed-wing aircraft was delivered, a H.S.748 transport. In late 1972, the Royal Brunei Malay Regiment was reorganised, and the Helicopter Platoon became the Air Wing. The First Squadron was formed around the Bell 206. In 1980 the Air Technical Training School was established. A Second Squadron was formed in 1981 with the MBB Bo 105 and a Third Squadron in 1982 with SF-260 light attack aircraft. After formal independence from Britain on 1 January 1984 the country became responsible for its own defence. The personnel strength of the Air Wing was expanded considerably and on 1 October 1991 it was renamed the Royal Brunei Air Force. In 1997 an influx of new equipment allowed two more squadrons, numbers Four and Five, to be established and the re-equipment of the Third Squadron. In November 2011 the biggest aircraft order to date, for twelve S-70i Black Hawk helicopters, deliveries starting in 2013, thus enabling a significant growth in the capability of the RBAF.

The progress of aviation has been fast since WW 2 but general aviation has lagged behind. There are thoughts to resurrect the Flying Club, if this comes about, we may see some home trained pilots join Royal Brunei. Much of the training for military pilots currently is in Australia, but again perhaps this could return to Brunei. The main Air Force base is 'Rimba' an enclave within the International Airport. It is a long time since I flew there but it is pleasing that the foundations the Air Wing made have seen the Royal Brunei Air Force come to fruition.



The civil and military side of Brunei Aviation



Geoff Hulett reports:

with pictures, warm air circulating 24/7, rapid access doors and painted and spotless floor



Other airworthy aircraft housed here include a Hawker Hurricane, a Harvard, an American Piper Cub and two Spitfire shells undergoing a transition to two seaters. Sadly, the beauty of the Spitfire is lost on its conversion to a two seater and to quote a phrase 'it is like a carbuncle on the face of a well-loved friend; but as a commercial venture it makes sense as countless people are willing to pay £2750 for a flight of 20 minutes duration. (I recall being paid 23/- a day to fly them).

On this day three people were booked for flights but Gremlins were in control until the ground crew solved the problem and the Merlin spluttered into life to the great joy of the first passenger who climbed into the cockpit and was briefed on safety procedures including baling out and parachute drill.



On 8th March I joined a group of veterans at Biggin Hill to inspect the new Heritage Hangar officially opened by Flt.Lt Rodney Scrase DFC, a Spitfire pilot who saw action in North Africa.

Owner of the hanger, Peter Monk began the venture when he acquired the remains of a Mark 9 Spitfire from a breakers yard in South Africa. The 'bits' were brought back to the UK and restored to flying condition by Airframe Assemblies. Serialised TA805 (its number when flying with 183 and 234 squadrons of the Royal Air Force) he named it 'Spirit of Kent' now known as 'The Kent Spitfire' and the flagship of the heritage hanger

The acquisition of more Spitfires has enabled the heritage hanger to encompass the Spitfire Company (Biggin Hill) Ltd and is now the foremost restoration facility in the UK. This hanger is like no other.....painted walls hung



I stood on the tarmac as this iconic aircraft taxied out, listened to the sound of the engine on run-up and then the roar as it sped down the runway, lifted off and climbed away into the bright blue sky as so many of its predecessors had in the defence of this country all those years ago.

Geoff

Leo Smith 1924-2016

As you will see elsewhere Leo passed away on 17 Apr and his funeral is to be held on Thu 5 May in Hemel Hempstead..

Leo was a WOP/AG and after training spent most of his WW2 service in the South East Asia. He joined No 159 Squadron (Liberators) in Jan 44. The squadron flew mine-laying, bombing, and reconnaissance missions over Burma, Siam, Malaya, Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies.

In July 1944 he moved to Air Sea Rescue flying with No 292 Squadron flying Consolidated Liberator Mk.VIs as replacements. In November 1944 the squadron already received a number of Supermarine Sea Otters (see Page 3) a more modern flying boat. The squadron were posted to RAF Agartala in February 1945, as operations had shifted further eastwards through Burma; they were located there when the squadron was disbanded on 14 June. Its duties were then taken over by three independent flights, Leo joining No 1347 Flight RAF. He continued until demob in Jul 46



Consolidated Liberator Mk VI

During his career he flew Dominie, Proctor, Sea Otter, Anson, Liberator, Catalina and Dakota aircraft. He was awarded the 39/35 Medal, War Service and the Burma Star.

In civilian life Leo was a College Lecturer and a keen golfer, he also enjoyed photography, cooking and going to the theatre. He is survived by his wife Sheila and we send her and his family our condolences.

From Photo to the whole story

How many times do you see photos and only wish you knew the story behind it. Well down in Rick Stein country at Padstow, one man's work has released the story behind a photo published in the Cornish Guardian Newspaper.



The photo was taken by the newspapers staff photographer George Ellis. His photo of a crash in Padstow Harbour was republished in 2015. A Lostwithiel man Clark Bryce took up the challenge to find out all about it.

He realised many people would have seen the crash and many more the wreckage in the harbour. He thought originally the aircraft was a Spitfire but as it was Naval uniforms he realised it was probably a Vickers Supermarine Seafire. Searches on the internet revealed that the pilot was a Lt Cdr Michael Clifford. He had gained his wings in February 1936. He served with 102 Sqn on HP Heyfords and in Dec 36 survived a crash near Stockport.

In Jan 38 he joined the Fleet Air Arm and in 1941 serving with 815 Sqn on Swordfish was taken prisoner by the Vichy French.

