





# The Fleet Air Arm Association



Airey Fairey

Issue No.18 – Summer 2010





## **THE FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION**

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# Fleet Air Arm Association

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The Fleet Air Arm Association website [www.faaa.org.uk](http://www.faaa.org.uk)

The Fleet Air Arm [www.fleet-air-arm.com](http://www.fleet-air-arm.com)

Fleet Air Arm Museum [www.fleetairarm.com](http://www.fleetairarm.com) (Yeovilton RNAS) 01935 842600

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# Contents

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<b>FAAA News in Brief</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Centenary Events 2009</b>	
Garden Party Buckingham Palace	3
Fly Sheppey	5
The Dedication of the Fleet Air Arm Memorial	6
Westminster Abbey Battle of Britain Sunday	8
The Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance	9
Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph	10
<b>Memory Lane</b>	
The Sea Fury and Service with the RNVR and overseas forces	11
An incident in the life of a Royal Naval Squadron	12
Sir Adrian Johns' Dinner Guest	14
Hawker Sea Fury	14
H.M.S. Gosling – A Guide for new entries	15
<b>Donations and Fund Raising</b>	
The Royal Navy Heritage Flight and the Fly Navy Heritage Trust	16
The Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT)	16
Uk4u Christmas box (2009)	17
Dr Rotman Plate, Pembroke House	18
<b>Branch News</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Squadrons</b>	
Brigadier Mark Noble Royal Marines, CO RNAS Yeovilton	25
Junglies in the mountains	28
Land Owner's day at Yeovilton	29
My Afghanistan Experience	30
Sweets for the Junglies	32
WO2 Carl Bird – Helmand 2007	33
Cottesmore	34
<b>Members who have 'crossed the bar'</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>List of Accoutrements</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>FAAA Branch Details</b>	<b>43</b>



## Editorial

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The long awaited Airey Fairey 18 has finally come to fruition. There have been a few problems on route but as you can see there is plenty for you to read.

Once again we have the six key sections of previous editions. There are still some centenary stories to be told – but they will not be forgotten. There is a ‘healthy’ Branch section which hopefully will continue. There is a need for more copy in the Memory Lane Section – so help me if you can. The Yeovilton Squadrons are included once again but we do have a variety in this Section hence the change of heading to Squadrons.

I have to stress that Crown Copyright MOD must be respected. No reproduction of photographs in any form please! This is important if we are to keep the supply of MOD photographs for our magazine.

I have had two requests for information. One requires a photograph of a WWII Jeep in Fleet Air Arm livery. The request has come from Guernsey and there is a connection to Lt Cdr Peter Plugge. The second is related to the Fairchild Cornell aircraft used in training by FAA pilots in Canada WWII. There were 4 with distinct markings. Any information will be welcome.

As you read through the magazine you will see that there are new links with FNHT, Greetings from Brian our ex Chairman, an article from Brigadier Noble, an introduction to Rear Admiral Cunningham, Branch and National Member changes to note and much more within the 6 Sections! Sadly the Obituary Section is long – some detailed Summaries still to come.

Once again I would like to thank everyone for the support that I have been given. Thankyou also to those who noticed the incorrect caption to HMS Victorious and the reference to RAF Gosling - it helps to know and from this sometimes articles can be constructed. Terry (Hubby) still continues to help me with the checking of copy etc. and is always ready to help – particularly when the time comes to get the Airey Fairey printed.

Airey Fairey 19 will see the end of the Centenary copy related to the Events in 2009. So folks we need to fill that space. Any new ideas are welcome.

Always remember that the AIREY FAIREY, your Magazine needs you.

Without copy there is no Magazine so I hope to hear from you soon.

My telephone number is 01923 676619 or you can pass any information you might have through your Branch Secretary.

Enjoy the magazine

*Margaret*

## Greetings everyone

.....

It is with a great deal of pride that I write this quick resumé of my time in office. What a great time it was. Unfortunately I did not manage to get around to all the Branches. To those I have missed my apologies. To those that I did meet thank you again for the warm welcome.

To mention a few highlights, Sheppey was where it all began and it caught the public eye. The Ford reunion again attracted a good 'turnout' and it was our first contact with our Hon. Vice President R.A. Simon Charlier. From then on it was just a merry go round - Illustrious, St Pauls and the superb lunch at the city of London, followed by the Royal Garden party - it was wonderful and another first. It was also noted that, unlike the Guards we didn't steal the cutlery!

Then there were the Air Days - Yeovilton and Culdrose, followed in October by the unveiling of the new Memorial at the Arboretum. Another excellent 'turnout' and I think it was generally agreed that this was another wonderful day out (and we gained 3 new members). Next on the Agenda was Westminster Abbey to remember the participation of the F.A.A. in the Battle of Britain. Here we met once again the two ladies from the Yorkshire Branch who must have attended every function. Last but certainly not least the Festival of Remembrance at the Albert Hall followed by the ceremony at the Cenotaph on the Sunday. What a way to end a decade.

So we have come to the end of a very definitive decade. It saw a great number of changes not only in the FAA but also in the various FAA associations who finally came together to form a group. Its objective: *"to bring to the public attention the work being done by our serving boys and girls."*

Known as the Fly Navy Federation (FNF) this organisation allows us to assist each other, whilst maintaining our individual independence. The Federation until now has mainly been concerned with the 100 celebrations and I think you will agree that considering the complications with availability a great result was achieved.

