



The Fleet Air Arm Association



Airey Fairey

Issue No.16 – Winter 08/09



THE FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

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<i>President</i>	Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns KCB, CBE, ADC
<i>Honorary Vice President</i>	Rear Admiral Simon Charlier ADC
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Fleet Air Arm Association

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The Fleet Air Arm Association website www.faaa.org.uk
The Fleet Air Arm www.fleet-air-arm.com
Fleet Air Arm Museum www.fleetairarm.com (Yeovilton RNAS)

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Front cover picture – an artist's impression of the aircraft carrier of the future. Download from Royal Navy Photographic Image Database www.royalnavyimages.co.uk
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Editorial Brief – Issue 16

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Welcome to Issue 16 of the Airey Fairey which I hope you will enjoy reading. The copy is longer than previous years – plenty to report and because 2009 is our Centenary year we have a section on FLY NAVY 100 and some of the events planned in 2009. I have received Branch newsletters with ‘stories’ which I hope to follow up and include in the next edition of the Magazine.

Basically the Magazine has 4 main areas – Fleet Air Arm news – Association and Branch (need more for the next Issue from the Branches), Memory Lane, Articles from RNAS Yeovilton and its squadrons, and the Obituaries. The Obituary Section has been extended where the information is available and this could be the format for the future. Our acting PRO Ray Whitehouse hopes to carry out personal interviews either over the phone or meeting the interviewee to give the personal touch – especially for the Obituary section. We have one such interview coming up in Issue 17 with Sir Adrian Johns, but next time it could be one with a member of the FAAA. Although some of the Association news may well not be news for members there are others who will receive the magazine that do not attend Branch meetings – particularly those who may currently be serving in the Fleet Air Arm – but you may not ‘know all’ as they say.

Three books have been referenced but more as further reading rather than as a Book Review. There are a large number of books coming onto the market and a look around a good bookshop will act as an update. If you find one that ‘is a good read’ and is relevant to the FAAA let me know and I’ll include a reference in the next issue.

Arnold Thompson (Association Secretary) has received a ‘request for Information’ from Stanley Henry Williamson’s Granddaughter. Stanley served on HMS Emperor during World War II, possibly on either 800 or 846 squadron which were thought to be Avenger aircraft. Amongst his personal effects she has found some photos and is now trying to find out more of her Grandfather’s World War years. Ring a bell? Any information to Arnold please.

I realise, as Editor, that I have followed two editors Barry Simons and Lionel Smith who have given much time and effort to produce quality Issues of the Airey Fairey. I hope I can continue in a similar way.

I would like to thank Arnold Thompson and Ray Whitehouse for all the advice and copy/photographs that they have sent me plus Terry (my hubby) who has helped me with checking the facts, proofing the copy, keeping me on track and accepting that time is needed to bring the Airey Fairey to print!

Last but by no means least please keep thinking that: copy for the AIREY FAIREY is always needed without it there is no Magazine. My telephone number is 01923 676619 or you can pass any information you might have through to me via your Branch Secretary. I shall be at the April 2009 Reunion and hope to meet more FAAA Members there – perhaps even to get some more ideas for the Magazine. Sorry for the long Editorial Section – ISSUE 17’s brief hopefully will be a much shorter one – I promise!

Enjoy the Magazine,

Margaret

FAAA News

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FLY NAVY 100

On 7 May 2009, the Royal Navy will be celebrating 100 years of Naval Aviation, on the anniversary of the date in 1909 when the Admiralty placed its first order for a Naval Airship. It was a radical shift in military thinking that was to lead to the formation of the Royal Naval Air Service, later renamed the Fleet Air Arm, and which marked the beginnings of the formidable versatility and capability of Naval Air Power. At its height the FAA comprised some 78,000 people, 3700 aircraft, 59 aircraft carriers and 56 air stations around the world. Now its squadrons are in high demand – providing air power from the sea, supporting land and amphibious operations, delivering carrier strike and providing maritime security. (Our thanks to RNAS Yeovilton for the news and stories we have received for use in the magazine).

FLY NAVY 100(FN100) is a programme of centennial events running throughout 2009 aimed at raising awareness of the legacy of the Fleet Air Arm, its history, and ethos and the enduring importance of Naval Air Power to our island nation. If you are on e-mail you will be able to visit the Royal Navy Website for updates on the Events. A summary of some of the major events is listed opposite.

The Chairman of the Fly Navy Federation 100, is Rear Admiral Chris Clayton RN Rtd. The FNF100 Team consists of Cdr Geoff Bowker SO1 FAA – the team leader, and Cdr Sue Eagles -Communications Director (see below) assisted by Lt Carolyn Jones and a Leading Air Engineering Technician.

Dates for some of the Events still need to be confirmed. Following a meeting at RNAS Yeovilton on December 8 it is expected that further information will be available.

For updates on the FN100 news visit the Royal Navy Website at www.royalnavy.mod.com or contact the FN100 Office (see below).

Communications Director for FLY NAVY 100

Commander Sue Eagles has been appointed Communications Director for the FLY NAVY 100 programme. She joined the Royal Navy in 1974 as a FAA Photographer. She has served at RNAS Yeovilton and RNAS Culdrose. As Commanding Officer of the RNR Public Affairs Branch from 1991-96 she led the way in which the military now operates closely with the media in current operations and for the past six years she has worked with NATO, serving on 2 tours in Afghanistan as the NATO Media Spokesman. (Reduced extract from FlightDeck Summer edition 2008 Page 5).

FLY NAVY 100 Office

The FLY NAVY 100 office is at RNAS Yeovilton. For those who do NOT use the Web there are other ways to gain information on the FLY NAVY 100 programme:

Tel 01935 456150

Email fn100so1media@yeovilton.mod.uk



FLY NAVY 100 and other Centenary events – 2009

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Dates to put in your Diary for 2009

Feb 19-21	Mountbatten Festival of Music – first public appearance of a live orchestral accompaniment to film review of 100 years of naval history *
May 08	St Paul's Cathedral (limit 2400) Muster of the Standards *
May ??	Tour of A/c HMS Illustrious – London Party visits a rare opportunity to 'step aboard' *
June 18(?)	Ford Reunion
July ??	Buckingham Palace Garden Party (unlimited) *
July 11	RNAS Yeovilton, Yeovilton Air Day
July 24	FAA Flypast Eastchurch *
July 25-26	Sky Sheppey
July 29	RNAS Culdrose, Culdrose Air Day
Sept 11	National Arboretum – Memorial Service and Dedication
Sept 18-21	HMS Illustrious visit to Liverpool *
Nov 07	Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance
Nov 08	Royal British Legion Ceremonies – Cenotaph
Dec ??	Greenwich dinner (limited to 350 mainly sponsors)*

Note: The list above does not include all the Events expected to take place in 2009. The key FLY NAVY 100 (FN100) events are marked with an *. The confirmed dates for both the FN100 and other centenary events taking place in 2009 are highlighted in bold.

Additional information

The Ford Reunion June 18th

The Chairman, Secretary and Membership Secretary have met with the Ford Open Prison representatives, to discuss the reunion visit and to arrange a programme. The date is provisional. It is hoped that a member of the Royal family (Prince Andrew) will attend. If the request is accepted the date will then be governed by his availability. Although the visit is intended for people that have served at Ford (when it was an Air Station) any members may attend but priority will be given to ex Peregrines. Names and numbers will be required early in the New Year and limited to 150.

100 Years flypast at the Birthplace of Naval Aviation July 24th 2009

On Friday 24 July 2009 a formation of current and historic aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm will fly over Eastchurch and it is expected to continue out to sea to overfly a Royal Navy warship just offshore. The Royal Navy flypast will be the opening event of Sky Sheppey 2009, a weekend of flying displays, events and exhibitions celebrating 100 years of British Aviation and much more. The formation of aircraft is expected to include both current and historic types, with aircraft from frontline and training squadrons, as well as from the Royal Navy Historic Flight.

Sky Sheppey 2009 July 25 and 26

This centenary celebration will have a particular link with the Isle of Sheppey's involvement from early 1909 in the race to fly machines that were powered and capable of being controlled, not only at the discretion of the wind but at the will of the pilot. The Short Brothers established the world's first airplane factory here and were visited several times by the Wright brothers. Many notable British aviation pioneers carried out their flights and conducted their flying experiments here andit is here that the Royal Naval Air Service was founded. Eastchurch Parish Council has formed an Aviation Centenary Committee to organise the Events. The Chairman is Captain John Carter (MN. Rtd). Their website contains further information not only on the events to be held there in July but also more of the history of the Eastchurch Aerodrome. See below for additional information.

Web www.eastchurchpc.kentparishes.gov.uk

Email flight100@hotmail.co.uk (Secretary of Committee)

Tel 01795 880790

The National Arboretum September 11th

The Arboretum is situated near Burton on Trent and is managed by the British Legion. It is open daily to all. A permanent memorial to everyone who served in the FAA is planned. The hope is that the planned 'all ranks' memorial stone (possibly in the shape of an aircraft carrier) will be completed in time for the Memorial service and that it will act as a reminder to future generations, of the role of the FAA in Britain's history. The FAAOA have very generously agreed to underwrite the estimated cost (£25000) so that the work for the placement of the stone can be started. An appeal to help offset the cost is to be launched. Our Association aim is to raise a minimum of £1000 as our contribution to this extremely worthwhile cause. Len Owen (Derbyshire Branch) is the contact for the Arboretum Project. So please *'dig deep into your pockets!'*

HMS Illustrious Sept 18-21 – Liverpool

Open ship + onboard cocktail party. This will be a large popular event with the ship alongside. Members of associations unable to travel to the South will have the opportunity to be involved in the visit programme. (Source FNF100 – July 2008).

Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance November 07

The Festival will be themed to the FN100 and it will be another opportunity to parade the standards.

Royal British Legion November 08 – Cenotaph

The Whitehall Ceremonials are familiar to us all, but 2009 is the year for the FAA to take 'the lead'. The FN100 team and the FAAOA with its experience regarding the parade are to emphasise to the Royal British Legion the request that associations be able to march individually BUT as a FAA 'unit' leading the parade. Attendance from Branch Members will be needed to support this request. It is realised that in past years (where we have had poor attendance) that every branch has its own local memorial service to attend but for 2009 the FAA needs a good 'turn out' at Whitehall in recognition of its Centenary year.



FAAA News in Brief

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Reunion/Annual General Meeting 2009

The Reunion in 2009 will be held at Bosworth Hall Hotel, Market Bosworth, Warwickshire, Friday April 3 – Monday April 6. The Hotel situated in the centre of the country, is a Grade II listed William and Mary Mansion set in some 11 acres of garden and parkland. Reservations cannot be guaranteed after November 14 2008. Currently we have 103 applications to attend. Barry is hoping that final numbers will be around 120. A trip to the Black Country Museum has been arranged for Sunday April 5 2009. Branch Secretaries have all the details.

Falklands Requiem

Our Patron and Chairman have received invitations to attend the Falklands Requiem, at the chapel of the Royal Naval College at Greenwich on the December 2. Unfortunately Sir Raymond is unable to attend so Sir Adrian is attending with Lady Suzie, in his place. Our National Standard will also be presented; our stand in Standard bearer was serving in the Falklands during the conflict.

