



FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION



“THE AIREY FAIREY”

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NATIONAL FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

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Contributions for inclusion in "The Airey Fairey", the official journal of the National Fleet Air Arm Association, are most welcome and should be submitted to the Hon. Editor prior to the deadline shown below. Whilst every effort is made to include them, due to space limitations, this is not always possible. However no article is wasted as those not used are retained for possible future use. Where there are events of general interest and dates for these are after the issue of the magazine, they will of course be included. Should you wish for articles and/or photos to be returned then please enclose a S.A.E.

DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT (SUMMER) ISSUE IS
30th APRIL 2002

EDITORIAL

I am very pleased to announce that Rear Admiral Scott Ledbitter, Flag Officer Maritime Aviation, has agreed to become our President in succession to Rear Admiral Iain Henderson. Some of you may recall having met Rear Admiral Ledbitter at the reunion at RNAS Yeovilton a couple of years ago.

Many of you will know that I had intended that this issue would be my last as Hon. Editor because I was becoming a little fed up with the lack of apparent co-operation from some branches, particularly those who, despite both written and telephoned requests, failed to notify Ted Cuff of their requirements. However, following some requests I have relented and will continue to act as editor until a volunteer is forthcoming. I am not sure that this is a wise decision since we seem to lack volunteers for any National Committee posts – we are still trying to recruit a PRO. My plea for articles has had a somewhat desired effect as I have received a few. For us to continue with The Airey Fairey we need a greater 'take up' from branches. The numbers requiring copies of each issue is diminishing. One branch even suggesting that they only need one copy which they will then photocopy for distribution within the branch. I point out that this infringes copyright.

I regret that I am still receiving photographs and articles from newspapers without the necessary permission to reproduce them without infringing copyright law. So please if you send me such material make sure it includes the necessary permission. Also if you send photographs and wish them to be returned, please include a SAE this does save unnecessary expense.

The section for Christmas greetings which has been included in the past, has this year been omitted as there has been insufficient response. Perhaps if there is sufficient interest next year we could re-institute it.

With the news that ships and personnel from both Navy and Marines are to remain to assist in actions in Afghanistan, I am sure you will all join me in wishing them all a safe and swift return.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

“As the delegate from the Hitchin Branch to our National Meetings, it has become very apparent to me that our financial position needs urgent attention. Ben Worship, our Treasurer, stated in his report that after paying all our bills we now have left less than £4,000. We cannot carry on as an Association if we carry on like this.

The main source of income is from capitation fees paid by individual branches- 27 in number. The sum of £4,000 is not enough to pay our way so it has to be increased to balance the books. We should not continue to expect our elected National Officers to continue to subsidise our Association. As a matter of interest they claim travelling expenses but donate these, approximately £900 per year, back to the Association. No way should we continue to expect them to ‘dig’ into their own pockets to keep us afloat, something they have been doing for some years. It maybe that the capitation fee was set too low in the beginning. This is very obvious when comparing what some of us pay to other associations to which we belong.

The Association is run on very frugal lines, none of our officer’s spending money like it has gone out of fashion. I can well understand how frustrated they have become with some branches constant opposition to any increase. I know some will say “it’s all right for him I expect he’s loaded”. Well I am not, but. I am not hard up either. I understand only too well some of you have ended upon only the State Pension and have to watch the pennies, but if you are sincere in belonging to our Association and to promote its growth and fellowship, I appeal to you all to think hard and give our officers the support they need.

There is more money in branch funds than we have in the National Kitty, what are you going to do with it if we fold up - give it to charity? My branch, with just 20 members, has donated £60 of our hard won cash towards the cost of a new National Standard. If we can do it, so can you if you try.

I know that it has been passed that our capitation fee is increased by £2 per year but not without some moans. So come on shipmates ‘get fell in’ and support our Association”.

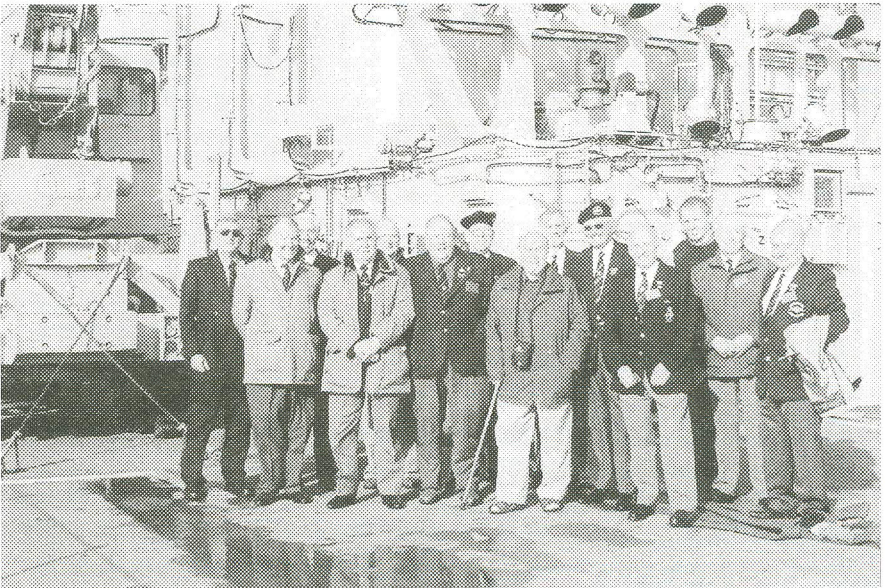
Frederick Udell, ex LAM(O).

NEWS AROUND THE ASSOCIATION

Angus Branch

Congratulations are extended to Granville (Fred) Cooper on his appointment to the Scottish Area Standard Bearer for the Royal Naval Association after winning outright the All Scottish Areas Standard Bearers Competition.