So in Jul 47 Lt Cdr Clifford was attached to the Ministry of Supply and was at St Merryn on a weeks air to ground rocket training. At 1108 on 17th the Seafire took off for the bombing ranges at Port Quin. He completed his bombing run just before noon and was returning to base. Over Padstow his aircraft developed a serious problem. With the beaches covered with holidaymakers, rather than bailing out he stayed with the stricken aircraft, steering it away from the town and the crowded beaches and into the estuary, where he crashed. It was third time unlucky for this gallant officer. The story all from a photograph.

**Runnymede Service
Sunday 8 May 2016**

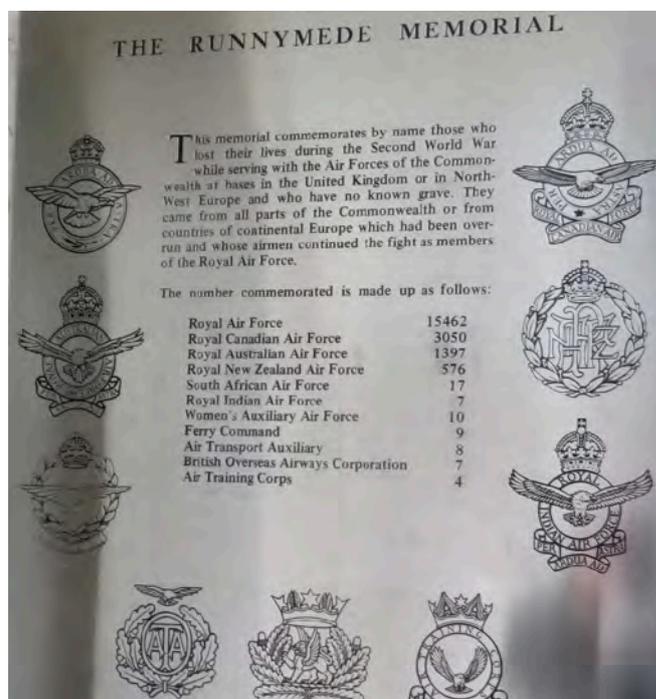
the United Kingdom and Europe, and who have no known grave.

The Memorial was designed by Edward Maufe and was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in October 1953



11.00 am (arrive by 10.30 am)

The Annual Act of Commemoration to honour those who lost their lives will be held at the Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede (Coopers Hill Lane, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey TW20 0LB). This very moving ceremony, during which wreaths will be laid on behalf of the Commonwealth Air Forces and Ex-Service organisations, is open to all who wish to pay their respects to those named on the Memorial. The Air Force Memorial at Runnymede commemorates by name 20,458 airmen and women who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in



The totals are staggering

Buffet Lunch

Greenacres Tavern

Wednesday 18th May 2016 at 12 Noon for 12.30

(Closing date 11 May 16)

Cost £8 per person

Please book your seat and send cheque payable to **“Chiltern Aircrew Association”** to:

Gerry Sealy-Bell, 31 Hempstead Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8BR (please include a stamped addressed envelope)

Names of those attending:

Programme 2016

Events at 1030 for 1100 at Greenacres unless (*)

2016

May 8	Runnymede Service*	11.00am
May 18	Guests Lunch*	1200 Noon
May 19	Veteran's Day (RAF Museum)*	
June 16	TBN	
20 Jul 16	TBN	
31 Jul 16	A Gathering of Moths	Old Warden*
17 Aug 16	TBN	
21 Sep 16	Members Meeting	
19 Oct 16	RAF Hendon past & present-David Keen	
16 Nov 16	The role of the Czechs locally in WW Neil Rees	
14 Dec 16	Xmas Lunch*	1200 Noon

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Welfare

I have been phoning round as usual. Norma Hagon is doing well after her op and plans to come to the May lunch. It was good to see Doug Hadland with us as well as Peter Woodard and his good lady. Best of all last month was Charlie Flint not only back after 8 weeks in hospital but looking so well. Our thanks also to Robert and Sue for keeping us up to date with his progress

David

Membership Secretary

I am sorry to report the passing of **Leo Smith** who died on 17 April. His funeral is at RC Church, St Mary and Joseph, 186 St John's Road, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 1NR at 12 Noon on **Thurs 5 May 16**

followed by cremation at West Herts Crematorium Garston at 1.20 pm. There will be a wake at

Mill Green Golf Club, Gypsy Lane, Welwyn Garden City AL7 4TY.

Leo is survived by his wife Sheila. Donations if required to: Keech Hospice Care, Great Bramingham Lane,

Allan Chappell DFC, born 17th August 1921, died peacefully on 22nd April 2016. Funeral and Celebration of Life to take place in the Hampden Chapel, Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham, on **Tuesday, 10th May at 2.00pm** followed by a reception. In lieu of flowers, donations if desired to RAF Benevolent Fund or Alzheimer's Research UK

Gerry

Secretary/Editor

We are running a minibus to Veterans Day at the RAF Museum at Hendon on Thu 19 May 16. It will depart at 10am and leave Hendon at 4pm. If you would like to book a seat please contact Rod Finn (details in column 1) as all entrants have to be pre booked. The cost of the minibus will be from our Funds.

Graham

Programme Secretary

The gaps in the programme will be filled, it is just a matter of juggling dates with a number of speakers. I am still open to ideas for talks and after the success of talks by our own members would be interested in others willing to 'present' to us

Bill