FAAA Officers and Committee Members

The Association desperately needs a Vice Chairman and a Public Relations Officer if it is to continue as an efficient organisation. There is a need to search the Branches for suitable candidates. The Chairman flagged the importance of filling these posts at the last Derby meeting. Failure to fill the Vice Chairman post could result in no Chairman in 2010. So urgent action is required!

Membership Secretary's report

The latest report, from Ray Whitehouse shows an increase in new FAAA members of 21.

The figure includes some 'serving members' which is encouraging. It is also a reflection of the Committee's promotional activities throughout the year.

It was reported at the Derby meeting that all serving members of the Royal Navy had been made members of the Royal Naval Association and that there were to be RNA representatives on every ship and establishment. The Secretary agreed to contact Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm to see how this could be achieved for the FAAA.

Association Life Membership

In July 2008 the Chairman of the FAAA presented Fred Udell (Hitchin Branch) with his Life Membership Certificate for his services to the Association. Fred served on the FAAA National Committee after joining the FAAA in 1996. Aged 17 years, he joined the Royal Navy (HMS Duke) in January 1942, and then, in the same year, he went to HMS Gosling to join the FAA to train as an Armourer. Prior to his demob at Daedalus (Feb 1946), as an LAM (O) he joined HMS Campania – an Escort Carrier embarked with 813 and 825 Sqdns and finally was stationed at HMS Kestrel (Middle Wallop) working with 700 Sqdn.

FAAA Diaries

The production of the FAAA Diary for 2009 was achieved. Earlier in the year there was some question as to whether the task of producing the Diary could be continued after John Maybank, who has produced the diary for many years, announced he was 'to retire from the job'. Fortunately a replacement has been found – Gareth Price (Wrekin Branch). Our thanks to John for all his efforts over the past years.

National Standard News

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National Standard Events

Chatham 2007- Veterans and Falklands 25 Day – Barry Simons our National Standard Bearer ‘took the lead’ (see above) on this occasion and had precedence over the RNA Branch standards. On arrival at the Standard Bearers changing room he was approached by the Standards Marshal with a request for Barry – the only National Standard Bearer present, to lead the various parades. He was also asked if he would be willing to be the only standard bearer to ‘hand up’ the standard at the church parade. It had been arranged for the South Atlantic Medal Association to take this honour but their standard bearer had been overbooked. This caused great consternation among the RNA standard bearers. They did not think it right that the ‘Airey Fairey’ standard should take precedence over the RNA standards.

It didn’t stop here!! The RNA were further aggrieved when for the evening performance of the Beating of the Retreat by the RM and City of Rochester Pipe band, the Director of Music from the RM asked that our standard be marched up between the two Bands to line up with the two drum majors. The remaining standards formed up on the outside of each Band. Quote from Barry *‘Needless to say I was very proud to do this and was pleased to see that the FAAA was honoured in this way.’* Well done Barry.

Standard news in brief (Barry Simons)

Weymouth and Portland Veterans Day – Unfortunately there was about an hour’s delay in starting the march along the seafront – the Mayor of Weymouth insisted on inspecting the full contingents of both regiments receiving the freedom of the borough. Needless to say this caused some consternation both to the many standard bearers, the marching contingent and the band of the Royal Marines. Some dignitaries forget that those parading are volunteers and in many cases past their sell by date. The Bristol Branch Standard, however, was presented by Able Cadet Wookey (Burnham-on Sea, Sea Cadets).



Battle of Britain Memorial Day, Capel le Ferne – There was a total of 68 Standards paraded including the National Standards of the RAF Aircrew Association, Royal Observer Corps and our own. It was a pity that there were none of our Branch Standards there. The conditions were atrocious with pouring rain and it was ‘blowing a gale’ – so much so that the service had to be shortened. Quote from Barry ‘We could not even ‘carry’ our Standards and had to perform the ‘dip’ from the order position – not in the drill book!.’

Portsmouth Veterans Weekend – This comprised of a short service and wreath laying in the morning, at the war memorial on Southsea Common where the Standards were paraded. In the afternoon a parade led by the band of the Royal Marines Portsmouth took place. Needless to say this was very well received by the large public contingent.

Your Branch Standard and FLY Navy 100

Following the meeting at Hanworth in July, a request was made for feed back from the Branch secretaries as to whether their Branch had an Association Standard and if so was there someone prepared to take it to the FLY Navy 100 Events – particularly the event to be held in May 2009 at St Paul’s cathedral. In the event that there was no one fit enough to parade the standard, it was suggested that perhaps an approach to the Local Sea or Marine Cadet Corps to carry



your standard could be considered. This arrangement was quite acceptable to the FNF100 hierarchy, who thought it a very good idea to ‘bring in the youngsters’. Feedback from the Branches would suggest that we have around eleven Standards that could be paraded.

Further to this, at the Derby meeting Ben Worship our Treasurer put forward the suggestion that the FAAA should reimburse Branches that are asked by the Association to send their Standard Bearer and Branch Standards to the main official Centenary Celebrations in 2009. Ben expects the cost to be no more than £1500. This would allow our standards to be seen ‘in number’ at major events. Good Publicity for the FAAA. These Events are expected to have camera coverage by TV and Newspapers – both Nationally and World wide. All delegates agreed that reimbursement should be made.

Watford Doctor's Bequest

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The FAAA has received the sum of £60,000 plus a possible additional £5,000 from the executor of a Watford Doctor's will. FAAA is one of sixteen Charities to benefit from the will. Since the beginning of this year there has been a great deal of debate as to how the money should be spent. The decision still has to be made. At the last FAAA meeting at Derby, still under discussion were the items listed below. It is hoped that a decision can be made at the AGM Bournemouth.

How should the money be used?

These are the items raised at the Derby meeting to be discussed at Branch level.

Provision of an award of a prize for the Fleet Air Arm Trainees

Southdowns branch suggested that the money be invested and the interest used to provide prizes for aviation personnel under training. The Secretary spoke with the Training Commander of the Telegraphist Air Gunners Association which has for some time provided a shield for best Air Engineering Technician of the year. The suggestion was that the FAAA should provide a similar prize for Leading Air Engineering Technician of the year – the only group without any end of course recognition. The Handlers Association provides something similar. The Commander and those at the Derby meeting thought that this was a good idea.

How to achieve it? A suggestion for a lump sum was discussed but thought to be expensive. However there was a more cost effective solution - namely the provision of a shield and an annual small replica or tankard engraved with 'The Dr. Rotman Award presented by the Fleet Air Arm Association' (or something similar). The presentation would be made at the passing out parade by a FAAA representative.

Every branch should be given £1000 for advertising purposes

Yorkshire Branch (Albert Firth) put forward this suggestion which had been seconded by the Cotswold Branch. The request was for £1000 to be given to each Branch to offset the cost of promoting locally FLY NAVY 100. There was a great deal of discussion over this suggestion. The Treasurer suggested that more could be gained by placing an advert nationally rather than locally and for less cost to the Association – approx. £5,000 as against £20,000. Local advertising versus 'around the world' advertising was discussed and advertising on Channel 4 text pages at no cost which had been more successful for the Watford Branch than local advertising. It was suggested by the Vice Chairman that having listened to all that was said the solution to this request could be that in future branches should be given the opportunity to apply for a grant to be used to promote the FAAA in their area. Each case could then be judged on its merit.

Provision of Mobility scooters

This is still under consideration, but as reported at previous meetings the liability associated with the issuing and maintenance of the scooters still needs to be resolved.



Sponsorship of a Royal Navy Historic Flight aircraft

Hitchin Branch (Fred Udell) was tasked with investigating what could be involved in sponsoring a Heritage Flight aeroplane. Fred wrote to John Beattie regarding the sponsorship and received a reply from Commodore Palmer the CO of RNAS Yeovilton. The letter drew attention to the close links that the FAAA has with the Heritage Flight and that when displaying older aircraft types around the country the Heritage Flight represented the interests of the FAAA. The letter also drew attention to the fact that the flight enjoyed visits from FAAA members and does get out talking to Branches from time to time. Given these connections and those of the historic past the Commodore felt it would be fitting to link any donation that the FAAA may make with the Sea Hawk for the naval centenary year celebration. In return the sponsorship would be broadcast by the Historic Flight Website, in Navy News and on Flight brochures and vehicles plus public address systems and programmes at the displays where the aircraft appeared. At the invitation of the Commodore, Fred together with our Chairman and Secretary visited the Flight to find out what sums of money would be expected by way of a donation. The sum suggested was £20,000 – not quite the figure expected. The suggestion from the Committee meeting prior to the main meeting at Derby put the reduced figure of £5000 to those attending the Derby meeting. A great deal of discussion followed and as this was only a suggestion the matter would be returned to the Branches.

Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF)

Whilst the Flight needs the support of Associations like the FAAA and its Branches it is also looking for support from individuals to donate either a single sum of money or a regular donation. Fund raising is key to the survival of these older aircraft. You can get regular news updates throughout the year at the RNHF website and visit the online shop where RNHF and FAA related merchandise can be bought. www.royalnavyhistoricflight.org.uk



Sea Hawk FGA.6 WV908 seen here over the Somerset levels with its distinct marker the Ace of Diamonds was built in 1955. During her career she served with 738,806,807,898 Naval squadrons in the aircraft carriers Ark Royal, Albion and Bulwark. She was transferred to the Royal Navy Historic Flight in 1982.

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Henry Allingham, veteran of Jutland, attends Second Sea Lord's Garden Party

Ray Whitehouse



Henry William Allingham, an FAAA member, a super centenarian of World War 1 and the last survivor of The Battle of Jutland was the guest of honour at a Garden Party held at Admiralty House, Portsmouth on Tuesday 1st July 2008. The Second Sea Lord and Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns KCB, CBE, ADC and his wife, Lady Suzie, hosted the event.

Henry, together with over 400 other guests from various organisations affiliated to the Royal Navy, enjoyed a splendid afternoon's hospitality and were entertained to some excellent displays from the Sea Cadets from the Training Ships, Drax, Dolphin and Royal George; demonstrations from various Military Working Dog Capability units and the Royal Marine Unarmed Combat Display Team. Henry was on form – he was prepared to challenge anyone over the age of 100 to a round of unarmed combat! The highlight of the afternoon was The Royal Marine Band, which performed Ceremonial Sunset. Henry joined the Second Sea Lord in taking the salute.

All will want to see Henry fit and well to celebrate the Centenary of Naval Aviation, Fly Navy 100 in 2009. Henry's story can be found in Issue 15 of the Airey Fairey.



Representing the Fleet Air Arm Association at the Garden Party was our Chairman, Brian Bingham, Secretary Arnold Thompson, and their wives Blenda and Dorothy respectively. Brian is sitting on Henry's left and Ray Whitehouse FAAA on the right.

Ray (Ford Branch) and Arnold (seen here talking to the Second Sea Lord) were also at Admiralty House in June 2008 at the invitation of Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns who had graciously agreed to give them an exclusive interview for the Airey Fairey. It is expected that the interview, will be printed in Issues 17 and 18 of the Airey Fairey. Ray, who has provided the photographs for this item, is currently co-opted as our PRO. He hopes that 'one to one' interviews can be arranged in the future.