On 16th October thirteen of our members paid a visit to HMS Ark Royal. The visit organised by John Cresswell, started with coffee and biscuits in the Wardroom with Lt.Cdr. Gunn (Little 'F') and Lt.Cdr. Hunt our two guides for the day. The ship's Commander joined us later and was 'grilled' by our group on various topics such as the modern Navy, the different aircraft used and the introduction of female personnel at sea. Some of our members who had served on previous ships of that name, were surprised how small, by comparison that is, the current vessel is. They also found sills a little higher and ladders steeper – or perhaps we are all getting older especially considering the apparent youth of the officers we met.



DETACHMENT BANGLADESH

In March 1973, having spent two years on 848 squadron, Wessex HU5 commando carrying helicopters and completed all leave owing, I joined 846 headquarters squadron based at RNAS Yeovilton, same aircraft different badge. I looked forward to a settled time at home with my family and a fairly settled easy going routine. This lasted approximately three weeks. One afternoon when I was off watch the front door bell rang and I was confronted by a naval rating in uniform with a message in his hand. I had been selected to go to Bangladesh ("where" I said) politely, and was informed I had to report to the AEO who explained the situation to me. Bangladesh had recently had their war and our government had offered them £1,000,000 pound in aid of which I was to be part. Thank you government. As you may imagine I was not in the best of moods about the impending detachment. I asked the usual question, why me, when I had only just come back from a front line squadron. Answer, I was supposedly better qualified than other EA's on the station, a likely story, and I didn't feel flattered either. After much discussion I had to accept that I was going and there was nothing I could do about it, so there.

The government aid, under the auspices of the Overseas Development Aid programme consisted of taking two modified Wessex Mk4's to Bangladesh to give to the Bangladesh Air Force, sounds easy if you say it quickly. What it really meant was receiving the two helicopters from Westlands, suitably modified with airline style cabin seating and no autopilot. These had to be stripped down for transit to the capital Dacca, by RAF Hercules, needles to say by us the selected detachment crew which consisted of myself, two AA1's, and REA and a couple of junior air mechanics – oh! and I forgot, an air engineering officer S/Lt.

We then spent a couple of weeks waiting for and preparing the aircraft, tool kits and spare parts. All to be crated up securely and the helicopter fuselages attached to what can only be described as a sledge.

The day for departure arrived and we set off for RAF Brize Norton with £200 to pay for accommodation and food. We were not allowed to take any uniform, not even overalls because of the political situation that was a bit delicate at the time. An uninteresting flight to Singapore by VC10. Transit from Singapore to New Delhi as we were unable to fly directly to Dacca. An overnight stay in a hotel and departure to Bangladesh in the afternoon. On arrival at the airport we had to wait on board the aircraft until all the other passengers had disembarked. We were then briefed as to what was to happen

“We meet to re-dedicate these Standards as a sign of our own re-dedication to the service of others, to the peace of the world and all that is good and honourable in human society, praying that a new generation will also hold these ideals dear. Men and women have been proud to march behind their Standards and to share their ideals”.

On a personal note, his statements of the feelings and actions of the past and present generations I recognise.

On the meeting side, we have had a number of very successful ones both socially and businesswise.

Bob Johnston

Watford

Following the death of our secretary Pat McCarthy, one of our newer members, Fred Good, who like Pat, an ex P.O.TAG, has taken over the reins as Secretary for which we thank both he and his good lady Beryl.

At present we have 29 full members, 14 ordinary members together with 19 associates.

We had a very successful social evening at our new meeting place, T/S Renown in July where we had a good ‘get together’ with the ladies organising the food. Then later the same month our social; secretary arranged a coach trip to the Romney, Hythe and Dimchurch railway. When we alighted at New Romney our coach was waiting to transport us to the vineyards at Biddenden where ploughman’s lunches awaited us. After numerous ‘sippers’, and then some more, we returned home arriving at about 7pm. Once again luck was with us and the weather was faultless.

When our new member, George Fawn joined us we discovered that he served on 882 Squadron (Wildcat 6’s) on HMS Searcher in 1942, both off the Norwegian coast and later the Far East, at the same time as our President, Tony Pullin who was the Senior Pilot. Surely a good example of just what our Association is about.

Eastbourne

This is a story of achievement of one of our Associate Members who unfortunately lost his sight in December 1999.

Nigel Whiteley is a former CPOMA who left the service in 1987. At one time Nigel was MA to the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Crew and also served on 846 Squadron.

He was accepted by St.Dunstan's in February 2000 and during his assessment and rehabilitation in May tried archery for the first time and was subsequently asked if he would like to join St.Dunstan's Archery Club, this he did. In June of that year he took part in 'Archery Week' and won the Gold Medal for the best novice. Further competitions followed where he won the Royal Insurance trophy for blind archers both in 2000 and 2001.

As a member of the St.Dunstan's Archery Team he competed against the Army Archery Association and RAF Archery Club in June 2001 where St. Dunstan's won both events. Later that month he competed in the British Blind Sports National Archery Competition where he won a Silver Medal for the compound bow in the category B2. The world's No.2 Ladies Archer, Alison Williamson, presented the medal.



Nigel receives his Silver Medal.



St. Dunstan's Archery Team

He is looking forward to competing in the British Blind Sports indoor championships in February 2002.

His other interests at St. Dunstan's include Acoustic Rifle Shooting, Pottery and woodwork. He is also well known in this area for his enthusiastic involvement with K.G.F.S.

N.B. Should the RN again have restrictions on ammunition usage they know who to call upon!!

National News.

Our bi-annual reunion, which this year was held at The Hotel St. Nicholas in Scarborough, was very successful with a total of 162 members and guests attending. The Gala Dinner was especially enjoyable with excellent food and entertainment. Our raffle raised £292 some of this was given to the staff as a gratuity and after other expenses were deducted a total of £221.73 was deposited in our reunion account. Our thanks go to all those individuals and branches that very kindly donated the raffle prizes.

However on a personal note I was very disappointed with the response where three of our larger branches failed to send one member especially as one of those was nearest to our venue. We did however have three members and their wives from overseas, George and Mrs. Barrass from Australia, Fred and Mrs. Sandy from Canada and Zvi and Mrs. Avidror from Israel. I am informed that the icing on the cake for Fred Sandy was when he emerged from the lift and came face to face with Sam Peake with whom he served in 1941. It was even more remarkable that they both recognised each other.

