

From Group Captain P D Oulton RAF



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Mrs MacDonald
'Dilraloch'
5 Morven Road
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24th October 1983

Dear Mrs MacDonald,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of 12 October 1983, I have, as you asked, passed on your thanks to Flight Lieutenant Neil Livermore - the Officer who attended your mother's funeral.

You asked about Number 18 Squadron and whether or not you can continue to wear the brooch which was presented to your mother. I was very touched to hear that your mother was so proud of the brooch and am obviously delighted that you wish to continue wearing it - please do so with my blessing.

Number 18 Squadron is currently based at RAF Gutersloh in Germany flying the Chinook helicopter and in fact it has been a helicopter squadron for much of its existence. You may be interested to read the enclosed copy of the Squadron's history which will obviously give more detail and background to their roles both present and past. The Squadron motto: 'Animo Et Fide' means 'With Courage and Faith'.

If ever you would like to come and visit Royal Air Force Lossiemouth to look around and see some of our aircraft you would be most welcome - just let us know. In the meantime may I again thank you for your letter and good wishes and offer my sincere sympathy at this sad time.

Yours sincerely
Peter Oulton

A BRIEF HISTORY

BATTLE HONOURS

Western Front 1915 - 1918

Somme 1916 - 1918

Hindenburg Line

Invasion Ports 1940

Channel and North Sea 1940 - 1941

Malta 1941 - 1942

North Africa 1942 - 1943

Italy 1943 - 1945

1. The Squadron was formed at Northolt on 11th May 1915 from a nucleus of No 4 Reserve Squadron. It went to France in November 1915 to undertake fighter, reconnaissance and Army co-operation duties, flying the Vickers Fighter, DH2 and Bristol Scout, but re-equipped in April 1917 as a bomber Squadron armed with the FE2b and later the DH4. No 18 Squadron flew bombing missions until the end of the war, and after a period of occupation duties it returned to England to be disbanded on 31st December 1919.

2. The Squadron reformed on 20th October 1931 at Upper Heyford as a light bomber unit with the Hawker Kart and Hind. In May 1938 it re-equipped with the Blenheim 1 and at the outbreak of war No 18 Squadron again moved to France, returning to England in May 1940 after sustaining heavy losses during the German invasion of France. The Squadron then operated from East Anglia until October 1941 when part of it went to Malta to attack enemy ports, airfields and shipping. In March 1942 the remainder of the Squadron in the UK resumed attacks on targets in the Low Countries and France. A unique exploit during this period was the dropping of a replacement artificial leg to the legless fighter ace, Douglas Bader, downed a few days previously when his Spitfire collided with an Me 102 over occupied France.

3. The Mediterranean based element of the Squadron, now operating the more potent Blenheim 4, built up an impressive record through its daring daylight attacks on Axis shipping until in November 1942, No 18 Squadron moved to North Africa. On 4th December 1942 the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander H E Malcolm led a daylight attack on a heavily defended airfield, during which, all but a few Squadron aircraft were destroyed. For his courage in pressing home the attack, Wing Commander Malcolm was awarded the Victoria Cross, and he and the raid are commemorated through the Malcolm Clubs for Servicemen, still found in many parts of the world.

4. From early in 1943, the Squadron operated the far more potent American Douglas Boston, in North Africa, Sicily, and then through the length of Italy. By September 1945 it was based at Hassani in Greece where it once again disbanded. Thereafter the Squadron number was transferred to a Lancaster Squadron at Ein Shemer in Palestine, but for two weeks only, and subsequently to a Mosquito meteorological reconnaissance unit in Ceylon and Burma, but was disbanded there in November 1947.

5. On December 8th 1947, No 18 Squadron reformed at Netheravon and equipped with the Dakota took part in the Berlin Airlift from Gutersloh and then Wunsdorf before disbanding on 20th February 1950. On 1st August 1953 the Squadron reformed at Scampton as part of the UK light bomber force and disbanded yet again on 1st February 1957. It reformed once again on 16th December 1958 to fly the Valiant bomber at Finningley until disbandment on 31st March 1963.