Branch news

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Cooking up for Cash for a new minibus Ford Branch – Ray Whitehouse

On Saturday August 16 members of the Ford (Peregrine) Branch helped a local youth organisation move a little closer to its target of buying a replacement minibus for their unit. FAAA members entertained cadets of the Littlehampton based T.S. Implacable – Nautical Training Corps (NTC) and their families to a barbecue and social evening at their headquarters at the Sportsman in Littlehampton. Doing a brilliant job at the BBQ was FAAA member Dave Perrott – ex LEM (Air) who lives in Lancing, West Sussex. He served at RNAS Ford (HMS Peregrine) in 1958 with 700X Naval Air Squadron operating Scimitars.



The NTC unit has launched a £30,000 'Implacable on wheels' appeal. This event is just one of a series of fund-raising activities that the Ford Branch members are arranging to assist the youngsters to achieve their target. Seventy plus attended the evening and over £400 was raised from the BBQ, a well supported raffle and a donation of £50 from the RNA.

Answers to the 'Searchword' that follows. Look away now if you think you are really good. Royal Navy Aircraft from the past. They all start with 'Sea' - Anson, Attacker, Avenger, Barracuda, Buccaneer, Corsair, Dominie, Fire, Firefly, Firebrand, Fulmar, Fury, Gannet, Gazelle, Hawk, Harrier, Hornet, King, Mew, Meteor, Oxford, Otter, Prince, Venom, Vixen, Scimitar, Skyraider, Swordfish, Walrus, Wessex, and Wyvern.



Searchword

.....

C	O	M	B	Y	E	S	T	Z	D	R	O	F	X	O	X	F	T
O	B	C	S	C	O	P	P	G	A	L	O	C	F	A	S	Y	I
X	F	E	N	E	E	L	A	M	R	M	O	N	E	V	M	F	A
J	U	I	K	E	I	N	A	S	O	R	R	T	U	E	U	V	D
S	R	U	R	A	N	N	A	L	S	L	R	E	T	L	P	Q	U
P	Y	O	T	E	S	E	I	A	T	E	K	E	M	E	W	O	C
R	E	T	T	O	B	M	I	M	K	O	O	A	D	A	F	J	A
J	O	T	N	V	X	R	W	C	O	R	R	I	L	O	Y	R	R
A	D	R	E	I	R	R	A	H	A	D	T	R	V	L	Z	E	R
K	O	D	B	V	O	T	U	N	Q	A	U	T	F	Z	W	G	A
S	C	I	M	I	T	A	R	O	D	S	N	E	T	I	Y	N	B
Z	O	K	W	A	H	E	A	T	E	N	R	O	H	U	B	E	Y
H	S	I	F	D	R	O	W	S	T	I	E	V	A	C	J	V	E
X	I	N	E	X	I	V	J	F	F	O	V	C	C	A	J	A	L
A	B	G	O	O	L	K	S	T	I	N	Y	J	A	B	Y	V	O
E	L	L	E	Z	A	G	A	O	R	I	W	E	S	S	E	X	S
O	B	C	T	A	Z	O	R	E	E	N	A	C	C	U	B	C	T
A	T	B	K	S	K	Y	R	A	I	D	E	R	O	P	I	C	T

The thirty-one aircraft in the ‘Searchword’ puzzle all served with the Royal Navy. The prefix ‘Sea’ has been left off. On a scale of one word a minute it should take about half an hour to complete. On good authority all the letters are there!

Twenty first birthday celebration

.....

Bob Ridout – Yeovil branch



Yeovil Branch members at the Royal Court Hotel, Coventry

Yeovil Branch celebrated its 21st Birthday in style with the help of a Lottery grant. It all started with a visit to the FAA Museum by the Yorkshire Branch in 2007. The visit was funded by the 'Awards for All' lottery scheme. A conversation with Bob Sharpe suggested that as it was Yeovil Branch's 21st birthday it would be worth the Branch applying for a grant under the same scheme to mark the occasion.

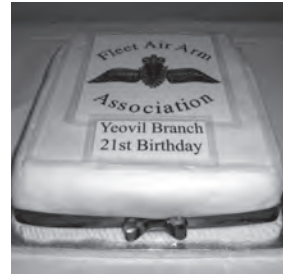
The question was 'Could the Committee devise a plan that would appeal to both the branch and the Lottery Commission?' After much discussion with the Committee the answer was YES and a plan was formulated, the application pack obtained and duly completed. Not quite as easy as it sounds, but with advice from the Yorkshire branch, and some creative thinking, the plan was completed.

It was posted to the Commission in the middle of January. I had one telephone call from lottery office to ask for some additional information and to let us know that we would receive the result of the application towards the end of February. This duly came and went. By the middle of March, still no reply. I was prepared at our March meeting to give out the bad news but waiting at the club where we meet was a letter from the Lottery Commission. On opening it I was able to give out the good news that the whole amount applied for had been awarded. The plan had then to be finalised. And it came to fruition on the weekend of 6th to 9th of June 2008.



June 6. 0830, coach plus forty eight passengers departed Yeovil for R.A.F. Cosford aircraft museum. Well worth a visit to see all the prototype aircraft and references made to the FAA. Mid afternoon we boarded the coach to reach our Hotel, (Royal Court near Coventry) where we checked in and prepared for dinner and drinks plus 'Happy hour' bar prices all weekend.

June 7. After breakfast a sightseeing/shopping trip to Coventry, then preparation for the Gala dinner that was followed by a disco till the early hours. Eleanor Thomson, wife of our chairman, Tommy, made a birthday cake for the occasion (at least one bottle of brandy for flavouring and preservation). All members and guests received a 'goodie bag' – an engraved pen, calculator and key ring torch (Fly Navy). Part of the entertainment included a game of 'Play Your Cards Right'. The prize being either two tickets for an Arsenal home game at the Emirates stadium or a weekend for two at a Warwickshire hotel + two tickets for a show. This was eventually won by Gerald Owen, a member from Wales, who, due to his circumstances, donated it to me and my wife as a thank you for organising the weekend. (Very much appreciated).



Yeovil Branch 21st birthday cake (Eleanor Thomson)



*National Memorial Arboretum Chapel
'Tree Of Life' Altar Cloth*

June 8. 0930 for 1100, and the main thrust of the celebration weekend – a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum to attend the daily remembrance service held at this time every day of the year.

June 9th. 0930 48 happy and contented people boarded the coach for the journey back to Yeovil.

In conclusion: *'a brilliant success due mainly to the fact that everybody wanted to be there, got on well together, superb weather, excellent hotel, enthusiastic coach driver and virtually free'.*

Freedom of the City of Derby – Derby Branch

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Negotiations for the Freedom of the City of Derby (2009) are still in the hands of Derby City Council. It is hoped that it can be arranged to coincide with the Memorial Service and Dedication at the Arboretum on September 11 2009 (See FN100 section for more detail).

Sea King HC1V Commando Course 2/07

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Bob Ridout Yeovil Branch

On April 25th 2008 my wife and I attended, at the invitation of the CO 848 Squadron, Cdr Terry Tyack, a Wings Parade for 2/07 Commando OCP. A Lt Cdr had been detailed off to look after us and provide tea/coffee and biscuits and social chit chat. Being an ex 848 'Junglie' myself we were able to compare 'notes'. The aircraft were different, problems similar and there was a similar approach and ethos for dealing with them.



At 1100 hrs we took our seats in the VIP section to watch four young pilots, (one from the Royal Australian Navy), being presented with wings by COS(AV) Rear Admiral Simon Charlier ADC Royal Navy – Sir Adrian Johns replacement. These newly qualified pilots would be on their way to Afghanistan within about four to six weeks. After the presentations and speeches we were treated to a champagne reception in the Hangar and a chance to speak with the squadron CO, the station Commodore and the Rear Admiral.

1200 hrs we all moved out to the hard standing for a role demonstration, by the Royal Marines. Then off to the Wardroom – more like a modern hotel – for a chat over drinks/ buffet lunch with Terry Tyack, 848 CO (discussed further ways for the Yeovil branch and 848 to form stronger links) and Admiral Charlier who offered to get our sweet. Since the Wings Parade, some members of 848 have attended a quiz night at our branch meeting. We are also working on a possible visit to the squadron to see it operating on a day to day basis.

'An enjoyable occasion. It was good to see that the current Personnel in the Fleet Air Arm are still the same as we were'.

The Fleet Air Arm Museum

.....

RNAS Yeovilton

His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh opened the Museum in 1964 with six aircraft; it now contains a large collection of Naval Aircraft, which are on display. The Carrier exhibition was created with the intention of showing naval aircraft in their natural environment. The experience takes you aboard one of the big carriers of the 1970s with aircraft ranged on the angled deck, and a tour of the island and various departments going about their normal duties. The Museum also has a souvenir shop, cafeteria and children's play area. It is open every day with the exception of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day from 1000 to 1630 (Winter) 1730 (summer).

For further details: www.fleetairarm.com Tel 01935 842600



Memory Lane

.....

A TAGs Journey

Ron Hibbs – from a fellow TAG of 827 Sqdn. (Bournemouth Branch)
(Often sung to the tune of ‘Montezuma’)

*From the shores of Lee on Solent,
Up to Scapa's barren isles
A TAG goes to join his squadron,
It's many a many a mile.*

*Scapa, Norway, then the Arctic,
The Dutch coast off Den Helder,
Northern Ireland, Norfolk Broads
It's too incredible for words.*

*After Furious comes Colossus,
To transport him far afield
Across the mighty oceans
To the places of his dreams.*

*Malta, Alexandria, then on to
Aden too
Arabian nights and flying fish
Strange lands and people too
It's just like making a wish.*

*Ceylon, and tea plantations
Temple bells and elephants too
Sights and places so incredible
He can hardly believe it's true.*

*Madras, the Indian Ocean
Snake charmers, Holy men
It's something from the Fairy books
And never to be forgotten.*

*On, on across the Oceans
More flying fish and sharks
Not the Aircraft of the Navy
But predators in the dark.*

*Australia, and Sydney Harbour,
The mighty bridge across the span
The greetings from the Aussies,
'Good on yer, yer Bloody pom.'*

*Shore leave in Blue mountains
Kind Aussie families
Sunshine, blue skies and Bondi
You're unable to take it in.*

*Worries over Kamikazes
Will we die, or sink or swim
Then bang, they drop the Atom Bomb
And save us from bad Nippon.*

*It's finished and once more
Home call
But first to Africa night shore
To see Table Mountain
And Africa's allure.*

*Then Blighty, home and England,
So hard to settle down
But there's life and loves to bind us
To bring our feet down on the ground.*

*It's all a distance memory
But with your log and photos too
And made me think of you
You've brought it all back Ron.*

*Many thanks for all your trouble,
And memos sent to me
I'll look forward my old Winger
To seeing you at Lee.*

Aircraft Carriers – MAC Ships

.....