On 24th October the Association tree was officially planted at the National memorial Arboretum.

The National Standards of ours and Handlers Associations together with Branch Standards from Derbyshire, Hanworth and Solent accompanied by those from Derbyshire RNA, RMA and S/MA formed

up outside the Chapel to await the arrival of the Mayor and Mayoress of Derby, Mayoress of East Staffordshire, and the President of Derbyshire Branch. When all the guests were assembled in the Chapel the Standards were marched in to take up posts.

Jacqui Fisher, of the Arboretum staff gave a detailed talk about the Arboretum and this was followed by a short service. When the service was complete we moved to the area alongside The Fleet Air Arm Association Memorial Tree for the official planting ceremony.



Terry Labalestier, one of our Vice Presidents, is shown performing the official planting.

The section in which our tree is planted depicts a wartime convoy with 4200 trees, each representing a merchant ship sunk during the war; the convoy escort being provided by those trees dedicated to the RN, including ours. I have no doubt that in a few years time, when the trees have somewhat matured, it will be a fitting tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice.

Barry Simons

A “CRABFAT’S “ VIEW OF THE ARK ROYAL.

By Dick Lawford, ex RAF.

I was reminded of my time on the Ark when I met an ex Navy chap whilst playing golf in Northern Ireland. He told me that the Ark had been broken up alongside the long pier at Cairnryan. It brought back memories of my short time on board which I hope will prove to be of interest.

Joining ship – We joined ship embarking from Rosyth via an ancient paddle tug. I’m sure the watching crew enjoyed our discomfort as we tried to climb the scramble nets whilst carrying suitcases, briefcases and a variety of other luggage. Nobody told us! However, we were told to salute the quarterdeck as we boarded, wherever that was. The watching ensemble was quickly reduced in number when our rather elderly, thin and bespectacled Avionics fitter looked up at the Ark and, in a Kenneth Williams like voice shouted “Oh goody, look at all those lovely sailors”. I’ve not seen sailors move so fast since they called last orders in the Black Swan, Pompey. I soon found out why the matelots carry so little luggage. We were in 2v1 mess, not far from the arrester gear. We eventually found somewhere to stow our belongings amongst the pipes that seemed to contain everything. However, we soon got the hang of living in such cramped quarters.

I distinctly remember our flight deck briefing. After being issued with flight deck boots and a white vest with ‘HARRIER’ on the back we met the redoubtable Cdr. Bill Credland, the Flight Deck Officer. He soon got our attention with his description of activities on ‘the most dangerous place on this earth’ and what he would do to us if we got in the way of his flight deck operations. I took note because I believed him and I didn’t fancy swimming back to Scotland. He was an impressive character and I’m sure it was down to him that we survived operating in a totally alien environment.

We took great pleasure in winding up our hosts – ‘going upstairs to the runway’ - ‘going to the back of the boat’ – ‘eating in the mess at the front’ – sticking the huge dayglo ‘FLY VSTOL’ stickers on the ‘right hand side’. The last one rather annoyed the Captain who subsequently rebuked our CO who then rebuked and subsequently congratulated us. It was probably the most dangerous adventure in the middle of the night. Thank God for good harnesses and rope.

I was not actually part of 1 Sqn. as I was a ‘shiny’, an SAC clerk (stats) and part of the Chief Scientist (RAF) research team. My boss was another formidable and unconventional character called Mike Hindley-Maggs

He was the epitome of a mad scientist, flowing hair and goatee beard. To him nothing was impossible. My official job was to record and time various events in order to compare how long they took at sea in comparison to that on land. We also had some trial equipment called 'Finray', I think. Its function was to align the Harriers' Inertial Navigation Attack System (INAS) with the ships' navigation System. Consequently when the squadron was working so was I: on the hangar deck, on the flight deck helping the hard pressed ground crew or just getting in the way.

Shortly after leaving the Firth of Forth we anxiously awaited the arrival of the first RAF operational squadron Harrier to land. It was flown by the CO of 1 Sqdn., the late Wing Cdr. Kenny Hayr. (He was recently killed in the Vampire crash at an air show). We all went up onto the 'goofers' deck to watch this and I still remember the warnings that were displayed which were along the lines of 'radar emissions can make you sterile'. It worried me a little. Meantime the Harriers did a 'fly past' and in came Kenny. He was approaching a little fast and low, traveling about twice the speed they had practiced ashore. He touched on the deck just forward of the last arrester wire and on applying the brakes on the slippery deck, skidded and made a rather untidy stop about 2 feet short of the edge. Fortunately there were no parked aircraft. The rest of the detachment landed with far less excitement.

With the Harriers I was very impressed by the way the flight deck crew recovered both Phantoms and Buccaneers the Gannets having been left ashore in order to make room for us. It was a very slick operation.

As regards visitors – I've never seen so many goofers in all my life. The ships' helicopters were delivering a variety of press, TV, VIP's, military types and it seems anyone else who fancied a day at sea. We had a scheduled take-off time for the Harriers to give a demo to the assembled visitors. The pilots were strapped in, the Finray equipment, accompanied by the various boffins etc. required for its operation, was plugged in well in advance of this time as it took several minutes to complete the task, when it worked. Suddenly Flyco broadcast "scramble Harriers, scramble Harriers". With Bill Credlands words in mind I immediately dived for safety. This was a cradle like contraption not far from the first arrester wire where, if the wire snapped during landing and you failed to duck, it would neatly de-capitate you. Meanwhile the Finray boffins, who had obviously not been briefed by Cdr. Credland, were shouting "no we're not ready" together with a fair bit of Anglo-Saxon comments. The pilot was not going to disappoint the audience and started the engine. The boffins were shouting "we're nearly, there hang on" as the cables were removed by the start up crew and the 'Finray' kit was shoved out of the way.

It may have looked from elsewhere that we didn't have a clue what was going on and that was quite right. The rest of the sortie went OK and there were no more surprises for us that day. The boffins went off to remonstrate with the chap who on an airfield would be called an Air Traffic Controller but I expect the Navy have another name for him.