We now have a new decade and new challenges. We must continue our efforts to keep the public aware of the very important part played by our service, not only in the fight against terrorism but also across the world today and every day, (although rarely in front of the cameras), so that our service continues to deliver. We must spread the word about the Historic Flight, the FAA Museum at Yeovilton and support the various parades and airshows etc. To serving members I would say this:

*"We are only the guardians, take an interest, give us suggestions as to what you would like to happen because when the next decade comes along it will be .....All yours"*

*Brian Bingham*  
Chairman Fleet Air Arm Association  
2008 – 2010



## Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham

Chief of Staff (Aviation and Carriers) and Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm  
.....

Welcome to our new Honorary Vice President Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham who replaced Rear Admiral Charlier ADC when he took up his current Fleet Air Arm appointment in April 2010.

Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham, on joining the Royal Navy, trained as a Fleet Air Arm Observer and completed tours in Sea King helicopters and with the Royal Air Force in the venerable Canberra bomber. The majority of his flying career, however, has been in the Lynx helicopter. He has served in embarked Lynx flights, including operations in Beirut, as an instructor on the training squadron and as the Executive Officer of the frontline headquarters squadron.

Between flying tours he qualified as a Principal Warfare Officer and served as the Operations Officer both of HMS Brazen during the 1991 Gulf War and, in 1995 of the carrier HMS Illustrious during flying operations over the former Yugoslavia.

Shore appointments have included Operational Requirements, where he had the Future Carrier desk during the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, International Defence Policy, with a special interest in the EU and NATO, and as the Project Team Leader for the UK frigate replacement programme. He has also served in the Ministry of Defence as the Director of the Naval Staff, supporting both the First Sea Lord and the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff in strategic, single service issues and in Washington as the Chief of the Defence Staff's Liaison Officer to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

He has commanded the destroyer HMS GLOUCESTER, the assault ship HMS FEARLESS, the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group and Coalition Task Force 150, the international, counter-terrorism, maritime force in the Indian Ocean.



Editor Note: The Rear Admiral has already briefed the Fly Navy Federation (FNF) on current activities, plans and policy, which has been taken as an indication that the associations and veterans of the FAA are still of great relevance. The Photograph provided with the summary above is Crown Copyright (2010) and should NOT be copied or reproduced.

## FAAA News in Brief

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### **AGM April 5th 2010**

The AGM was held for a second year at Market Bosworth. As a result of the morning meeting we now have a new Chairman - Arnold Thompson, Acting National Secretary Dicky Bird (Essex branch) was voted on to the committee, together with, our new Vice Chairman Ray Thomas (Watford branch). Dicky expects to 'run' the secretarial post from a distance. As a consequence, there is the possibility of a new post of 'Minute secretary' being created. The task will be to tape and minute the proceedings at the Hanworth and Derby meetings and pass them to the National Secretary. We also have a new National Standard Bearer – Alan Breward (Birmingham Branch).

Brian welcomed the guest of honour at the Gala dinner, Commodore Martin Westwood who is very much involved in 'all things to do' with Carriers and Aviation at Headquarters Navy Command. Our President Vice Admiral Adrian and Lady Susie sent their apologies.

Our thanks to Barry and Dorothy for all their efforts to make the AGM a success.

### **AGM April 10th 2011**

Barry and Dorothy have agreed to organise the 2011 AGM meeting at The Heathland Hotel Bournemouth – but after this they will definitely 'step down'. Understandably, they wish to enjoy a reunion without the Event administration. Our thanks go to them for the time that they have given to ensure that the AGM's 'run to plan'.

All Application forms should be returned to Barry by October 22nd 2010.

Sadly we now need a Reunion organiser for the 2012 Reunion.

### **The Fly Navy Federation**

Thanks to some hard work by the national Committee in 2009, the standing of the FAAA has been enhanced within The Fly Navy Federation. This has continued, to the extent that the Association has been asked to co-ordinate the Isle of Sheppey service, which is to be held annually. A meeting in September 2010 will confirm the details of the service to be held in October 2010 and probably May for subsequent years.

It has also been agreed that from 2010 the responsibility for the T.A.G.s' Memorial service at Lee on Solent will be passed to the FAAA. Arrangements have already been made with the Gunnery Marshall, Service personnel etc. for the 3rd Sunday in May 2011. A payment (approx £200) will be needed, for the local police services.

## National Standard Parades

Further to the report given in Airey Fairey 17, Barry our National Standard Bearer continued to Parade the Standard at Chatham, Southsea and the Sheppey event (July 26th), the funeral service of our oldest member Henry Allingham, the National Arboretum, the Royal Albert Hall and the unveiling of the Channel Dash Memorial. Barry has now retired and our new National Standard Bearer Alan Breward has, following the AGM 'taken up' the task of parading the National FAAA Standard, (more about Alan's events in Airey Fairey 19).

The Standard was, at short notice, presented by Dicky Bird and Brian Bingham at the funeral of Lt. Com. Edgar Lee, the last of the five FAA heroes to survive the Channel Dash attack on a powerful German fleet in the English Channel. Rear Admiral Charlier ADC gave the Eulogy. More details will be given in AF19.

## The National Standard (FAAA)

Our standard has recently been fully refurbished. A general question for Alan has been: Why is the braid on this Standard, Silver?