Fred Good, Watford Branch
Telegraphist Air Gunner, Fleet Air Arm, Royal Navy



Merchant Aircraft Carriers, or MAC ships, played something of an unsung role in the Battle of the Atlantic. In fact, not many people are even aware of their existence. MAC ships provided vital air cover for a convoy and were also used to find and force down any submarine it encountered, or to attack and destroy any submarine that refused to submerge. No U-Boats were sunk with the aid of the MAC ships, but a submarine forced to dive and kept under was impotent. In the two short years the MACs were in operation they helped turn the tide in the Battle of the Atlantic and contributed to the final outcome. This article has been written by Fred Good who was posted to an operational MAC squadron. This is his story.

As a teenager, Fred couldn't wait to join the Fleet Air Arm. Thrilled at the prospect of joining his first ship, HMS Royal Arthur, he found himself outside the gates of Butlin's Holiday Camp in Skegness. Here he was taken under the wings of a group of tough, old, long-serving matelots who taught him to heave a line, tie a knot, wring out a swab and cross country march at the double. This was induction.

He soon found himself in Canada undergoing flying training. Fred was trained to be a Telegraphist Air Gunner and eventually received posting to an operational squadron. Instead of joining a Fleet Carrier, however, he was sent to 836, the MAC Ship Squadron.



HMS Empire MacKendrick and on deck one of her Swordfish

MAC ships were introduced at a critical time when Britain was in real trouble. They were barely surviving in any field and as an Island Nation they were on their knees. Since much of the population was devoted to the war effort, manufacturing and export were insufficient.

There was no national income and they had no choice but to import food and equipment from North America. Of course, this meant crossing the Atlantic and forming huge convoys of merchant ships. Getting them across without loss to the German U-Boats was a formidable task and the Atlantic was a disaster area.

Much of the Atlantic seaboard was in German control, which meant their reconnaissance planes could operate unhindered to observe and report on Allied movements. They used a fairly sophisticated method – sending U-Boats into attacking positions using their diesel engines. As the convoy approached they would switch to much slower battery propulsion (the submarine had to shut down its diesel engine to submerge), submerge and wait for their unsuspecting prey. After the attack, they would then surface, switch back to diesel, using the increased speed this gave, to skirt past the convoy, and get into position ready for the next attack. This also allowed them to air the boat, fix their position, communicate by radio and of course recharge their batteries after the use of the electric motors whilst submerged.

Their preferred hunting ground was out of reach of shore-based aircraft and was known as the Atlantic Gap, approximately 950kms (600 miles) wide. What was needed to close the gap were ship borne aircraft, which would keep the U-Boats submerged. They would then be denied the speed to catch up with, or get ahead of convoys, thereby avoiding the first and subsequent attacks. Merchant ships were being destroyed faster than they could be replaced, and the losses of Merchant Navy personnel were irreplaceable. On the other hand, the U-Boat fleet was growing. The use of Catapult-armed Merchant Ships in an effort to find some way of hitting back had proved to be of great value but at great expense, because each time an aircraft was launched it had no way of flying to safety. So the brave pilots, after taking on the enemy, had to take to their parachutes and hope to survive the freezing waters of the Atlantic for long enough to be picked up. Survival time was estimated to be 5 minutes.

A solution was desperately needed. The answer offered was to fit a simple flight deck and

arrester gear to a suitable Merchant Ship. As an experiment, a captured German ship, the M.V. Hanover was converted and became HMS Audacity in June 1941, and so the MAC ship was born. With no hangar, all aircraft maintenance had to be carried out in all kinds of foul weather. The ship had 4 arrester wires and a crash barrier. Tests were so successful that the Admiralty was convinced that this might be the answer they were looking for.

In 1942 the Admiralty placed an order for nine existing tankers to be converted plus six new grain ships and four new tankers to be built. The first of these was commissioned in April 1943, a grain ship, the Empire MacAlpine. In all 19 MAC ships came into service between April 1943 and April 1944. Their area of operation was the North Atlantic from Liverpool or Clyde to Halifax or New York and they were manned by a Merchant Navy crew and Skipper with FAA ground staff and aircrew Defensive Equipment. Merchant Shipping personnel manning a 4" stern gun and eight 20mm anti-aircraft cannons.

The convoy was arranged to leave a clear space in the centre rear, about 3 miles by 1 mile, in which the MAC ship could turn into wind without endangering other ships.

U-Boat searches were flown off from this position whenever necessary – following information obtained from German messages decoded by the Enigma machine. Searches were limited to 3 hours in the summer and 2 hours in the winter especially when they were routed North. Handling aircraft on a tilting, swaying deck took enormous physical and mental strength. Starting up a 750 hp engine which had been out all night, by means of a hand-wound flywheel inertia starter gave warming exercise to the whole body apart from the hands which were grasping the steel and brass starting handle – and when that episode was over they couldn't go and lay down.

MAC ships contributed greatly to convoy management. One can imagine how scattered a convoy could become after a severely stormy night, with no means of ship to ship contact. These new weapons could round up the stragglers covering a far greater area much more quickly than could an escort vessel such as a corvette or frigate, and this in turn conserved the fuel of the escorts. They could also signal the strays by use of the Aldis lamp, giving instructions about course and bearings. The presence of MAC Ships was a great morale booster to the men of the Merchant Navy, and from their first voyage to the end of the European war in May 1945, only two Merchant ships were sunk.

“The MAC ships didn't win the Battle of the Atlantic single handed but if they had been conceived and introduced earlier it's a wonder how many Merchant Navy seamen's lives would have been spared. Fred's experience may have been unusual in that the MAC ships crews didn't take lives but helped to save them”.

Editor's Note Fred has asked that acknowledgement be made to S/Lt. Stanley Brand who helped him to put together this article. S/Lt. Brand was a MAC Ship pilot who in recent years has written the book 'Achtung Swordfish'. It tells the story of aircraft and the men who flew them from the decks of converted merchant ships during the battle of the Atlantic. The aircraft which they flew from wildly pitching decks of 'Macships' in all that the North Atlantic could throw at them (violent storms, mountainous seas and bitter cold) to fend off the attacks of German U-boats were obsolescent Fairey 'Swordfish'. It's a good read.

Reference Achtung Swordfish ISBN 1 86029 805 2 Price £14.95.



The Battle of Taranto

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November is a time to remember and many Branches have arranged Taranto Dinners in honour of those who fought at the Battle of Taranto. This is their story..... On the night of the 11th November 1940, twenty Swordfish aircraft from the HMS Illustrious sank or crippled half of the Italian fleet anchored in its homeport of Taranto. Until this action, the popular view was that only the large guns on our Capital ships, or torpedoes, could defeat the enemy's fleet. This daring attack by four squadrons of naval aircraft was World War 2's first successful offensive against the axis powers. A strike force from 813, 815, 819 and 824 Taranto Naval Air Squadrons had won the battle.



Taranto Badges



Badges for the 3 Squadrons featured in RNAS Yeovilton Articles

Where were you in 1953 – Coronation year?

.....

Ray Thomas, Chairman – Watford & District FAAA

In 1953, the year of the Coronation, I was an R.E. M. (Air) 1 – based at R.N.A.S. Lossiemouth on 764 Squadron (Seafires). A celebratory dance was held in No 4 hangar in the absence of ‘our’ aircraft which were at Lee-on-Solent. Days before the dance, the ground equipment was removed from the hangar followed by big cleaning sessions, before French chalk was put down and tractors towing large bumpers were put to work. The result was an impressive shiny floor. In the centre of the hangar was a boxing ring, above which, suspended from the ceiling was a large ‘Crown.’ The ring was solely for the band.

Elsewhere in the country, all manner of celebrations took place. What must have been the most impressive sight, particularly for the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm, took place in, and over the Solent. The Royal Naval Fleet review was one of the largest aggregations of ships ever assembled (279 in all). It included the last battleship, H.M.S. Vanguard + 8 Aircraft carriers. We were privileged to see the largest Fleet Air Arm fly-past of all time. It was scheduled to fly pass Her Majesty at 17: 35 hrs. Lee-on-Solent had most of the piston-engined aircraft. The turbine aircraft were to fly from Ford and the Gannets from White Waltham. The 150-odd piston aircraft would begin take-off approximately mid-afternoon.

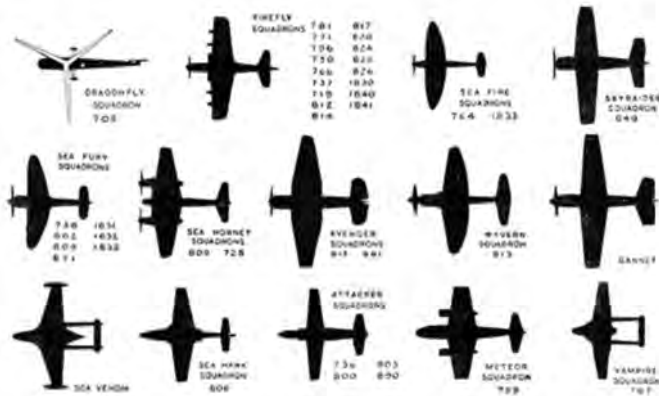
The Fleet Air Arm was at a stage of transformation at this time, with jets and helicopters coming into service but the mainstays were still the Firefly and the ‘beautiful’ Seafury. The piston-engine aircraft present were lined up on the runway at Lee. Among those lined up was a grand total of 117 Fireflies – F.1s of 766 Squadron based at Lossiemouth, T.1s from 781 at Lee, T.3s from 796 at St. Merryn, TT.4s from the F.R.U.771 Squadron at Ford, A.S. 5s and A.S.6s from 737 Squadron and the operational Squadrons 812, 814, 820, 824, 825, 826 and last of all T.7s of 719 and 750 Squadrons. Also on the Lee line-up were 4 Squadrons of Sea Furies – 802 off the Theseus with 804 and 871 of The Royal Canadian Navy and 738 from Culdrose. Further piston-engine representation was provided by Sea Hornets of 809 Squadron off the Eagle and 728 Squadron from Hal Far in dear old Malta. In addition to the above were Avengers of 881 Squadron and the Royal Canadian Navy’s 871 Squadron off H.M.C.S. Magnificent, the old A.S.4s of 815 Squadron and, new, to the F.A.A., the AEW Skyraiders of 849 Squadron. Flying machines of the future were there in the shape of 4 Helicopters – 2 Dragonflies of 715 Squadron, a Hiller and WW339 – the first Sikorsky S-55.

The airfield at Lee was peaceful, until there came the crackle of the Fireflies’ Merlins, engine after engine down the length of the runway, followed by the long slow taxi, the take-off and the opening up out over the sea. They were followed by the Skyraiders, Sea Furies and Sea Hornets, all followed by the Avengers and the strange new sound of the Double Mamba in the Gannets. Then the airfield was at last back to its peaceful state, but off the Isle of Wight things were happening. The first wave was forming up and assimilating other Squadrons, 3 Firefly, 2 Seafire, and 3 Sea Fury – R.N.V.R. Squadrons from Culham. To get the timing right, all aircraft leaving Lee went to the rendezvous point at St. Catherine’s Point, the southernmost tip of the Isle of Wight where they were joined by the Wyverns of 813



Squadron from Ford. This, now massive formation was strung out over a route which took the aircraft along the Hampshire and Dorset coast, prior to turning inland near Weymouth, then over Dorchester, Blandford and up to Salisbury before heading down to the Refinery at Fawley in Southampton water. By then, it was estimated that the formations of the different types of aircraft flying at different speeds would have closed up for the run in over the frigate H.M.S. Surprise which was acting as the Royal Yacht.