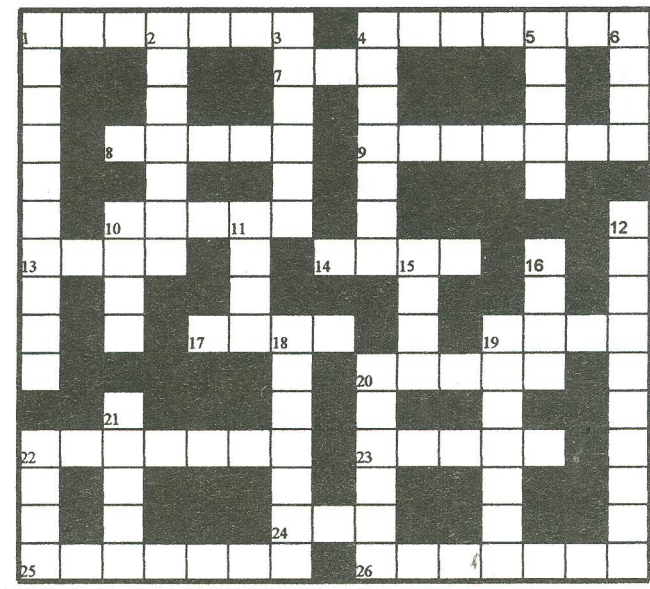
As we were working very odd shifts, in some cases 20 hours a day, we had permission to draw our beer ration unopened as long as we did not hoard it. I was on my own, in civvies, sipping a can of beer and watching TV in the mess when the door burst open. A large fellow in a sailor suit with white spats and a shaven head bellowed "teshunfrounds". I was initially startled but gathered my wits in time to say "pardon" just in time for a fresh faced young naval officer stepped through the door. "Attention for rounds" he said. I understood the first bit so I did my best to stand to attention with a can in one hand. On finding some unopened, the large chap with spats was getting all excited. I explained that I was in the RAF and the young officer visibly relaxed as though he was relieved that he wouldn't have to take further action. The large chap pointed out that this was a regular daily routine and that in future he would like to see the place a bit tidier and cans out of sight. I made a point of not being in the mess at that time for the rest of the detachment.

One afternoon when all the aircraft had departed to play somewhere else we had a 'make and mend'. I took my camera and made my way to the stern of the flight deck. There was a net there and several of us lay on the flight deck with our feet in the net quietly dozing in the pleasant sunshine. What made me do it I do not know but I opened an eye and saw a Vulcan on approach about ½ mile away with its undercarriage down. It was too late to do anything but I had the presence of mind to take some photos as the Vulcan came very low and opened up on reheat and flew past. The same thing happened with a Lightning. I just wish I could find those pictures now.

I am pleased to say that I managed not to be seasick when the weather turned nasty. I remember developing a peculiar walk together with bruises on my head and shins going through bulkhead doors. Fortunately, in these conditions, there was no flying and the boffins had departed to have a rethink on their piece of kit. I've got the feeling that it was broken when unceremoniously unplugged on scramble day. I'm sure that some of the FAA crew got pleasure in ground running Phantoms in the middle of the night about 6ft. above my head.

All in all those 2 weeks, or was it 3, spent on board are memories that will remain with me forever. The comradeship, hardships and good time all merge together. Believe it or not, and to cap it all, I was airsick in the Hercules that returned us from Leuchars to Wittering once the detachment was completed.

NO PRIZE CROSSWORD (answers page 26)



ACROSS

1. Sailor looking for a chopper crew.
4. Warning siren
7. Abbreviated alias.
8. All aircrew have done this.
9. Ships' crew.
10. Reconnaissance plane.
13. It happened to the Bismark.
14. Wight or Man.
17. Navy girls.
19. Emergency float.
20. Emergency raft.
22. Ship's hospital.
23. Learn to stay on the rails.
24. A grand river.
25. Put your oar in.
26. You can tell it to them.

DOWN

1. This is needed from an efficient
2. Leading hand.
3. Greedy bird.
4. Little iced cakes.
5. Large sea.
6. In which we served.
10. Caught up with a problem.
11. Employer.
12. Winning ship?
15. A calm in a storm.
16. A ship may be referred to as this?
18. Nth. Atlantic convoy destination.
19. Tasty Italian dish.
20. Six feet of water.
21. Propeller.
22. Now a grocery chain.

The Holman Projector

By **Freddie Longman**

Courtesy of Gosport Aviation Society.

This is about the Holman Projector. Whatever is that you may ask? Not a lot of people would know but I do, as I was involved with this weapon during World War 2. It was an anti-aircraft weapon, invented by a Mr. Holman in 1938 and accepted by the Department of Miscellaneous Weapons, usually known as "wheezers and dodgers department" in 1939, for use on fishing trawlers, minesweepers and armed merchant cruisers. It was designed to throw a hand grenade into the air at attacking aircraft. We had two of these fitted aft of the aircraft catapult in HMS Alacrantra and the starboard Holman became my secondary action station when I wasn't required to fly the aircraft.

The Holman projector consisted of a six foot length of steel pipe, which had an inside diameter exactly the same as the outside diameter of a hand grenade. A ring and bead sight was attached near the top of the pipe for aiming with a handle half way down protruding a foot either side of the pipe enabling it to be turned towards approaching aircraft. The propellant was, believe it or not, steam.

To load the grenade, the pin holding the firing lever was removed and the lever held tightly down. The pin was always put safely in the trouser pocket as it had to be returned to the gunnery stores as proof of firing. The grenade was then inserted into the top of the pipe where it slipped to the bottom, the firing pin was now being held tightly by the pipe. At this point the drill allowed a sigh of relief. To fire, having aimed and not forgetting to aim off ahead of the enemy aircraft to allow for his speed, a twist grip on the right hand handle was turned to allow the compressed steam to push the grenade up the pipe and into the air.

