

Lincolns to Egypt

The Association's communications manager Paul Thompson recently received an enquiry and some photographs relating to a 101 Squadron Lincoln deployment to Egypt in October 1947. Further investigation has revealed an unfortunate incident that led to the death of one of the Squadron ground crew when the squadron returned to Shallufa a year later.



All photos courtesy of Diane Griffiths, whose uncle Dennis Roles was ground crew on the 101 Squadron deployment to Shallufa in October 1947.

The photographs that accompany this article come with a request for any information on the gentlemen featured – a Dennis Sydney Roles, with a 101 Squadron connection. Paul Thompson provides the following observations after conducting some research:

“I believe that Dennis is wearing groundcrew uniform and in the photo of the group of six, they appear to be holding cartridge belts, which would imply he was an armourer. The aircraft in flight against the mountains is definitely a 101 Squadron Lincoln and the reference to Shallufa on the reverse of the photo would suggest Egypt. I dug into the ORB for 1947 and discovered that 101 dispatched six Lincolns on 1st October 1947 to Shalufa as part of Operation *Sunray*. They went on to make a goodwill visit to Turkey, where they lost 6-1 to a Turkish Air Force football team and were given a kilo of sugar on a visit to a sugar beet factory! They returned to the UK on 31st October.

According to the RAF Museum, in October 1947 101 Squadron supported No 8 Squadron (then equipped with DH Mosquitos) in the bombing of a village in Aden, although I can see no mention of such an op in the squadron's Operational Record Book. The photo of 101 Squadron Headquarters is most likely taken at Binbrook.”

If anyone can shed any more light on Dennis Roles' service with 101 Squadron, or provide further details of the period in question, we would love to hear from you!

<https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/history-of-aviation-timeline/interactive-aviation-timeline/british-military-aviation/1947.aspx>



On 30th September 1948 five HP Halifaxes of Transport Command took off from RAF Binbrook, destination Castel Benito in Libya. They carried the Station Armament and Signal Officers and 55 ground crew, heavy equipment and spares for Exercise *Sunray*, which was to be carried out by six Avro Lincolns of 101 Squadron. The Avro Lincolns took off the next day. The ORB states that 'the ground crew of the Squadron were on the aerodrome to receive the aircraft at CASTEL BENITO, and worked on the Squadron aircraft till dark in preparation for an early take-off the following day to SHALLUFA'. This reference to the ground crew of the Squadron is important in the context of later events.

On 2nd October the Halifaxes and 101 Squadron Lincolns took off from Castel Benito for RAF Shallufa in the Canal Zone, north of Suez in Egypt. From their arrival on the 2nd until their departure on the 31st, the Squadron carried out over 100 training sorties; live bombing at the El Shatt range, air-to-air and air-to-ground firing and fighter affiliation.

On the 8th the Squadron was visited by AVM Sir Basil Emery KVB CB DSO DFC AFC, the Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Training).

On the 22nd four aircraft took off to take part in a bombing exercise at Khartoum; one of them was fired at by the Suez anti-aircraft guns as it set course, although it was considered that the bursts were only warning shots. The last of the training flights were completed on the 27th.

It had not been all work though: On the 11th a game of football between members of the Squadron was played in the afternoon and on the 15th, an all-aircrew football team from the Squadron beat the Fire and MT section 5-0.

On the 19th a game of hockey was organised by the station in which many of the Squadron played, and on the 26th the Squadron played the RAF Regiment at football and won 1-0.

On the 28th a Squadron team of two officers and eight airmen beat the RAF Regiment at a



Halifax RT824 at RAF Binbrook in 1948.



shooting competition on the 25 yard range, the scores being 605 compared to 565. Several liberty runs were organised to take the airmen swimming at Fayid lido.

On the 30th, two York aircraft and a Lancastrian

freighter of Transport Command arrived at lunch time to convey ground crew and heavy equipment back to the United Kingdom the following day.

