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# THE LYNEHAM GLOBE



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# Two Sixteen Squadron Ends Conquished Service

With regret, we record the disbandment of this Squadron after 58 years of service, the last of which have been spent at Lyneham. It was the saddest blow of the Government's axe to be disbandment, but the Squadron will die as it has served, since the First World War. The sleek white Comets grace the skies and indeed the skies of the world.

It helps looking back over the last decade to see what might now be thought by our passengers. No longer will they or their experience the comfort and convenience of a Comet to wing them around the globe, their wish and arriving at the red carpet and second. No longer, either, will some be able to depart from or arrive at their field to their country seats! The Squadron over the years numerous letters of appreciation for the treatment given them, the safety of the crews and the immaculate service instantly achieved.

Reminded of a support flight in the late 1940s then new V-force. The Air Officer commanding the detachment remarked upon the safety of the Comet and enquired of the navigational staff the Comet, saying that the Vulcan had the Comet navigator replied, "I have never seen one." The Air Officer appeared unaware that the Vulcan was referring to his upholstery.

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The Squadron's history goes back to October, 1916, at Manston, Kent, it started life from a No. 7 Squadron RNAS, operating four D/400 twin-engined night bombers. On 1 July 1917 moved to France to join the Independent Doherty and proceeded to the 176th

starting the unit tradition of being called "Two-Sixteen." The Squadron badge shows 'An eagle, wings elevated, holding in its claws a bomb' with the motto 'CCXVI Dona Ferens' meaning 216 'Bearing Gifts.'

In July, 1919, 216 moved to Egypt where it was to remain until 1955, operating the Handley Pages and later the DH Amiens on mail/passenger services to Palestine and Iraq. Soon after re-equipping with the Vickers Vimy in June, 1922, the Squadron began its long service of troop/freight carrying. The larger Vickers Victorias arrived in August, 1926, and many noteworthy flights were made including return flights Cairo-Aden (1916) and Cairo-Capetown (1931). At the same time the Squadron was engaged in planning and surveying the strategically important West African route between Khartoum and Bathurst. The Valentia succeeded the Victoria in 1935 and in 1939 was superseded by the Bristol Bombay.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Squadron flew RAF units to their bases in the Western Desert and also took part in night bombing raids on Benghazi. By the end of 1940, a reversion to purely transport duties, throughout the Middle East, saw the Squadron operating support flights between Khartoum and Takoradi (Ghana), the route which it had pioneered ten years earlier. On 16 November, 1941, five Bombays made the first Allied airborne operation in the Middle East, dropping 54 troops at Tmimi (Libya). The inventory at this time also included DH 86b light transport/communications aircraft.

On 29 July, 1942, six Bombays supported a force of Albacore torpedo bombers on a long range surprise attack on a convoy. The Bombays, loaded with fuel, positioned in the desert about 200 miles inside enemy lines and refuelled the albacores on their return from the attack; all aircraft returned safely to base. The Squadron at this time was also equipped with the Lockheed Hudson C3A and C6 and the Lockheed Lodestar. In November, 1942, the Squadron moved to Cairo West, re-equipped with Dakotas in early 1943 and operated scheduled routes under the newly-formed Transport Command. A detachment went to South-East Asia in 1944 to help the Chindit Operations. By the end of the war, detachments were operating Habbaniyah, Eastleigh, Khartoum, Aden and Karachi.

## Vickers Trophy

Between mid-1945 and early-1951, the Squadron moved from Cairo to Almaza, to Fayid, to Kabrit and back to Fayid where it remained until its return to UK. In 1948 it flew evacuation flights from Palestine and arms flights to Transjordan. Valettas had replaced the Dakotas in 1949 and in 1954 the Squadron was awarded the Vickers Trophy for efficiency.

In November, 1955, after 36 years in Egypt, the Squadron returned home to start a long association with Lyneham and, in June, 1956, re-equipped with the DH Comet Mk. 2 to become the first Squadron in the world to be devoted entirely to jet transport



## **Squadron (contd.)**

much to be desired in the Middle East. In consequence, much credit is due to those of that time who really pioneered the routes by basic instincts and a lot of courage; the Comet 2 had no doppler

and the Squadron maintained an excellent safety record. Transport Command Flight Safety Awards were received in 1959, 1960 and 1961 and the AOC's Certificate of Merit from the Navigation Section in 1959 for the same service. This performance was also recognised by the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in 1961, of the Brackley Memorial

the Squadron received its standard, which was first awarded in 1943, with the Battle Honours, for service in France and Germany 1917-18, Greece 1941, Egypt and Libya 1942, El Alamein and North Burma 1944 and South-

proved most attractive to VIPs, many of them being carried out and, in 1962, five were added to the inventory. These larger aircraft took over the twice-weekly slip service and also the majority of the VIP service. The Comet 2 maintained the frequent London-Med schedules. With the Comet 2s established themselves as great time-savers, the service was consolidated with the Comet 4s in 1967. Many ex-Changi perished upon adjusting their watches to the time difference of the Comets at Changi!