You might ask how far did it go? Well, that depended on the pressure of steam available at the time of twisting the grip, which of course the gunner cannot control. When asked I always used to say, "well that depends on the menu". The steam which left the boiler room under pressure was available first to the main engines, then to any steam driven machinery, then to the Wardroom and Ships Company galleys before getting aft to us. So if the officers were on steak and kidney pudding for lunch and the Ships Company had a figgy duff for sweet, the pressure which finally got aft to the Holman was lower than on a cold meat and ice cream day. There was no guarantee that it would even push the grenade over the ship's side.

You may wonder how I became involved with this primitive weapon since I

have usually talked about my prime job as pilot of one of HMS Alacantha's seaplanes but before transferring to the Fleet Air Arm I had served in the gunnery branch for some six years so I became a natural choice for a Holman gunner. In an air attack our two aircraft would be left firmly one on the catapult and one in the hangar, as there was no way that an 80knot seaplane could be used as a fighter.

I think that everyone involved with this weapon would agree that it was a very crude 'hit and miss' contraption.

The following are quotes from some of the users>

Gunnery Officer, paddle steamer Thames Queen in 1941 – “The most frightening thing that I ever had to handle during the war”.

Captain, troopship SS Oransay in 1940 where a Holman had been fitted just aft of the bridge – “Remove this contraption before it kills me and the rest of us on the bridge”.

Gunnery Officer, 8th mine sweeping Flotilla North Shields in 1941 – “This weapon was one of the most improbable devices fitted to any ship. It seemed to pose a much greater threat to the user than the target”.

I must end my story by saying that I was never called upon to fire this weapon in anger. During my time in HMS Alacantha we were operating mainly in the South Atlantic based either Freetown, Sierra Leone or Simonstown on the Cape Peninsular, well out of range from enemy aircraft.

I did once say to the Gunnery Officer in HMS Alacantha after a practice shoot, “you wouldn't have a bow and arrow would you?” *I often wonder how we managed to win the war!!!!*

Freddie Longman

“The Cairniehill Joker” (*Angus Branch*)

One liners on doctors and medicine.

“I hope you enjoy my talk this evening; the last time I gave this lecture was to the British Haemorrhoid Society – I got a standing ovation”.

“I eat so much fruit and vegetables that, honestly, if my body is short of fibre, I'll eat my hat”.

“He has a remarkable reputation as a doctor.....if you're ever at deaths door, he's the one who'll pull you through”.

“If you've got trouble with your heartbeat, he'll soon put a stop to it”.

H.M.S. RAJALIYA

ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATION, PUTTALAM, CEYLON.

Puttalam is on the northwest coast of Sri Lanka and is about 80 miles north of Colombo. I arrived there in May 1944 to join 757 Sqdn. As a PO(E) and found that the object of the squadron was to enable fully qualified pilots of British aircraft to be retrained to fly American planes which were mainly Corsairs and Hellcats.

The airstrip was a metalled one with just one runway with a turning pad at each end while the airfield was mainly surrounded by trees. There were two or three hangars, a workshop and stores around the airfield whilst the camp itself was about a mile away. The total number of personnel in the squadron, including pilots under training, was about 160.

Various aspects of training were undertaken ashore and when this was satisfactorily completed there came the necessary carrier training. This was undertaken aboard a 'borrowed' carrier and the 'fly boys' were accompanied by a couple of ground crews.

I digress for a moment to mention that prior to one occasion when we were about to go onboard, I think it was the 'Unicorn', our CO asked me if I had ever seen an aircraft fly backwards? My reply was "no". He then said that I should watch carefully when he was coming in to land. He usually visited the carrier well before the other aircraft were due to arrive in order to acquaint himself with other officers and to make the final arrangements. I had gone ahead with the advance crew and was watching the deck as he approached. His aircraft turned out to be a Walrus and not a type to be used on a carrier. As it approached the deck, eagerly watched by many, there was a good headwind and as the Walrus slowed over the deck the combined wind speed together with the ship's speed was greater than the aircraft and it appeared to be flying backwards for a while.

Also on the squadron was the strongest handler I have ever seen. This was an elephant, which can be seen on the 1944 squadron Christmas card a copy of which can be seen on the next page. This animal was very useful when large heavy objects had to be moved and especially during the monsoon season when the ground was soaked and an aircraft strayed off the peri track onto the soft surround. We found that the two tractors, which we had, were often unable to move the aircraft which would very quickly sink into the mud above axle deep. In these cases the mahout would stand the elephant in front of the plane, facing in the same direction, and the chains which were attached to the

beast would be fastened round the undercarriage legs. The mahout would then move the animal slowly forward until the chains tightened and then get it to take the strain and heave. In many cases the plane would hardly move and the mahout would urge it forward with his stick. The animal would strain and strain, trumpeting loudly from front and rear ends often leaving large droppings at the same time. It seemed determined not to be beaten and in every case the aircraft was pulled back onto solid ground.



For entertainment, we were occasionally visited by an ENSA company. But I must say this was not very often, and from time to time films would be shown in an open-air cinema. The town of Puttalam was quite small and had no recreation facilities so it was better, if possible, to go into Colombo by lorry which was generally provided at the weekend when it may have been possible to spend a few days break there. Other than that we could spend a full day there going to a cinema or dance followed by a few drinks before returning to camp.

We were obviously quite busy working on the squadron aircraft and long working days were quite commonplace. Being very near the Equator meant that it was hot, 40 degrees C was not uncommon and it was often that someone working on an airframe around noon could get a nasty burn. Many of the squadron were very dissatisfied with being on a second line squadron and working in such heat and were keen to get to sea and be on a front line outfit. I could understand their feelings quite well, but it was not up to me to

to point out that someone had to keep the reserve aircraft in good order and everyone could not be in the thick of the fight against the Japs. Occasionally some of our planes and pilots were called upon to assist when a strike was being made on enemy island bases such as Java and Sumatra and they returned having many successes. It must have contributed to very crowded quarters for those on the carrier, but I did not hear any complaints.