6. Following this very turbulent period, 18 Squadron formed again at RAF Odiham being the first Squadron to be equipped with the Westland Wessex Mk 2 twin engined helicopter. With this aircraft it has served in the United Kingdom, in Cyprus as part of the UN forces, and since 1970 at RAF Gutersloh in Germany. For the past decade, as in the very early history, the Squadron has been employed in the direct support of the British Army. In November 1980 18 Squadron disbanded having given many valiant years service with the battlefield work horse.

7. 18 Squadron reformed at RAF Odiham in August 1981 equipped with the Chinook HC 1 helicopter, prior to a return once again to RAF Gutersloh in Germany.

8. In April 1982 18 Squadron was committed to the South Atlantic Task Force and 4 Chinooks were loaded on the MV Atlantic Conveyor. As the result of an Argentine Exocet missile attack on MV Atlantic Conveyor, three of the four Chinooks were destroyed. The sole survivor, BN continued into the battle zone flying an amazing 130 hours in 2½ weeks with little or no servicing back up. The herculan efforts of the 27 air and ground crew to keep BN flying assisted greatly in the land based troops final success. The Squadron is now scheduled to move to Germany in Mid 1983.
based at RAF Gutersloh in West Germany.

CHINOOK CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TASK FORCE

1. 6 Apr; 18 Sqn first involved, three Chinooks to Culdrose to assist loading the armada, including a 5 Ton prop bearing carried to HMS Invincible to avoid return to Devonport for repairs.
2. 25 Apr; 5 Chinooks loaded on Atlantic Conveyor. One (BP) off-loaded Ascension Island, on task within 1½ hours of leaving ship. Flew 100 hours without significant unserviceability in 3 weeks. In one day lifted 350 tons from airfield to various ships.
3. 25 May; Atlantic Conveyor junk, 3 Chinooks lost, one (BN) airborne at time. Flown ashore with no tools, spares or lubricants. By cease hostilities (2½ weeks) had flown 109 hours, no servicing. Gearbox oil leak mended with glue, refilled with Navy oil. Minor snags (no compass, no cockpit door) carried. night special forces mission in snowstorm, struck water at speed; engines surged, relit, aircraft climbed away. Aircraft still operational, due back soon with many Argentine spares fitted, and flying like any other Chinook.
4. During hostilities, BN carried 2,150 troops, of whom 95 were casevac, 550 prisoners, and 550 tons of freight; this is about 50 tons more than the million pounds by a Sqn of 14 Sea Kings in the same period.
5. Isolated incidents:
 - a. Twenty two troops and three 105 mm guns (2 internal, one external) carried on one sortie.
 - b. 81 paras in full fighting order, with extra ammunition, carried on one sortie.
 - c. 64 casevac from Bluff Cove to Uganda carried on one sortie.
 - d. Murrell Bridge at Mt Kent replaced to enable vehicles to continue to Stanley.
6. 14 Jun; replacement Chinooks begin to arrive in the Falkland Islands. Initial major task to carry aviation fuel to support Naval helicopters in the forward area. Up to 10,000 gals per day, in all some 200,000 gals fuel ferried 60 miles, until Stanley Airfield installation working. Fuel carried in APFC ("Bollocks"); Sea King could carry one, Chinook normally 4, but once 6 (2 on each hook).
7. Post hostilities. Major clear up and regrouping operation, Chinook used to embark returning troops, recover damaged vehicles (eg CVRT light tanks), embark Argentine aircraft and helicopters, and our own damaged helicopters, onto returning ships. Off loading porta-cabins, containers and defence equipment (eg radars), which would not be done by other means due to lack of port facilities.
8. First operational use of triple hook system, a most valuable improvement to flexibility of operations, as variety of smaller, easily prepared loads could be carried simultaneously, improving productivity. Also first operational use of pressure refuel system by Chinook - a considerable help. On ships, Chinook had a smaller "footprint" than Sea King or Wessex, so operated with almost every ship in the Task Force, yet payload equal to fully loaded Sea King (23,000 lbs).
9. To date, nearly 2,000 hours flown in support of Task Force and garrison. Over 15,000 troops and 14,000 tons (over 30 million pounds) of freight carried. Serviced in the open, with minimal support facilities, aircraft has very high availability, despite minor snags. Chinook is an extremely versatile aircraft, with immense potential to assist the Army and Navy in all areas of operations.