At this point they would also have the jet Squadrons from Ford comprising 787 (Vampires) Squadron, 759 (Meteor T.7) Squadron, 4 Attacker Squadrons, 736, 800, 803, 890, the first, newly commissioned Sea Hawk Squadron, 806 and lastly, three early production Sea Venoms. This jet formation flew a much smaller pattern as they had a much higher average speed and less fuel allowance.



Fleet Air Arm Aircraft at the Coronation Review of the Fleet

The whole formation, Squadrons line astern comprised of Squadrons, Dragonfly – 705, Firefly – 701, 750, 771, 781, 796, 766B, 737, 719, 812, 814, 817(R.A.N.), 820, 824, 825, 826, 1830, 1840, 1841. Seafires – 764, 1833. Skyraider – 849. Seafury – 738, 802, 804, 871(R.C.N.), 1831, 1832, 1835. Sea Hornet – 809, 728. Avenger – 815, 881(R.C.N.). Wyvern – 813. Gannet Flight. Vampire -787. Meteor – 759. Attacker – 736, 800, 803, 890. Sea Hawk – 806 and early production Sea Venoms. 40 Squadrons in all, plus Gannets and early production Venoms.

At 17:30 hrs, dots could be seen up Southampton Water coming towards the Solent – slightly to port of Fawley. The sky was a mass of aircraft with the faster machines bringing up the rear – the Sea Hawks and Sea Venoms portraying the ‘shape’ of the Fleet Air Arm aircraft over the next few years. Then, all of a sudden, this great spectacle of Fleet Air Arm organisation and efficiency was over and an even more telling demonstration of those attributes was to follow, as Lee set out to recover over 200 aircraft. A day to remember. A Fleet Air Arm fly-past the likes of which could never be repeated had been witnessed by the nation.

The Fleet Air Arm: An Illustrated History

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Alan Key – Solent Branch

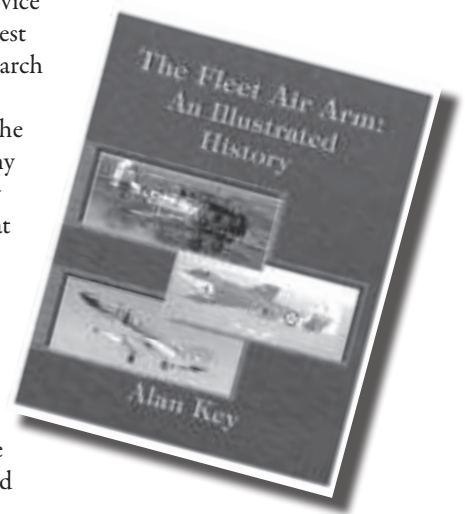
Alan has now completed his book with the help of his Shipmates. Contributions and photographs have been supplied by many of our FAA Association members. It is a complete History of the FAA with 140,000 words and nearly 500 photographs many not seen in print before. It is an historic reference book celebrating the 100 years of the FAA. “You will not find any aircraft serial numbers or pilots’ anecdotes, nor in depth histories of squadrons or ships – they can be found in other books.”

The book covers the development and actions of the Royal Navy’s flying branch – beginning with the use of balloons to the current proposed aircraft and ships of tomorrow. It includes the development of aviation warfare techniques, weapons and systems – strategic bombing, torpedo and depth charge weapons, aerial photography, pathfinder and anti-submarine warfare methods to name just a few, together with the development of the naval aviation practices, equipments and techniques used worldwide – the fundamental prerequisites of the modern aircraft carrier, angled deck, catapults, arrestor wires and the ski-ramp, plus helicopter operations in the ASW role, SAR, amphibious assault role and as an integral weapon for frigates and destroyers.

The book is written as a tribute to the FAA service and all who have made it what it is today – the finest military force in the world. It is up to date as of March 2008 just before going to print and it has been published by Scovall publishing. It is available on the Website (so look for bargains) or by order from any good book shop. It is coffee table style with nearly 500 pictures, many in colour. The book is priced at £30. The distributor, Casemate, has agreed a 15% discount for FAAA Members so this brings the price down to £25.50. ‘The Fleet Air Arm: An Illustrated History’ ISBN 9781902236100

Order online at

www.casematepublishing.co.uk or by telephone on 01635-231091 – in every case quote FLEET 015 to prove you are a FAAA Member and entitled to the discount.





AGM Bournemouth 2008 – Associate membership

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One of the items on the agenda at the AGM – Bournemouth was the change of the definition of Association Membership.

“An Associate membership shall be open to such persons with a close connection or keen interest in the Association or the Fleet Air Arm who are not otherwise eligible for membership. Such as persons who worked in the Royal Naval Aircraft yards, Members of the Merchant Navy who served on Merchant Aircraft carriers (MAC Ships), Sons and Daughters of members who provide support for their parents and wish to join them at reunions.”

Merchant seamen on Mac ships were all civilians and this gives then the opportunity to join the FAAA as Associate Members. The Secretary of the Merchant Navy Association has been advised of this change and the information has now been published in the Merchant Navy Magazine. The Amendment related to this change will be set out in Rule 3 in the next printed edition.

Call for carrier veterans of all ranks

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This is a request to all carrier veterans of all ranks from WW2 onwards to assist author Jean Hood in gathering information for her proposed book. The book is expected to include accounts of life in carriers in war and peace. She has approached various Carrier and Fleet Air Arm associations in connection with a book. Are there any of our Members willing to contribute their memories? If so contact your Branch Secretary for more information or Jean Hood direct: Tel 01270 759890, email trafalgarhistory@aol.com

Joint Force Harrier

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Essex Branch (RAF Cottesmore news)

Commander Adrian Orchard – the first FAA Harrier pilot to lead fliers in Kandahar is now back from Afghanistan – has charted that ground breaking deployment in ‘Joint Force Harrier: The inside story of a Royal Navy Fighter Squadron at war’. Proceeds from the sale of his book will be split between the Forces charity Combat Stress and the Royal Navy Historic Flight. Penguin, £16.99 ISBN 978-0-178-15399-1. Further information in Navy News October 2008. Essex Branch hope to gain further cover for the Airey Fairey.

1000 hrs UP for Lt Andy Johnston and Lt Ben McGreal

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Reaching your first 1000 hours of flying is a big milestone for any pilot, but for two 845 Naval Air Squadron pilots who are currently based at Kandahar Airfield in Afghanistan, they achieved this unique milestone with a difference. Lt Andy Johnston and Lt Ben McGreal both passed the 1000 hour barrier whilst flying together on the same aircraft during tasking in and around the Taliban stronghold of Now Zad in Helmand Province.

The 1000 hour marker in any pilot's career has lots of bad omens associated with it, so once the Detachment Commander had finally been convinced to let such a trip take place it literally took weeks of preparation and co-ordination to ensure that they both reached the landmark simultaneously. On the 5th June they finally did it and once they had safely returned to the airfield they were unceremoniously assaulted with buckets of water and shaving gel before celebrating with cake and alcohol-free beer.



Lt McGreal (left) and Lt Johnston (right)

Both pilots fly the Sea King Mk 4+ and are members of the Commando Helicopter Force detachment operating as part of Joint Helicopter Force Afghanistan having been deployed in theatre for almost three months they, along with the rest of the detachment, have been intimately involved in providing a vital support helicopter capability to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Lt Andy Johnston said,

'To achieve such a landmark was great, but to have two of us hit 1000 hours together in such a unique environment made it feel very special. The type of tasking we were doing at the moment we passed the milestone prevented us from celebrating on the ground afterwards.'



HRH The Duke of York Visits the Navy in Afghanistan

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On 8th June 2008 HRH The Duke of York visited Kandahar Airfield and took the opportunity to revisit his Naval past and call on members of 845 and 846 Naval Air Squadrons deployed in the country. Following a warm welcome from the Commando Sea King detachment he spoke to personnel on a number of issues including how they were coping with operations in the country and how the Sea King, which he flew in the Falklands conflict, is performing in the demanding Afghan environment.



Both Commando Helicopter Force Squadrons are operating as part of Joint Helicopter Force Afghanistan and fly the Sea King Mk 4+.

Having been deployed in theatre since late last year they have been intimately involved in providing a vital support helicopter capability to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Major Hunt RM, the Detachment Commander, said,

'All members of the Sea King Force were pleased to welcome Prince Andrew to Afghanistan. We certainly enjoyed the opportunity to not only show what we are achieving in theatre but also to re-acquaint Prince Andrew with his old flame, the Sea King.'

Land Locked In A Sea Of Sand

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Build Up For Afghanistan
Lt David J Brewin
RN 846 NAS

January 2007 whilst training in Norway, the rumours of change of direction for 846 NAS operations became a reality, when the Commanding Officer Commando Helicopter Force (CO CHF) confirmed that we would be deploying to Afghanistan in support of Op HERRICK. As the first Royal Navy helicopters to be used in this notorious Theatre, the Commando Helicopter Force Headquarters and Squadron faced the challenge of recovering from its commitment to Op TELIC, whilst training to be ready for a new Theatre of operations in less than 7 months.

CHF has a wealth of experience in desert operations, accrued during several years of support to Op TELIC, so many of the tactics and techniques were directly transferable to the new Theatre. Despite this experience there was much to learn of the intricacies of this land locked and remote country whilst achieving a realistic and appropriate Pre-deployment Training (PDT) within a relatively short period of time. To add to the complication of this training, we would have to fit into a well established Joint Helicopter Force of Army and RAF aviation already in Theatre, as well as mastering the use of new equipment and aircraft modifications, including Display Night Vision Goggles (DNVG), Carson main rotor blades, Agusta-Westland 5 bladed tail rotor, a new Defensive Aide Suite (DAS) and Bowman radios.

With the initial deployment timeline still uncertain, the training began in earnest at Stanford Training Area (STANTA) in June 2007. Here a majority of the squadron conducted personal weapons training with the Royal Marine Training Unit (RMTU) from RNAS Yeovilton – which developed basic infantry skills far beyond the routine Annual Personal Weapons Test. Live field firing, Close Quarters Battle, contact and down-bird drills normally the preserve of fully trained infantry soldiers were soon being safely conducted by the Sailors of 846 NAS, much to the surprise of our very able instructors. It was clear to all that the importance of owning the correct kit, maintaining drills and high levels of fitness were paramount if personnel were to come under fire during road moves and for aircrew if they were downed and away from supporting troops.

Training back at Yeovilton covered a wide range of issues from the formal Operational Training Package, to specialist Afghan cultural study, Team Medic training, survival training and lectures on Emergency Close Air Support (ECAS), Apache WAH 64 tactics and RAF Chinook operations. A visit to the Medium Support Helicopter Aviation Training Facility at



RAF BENSON followed, where aircrew received the latest advice and training in simulators from crews who have recently returned from Afghanistan. A short 'call for fire' artillery acquaint at Middle Wallop, Cabin Gunning training at Castlemartin Range and Bowman training at RAF Odiham completed a very busy period of background briefing and training during the summer.