We had a variety of aircraft on the squadron, which besides the Corsairs and Hellcats were Seafires, Albacore's, Fulmar's a Gloster Gladiator, a Lysander, a Walrus and a Tiger Moth. Why we had such a variety I have no idea although it did seem that our CO, a Wavy Navy type, did somehow have a great deal of influence and used this to great effect many times. He was well thought of by most of the squadron personnel both for his flying and general running of the squadron.

Hubert Hartley, ex POAF(E)

NEW ZEALAND FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

We receive copies of the NZFAA Association newsletter but often it is too late for me to include any articles in our magazine and although this appears long after the occasion I feel that it warrants inclusion.

Just before Christmas 2000, 16 wartime veterans of the Fleet Air Arm, including two women, gathered at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea to witness the unveiling of a memorial plaque to commemorate the role of New Zealanders in the Royal Naval Air Service and FAA during both world wars.

The RNAS took part in many actions in the First World War including the Dardanelles campaign and the Battle of Jutland. At least two New Zealanders flew their fragile 80-hp machines in combat over France. Towards the end of the war a unified air service called the RAF was created.

Unfortunately naval aviation suffered for nearly 20 years at the hands of masters who did not understand, or want to understand, the needs of the fleet in terms of air cover. There were also senior naval officers who thought aeroplanes belonged to trench warfare and had no place at sea. The wrangles continued until 1937 when control of the FAA was finally returned to the Admiralty.

Fortunately Britain continued to lead the world in the development of the aircraft carrier and at the outbreak of the Second World War could claim nine Carriers of varying vintage with a further 5 fleet carriers under construction.

In 1940 'Scheme F' was devised whereby New Zealanders could go to England for basic training as Naval Airmen before learning to fly and be commissioned. The first group of 20 sailed from Auckland in July 1940. Meanwhile the Fleet Air Arm was establishing a proud record. Its cruiser-borne aircraft took part in the action against the German pocket battleship Graf Spee and in November 1940 inflicted more damage on the Italian fleet at Taranto than was inflicted on the German High Seas Fleet in the Battle of Jutland!

Over a thousand New Zealanders served in the air branch of the RNZNVR, but sadly 152 of them lost their lives. New Zealanders constituted 10% of the Fleet Air Arm aircrew and in the carriers of the British Pacific Fleet the proportion was much greater. They served with distinction in every one of the 51 carriers in commission during the war and flew, operationally from airfields in Britain, Canada, Ceylon, Egypt, Gibraltar and Malta.

Paying tribute to the Kiwi airmen, Admiral Sir Philip Vian said, "I consider the pilots from New Zealand second to none and to have ever excelled in the offensive spirit." Awards included one DSO, 39 DSC's and 2 bars to the DSC, one DFC, 3 MBE's and 49 mentioned in despatches.

Speaking at the unveiling, World War 2 Fleet Air Arm veteran, Reg Phillips said, "some stayed on after the war and some went back at the time of the Korean War, and that was when I first met them as they flew the likes of me while under training."

"I am honoured to take part in this ceremony as we commemorate all those who served" He said it was particularly appropriate that the plaque was displayed in the offices of the harbour which had hosted several aircraft carriers over the years. "Who can forget the visit by HMS Eagle in 1971 and the wonderful hospitality given and received. Despite the difference in ages there was no generation gap, they were as interested in you as you were in them."

N.Z. Fleet Air Arm Association, Auckland Branch.

814 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON – RE-DEDICATION

Following the long standing affiliation of 814 Squadron with the Harlow Branch of the RNA and more recently with the Essex Branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association, my wife and I were invited to the re-dedication on its reformation with Merlin HM Mk I helicopter.

The Commanding Officer, Lt.Cdr. S.J.Murray, met us at the squadron hangar. Since this was our first meeting we took the opportunity to convey our thanks for inviting us to attend an event which had always eluded me during my 27 years service. It had always been my lot to carry on where others had begun. Mingling with the other guests we enjoyed coffee prior to going outside to watch a short flying display by one of the squadron aircraft. This was impressive and much quieter than my memory of other aircraft. It may however, have been the quietness prevailing over Culdrose at the time.

It was then time to take our seats and witness the parade and The Act of Dedication. It crossed my mind that the squadron personnel seemed to have an easy time, they simply had to fall in while the Royal Marine Band of the Commando Forces and the Guard was marched on. Those present included Vice Admiral Jonathan Band, Deputy CinC Fleet and Lord W. (Willy) Bach, Minister for Defence Procurement.

The Ceremony of Dedication commenced with the reading by the CO of the Re-dedication order issued by Admiral Alan West, CinC Fleet (he addressed the RNA Conference at Southport in 1999). The CO, together with the Rev Mike Brotherstone (the scooter padre) and Fr. John Richardson, conducted us through the Service of Dedication. Upon completion of this Lord Bach inspected the Guard, Band and Squadron before they were marched off and dispersed.

There followed the ceremony in which Lieutenants Gary Milton, Al Hinchcliffe, Tim Hayden and Leading Aircrewman Nicholas Hipkin were presented with the Boyd Trophy which was awarded for their part in the rescue of stranded passengers aboard the Greek ferry 'Express Samina'. This was while they were the crew of Rescue 86, a Sea King of 814 Squadron embarked on HMS Invincible.

Mrs. Pixie Murray, the CO's wife and AEM P.J.Hardman, the youngest Squadron member, cut the commemorative cake. This was followed by a glass of champagne.

Before going for lunch there was sufficient time to meet some of the notable visitors and to be shown around the inside of one of the aircraft. It is an understatement to say that I was impressed by all I saw on October 5th at Culdrose. One can never get over the sensation of being with a group of naval personnel at times such as divisions and to have the benefit of a Royal Marines Band in attendance makes it a special occasion for an oldie like me.