Answer -- The FAAA tie was given a Silver stripe. The silver was chosen and repeated for the National Standard so that it would stand out against the rest. Thanks to Terry Lowden for the information (Hanworth Branch) who was on the Committee that made this decision. Nice one!

## Gazebo News

The Gazebo is now up and running, with information leaflets, display panels etc. Volunteers are needed to man this new facility. The Kent branch is involved with the activities of the Channel Dash Committee and consideration is being given to the sharing of the FAAA Gazebo for some events and air shows. If this is 'taken up' this facility will be in use throughout the year. The Gazebo panels have, thanks to Arnold's efforts, a lot of mounted photographs of FAAA activities – especially those of the Centenary year. Vice Chairman Ray Thomas stands at the entrance of the tent (North Weald Air Show 2010).



## FAA Memorial

The Memorial has undergone some repair work due to frost damage. It is now 'looking good'. Discussion is underway as to the format and arrangement of the plaques. The number of Memorials within the Arboretum continues to grow.

# Garden Party Buckingham Palace

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July 9<sup>th</sup> 2009

Arthur Gardner (Greater Manchester Branch)



Both Mary and I were delighted to receive our invitation from HRH The Duke of York, KG to a Garden Party to celebrate the Centenary of Naval Aviation. We also had a free parking permit for the Mall, but it was something of a mixed blessing, for to get to the Mall we had to pay the £8 London congestion charge!

We arrived in London at about 2.25 on the day, and parked as directed by the police. The weather being fine and sunny, we strolled down the Mall, to reach the side gate of the palace at 2.45, where we joined the queue.

After being checked in, we walked through the courtyard, across the front of the palace and the central arch into an inner courtyard, passed a static helicopter display, then up some stairs to a large gallery with paintings of notable persons and past monarchs. We continued from there, into a smaller room in which there were corner display cabinets (all locked) filled with various makes and patterns of the finest bone china, and finally up a few more steps to reach a veranda looking out over the rear gardens.

We could see to our left was a very long tent-like structure under which was the food and drink counters, overflowing with all manner of mouth-watering goodies – Canapés and delicious sandwiches with no crusts. I loved the cucumber ones with the cucumber sliced long-ways. There was also a huge selection of cakes. Along the front of this tent was a profusion of tables and chairs – ample seating for all. To the right was a roped-off area



which held two tents separated by ropes – the Diplomatic tent and the Royal tent. Sadly our invitations did not extend to either of those. We and other members of our Branch (Greater Manchester) were allocated places in the Main (Third) tent.

We walked down the flight of steps into the garden, the steps being lined by naval ratings from ships and shore stations, along the front of the long Main tent and met up with some of our FAAA members. At the end of the Main tent was a large table holding a variety of cold drinks. Hot tea and coffee were served in the food tents.

The toilets were roomy and thankfully well signposted, and although in tents were first class, complete with sinks, soap and towels.

Near the lake a Royal Marine band was playing a mixture of music, and those who had eaten their fill were strolling around the gardens. Our host Prince Andrew arrived with Prince Edward and Princess Anne and after some presentations on the veranda they came down the steps into the gardens to do their walkabout, which we were unable to see, because the path they followed had been lined by people who must have taken up places from the start. There was no room for us – we had spent time eating and chatting, together with other members

However we were in a good place to see the helicopter fly-past and then watched as the Yeomen of the Guard marched up in full regalia complete with pikes. Around five o'clock, as the royals made off to their tent, the Tannoy announced that champagne and ice-cream were being served. Editor: It was the first time ever for champagne to be served at a Royal Garden Party.

Mary managed to choke down both our champagnes. We left at about six o'clock, having had a truly memorable day. Looking forward to our next Centenary?



*Our thanks to Dick Ascott (Essex Branch) for providing the photograph (See Fly Sheppey 2009)*

*Editor: Mary and Arthur Gardner at the Palace. Arthur was made a Life Member of the Greater Manchester Branch (2009) 'in recognition of outstanding efforts and loyal service as the Branch Chairman'.*

## Fly Sheppey

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July 26<sup>th</sup> 2009

A service in commemoration of 100 years of Aviation in Eastchurch and Leysdown was held in the Parish Church of All Saints Eastchurch. The Address was given by Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns KCB CBE ADC. Those attending the service assembled at the Memorial leaving 4 standard Bearers in the Churchyard where several early flying fatalities are buried. Three Buglers were positioned at the top of the Tower. When the last post was sounded it carried over the graveyard and the Memorial simultaneously – very moving for those attending, especially in the Churchyard. Brian Bingham laid a wreath on behalf of the FAAA.



Wreaths were also placed at the Memorial prior to the ‘fall in’ (which included members of the FAAA, RNA, and the Sheppey Sea cadets who took up the rear of the column with the Field Gun) behind the Band for a march to the Arena where Sir Adrian took the salute. This was followed by the Morning colours and dismissal until 1500hrs, leaving everyone time to enjoy the entertainment arranged by the ‘locals’.

At 1500 there was a further march into the arena for ‘Sunset’ followed by two presentations – the National FAAA Life Membership to Peter Roalf (Essex Branch) and a Plaque with the RNA and FAAA Badge combined to Mrs K Carter (Parish Council Chairman).

The Whitstable Sea Cadet Band led the morning parade. Barry Simons FAAA National Standard bearer had a young trainee on the day. Each Standard Bearer was given a ‘pin badge’.

The activities in the Arena included a Field Gun Display and run against the clock by the local Cadets. A Great day and fitting reward for all involved with the event organisation.