years of excellent service, the Comet 2s were replaced in 1967 and the Comet 4s assumed the role of the VIP flying with additional troop transport flights. Many and varied VIPs have been carried out from almost every part of the world and have been seen in every continent in such places as London and Montevideo, Tokyo and Tahiti. The Squadron has often mounted flights out to aero-medical or passenger flights and has been engaged in the recent Cyprus evacuation. On three occasions, three aircraft brought out over three thousand women and children; no one was injured when two VIP flights were away

## **Company Affiliation**

was made of the Squadron's association with the oldest and most distinguished Livery Company of the City of London. In 1961 it was an honour and privilege to become a member of the Worshipful Company of Coachmakers and Harness Makers, whose origins go back to the 14th century. In those days, unless a member

Several visits have been made to the Squadron by members of the Company and they will be welcomed again at the disbandment functions.

Apart from the many VIPs carried, the Squadron has been privileged to serve several VIPs, namely Royal personages. The first occasion was on 4 June, 1957, when Her Majesty the Queen, accompanied by HRH Prince Philip, flew from Leuchars to London. It was Her Majesty's first jet flight and the first of several with 216 Squadron. Two other occasions were to South America (1968) and Thailand and Malaysia (1972).

## **Visitors' Book**

Other members of Royalty include The Queen Mother, Their RHs The Princesses Margaret, Anne, Alexandra, HRH The Prince Charles and King Olav of Norway. The most notable flight must be the return from Aberdeen to London after the funeral of HRH Princess Marina. The passengers were HM The Queen, HM The Queen Mother, HRH The Princess Margaret, HM Queen Fredrika of the Hellenes, HRH Princess Sophie of the Asturias, the Duke of Fife and members of the Royal Household. The page in the Squadron Visitors' Book, which all VIPs are invited to sign, bearing the signatures of these three Queens and two Princesses is rare indeed; a visitor has made an offer for this of several thousand pounds.

The list of VIPs is impressive and, apart from countless very senior officers of the three Services, included the President of the USA; our various Prime Ministers; Dr. Hastings Banda, Prime Minister of Malawi (1966); Sheik Mujibur Rahman, President of Bangladesh (1972); and the President of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios (1974); to name but a few. Additionally, of course, Miss Leila Khalid of hijacking fame. One could go on but space is limited.

Two-Sixteen has become internationally known and despite the age of the Comets and their lack of speed in comparison with modern day transports, they have been greeted with enthusiasm and delight by many people in admiration of their sleek lines and immaculate appearance. The Squadron has justifiably earned a reputation second to none in every respect, and the servicemen and women who have served on it have been proud members of an elite organisation.

## **"Letter from the General"**

**Little Theatre, Lyneham**

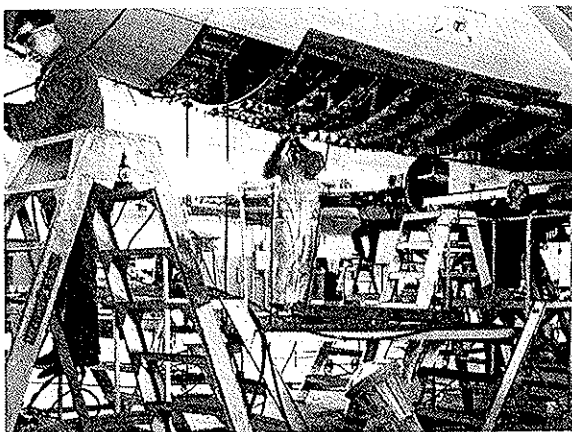
**JULY 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th**

**Tickets: 30p**

# Sixteen Squadron Engineering Flight

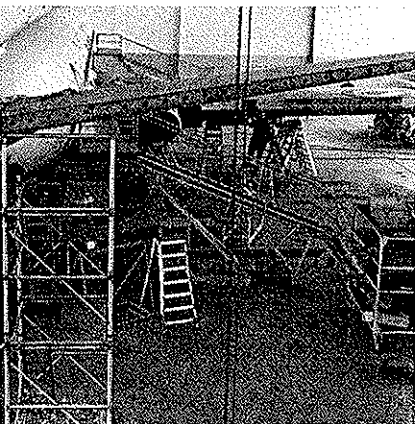
Summer of 1970, 216 Squadron's Comet led by Engineering Wing RAF Lyneham Britannias. In June of the same year it was the Britannias to RAF Brize Norton Comet First and Second Line Servicing Engineering Flight into 216 Squadron. Within the usual Bays—Engine, Role, Hydraulic, Care and Electrical, and whilst the Flight pulling down in 2C Hangar another hangar, prepared as the Engineering Flight's new of course the furthest away from C2 and Headquarters—we have always wondered

after the last remnants of the Britannias moved, J1 Hangar was ready for our use (move is a four letter word) was planned with infinite patience and precision. Working at Lyneham which had wheels was huge—or as the local paper will insist, Transporter to one airman-powered Traffic, with their splendid view of the were very thoughtful in providing a lover to follow each daily procession, laden than some of the vehicles in