To bring all of this training together in practice, a detachment to the mountains surrounding RAF Valley allowed the theory to be developed into mission profiles both by day and night, before further consolidation with Chinooks, Apaches and Lynx aircraft during Exercise KUSH DRAGON on Salisbury Plain. The culmination of this training was Ex HIDA at RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus, which comprised of training to prepare aircrew for hot weather operations in mountainous, dusty terrain.

The Exercise tested the heavily modified aircraft, converted to Carson blades, Agusta-Westland tail rotor and avionic upgrades, now known as the Sea King HC4+. Operating higher and hotter than usual, the modifications enabled the aircraft to conduct landing at various sites high in the Troodos Mountains, during the hottest part of the day and an extra 2,000 lbs heavier than previously possible, confirming the huge capability leap that would be provided to our impending operations in Afghanistan.

Following the training in England and Cyprus throughout the Summer of June 2007, D Flight of 846 NAS finally emerged from a blacked-out RAF Tristar on the 22nd November, in the middle of the Afghan night, to a warm reception from the Squadron advance party –their 'new home' was in the vast expanse of the multi-national base at Kandahar Airfield. The base was home to around 15,000 military and civilian personnel from the USA, Canada, France the Netherlands, Denmark and many other nations.



The first of the Sea King HC4+ arrived a few days later, allowing the engineering team to quickly start the job of preparing the aircraft for aircrew training flights – day and night Theatre familiarisation and dust landings (described as ‘A Level’ by experienced desert operators!). Much of the first few days were spent getting equipment organised and facilities prepared, amongst a very busy Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) (JHF(A)) Headquarters and the established Army Lynx and RAF Chinook detachments.

An initial operating capability was declared on 1st December with the Sea King taking the weight of some of the re-supply tasking in Helmand Province. Since then our remit has expanded to include the whole of Regional Command (South) (RC (S)) and includes troop movements, under slung loads, mine strike evacuation, command tasks and force protection including ‘Eagle’ Vehicle Check Points (EVCP) – troops are inserted next to roads to check vehicles for illegal weapons and explosives. Much of this tasking is conducted in mixed formations of aircraft from all 3 UK Services and other coalition elements and often with UK or US Army Apache AH64s. Whilst Forward Operating at Camp Bastion, the Sea King Force maintained a High Readiness Force (HRF) capability during the highly publicised aviation assault on the Taliban stronghold of Musa Qala (northern Helmand). This Operation has created a requirement to re-supply troops in this highly dangerous Area of Operations (AOR), via new and very dusty landing sites in around the main areas of population.

In the run up to the Christmas, 846 NAS played a massive moral boosting role as ‘Father Christmas’, with the Sea King sleigh navigating around RC (S) delivering up to 60 bags of mail and Christmas presents per day. It was with a sigh of relief that the squadron was able to clear the backlog of free postal packages in time for the festive season – a massive undertaking, as many parcels were addressed to troops in some of the most remote areas of Afghanistan. A welcome addition to the Christmas preparations was a visit by ‘Top Gear’ presenters Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May. Many of the detachment personnel who requested to grow beards whilst in Theatre, rather wished they had not when the famous trio relished in the opportunity to stand-in for the Detachment Commander’s inspection, displaying the kind of ‘harsh banter’ that many will have seen on their television show. Following this very busy period (which included tasking for two crews on Christmas Day itself) a visit by the First Sea Lord to deployed Royal Navy units in Afghanistan, allowed many of the Sea King Detachment to meet Admiral Band and raise some challenging issues during a rare, but extremely worthwhile question and answer session.

The ‘Junglies’ have already established a good reputation in Theatre, which will no doubt continue to grow as the Sea King footprint expands over the next 4 months. This will provide a significant contribution to operating on the ground throughout both Helmand Province and Regional Command, as ISAF ‘takes the fight to the enemy’ over the winter months, depriving the Taliban of their traditional rest and reorganization period in the mountains.

Commando Helicopter Force (Afghanistan) is here to stay and with the potential of other units and assets being deployed in the coming year, the RN will represent over half



of the UK contingent in RC (S) by the end of 2008. The Royal Navy is going to become very accustomed to contributing to land locked operations in the coming years and is proving its capability to project over a 'sea of sand' just as well as it has in the traditional maritime environment.

Photographs by Cpl Dove and Lt Sharp RN
Crown Copyright

The Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) is a group of 4 squadrons and supporting elements based at the Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in Somerset. It is a combined Royal Navy/Royal Marine force that operates Sea King and Lynx helicopters in support of the UK armed forces. Working under the control of Joint Helicopter Command it specialises in amphibious warfare.

Baptism of Fire

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By Lieutenant Bridget Compain RN
846 NAS

It's hard to believe I'm already about to leave 846 NAS and the front line. The past two and a half years on this Commando Sea King Squadron have undoubtedly been diverse. My husband and I transferred from the Royal New Zealand Air Force. He came from the decline of the fast jet world in NZ, and I came from 3 Squadron (helicopters). We were somewhat against the grain in making the move this way – opposed to the general aircrew trafficking from the British Isles to Auckland.

I arrived at Dartmouth in 2003 for my tailor made (cuff it) Royal Navy familiarisation training. I spent a few weeks at Dartmouth to discover ships and cleaning duties of the IST, received the standard banter for being an ex 'crab' and now a 'wafu', then sent onward to commence flying duties.

Having previously been pilot trained I went on to RAF Shawbury to do some flying at 705 Squadron in the SQUIRREL. I enjoyed my time there, the SQUIRREL was a thrill to fly. I left Shawbury able to navigate without 10,000ft mountains, and to low fly despite the lack of sheep for height judgment – safeguard techniques used in NZ for low flying.

I joined 848 NAS at RNAS Yeovilton for Aircraft and Operational Conversion onto the SEA KING Mk 4. It was a busy course with enjoyable flying, I developed my admiration for the SEA KING and got my RN Wings on completing 848 then joined 846 NAS. In just over two years with 846 I have worked in Bosnia, Iraq, Norway, Cyprus, Sierra Leone and on board HMS Ocean.



My first two operational tours were to Bosnia Herzegovina, based at Banja Luka Metal Factory. Our main tasking was ferrying people to meetings, which in itself was monotonous, however it was a spectacular place to get airborne, which more than compensated. As anyone who has flown in Bosnia will agree, the wires are another story. They scarily cross every flight path and many span valleys at 500ft. Most crews experienced near misses at some point, myself included, and following a LYNX wire strike, our respect for wires was forever ingrained.

This was the first time I had operated jointly with other nations, flying closely alongside the Romanians and their COUGARS (super PUMAS). I was regularly crewed up with a fellow female pilot. The reactions on troop's faces could be quite amusing when they realised two women were in control of this 21,000lb helicopter. Some would smile nervously and stare, others were truly petrified!

During these Bosnia tours we were fortunate enough to have spare time to explore during off duty periods; runs through the hills and local villages, city sightseeing, sampling local food and wine. I also went with Liaison Officers to meet the locals and spend time in different towns. Others managed to ski (no off piste due to mines!). The battlefield tour of Sarajevo was enlightening.

After 13 years of Junglies being in Theatre, the Army Air Corps arrived to take the weight in March 2005. We flew the SEA KINGS home over three days via Prague and Amsterdam. A loss for MND (Multi-National Division) – NW but an enjoyable finish to the tour for us.



As for the operational element, Bosnia was a pleasant and gentle introduction for what was to come.

My next three tours were to be Op TELIC, Iraq. The TRI-STAR flight into Basrah initially seemed as if it could be a standard airline flight anywhere, even with complimentary peanuts. Then it became slightly alarming as everyone on board put on helmets and body armour; the aircraft went into blackout and dived towards the airfield. Not your standard holiday destination arrival.

I enjoyed my first Iraq tour – a new environment with novel things to see and experience. The desert is a hard environment to operate in. Over the summer months we were flying in up to an unpleasant 50°C, and it's back to basic techniques, or even more commonly 'thank you GPS' when it comes to navigating.

Much of the tasking involved flying long stretches of the country, which saw some enjoyable low flying. Iraq is mostly desert and during transits we would often encounter large herds of camels. There are also many marsh areas; pelicans and water buffalo were a regular sight, alongside the Marsh Arabs in their small boats. It was a surprise to see Bedouin camps and these nomads roaming the desert miles from anywhere. Often we would receive waves from people, but sometimes we received bricks or worse.

We worked a rotating duty routine; rolling through tasking, test flights and incident response. Tasking was anything from 'bus runs', troop moves, Eagle Vehicle Check Points (EVCPs), top cover and reconnaissance. We did a fair amount of top cover for convoy moves and for the many unfortunate roadside explosions. Formation night troop inserts for operations were a highlight and we had a lot of success in many arrest operations. During reconnaissance missions I learnt what it was to be a 'bagger', albeit the successful raids made it all the worthwhile. We held an Incident Response Team (IRT) at both Basrah and further North at Al Amarah. This consisted of the aircrew, two medics and a team of four Airborne Reaction Force (ARF), utilised for security of the aircraft and medics at landing sites.

IRT was the most intensive flying of all, more often than not for a serious incident, and always time critical. We regrettably have many IRT accounts. One tells the story of a SEA KING that got called out after a ground patrol came under contact. On arrival it picked up an Army Private who had had his leg blown off by an RPG. Once he was in the aircraft the crewman put a headset on him to hear the medics. His initial words to the crew were,

'I'm so sorry, I hope you didn't have to get out of bed for this.'

We worked hard and any down time could be spent in the on-camp cafes, on internet or in the 'Camels Toe' bar. Accommodation was temporary seven man tents, and after years of use the fabric is still apparently mortar and rocket proof.

At Al Amarah we worked out of hardened accommodation, supplied with a multitude of 'nasties'. One evening a camel spider held me hostage in the shower block for an hour.

My three tours in Iraq have been an 'experience'. It's a diverse deployment; the squadrons and people pull together to do a fantastic job in an awful environment. The flying was good and the operations were very rewarding. I'm glad I have been and done it, but also thankful I'm not going back anytime soon.



On returning from Iraq earlier this year I went to Bardufoss in Norway – temperature change of 90°C. The SEA KINGS were operating out of here, but this time it wasn't flying training for me, it was to complete the Arctic survival course, in preparation for the flying in the coming months. Another extremely harsh environment to operate in. The Junglies have been training here for around 25 years.

Norway has a remarkable landscape and aside from freezing in my snow hole, it was great. Those who have done the full deployment say it's the best you will do. So I am looking forward to the upcoming flying.

On return from Iraq again a few months back we were due to have some time back at home – or so we thought. When the Israel / Lebanon crisis occurred in July, there were rumours we might be sent.

A 'just in case' line was drawn on a map – a few days later at 11am we were told 'we're briefing at 2pm for a 3pm launch' so we all went to re-pack our body armour and sunscreen then returned to the squadron to sort out the details. In an astonishing effort by all, our six aircraft formation did indeed launch at 3pm on route to Akrotiri, Cyprus – where we would be based for Op Highbrow. It took us two days and around 20 hours flying to reach Akrotiri, via various refuel and sleep stops across Europe. The evacuation of nationals was almost complete, when we arrived – done mostly by RN ships. Nevertheless the SEA KINGS were utilised for passenger and troop moves into Beirut. The deployment was an incredible feat for 6 aircraft and crews with such short notice.