A big thankyou has to go to S/m Mick Whithington for his efforts to bring the event to fruition and the Area 2 Parade and Ceremonial Officer of the day who controlled and planned the day.



# The Dedication of the Fleet Air Arm Memorial

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September 11<sup>th</sup> 2009

Sue Halladay (Birmingham Branch)

Thursday September 10<sup>th</sup> saw me having my hair done in readiness for an early start the next day and our first visit to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. I am just about the worst 'getter upper' in the world! Friday morning came and I did get up. For once the gods looked kindly on us, the weather was beautiful and we 'set sail' just after 0800, Doc driving whilst I navigated. On arrival we left the car in the Arboretum Car park and then



to the first excitement of the day – instructions on how to drive my hired electric scooter named 'ROBIN'. There are scooters and wheel chairs for hire at a cost of £5.00 each but you need to phone 01283 792333 beforehand to reserve one. Fortunately, I did not have to do any organising as our Standard Bearer, Alan Breward and his wife Vicki are Friends of the Arboretum and did it all for me. After 5 minutes tuition I was off. Each scooter has a tortoise pace and can accelerate up to hare pace. I only used the hare pace to get up the steep hill to the shop and the usual facilities; otherwise I was a happy 'tortoise'! The Arboretum is, I believe manned mainly by volunteers – maybe they all are – but whatever the status of the people who work there, all credit to them. It really is a superb site, beautifully maintained. The trees, and there are a great number of them, look glorious.

No more waffling, now for the big event. People started to arrive from 0900 onwards and from then until around 1130 tours of the site took place. You could either go around using an informative map or for £2.00 you could 'jump' on a little wooden train and get taken around the site and listen to an excellent commentary on each memorial we passed. Well worth the money. There is a museum, shop etc. and a cafeteria with a pleasant seating area and a good selection of eats and drinks. All guests had to be seated by 1140.

The seats for the dedication were laid out either side and to the rear of the White Ensign covered Memorial – four matelots standing like statues at each corner – yet, to the assembled guests there was a feeling of comradeship and informality in respect of the Proceedings. There was even a space set aside for the scooters and wheel chairs.

The Guard and Standard Bearers (12 or maybe 14) stood facing us about 25 metres to the rear of the lectern. At 1145 the Chaplain of the Fleet the Venerable John Green QHC arrived followed at 1150 by Rear Admiral Simon Charlier, Chief of Staff Aviation who arrived in a white helicopter which sparkled in the sunlight. The Rear Admiral inspected the Guard and Standards, after which there was a flypast of Fleet Air Arm aircraft. At noon, on the dot, the Dedication Service began. Everyone had received an Order of



Service booklet, beautifully printed, so that each person could partake in the Service of Dedication which lasted for about 40 minutes. It was followed by a second flypast. At the time of the unveiling of the aircraft carrier (memorial) the precision and care given to the folding of the White Ensign by the young sailors who had guarded it so well showed that the future of the Fleet Air Arm is in good hands. It is expected that squadrons, ships and associations will buy standardised plaques appropriately inscribed for assembly around the base of the Monument. Apparently it is also planned to plant four Rowan trees at the site in memory of the four Fleet Air Arm recipients of the Victoria Cross. I think, no, I know that all present were impressed by every aspect of the service that we were privileged to have been a part of. Birmingham Branch was also very proud to stand there by the Memorial knowing that their Branch was the first (FAAA) one to be formed in 1981.

After the service many went down to the large marquee for the buffet and drinks and a chat with shipmates not often seen. Others wandered around the site – others had already made alternative arrangements off site. However, I am certain that the memories of the 11th September 2009 will live long in the hearts and minds of all those who made it to the National Memorial Arboretum on that very special day. Long live the Fleet Air Arm and all her Associations, I say!

*Editor: The Arboretum is located just off the A38 north of Lichfield (Croxall Road, Staffordshire DE137AR). It is open between 9am and 5pm. Entry is free. Sadly for Sue her husband Doc Halladay crossed the bar May 2010. He was one of the founding members of the FAA Association National Branch formed in 1981 and was its first Secretary).*





## Westminster Abbey Battle of Britain Sunday

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September 20<sup>th</sup> 2009

Twenty seven members of our Association attended the Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication on Battle of Britain Sunday in Westminster Abbey, all proudly sporting their Fleet Air Arm badges, which caused very little comment from all the light blues in attendance. It was an enjoyable occasion with many dignitaries from across the World attending. The Lord Mayor of London, the Lord Mayor of Westminster and HRH the Prince of Wales representative arrived and walked down passed the invited guest to their seats. Once they were seated the Service began. The service for Battle of Britain Sunday followed a similar format to that of the FAA service at St Paul's Cathedral in June but naturally had direct reference to the RAF.



In the photograph you will see the 2 Yorkshire ladies (wearing the berets – Pam Senior and Wendy van Der Venn) mentioned in Brian's Greetings, together with Blenda and Brian Bingham (Ford Branch), Arnold Thompson (Daedalus Branch), Ron Bennet and his wife (Bournemouth Branch) and Dorothy Thompson. They stand at the main entrance to the Abbey. Behind them can be seen some of the RAF Standards that formed the 'lining party'.

After the service the bells of the Abbey were rung. A fly past, to salute 'The Few,' of a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and a Typhoon (RAF Coningsby) closed the ceremonial for the day.