Things have changed considerably since my time on 814 with Wessex Mk.I's. There are now female maintenance ratings and Aircrewmen, or is it politically correct and should it be Aircrewpersons? So much is computerised that the manning numbers are far less than in the 60's. Those of you who are familiar with the Sea King will be somewhat surprised to see the Merlin. It is somewhat bigger something which can be most appreciated from the inside. For my internal inspection I was guided by LWACMN Nikki Morrison, "three badges gold... and Nikki said she was well aware of the expression. The front cockpit for the 2 pilots resembles the flight deck of a modern airliner: I do believe that there may be a round gauge somewhere but most seem to be screens. The 'command' station in the cockpit is again vast compared to previous aircraft and there seemed to be acres of space for the handling of sonobuoys, smoke floats etc. and you really need to look for the dunking sonar.

The CO confirmed that he wishes the affiliations to continue and that he would endeavour to arrange a visit by a squadron aircraft when the programme permitted. This is likely to be in the distant future as they need to become acquainted with their new lair in Ark Royal and to set about ensuring that the equipment works as intended.

Having captured the CO's signature on my memorial cloth I was privileged to obtain that of Vice Admiral Band. Lord 'Willy' Bach, Lady Mary Holborrow, the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall and last but by no means least Nikki Morrison. I spoke with Rear Admiral Scott Ledbitter who had previously signed the cloth at Yeovilton and was checking that it had been properly sewn in.

Our day with 814 concluded by being taken to the WO's and Senior Rates mess for lunch by our appointed host CPO AEM(M) John Feheley the AEO's Writer who had previously shown us his place of work and explained how much the documentation had changed over the years. Well fed and watered we took our leave of John and with fond memories commenced our way home.

Peter Roalf, Essex Branch.

DETACHMENT BANGLADESH

In March 1973, having spent two years on 848 squadron, Wessex HU5 commando carrying helicopters and completed all leave owing, I joined 846 headquarters squadron based at RNAS Yeovilton, same aircraft different badge. I looked forward to a settled time at home with my family and a fairly settled easy going routine. This lasted approximately three weeks. One afternoon when I was off watch the front door bell rang and I was confronted by a naval rating in uniform with a message in his hand. I had been selected to go to Bangladesh ("where" I said) politely, and was informed I had to report to the AEO who explained the situation to me. Bangladesh had recently had their war and our government had offered them £1,000,000 pound in aid of which I was to be part. Thank you government. As you may imagine I was not in the best of moods about the impending detachment. I asked the usual question, why me, when I had only just come back from a front line squadron. Answer, I was supposedly better qualified than other EA's on the station, a likely story, and I didn't feel flattered either. After much discussion I had to accept that I was going and there was nothing I could do about it, so there.

The government aid, under the auspices of the Overseas Development Aid programme consisted of taking two modified Wessex Mk4's to Bangladesh to give to the Bangladesh Air Force, sounds easy if you say it quickly. What it really meant was receiving the two helicopters from Westlands, suitably modified with airline style cabin seating and no autopilot. These had to be stripped down for transit to the capital Dacca, by RAF Hercules, needles to say by us the selected detachment crew which consisted of myself, two AA1's, and REA and a couple of junior air mechanics – oh! and I forgot, an air engineering officer S/Lt.

We then spent a couple of weeks waiting for and preparing the aircraft, tool kits and spare parts. All to be crated up securely and the helicopter fuselages attached to what can only be described as a sledge.

The day for departure arrived and we set off for RAF Brize Norton with £200 to pay for accommodation and food. We were not allowed to take any uniform, not even overalls because of the political situation that was a bit delicate at the time. An uninteresting flight to Singapore by VC10. Transit from Singapore to New Delhi as we were unable to fly directly to Dacca. An overnight stay in a hotel and departure to Bangladesh in the afternoon. On arrival at the airport we had to wait on board the aircraft until all the other passengers had disembarked. We were then briefed as to what was to happen

next. We were VIP's and were met on the tarmac by the local political representative, The British High Commissioners security officer, Spike, an Australian, and the local British Defence Advisor. Straight through customs which if we had known in advance, would have allowed us to stock up on some duty frees to transport to our accommodation which incidentally was the Hotel Intercontinental, nearly Hilton standard. A further briefing from Spike and his aide an army staff sergeant. The Defence Adviser then advised that as it was near the end of their quarterly supplies delivery he could only give us a single case of beer each – what a shame. The sergeant then laid on a party in his room at the hotel for that evening with beer in the bath with copious amounts of ice obtained from as many places we could find in the hotel. As this was Friday evening and the aircraft were not due to arrive until Sunday morning we had plenty of time to settle in, find our way around and generally relax by the swimming pool. During this settling in period we were given invitations to a party with Spike and the crew of the RAF transport aircraft for the Sunday evening to follow the unloading of the aircraft and their securing in the hangar. We also had a cocktail party at the British Commissioners residence and one with his deputy and secretarial staff. What a good start to a detachment!

The helicopters duly arrived on the Sunday when they were unloaded and the undercarriages fitted. Then they had to be towed along the main road to the airbase which was about half a mile away. One of us had to sit on the rotor head gearbox and using a broom lift the overhead cables clear. Someone else had to keep the traffic out of the way. On arrival at the airbase it was discovered that the entrance was not wide enough so it was necessary to remove the gate posts. Then to the hangar, an oversized open-ended Nissen hut riddled with bullet holes and just enough room for the two aircraft and paraphernalia. A local guard was employed to keep things safe.

That evening at a party given by Spike, we were introduced to eight members of the US Marine Corps who were the American Embassy security guard.

The rebuild of the helicopters took place over the next ten days after which they were test flown by a maintenance test pilot specially flown out for the job. I was fortunate to be given the task of flight test recording, which gave me the opportunity to overfly the local area and see it as very few people had. The most amazing sight was seeing large eagles flying towards us and refusing to move out of our way. Thank goodness the pilot was awake.

A few minor mishaps occurred during our stay; two or three down with the dreaded Delhi Belly and my roommate struck down with raging toothache. Cement for the stomachs and a long search for a local dentist willing to treat the patient.