On the 31st the six Lincolns of 101 Squadron and the three Transport Command aircraft took off for Castel Benito in the morning.

On November 1st, it was intended that all the aircraft should fly back to Binbrook. Owing to bad weather at Binbrook all aircraft were diverted to Istres. Insufficient accommodation was available for the airmen and nine of them were obliged to sleep in the Camp cinema. While the airmen were sleeping, the building caught fire and when a roll call was taken it was found that one of the occupants – 2334884 LAC HIBBERT G.I – was missing. His incinerated body was found the following morning in the ruins.

The Squadron returned to Binbrook on the 3rd except for an Officer and eight other airmen, who had slept in the cinema, who were required for the Court of Enquiry.

LAC G I Hibbert is buried in the Rouquiers Cemetery in Istres alongside an RAF pilot, Flt Lt W M Strathern, DFC & Bar, who was killed on 17th May 1950, aged 30, when the Vampire jet he was testing blew up.

The cemetery is only three kilometres from Istres 125, the largest French Air Force base and home to two French AAR Squadrons – 4/31 Sologne (Boeing C-135FR and KC-135R) and 1/31 Bretagne (Airbus A330 MRTT ‘Phénix’ AAR and strategic transport). So Istres 125, the French equivalent of RAF Brize Norton, is a fitting place for a 101 airman to rest.

LAC Hibbert must have been one of the ground crew of the Squadron who were on the aerodrome to receive the aircraft at Castel Benito on 1st October and as such he should certainly be included on the 101 Squadron Roll of Honour and the Losses Database.

Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	SECRET.	References to Appendices
CASTEL BENITO (N.AFRICA).	1.11.48		COMPILED BY P.W.L.T. WEST AND P.W.L.T. BARTON. With the exception of P.W.L. HUBBARD in SR40 (RF.522) who was delayed owing to an unserviceable aircraft, the whole Squadron took off for BINBROOK. Owing to bad weather at BINBROOK all aircraft were diverted to ISTRES, the last aircraft landing at ISTRES at 12.00Z. An unfortunate fatal accident marred the Squadron's enforced stay at ISTRES. Insufficient accommodation was available for the airmen and nine (9) of them were obliged to sleep in the camp cinema. While the airmen were sleeping the building caught fire, and when a roll call was taken it was found that one of the occupants 2334884 L.A.C. HIBBERT, G.I., was missing. His incinerated body was found the following morning in the ruins.		
ISTRES (FRANCE)	2.11.48		It was intended that all aircraft should return to BINBROOK, and all crews were standing by to take off pending latest meteorological information. Unfortunately when the information was received it was found that the weather in England was bad, and it was deemed to be unwise to return to BINBROOK. Information was signalled to AIR MINISTRY, No.1. Ground, and BINBROOK regarding the fatality and a Court of Enquiry was convened. In spite of the bad weather P.W.L. HUBBARD in SR40 (RF.522) took off from CASTEL BENITO and landed at LYNNHAM.		
ISTRES (FRANCE)	3.11.48		P.W.L.T. SCOTT and crew were first to take off for BINBROOK in SR40 (RF.372) followed by P.W.L.T. BOGGS in SR40 (RF.369) and Sqn.Ldr. WINGFIELD in SR40 (RF.376). The remaining two aircraft were unserviceable and were unable to take off. P.W.L.T. SHEPHERD and the eight other airmen who had slept in the burned down cinema were also left behind as witnesses for the Court of Enquiry. P.W.L. HUBBARD in SR40 (RF.522) flew from LYNNHAM - BINBROOK.		
BINBROOK (LINDS)	4.11.48		The whole day was spent by the Squadron settling down again at BINBROOK. All Section Leaders were busy making out their respective reports on Exercise SUNRAY and certain equipment which had been drawn specifically for Exercise SUNRAY was handed back into stores.		
	5.11.48		All Squadron personnel were busily engaged in handling in Equipment in the morning.		