Perhaps our presence, reminded some attending the service of the 'missing heroes' of Fighter Command – the FAA crews who served under Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain.

The air crew were either loaned directly to RAF fighter squadrons or as with 804 and 808 naval units loaned as entire squadrons. The 804 squadron were to fly dockyard defence during the Battle of Britain with Sea Gladiators. (Source – FAA Archive 1939-1945. Also listed here are the names of the 804 squadron aircrew).

# The Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance

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November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009

Barry Simons National Standard Bearer

For the first time the Fleet Air Arm Association was invited by the Royal British Legion to attend the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall (November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009). I as National Standard bearer was to represent the FAAA. This rare invitation to present the Standard was in recognition of the 'The Centenary of 100 years of Naval Aviation'.

Rehearsals were to take place at 1400 on Friday (6<sup>th</sup>) and Saturday (7<sup>th</sup>) at 0900. and should our 'Standard Bearer' fail to attend then 'it will not be possible for him to take part in the Festival'.

Some ten ex service Association Standard Bearers were in attendance for the first rehearsal. We waited for some time before we were called together, given the order in which we would be marching onto the arena and then marched down the steps, (not the ones we would actually use but the main stairs at door six). These steps were nothing like the ones we would be using for the performances and, we only did this once. Three hours later at about 1700, we were told that we would not be required any more that day, come back on Saturday at 0800 – not the 0900 we were originally told.

Saturday morning we all arrived on time for the full dress rehearsal, this time we were to be using the correct steps. But we were astounded to hear that we would simply be marching onto the arena and then march out taking no further part in proceedings and that all RBL Standard Bearers were to be seated behind the band on either side of the stage but that there would be no room for us. (It would not have been rocket science to reduce each column of RBL Standards by five to make room for us to be seated as in past years). After complaining to the RBL organiser we were offered seating beside the organ as we could not be given tickets for seats – the spares were at the RBL and the ticket office, as it was Saturday, was not open! Also to get seats we would first need to return to our dressing room to store our Standards.

In past years at the actual performances, ex service Standard Bearers were individually announced but not this year. Maybe this indicated that they really did not want us there. I did expect that as this was the Centenary of Naval Aviation at least this would be mentioned- needless to say it was not.

Tickets for the evening performance were supposedly only allocated to RBL members but after some considerable persuasion by our Vice Chairman he managed to obtain six of some of the poorest seats. (Note – The Royal Albert hall staff said any RBL tickets not sold were given to the RAH!).

Needless to say that despite the shortcomings I was both very proud and pleased to have represented our Association and those that saw it in the flesh or on television, even though only the back view, agreed that it was worth while.

# Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph

.....

November 8<sup>th</sup> 2009

Margaret Gidman (Editor Watford Branch)



The march, past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday is familiar to many. But this year was special – 100 years of Naval Aviation, a year to celebrate and to remember. On this day (November 8<sup>th</sup> 2009) we were to remember those who had given their lives for our country. The FAAA had a strong contingent attending. Our Cenotaph Marshall (Doug Wyatt) was kept busy (trying) to get us into line. Finally he made it and we were on the move, there was no stopping us! Left, right, left right or was it right, left, right left.....

They always say a picture is worth many words. Below is the FAAA on the march. My theory that anyone can march if you have a military band to lead you was in my case proved correct. Is waiting around a problem? No. Plenty of comradeship and chat – time soon passed. Was it a nervous moment? Yes. When taking the salute by Prince Andrew on the march past. – I never was good at left and right – fortunately He could be seen. So that was OK. My, how people cheered and clapped all the way around. It was a cold day but that didn't seem to matter. It was a privilege to have been able to attend and take part.

After the finish of the parade Doug laid a wreath, with other Associations at the FAAA memorial (Thames Embankment). A perfect end to the day. A day that Terry and I will always remember with pride. We were proud to be there with those who had served so many years ago.



## The Sea Fury and Service with the RNVR and overseas forces

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Ray Thomas (Watford Branch)

From 1938 until 1957 the RNVR provided aircrew personnel in the form of their own Air Branch. After the war, in 1947 their contribution was cut to 4 squadrons, one of which was anti-submarine and the other 3 were fighter squadrons. By 1957 the UK Government considered that the training required to operate modern equipment was beyond that expected of reservists and all 12 Air Branches were disbanded. The U.S.A Government took a different view. Today's U.S Navy and Marine reserve squadrons still operate front-line types alongside the regular units. In 1980 the Air Branch was reformed at RNAS Yeovilton. Initially the 3 RNVR squadrons were equipped with Seafires and partly equipped with Sea Furies in 1950 but it was in August 1951 that the first squadron was fully equipped with Hawker Sea Furies. They were flown by 1831 squadron which was based at RNAS Stretton, HMS Blackcap.

The re-equipping of 1832 and 1833 RNVR squadrons with Sea Furies was deferred – possibly due to the Korean War and the demand on the Sea Fury. During the interim period, 1832 had 6 Sea Furies and 9 Seafires – full conversion by 1953 and 1833 had Seafire 47's (contra rotating props) to replace its Seafire 17's – full conversion by 1954. By January 1955 the RNVR had 6 squadrons flying Sea Furies. This was not to last as the RNVR squadrons were to move to the turbo jet era with the Supermarine Attacker and the early Hawker Sea Hawk.