*Inspecting a Comet's innards.*

The Squadron has flown nearly 16,000 hours since formation of the Engineering Flight and numerous Base 2 and 3 servicings have been completed. The Flight's efforts must be judged by the performance of the aircraft on route—whether a normal trooping flight or on a VIP journey—letters of appreciation show that performance has been excellent. We could not have carried out our task without the wholehearted support of RAF Lyneham's Engineering and Supply Organisations and special thanks must go to the maestros of the long handled brooms and high pressure spray guns, without whom the Squadron would not have kept its nickname, Shiny Two Sixteen.



*Base 3 Servicing.*

## Overseas Servicing

Because the world wide Comet fleet has diminished, so the servicing backing for overseas flights has had to be extended by carrying groundcrews and spares. Almost as important as the spares carried are the Ground Engineers and crews from the hangar servicing teams. Each Engineer is very experienced with the peculiarities of the Comet where even the hydraulic systems come in three colours: red, blue and green—a pity the latter wasn't white. The groundcrew put the aircraft to bed at nightstops and before the aircrew leave, the departing Navigator whispers the name of the hotel; when the accommodation is a 5-Star attraction, it produces smiles and a flurry of activity—transit at Akrotiri fails somehow.

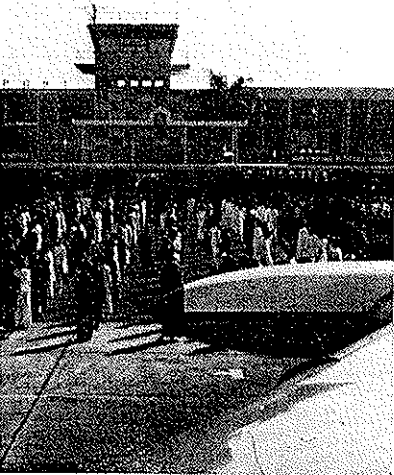
Groundcrew down route often have to cope with unusual and occasionally humorous, situations. At Sydney airport a Ground Engineer was asked if four customs officers could inspect (out of curiosity) his aircraft—he agreed and carried on refueling; when completed he locked the aircraft doors. Glancing back at the aircraft before leaving, he saw four forlorn faces pressed against the windows; releasing them prevented the world's most thorough three-day search of a Comet. General Carver as C in C British Forces Far East used the Squadron to visit Mount Isa in

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weeks it was plainly evident that J1 squadron of fearless feathered dive doubt encouraged by the Squadron 'Bearing Gifts'. The pigeons were trackshot who pursued them tirelessly orders and heating panels in the hangar please remember that a bird's nest

## Engineering Flight

er short and full reverse thrust was  
anning out of loose chippings, some of  
e inlet blades of the outer engines.  
spent four days with their feet poking  
akes honing the blade profiles, after-  
s performed faultlessly for a further  
r 20,000 miles. The local airline was  
cheduled service using the same runway  
e Comet's arrival at Mount Isa—it  
until the runway was relaid—Two  
e way.



t  
ummer of 1972, The Queen and HRH  
gh visited Thailand using a Squadron  
f the journey. The photograph shows  
Chiang Mai airport. Each of the  
g girls at the airport reception wore  
e or blue saris—even more important,  
ing at the same hotel as the ground-  
een Engineering Flight has always  
e with unusual problems but odds of  
o one are something else.

n of wives and children from Cyprus  
Squadron aircraft shuttling between  
eham—skilfully avoiding the slower,  
olate lorries' en route.

ago ominous gaps in the route plans  
s were confirmed by our Squadron  
n he told us we would be disbanded  
5 Defence Review. All of the Flight  
me through from the capital of the  
—Innsworth. In its wisdom the  
ecided to sprinkle the accumulated  
servicing experience quite evenly

fuselage without a red carpet beneath their feet.

During the Disbandment Parade at the end of June, the Flight will face the Squadron Crest attached to the wall of J1 Hangar. Many will hope that one day the Squadron will reform and the Eagle's talons clutch something faster than a falling bomb—Concorde.

## Cheshire Home Fete Success

THE proceeds from the Bottle and Can stall amounted to £308, and the sale of Raffle Tickets on the station realised £176, a total of £484.

The Community Relations Officer, Flt. Lt. David Hide, and Mrs. Liz Olding would like to thank all those who contributed goods, sold or bought tickets, and particularly those who helped with the stall for their support.

The sum raised this year far exceeds any previous efforts.

### RAOB

THE Dawn of Victory Lodge meets every Friday evening at 2015 hours in Building 52 (next door to the Route Hotel). All members are cordially invited to attend. If further information is required, ring Ext. 255.

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