In September my flight deployed on board HMS Ocean and joined the amphibious task force for the VELA deployment. With focus having been predominantly Op TELIC for the past two years, it has been some time since we got back to our Junglie core roots of amphibious tasking. The work up took place off the South West coast of England. We were reacquainted with ship borne flying and working with a Commando of Royal Marines, and for most the littoral environment was a welcome change of scenery. We then set sail for Africa, via a long weekend stop in Gibraltar.

I'm currently still onboard and in the middle of Exercise GREEN EAGLE in Sierra Leone. It is hard to believe what this country has endured in recent years, when flying over its expanse of jungle and tropical beaches. We were fortunate on jungle survival not to encounter many of the poisonous creatures we were repeatedly warned about, although the balance was restored when the heavens opened and it rained all night.

The Tailored Air Group (TAG) is made up of our 845/846 Squadron SEA KINGS, 847 LYNX and 820 Squadron MERLINS. Many of us, particularly CHF elements, realise how little exposure we've had to naval operations recently, and are thoroughly enjoying the amphibious environment. We've been kept busy with troop moves, load lifting, amphibious offloads, and utilising our many secondary roles such as fast roping, HIFR, hi-line, winch transfers and casevac. The 'green' side of the TAG's ship recognition is progressing and we are being educated on the roles of the 'grey'.

The locals are proving to be inquisitive and very welcoming as we work up towards the final 'livex', which should culminate in a Commando group assault. An eventful exercise thus far, with more to come, and the always-enjoyable self-deployed flight home to follow.

My time on 846 NAS has been remarkable. In the space of a few months, the Squadron and ever-durable SEA KINGS have operated in temperate, desert, arctic and jungle environments, and although the helicopter is old, she's maintained well and continues to soldier on. As with every unit, there are things Junglies could do better, but we continue to be professional, work hard and, as I'm sure any of the troops we support will vouch, we do an excellent job.



The Fleet Air Arm Memorials

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The Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church

The former Parish Church, St. Bartholomew of Yeovilton village was declared redundant in December 1988. The Church has a special association with the Fleet Air Arm; it was the Station Church, and the scene of many Naval weddings and Christenings. Since 1942 the churchyard has contained Military War Graves, and in the same year the Royal Naval Cemetery, which adjoins the churchyard was established. Nearly one hundred Servicemen and women have so far been laid to rest at Yeovilton.

The church has now been rededicated, St. Bart's is now the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church and the future of the Church and Cemetery is assured.

The Fleet Air Memorial Lee-on- Solent

Situated on the corner of Marine Parade and Richmond Road, the Memorial pays tribute to all those members of the Fleet Air Arm who lost their lives during World War 2.

As well as the annual Remembrance Service each November, the Telegraphist Air Gunners Association holds their annual service on the third Sunday in May.

The Fleet Arm Memorial – London

His Royal Highness , the Prince of Wales and His Royal Highness Prince Andrew, unveiled the Memorial on June 1 2000. The Memorial stands as a tribute to those who pioneered Naval Aviation in the last century, and commemorates over 6000 men and women who have died while serving in the Fleet Air Arm and its predecessor, The Royal Navy Air Service. The Memorial is situated on a site alongside the Ministry of Defence's main building on London's Victoria Embankment.



Watford Branch – Peter Murray (Membership Secretary) and Terry Gidman

Members who have ‘crossed the bar’

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Members who have passed away 2007–2008

Issue 15 included the names of those who have ‘crossed the bar’ in 2005/06. This issue includes those on the List from the AGM 2008, Branch News items, and those on the Membership Secretary’s list (2007-2008) together with some detailed articles of seven of our members (Charles McIntyre, Richard Leece, Terry Larbalestier, Samuel Peake, Ronald Bramall, Bill Jones and John Sones) where additional information was available. It is hoped that in the future this recognition of a ‘loss’ is regularly recorded not only with the Membership Secretary but also in the Airey Fairey, on the FAAA Website and in the Navy News.

John Baily	LAM(A)	Derby
Michael Baldwin	POAM (O)	Essex
Ronald Brannan	POAF (E)	North East Hants
Eric Browes	LAM (E)	Ford (Peregrine)
Dennis Bull	LEM (A)	Derby
Joycelyn Colbert	L/Wren AM (PM)	North East Herts
Doreen Cripps	WRN (SE)	Bristol and District
Derek Deans	CEL (A)	Daedalus
John Denham	CEL (A)	Solent
Oswald Flowerdew	CAF (A)	Essex
Robert Fyles BEM	CAA (O)	?????
Keith Gregory	NA1 (Phot 2)	Daedalus
William Hart	POAM (E)	Hitchin
Thomas Huggett	AA1(AE)	Daedalus
Ronald Ing	LAM (E)	Essex
John Jackson	AF(E)	Greater Manchester
David Lines	POEL (A)	Wrekin
Dickie May	AA1	Birmingham
Albert Mitchell	LAM (O)	Essex
Henry Mockford	AF (A)	Bristol and District
Geoffrey Read	AF (A)	Hanworth
Frederick Richardson	LAM (E)	Birmingham
Reginald Scott	LAM (E)	Essex
Clifford Smart	LT (A) RNVR	Bournemouth & D
Alex Steed	AM (O)	Hanworth
Edward Townsend	POAF(A)	Hanworth
Geoffrey Ufton	POAF(A)	Daedalus
Sid Walker	NA 2 TAG	Essex
Douglas Ware	LAF (MW)	Bristol and District

Editor Note: The Bournemouth and District Branch have asked that I include detail for four of their members who are not on the AGM list: Kenneth (Ken) Baylis (2006), John Hurst (2005), Geof Mounce (2007), Stanley (Stan) Newbery (2005).



Short Summaries

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Charles McIntyre ERA (MW) (Bristol Branch)

We heard that Charles (Mac as we all knew him) had died on the 14th of June 2008 aged 87. He was an ERA Metal Worker FX87244 and served from 1941 to 1946. His funeral took place at Westerleigh Crematorium on the 25th of June 2008. Unable to carry our Standard, we placed it in the stand, to the right of the altar; Secretary Reg presented a poppy wreath with the following inscription – God Speed on Your Last Commission, from Officers and Members of Bristol Branch FAA Association. In attendance were S/Ms Reg (Secretary) John Rich, John Bullock, Bob Worth and I (Eric Pitt). I handed a sympathy note to his daughter Vivian saying that our Branch members were very sorry to hear that her father had died. He was always interested in our Branch affairs and regularly attended meetings when in better health. We paid our last respects to Charles, at our Branch meeting on Monday 14th of July by holding a two minutes silence.

Richard Malcolm Leece PORM (AW) (Watford Branch)

Richard Malcolm Leece crossed the bar on 15th July 2008 age 84 years – virtually 64 years to the day he joined 1833 squadron on HMS Illustrious (17th July 1944) where he served in the Pacific.

He joined the FAA on the 27th August 1943 and attained the rate of Petty Officer Radio Mechanic (AW). He served in the FAA until January 1946. During that time he was stationed at RNAS Brawdy (HMS Goldcrest) until January 1944. He then moved to RNAS Fife (HMS Waxwing) on route to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) where he was shore based at HMS

Bherunda (RNAS Columbo – an ex race course!) and HMS Bambara (RNAS China Bay later to be re-named RNAS Trincomalee). From here he 'set sail' with HMS Illustrious and 1833 squadron where he survived an attack by a Japanese suicide plane by 5 minutes. His duty relief on the flight deck was not so fortunate. He was killed in action and Richard who had gone below survived.

Following the hostilities encountered in the South Pacific he returned to RNAS Lee on Solent (HMS Daedalus) and then completed his FAA Service at HMS Hummingbird (RNAS Zeals (Wiltshire)) and RNAS Culham (HMS Hornbill (Oxfordshire)) where he was finally demobbed in August 1946.

Following his time in the FAA he established a notable career as a schoolteacher specialising in Maths and P.E. He was a loyal member of the Fleet Air Arm Association – Watford Branch – as was his wife Eileen for many years. He was also a member of the RNA. Before his death Richard's illness prevented him from attending the Watford meetings but contact was still maintained through the Social Secretary and his wife Eileen until she died only a few days before Richard. Their funeral was held at the West Herts. Crematorium on July 18th. The Standards of the FAAA and the RNA were paraded and Richard's coffin was draped with the White Ensign, his beret and his medals. Attendance by the Family and Members of the two Associations was such that the chapel could not accommodate all the mourners. However the chapel doors were left open for the mourners, standing in the foyer of the chapel, to participate in the service which was conducted by the local RNA Chaplain Richard Lewis.

Terry Larbalestier PO AF (E) Birmingham Branch

Terry – Vice President of the FAAA crossed the bar on the 28th August. His funeral was held on 9th September at Robin Hood Solihull Crematorium. Five standards attended. The draped coffin was carried through an Honour Guard to the Chapel where Shipmates, relatives and friends were waiting to attend the committal. After the funeral they assembled at the Nautical Club, and remembered Terry in the traditional way.

Terry joined HMS Excalibur in 1946 – a newly commissioned Naval Establishment for New Entry Training, situated on the outskirts of Alsager (Staffs).



Terry – back row, 3rd in from the right



*Terry waiting on his Shipmates at the 1993
HMS Excalibur Association Reunion*

Samuel John Peake POAF (O) Ford (Peregrine) Branch

Samuel John Peake crossed the bar on 6th June 2008 after a short illness. A committal service took place at St. Mary the Virgin Church, Felpham in West Sussex on 18th June 2008. The service was followed by cremation at Chichester Crematorium.



Sam was a long time member of the Fleet Air Arm Association – Ford Branch – which he attended regularly right up to his death. In 1942, then aged 18 years, Sam joined the Fleet Air Arm as an armourer at HMS Daedalus, Lee-on-Solent and retired in 1946 as an Acting Chief Petty Officer (Air). During his time in the Navy, he saw active service in HMS Illustrious, Unicorn and Ocean and served with both 847 and 810 Squadrons.

Born on 16th February 1924, he grew up in the Enfield area. He left school aged 14 to become a trainee toolmaker until enlisting in the Navy. He returned to that trade after the war. At a New Year's Eve party in the late forties, he declared his intentions to a certain young lady called Isabel. At the time, she was not overly convinced of his true intentions, Sam 'being a little bit tipsy.' However, by sheer perseverance and his unwillingness to admit defeat they were eventually married at St. John the Baptist Church, Isleworth in 1951... a union that was to last for 57 years.

In 1957, the family emigrated to Canada but did not settle. They returned to the UK in late 1959 to a very different sort of life. Sam, then aged of 40, began a new career as a Lecturer in Mechanical Engineering at Isleworth Polytechnic. He quickly gained promotion and began to seriously study in his own time finally achieving his MA at the age



of 55 years. Not content with that achievement he then began home study for a PhD, with one day a week at London University. In 1987, he retired from Lecturing and he and Isabel went to live in Middleton-on-Sea in West Sussex.