The first front line squadrons of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) reformed in the UK (805 and 808) were equipped with the Sea Fury in August 1948 and April 1950. A third squadron (850) joined them in January 1953. Squadron 850's stay was brief – it was disbanded at RANAS Nowra in 1954 after patrolling Korean waters aboard HMAS Sydney with 805 and 816 Firefly squadrons. 808 squadron was also disbanded in 1954 but 805 – the original squadron – was to soldier on until 1958. RAN also had Sea Furies with 3 second line squadrons. Some were used along with other aircraft of 723 Squadron (a RN squadron until 1946). It was re-commissioned at Naval Air Station (NAS) Nowra on 7 April 1952 as a Fleet Requirements Unit. The squadron was equipped with two Hawker Sea Fury Mark II's, a Douglas C47A Dakota, a Supermarine Type 309 Sea Otter and a Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation CA-16 Wirraway. RAN 724 and 725 squadrons also operated Sea Furies. RAN 724 in 1961/1962 continued to operate Sea Furies whilst also flying Venoms, Vampires and Gannets.

The Sea Fury was an outstanding aircraft, a tough customer in the attack role, but with light and responsive controls and excellent performance. There were numerous overseas customers. For example, the Royal Netherlands Navy, the Iraqi, Pakistan and Egyptian Air Forces, Burma Batista Government, German DLB (Deutsche Luftfahrt Beratungsdienst) and Cuba (where it is understood that they were to be used against the American support landings at the bay of Pigs in 1961).

# An incident in the life of a Royal Naval Squadron

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Peter Roalf (Essex Branch)



This didn't get into the papers, but it saved the exchequer the cost of a replacement Wessex Mk.1. The year? 1963. It was a normal flying day – the squadron was disembarked to RNAS Sembawang (HMS Simbang), Singapore – until a call from Terror Movements (Singapore) came in. A Chief Petty Officer on board one of H.M. Submarines, at sea off Singapore, was urgently required at home in the U.K. A flight home was available if he could be 'got' to Terror by 1600 that day. The request? 'Can 814 squadron make arrangements to transfer him to Terror.' The expectation was that the C.O. who was due to make the 'pick up', would fly to the submarine, do a winch transfer of the Chief and take him to Terror.

All went well, finding the submarine, carrying out the winch transfer, until the back seat crew noticed a large amount of AVCAT (fuel) leaking from the engine bay into the cabin en route to Singapore. As there was no obvious reason for this fuel leak, the C.O. called a 'Mayday' advising of a possible ditching. Then he spotted the RFA Retainer, an ammunition ship, proceeding to Singapore. She was fitted with a small stores transfer deck aft, which had been fitted in the days of Whirlwind Helicopters.

The C.O. Lt. Cdr. Beyfus approached the ship and established R.T. contact. The ship's bosun cleared away the boom stays to increase the available space for the main rotors. By dint of good airmanship the C.O. squeezed the Wessex onto the transfer deck, with less than six inches for the tail wheel to stay on deck. They secured the aircraft and cleared the deck space.

Ashore, the squadron A.E.O. was advised of the at sea incident. A second aircraft was made ready and sent out to the Retainer, along with a C.A.Mech, with instructions to winch transfer to the ship and endeavour to locate the source of the leak. This flight was uneventful. The C.A.M. was deposited on board, the compassionate case, the back seat crew and the second pilot were returned to shore.

Meanwhile the ship was still proceeding up channel to the ammunition depot. The C.A.M. removed the fireproof panels from around the hot end of the engine and, assisted by the C.O. in the cockpit operating the Booster pumps found that an 'O' ring had failed allowing a very fine mist of fuel to fill the hot area. It is still not understood why this very fine fuel mist, exposed to the temperature of the exhaust never caught fire. A very lucky escape for all on board !! The C.O. is believed to have received a Green Endorsement for his airmanship.

The squadron was now faced with the problem of recovering one Wessex from the load lift deck of an ammunition supply ship at anchor in restricted anchorage. Discussions between the A.E.O./C.O. and others indicated that if a replacement 'O' ring could be sourced, fitted and remain leak tight, it might be possible to fly the aircraft off astern. Problem, the offending 'O' ring was not stocked anywhere East of the

Engine manufacturers. Fortunately ashore in a hangar, was a life-expired engine awaiting shipment home – the second hand ‘O’ ring was retrieved undamaged – thanks for once, to an easy removal. Finally at about 2100 the A.E.O. agreed that the C.O. and the C.A.M. could go up the harbour the next day by boat to replace the leaking ring. The A.E.O. also authorised engine start up, if leak tight at Low pressure and if leak tight, after engine start, and, subject to the C.O.’s discretion, permitted take off and flight back to HMS Simbang. Needless to say there was another Wessex airborne in the event of further problems!

Good luck prevailed that day – everything to do with the start up of a known troublesome starter went like clockwork, there was no sign of leakage, the necessary panels were refitted (albeit with some discomfort to the C.A.M.- it was after all the hot end of the engine), rotor engagement and power tests were satisfactory – so the C.O. said goodbye to the Ship’s wireless room, pulled up the collective, transited rearwards to clear the ship’s stern, turned to port, climbed to 1500 ft. and headed towards Sembawang. En route the C.O. asked the C.A.M. ‘What’s next?’ Reply ‘onto the tie down base for check runs then Test Flight’. In other words half a days messing about to prove the engine was satisfactory. Would the A.E.O. approve a full Test Flight to 10000 ft. to check torque trips etc? Reply on the RT was affirmative. So up to 10000 ft. where for our C.A.M (Peter Roalf) dressed in boiler suit and shorts it was B....y Cold, plus **No Parachute** (normal practice for full test flights).