A further highlight of our stay was another party with the US Marines at their club, a party apparently every Friday evening, where we were introduced to some young volunteer nurses. They were helping to man the hospital where war wounded patients were being treated and also operating a smallpox vaccination programme in the local villages. These nurses were living in appalling conditions and, being volunteers, were paid very little, so being able to spend money on such luxuries as soap, toothpaste and even toilet rolls was very limited. We listened to their sob stories and subsequently raided the hotel for as many bars of soap, toothpaste and toilet rolls as we could lay our hands on. We were also able to treat them to a few meals in our hotel which came under the broad heading of expenses. At the end of our stay we discovered that the aid programme covered the hotel expenses so our £200 advance stayed mainly intact. We were accorded a couple of trips out, one to the banks of the Chittagong river, a pretty muddy looking stretch of water but at least a chance to see the country and people at work. During a guided tour around the hospital to meet some of the war-injured civilians, we saw that many had lost all or part of their limbs. We also saw one young man being fitted with an artificial lower leg for the first time. Once fitted he got up and wandered around on it as though it had always been there. The heel was made from a piece of car tyre to give the foot a bit of spring and to absorb some of the impact. Absolutely amazing! Finally an afternoon out with the mixed nursing team to carry out part of the smallpox vaccination programme in one of the villages. Having obtained permission from the headman of the village, we started to round up the young boys ready for them to be vaccinated. Not an easy job as they kept running away. However, once a couple had been done they helped in catching the others. The teenage girls were a different problem as they would run and hide in the toilets. If you have experience of Asian style toilets you will understand the problem. We had to go in and drag them out in order to progress with the programme. During that afternoon we treated about 200 people and once ready to leave had a following of youngsters, just like the Pied Piper of Hamlyn. They were encouraged by our group leader to sing. It may have been a slum area in which to live, but I was still a little sad having to leave with the programme unfinished.

A fortnight after arriving we had completed the task and all that remained was to hand over the aircraft and spares to the Bangladesh Airforce. This was duly accomplished at a small ceremony.

A few local helpers had learned some English language kindly taught by our REA, but this really could not be used in polite conversation.

We finally departed late in the evening. We had to stop at Bangkok early in the morning where we were put into an hotel and left to eat and sight see, all free, until

late afternoon. Back to the airport and another plan to Singapore where once again we were installed into a city hotel free of charge. Our return flight by courtesy of 'Crabair' wasn't until the following Thursday so it was back to sightseeing once more. Unfortunately the MOD must have got wise to us as on the Monday we suddenly had to leave the comfort of the hotel and move into accommodation at HMS Terror – still we didn't have to pay.

The final part of the story was the flight home. The VC10 we were booked on also had the Duke of Edinburgh on board, he was in transit from Australia to UK, so very high security but superb food. We were informed that should we hear anyone moving or walking around, we were not to turn around and look.

There was a sting in the tail. When we got back to Yeovilton, the pay office wanted the return of the £200 float when they found out about the 'freebies'. But, in time honoured tradition, after deductions for damaged civilian clothing, laundry bills, meals and airport taxes they did not get much of it back.

I must say that although I was reluctant to go in the first place I have never regretted going. It was certainly an experience to savour.

Bob Ridout, Yeovil Branch.

ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD.

Across: 1. Sea King. 4. Foghorn. 7. AKA. 8. Flown. 9. Company. 10. Scout. 13. Sank. 14. Isle. 17. WRNS. 19. Raft. 20. Float. 22. Sickbay. 23. Train. 24. Rio. 25. Rowlock.

26. Marines.

Down: 1. Seamanship. 2. Killick. 3. Gannet. 4. Fancies. 5. Ocean. 6. Navy. 10. Snag. 11. User

12. Victorious. 15. Lull. 16. Boat. 18. NewYork. 19. Ravioli. 20. Fathom. 21. Screw. 22. Spar

**IT IS WITH REGRET THAT WE ANNOUNCE THE NAMES OF
THOSE WHO HAVE "CROSSED THE BAR"
MAY THEY BE GRANTED SAFE ANCHORAGE**

DICK MARR – ex AM (E), Ford (Peregrine) Branch

COLIN BOND – ex CPO(El), Bournemouth Branch

JEAN GOODE – ex Wren, Standard Bearer, Derbyshire Branch

JOSEPH HARRIS – ex AM, Angus Branch

KEITH ROBERTSON, B.E.M. – ex C.A.F.(A), Bristol Branch

ERIC COULDREY – ex LAM, Cotswold Branch

PETER WALTER - ex AM(E), Cotswold Branch

JOHN LARBY – ex CERA (MW), President, Eastbourne Branch

ALAN GOODE – ex LA(SE), Chairman, Derbyshire Branch

GEOFF (SHINER) WRIGHT – ex AA4, Ford (Peregrine) Branch

LIST OF ACCOUTREMENTS ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER.

4th March 1999.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>Cost (Incl. P&P)</u>
Ties	£7.50
Gold Wire Blazer Badges	£11.00
Silk Emb. Blazer Badges	£8.50
Life Member Lapel Badges	£1.00
Members Lapel Badges (Gilt)	£1.50
Associate Members/Spouse Lapel Badges (Chrome)	£1.25
Ladies Head Scarves	£8.50
Beret Badges	£7.00
Car Stickers	£1.25
Membership Cards	£0.15

ITEMS BOUGHT TO ORDER

Short Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£15.00
Acrylic Sweaters	£16.75
Lambswool Sweaters	£23.75
Colours Available: White, Navy, Red, Light Blue (Acrylic ONLY), Black, Grey, Bottle Green and Royal Blue.	
Sizes when ordering: 32" to 56" in 2" stages. Shirts S, M, L, XL and XXL.	

Orders to the Treasurer. **PAYMENT WITH ORDER PLEASE.** Cheques made payable to the Fleet Air Arm Association (National).

Items will be ordered by the Treasurer and sent direct from the supplier to the purchaser. The invoice will be sent to the Treasurer in order to prevent non Members of the Association from purchasing these items.

Note: Berets may be obtained from:

Uniform Clothing Store
H.M.S. Collingwood
Newgate Lane
Fareham, Hants.

Last known price - £6.71

Tel: 01705 722351

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HMS INVINCIBLE 1980
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