During the move to Middleton Sam wanted to 'ditch' the work done at University but at Isabel's insistence and encouragement he decided to complete his PhD. Seeing him receive his Doctorate in 'Comparative Education' (London University) was one of the family's proudest moments – quite an achievement at the age of 67! Retirement to Sussex did not mean inactivity for Sam and he soon became involved with the local community. He was a deeply spiritual man and through his involvement with his local church became a member of the Guild of Servers and a Lay Minister of Communion. As a Server, he would visit the elderly and housebound on Sunday mornings to share Communion with them. His other interests involved being a Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and of course, his long time association with the FAAA where he served as the Ford Branch Secretary for many years. Sam is survived by his wife Isabel and their four children.

Ronald Bramall S/Lt (A) RNVR Observer (Bristol Branch)

Ronald Bramall crossed the bar on April 19 2008. His funeral took place at Canford on April 28 – Eric Pitt, Reg Veale, Bill Davies, Bob Patch and Bill Sage who said the Homage attended with the Bristol Standard. The Standard was placed on the Altar for the Service along with the RNA Standard. Ron was a loyal postal member of the Bristol Branch for 9 years. Eric handed a sympathy note to his son on behalf of the Branch saying that "we would pay our last respects to Ron at the RBL Patchway on May 12 by holding a two minute silence". Our standard and support was gratefully appreciated by Ron's family.

Hugh William Jones ,Watford Branch

Hugh William Jones 'crossed the bar' June 01 2008. Age 77. A committal service took place in the Chapel at West Herts. Crematorium (Garston) on June 20th. Four standards were paraded. The Honour guard included the FAAA, Handlers Assoc, RNA, WRNS and British Legion members. Bill had many friends both within and without the service and was a Founder Member (1991) and Life member of the Watford FAAA Branch. He was also one of the Aircraft Handlers Branch's most long serving members, having completed over 37 years. Bill will be sadly missed, but never forgotten, by those that both knew and loved him during his varied and exciting lifetime around the world. Bill was finally laid to rest by his friends in a Burial at Sea provided by the Royal Navy just off Spithead in Portsmouth. 'It was a very moving and memorable ceremony which I (Larry) am sure Bill would have both approved of and been very proud of'. With the help of his friends (Pam and Larry Keelan) who befriended Bill 31 years ago – this is his story.

Hugh William Jones BEM (or Bill as he was known by his shipmates after his basic training instructor changed his name from Hugh William to William Hugh for identity purposes) was born on 8th Aug 1930 in Aberystwyth, South Wales. His mother died when he was very young and he was brought up by numerous uncles and aunts. He eventually moved to Derby to live with his Dad and new Step mum until he decided to join the UK Armed Forces. The Royal Air Force asked him to return in six months so he immediately went into the Royal Naval Recruiting Office and signed up (3rd March 1948) for service in the Fleet Air Arm as an

Aircraft Handler. He did his initial training at Royal Arthur.

He advanced steadily through the ranks being rated Naval Airman 1st Class in 1949, confirmed as a Leading Airman in 1953, Acting Petty Officer in 1963 and confirmed Petty Officer in 1964. He achieved the rank of Chief Petty Officer in 1971 at which level he remained until eventual retirement in 1985. Throughout his service career he was a keen sportsman and represented his ships and shore establishments at Rugby where his large frame was put to good use!!!

Bill was extremely proud of his Naval Service and was very popular with his peers and seniors alike and with the members of the other services that he worked with (Royal Air Force and Army). Whilst at Naval Aeronautical Reporting Cell Pinner he served as a very active member of the Senior Rates Committee at HMS Warrior, the



home of CINCFLEET and the UK NATO Headquarters, and was instrumental in setting up the Senior Rates Mess when the site was taken over by HMS Warrior from RAF Northwood (HQ 18 Maritime Group).

For his long and dedicated service he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in Dec. 1978 followed closely by the prestigious award of the British Empire Medal in Dec. 1982 (Northwood), both of which he proudly wore in company with his Korean War Medal on the numerous occasions he marched with the RN, FAAA and Handlers Association Veterans on Remembrance Sunday parades in Whitehall.



Editor Note Arrangements for Burial at sea can take time. Bill died in June and the burial at sea was in October. The arrangements prior to the burial included the purchase of a 'coffin' specifically designed for a sea burial. The Royal Navy provide the burial service at Portsmouth where they have a designated area at sea to receive the coffins. The Service time is allocated by the Navy. The ceremony can – as in Bill's case – include other departed with Royal Navy links.



On leaving the Navy he worked as a Security Officer initially for the MOD (London), then for the Met Police at their Hendon Training College and finally at the Computacentre (Watford) where he very happily spent the last ten years of his working life. His final years of retirement centred around the Watford Ex Services Club, The RNA Aldenham Branch, FAAA, and Handlers Association and on occasion the British Legion branch at Bushey Mill Lane (Watford).

Bill's Ashore/Afloat locations:

1948 HMS Royal Arthur/HMS Implacable/
HMS Siskin
1949 HMS Daedalus, HMS Gamecock
1950 HMS Triumph
1952 HMS Blackcap
1953 HMS Triumph
1953 to 1955 HMS Warrior Far East Korean War
1957 HMS Peregrine
1958 HMS Fulmar
1962 HMS Victorious/HMS Seahawk/HMS
Ariel (RAF Shawbury)
1967 HMS Goldcrest
1968 HMS Eagle (Air Reg 829 SQN)
1970 RFA Engadine
1971 HMS Seahawk
1972 HMS Intrepid
1973 RAF Leuchars
1978 NAIC Pinner/HMS Osprey, NAIC
Pinner until 1985.



John A Sones AM 1 (A) (Watford Branch)

John Arnold Sones crossed the bar on 11th January 2007 aged 82 years. He joined the FAA in 1942. The following year he was stationed at HMS Duke (the Royal Navy training establishment in Malvern, Worcestershire on the site which became the Royal Radar Establishment), and at RAF Hednesford (training – maintenance of air frames and engines), before joining 700 Squadron at HMS Tern. His next draft in 1944 was to 829 Squadron aboard HMS Victorious then 2 shore drafts to RNAS stations in Ceylon – HMS Bherunda – RNAS Columbo (44/45) and finally HMS Ukussa – RNAS Katukurunda (45/46).

A service of Thanksgiving for the life of John was held at the West Herts Crematorium – Garston – 23th January 2007. Watford FAAA members were among the honour guard together with their standard. Helen and Lynsey – John's daughter and granddaughter gave the readings and the Rev'd Dr Jo Spreadbury gave the Tribute based on words from Joyce.

John, a Founder member of the FAAA Watford Branch (founded in 1991) was a member of the Association for 16 years. His wife Joyce still continues to actively support the Branch in all its activities. John worked for the newspaper industry as a Printers' Reader, having served an apprenticeship at the Express & Star Newspaper Wolverhampton, he then moved to Watford in 1951 to continue his career. He retired in December 1983 and together with Joyce he became a keen, active gardener until he was unable to cope through illness.

May all who have 'crossed the bar' rest in peace

List of Accoutrements

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ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER – 2008

ITEM	Cost (Incl. P&P)
Ties	£ 8.50
Gold Wire Blazer Badges	£12.00
Silk Blazer Badges	£ 8.75
Beret Badges	£ 8 50
Baseball Caps	£ 7.00
Ladies Head Squares	£ 11.00
Gilt Lapel Badges	£ 1.75
Chrome Lapel Badges	£ 2 00
Life Lapel Badges	£ 1.25
Car Stickers	£ 1.25
Membership Cards	£ 0.00
Medal Holders Large	£ 4.75
Medal Holders Small	£ 3.25

Items bought to order

Short Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 15.00
Long Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 15.00
Sweaters, Acrylic	£ 16.75
Sweaters, Lambs wool	£ 25.00

Colours Available: White, Red, Maroon, Bottle Green, Grey, Navy Blue, Royal Blue, Light Blue (NOT in Lambs wool)

Sizes when ordering: 32" to 56" in 2" stages. Shirts, S, M, L, XL, XXL.

ORDERS TO THE TREASURER

Cheques made payable to the Fleet Air Arm Association.

PAYMENT WITH ORDER PLEASE.

Items will be ordered by the Treasurer and sent direct to you by the supplier who will invoice the Treasurer. This is to safeguard against non-Members of the Association purchasing these items.

Berets can be obtained from:

Baun & Co. Naval Tailors & Outfitters, 14, Queen Street Portsmouth. PO1 3LH.

Cost £9.00 inc. Post & Packaging (last known).



FAAA Branch Details

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BIRMINGHAM – 2nd Tuesday at 2000
The Nautical Club, Bishopsgate St. Birmingham
Secretary – Doc Halliday 0121 357 2783

BOURNEMOUTH – 4th Friday at 1930
Bournemouth Flying Club, Bournemouth
Secretary – Mrs Jo Towler 01202 514917

BRISTOL – 2nd Monday at 2000
The Royal British Legion Club, Patchway, Bristol
Secretary – Reg Veale – 01454 898363

COTSWOLD – 2nd Monday at 2000
18 Commercial Road, Gloucester
Secretary – Mike Humphries 01453 547436

DERBYSHIRE – 4th Wednesday at 1200
The Royal British Legion Club, Allenton, Derby.
Secretary – Roy Pym 01332 701993

EASTBOURNE – Last but one Thursday 1200
Odd months, Marine Hotel, Eastbourne.
Secretary – Barry Simons 01825 872539

ESSEX – 2nd Thursday at 2000
RAFA Club, Chelmsford
Secretary – Peter Roalf 01279 431599

FORD – Last Thursday at 2030
The Sportsman, Littlehampton, West Sussex
Secretary – Peter Colston 01903 713203

GREATER MANCHESTER – 1st Monday at 1300
Ex Servicemen's Club, Stretford
Secretary – Jim Buie 0161 865435

GREAT YARMOUTH – 2nd Monday at 1400
Conservative Club, Gorleston
Secretary – Mike Denton 01493 664177

HANWORTH – 1st Wednesday at 2000
RNA Club, Park Road, Hanworth
Secretary – Terry Lowden 020 89483979

HITCHIN – 2nd Wednesday at 2000
The Sun Hotel, Hitchin
Secretary – Mike Sargent 01582 650533

NORTH EAST HANTS – 4th Tuesday at 2000
Albert Social Club, Albert St, Fleet, Hants
Secretary – Mike Pomeroy 01276 502358

SOLENT – Last Thursday at 2030
Lee on Solent Community Centre
Secretary – Peter Westbrook 023 92580158

SOUTHDOVNS – 4th Wednesday at 1915
The Restaurant, Shoreham Airport
Secretary – Alec Braybrooke 01273 505187

WATFORD – 2nd Sunday at 1100
Carpenters Park Community Hall, Herts
Secretary – Fred Good 01923 445832

WREKIN – 1st Friday at 1930
T.S. Wrekin, Donnington, Telford
Secretary – Gareth Price 01902 773197

YEOVIL – 3rd Tuesday at 2000
The Old Barn Club, Old Barn Way, Yeovil
Secretary – Bob Ridout 01935 424148

YORKSHIRE – Last Saturday at 1300
New Headlingley Club, Leeds
Secretary – Albert Firth 01924 525656

DAEDALUS – Headquarters Roll
No meetings
Secretary – Arnold Thompson 023 92786443