The C.O. was more than satisfied with the Test results, so on landing the aircraft was signed up as serviceable, and the next morning, for one of the very few times it happened, the squadron had a formation of eight from eight aircraft.

The second hand ‘O’ ring must have been good as it was still leak tight six weeks later when the new one arrived from the U.K. ALL’S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.



*RFA Retainer seen here approaching Malta. Launched January 1950, Commissioned July 1954  
Demolished at Barcelona October 1979. Displacement 14,400 full load. (Copyright RFA)*





## Sir Adrian Johns' Dinner Guest

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In an interview part recorded in AF17 Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns was asked who, living or dead, he would like to invite to a dinner party on HMS Victory? He chose Nelson and Thomas Cochrane, who was also around in Nelson's time. This is why he selected Thomas Cochrane. "He was a man who did things that authors fictionalised in their novels. He took and boarded a 32-gun Spanish Frigate with his tiny little ship HMS Speedy, a feat that was astonishing. He was accused of fraud on the stock exchange – which was almost certainly untrue – and disgraced. He was just naive and got stitched up but as a consequence spent time in the stocks. He then went out and founded the Chilean Navy.....the Brazilian navy and finally the Greek Navy. He was an advocate of gas warfare, which he thought was the coming thing. He was an innovative inventor in pitch and tar macadam in particular. He tried to persuade the Admiralty to use pitch rather than copper bottoming which was a practice of the day but the Admiralty declined.

Eventually they did use pitch as Cochrane had recommended and to add insult to injury pinched his patent. He was an amazing man and his great great grandson is still serving in the navy today. Without doubt Cochran was the greatest frigate Captain the Navy ever had".

## Hawker Sea Fury

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Some Speed Record achievements: London to Rome in 2hrs 31mins 51 seconds (880 miles) – beating the previous record set by a De Havilland Vampire by 18min 49sec. London to Karachi covered in 15hr 20.5mins (3000 miles). In 1950, a Sea Fury T20 Trainer broke the existing record for a piston aircraft achieving 377.8 mph, at the Challenge Cup Race.

The Sea Fury was the Fleet Air Arm's last piston engined fighter to serve in front line squadrons. The prototype Sea Fury first flew on 21 February 1945 and carried out deck landing trials in HMS Ocean in October of that year. When the Korean War broke out in 1950, the Sea Fury was the Fleet Air Arm's leading single seat fighter and it fought with great distinction in that war. The aircraft were mainly used in the ground attack role armed with bombs and rockets, but also engaged in air-to-air combat against the much faster MIG 15.



*Picture Crown Copyright Royal Navy Website*

## H.M.S. Gosling – A Guide for new entries

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Shipmate Howard Bloxham kindly lent the Editor a copy of the ‘little’ blue book that many were issued with when joining the FAA. Howard joined in 1943. Below are some ‘snippets’ from the book to refresh memories!

“You are joining the Royal Navy at a critical time in its long and honourable history. Day by day a fresh page is being added to confirm what the centuries have established – namely that upon the Royal Navy depends the security of Great Britain and the Empire. Here (HMS Gosling) you will have nine weeks instruction. That is not long, and much depends upon the effort you make for yourself. Therefore, whenever you are in doubt or difficulty, do not hesitate to ask your instructor. He is here to give you the information you require.”

**Training** Your training is for the Fleet Air Arm, a vitally important component of the Royal Navy. After your joining routine at Camp 1 (Headquarters Camp) you will be attached to Camp 2, Camp 3, Camp 4 or Camp 5. The same training is carried out in all camps. Classes vary in size, but are made up of from 25 to 35 ratings. Each class is in charge of an Instructor who will be either a Chief Petty Officer, Petty Officer or Leading Seaman. He will help you in every way he can.

**Officers.** The branch to which Officers belong is indicated by coloured cloth worn between the stripes or in the case of single stripes worn below the single stripe. Colours indicate as follows: No coloured cloth – Executive; Purple – Engineer; Scarlet – Medical; Orange – Dental; White – Accountant; Light Blue – Instructor + Schoolmasters; Silver Grey – Shipwright; Dark Green – Electrical.

**Tobacco.** You are allowed to buy ‘service’ tobacco free of customs duty. This is a valuable privilege which must not be abused. Consequently no more of this tobacco than is required for your personal use must be taken from the Establishment, estimated at 1oz. for ordinary daily leave, except that ratings going on 7 days leave are allowed 8ozs.

**Sickness.** Two states of health only are recognised in the Royal Navy—‘Fit for duty’ and ‘Sick.’ If you feel unwell report to your instructor and then to the Sick Bay. ‘Feeling unwell’ is no excuse for being absent from your place of duty.

**Extension of Leave.** Should you desire an extension of leave, send a 1/- prepaid telegram to the Commanding Officer, requesting extension and stating reasons.

**Trafficking.** in any form is forbidden. This includes giving, lending or exchanging any article of kit or personal belongings such as civilian clothes without the permission of your Divisional Officer.

**Mess Kit.** Each trainee has a personal issue of knife, fork and spoon to be returned on leaving ‘Gosling’. Losses will be charged against a man’s pay.

**Damage to Property etc.** Care is to be taken of Government property etc. Sabotage of this nature is helpful to the enemy and is punishable. Gym shoes are only to be worn for physical training, close combat (including bayonet fighting indoors) and organised games.





## The Royal Navy Heritage Flight and the Fly Navy Heritage Trust

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The Swordfish LS326 continues to fail her ground runs. She has been grounded until further notice. This will avoid letting down air shows at the last minute. But Yeovilton 'will continue to tease her carefully back to life'. The restoration of the wings for Swordfish W5856, thanks to BAE Systems Brough, is going well, and with a new RN Project Officer scoping rebuild of the second Pegasus, work continues to bring W5856 back to life.

The Sea Hawk display season (2010) continues to please those who see her. She has a healthy programme ahead and continues to fly the White Ensign around the country. The Nene engine requires a major overhaul at the end of this year. Preparations are underway to arrange the space and machinery required to conduct the overhaul. Starter cartridges are in short supply. RNHF engineers have been working on an electric starter to be schemed and hopefully fitted within the next 18 months. Quote 'The only other alternative would be to 'bump start' her!'

The Centaurus overhaul for the Sea Fury VR930 continues in the USA. It is hoped that she will rejoin the air show circuit next year. The next stage check on the engine will be in autumn for the ground runs prior to despatch back to the UK. The sourced spare engine has now become a donor engine. A search for a spare Centaurus continues.

The Sea Fury propeller found in Iraq last year was formally handed over to the RNHF in May. RNAS Yeovilton Wardroom Mess President is actively looking at ways of mounting a very heavy piece of metal in or around his Mess!

## The Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT)

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The Fly Navy Heritage Trust continues to support the RNHF in various ways. The trailer provides a presence on the ground at a number of air shows. A regular supporter of the Trust who has completed a Standing Order Mandate for as little as £20 will receive regular newsletters, the latest news from the Royal Navy Historic Flight and on request an arranged visit around the Flight. Other benefits include reduced price tickets and access to the Trust's Marquee at RNAS Yeovilton Air Days. The Trust hopes to be able to offer more benefits to its supporters in the near future.

For further details go to the FNHT or RNHF Websites or Tel 01935 842005.

## Uk4u Christmas box (2009)

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The FAAA last year gave a donation to the UK4u team towards the supply of Christmas Boxes for the troops who serve abroad. The National Branch has received from the UK4u team a sample of last year's Christmas box plus relevant leaflets. This followed a request from the National Branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association for display material. The contents of the box will be mounted on a display panel to form part of the FAAA Tent Display Unit. The tent is used to promote the FAA at selected events.

UK4u receives many e-mails from Box recipients but the e-mail below shows what it means not only to our 'own' but to other nation's troops. The e-mail was signed 'Respectfully, Sgt Zamora, Frank A' (USA) and reads:

"To All: My name is Sgt. Frank Zamora with the United States Marine Corps. My unit is stationed at Camp Bastion with the British Forces and we shared Christmas as well as the New Year with them. I must say that it is rare to meet such a kind and giving people. One in particular, Warrant Officer Nichols, showed me how to make one damn good cup of tea or "brew" as he called it. I am very fortunate to have met so many wonderful British Soldiers and have the upmost respect for them.

The purpose of this email is really to say thank you so much for the Christmas Boxes. Our unit eats in the same chow hall (1of 2 in Bastion) that your soldiers eat in. As soon as we walked through the door for our Christmas dinner we were handed little red boxes with a smile and thanks. It was the only gift that I received for the holidays and being that I was not expecting to get anything, it immediately brought a sense of joy to my heart. I know that I am a Marine with the US but after watching the DVD in the box, I realized that you support all of us. THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! It means so much to us to know that we are supported and it is so nice to know that we are remembered, especially during the Holidays.

You must keep this program going. It made a world of difference to me on Christmas day and believe me when I say that I am not the only one. You need to know that what you guys did for us brought happiness and a little taste of home to so many of the men and women serving out here. I will always remember what you did for us --- always. "

To make a personal contribution go to the uk4u website or contact: The Old Granary, East St., West Chiltington, RN20 2JY. Tel 01798 812 081

## Dr Rotman Plate

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The Dr Rotman Plate for The Leading Technician Award 2009 has been awarded to LAET(AV) C Merralls. The presentation was made by FAAA Chairman Arnold Thompson at HMS Sultan on the 23rd July 2010. This is the first of what is expected to be an annual presentation. The successful recipient receives a small trophy and the plate itself will be kept in the Trophy Cabinet at HMS Sultan with an honours board placed alongside the Cabinet. For further information contact Arnold Thompson. Tel 0239 278 6443.

## Pembroke House

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The Association has received a request from the Pembroke House Home Manager Mrs J.L Trembeth, for a donation towards the refurbishment of the Bar/Lounge area of the home.

During its review at the AGM (2010) it was realised that at least one of the residents was ex Fleet Air Arm. As a consequence Members voted that £2000 should be given to the home.

Pembroke House situated in a residential area of Gillingham, Kent provides residential and nursing care to former Royal Naval Ratings, other ranks from the Royal Marines, their wives and widows. The home was originally built in the 1920's and was extended in 2000 and can now offer accommodation for up to 50 residents. On the Ground floor three day rooms can be opened up to provide a large function room with a purpose built Bar – the area which needs refurbishment. The Royal Naval Benevolent Trust, a charitable non-profit making organisation owns and manages the home. More details can be found on the Pembroke House Website or for Placement enquiries Tel 01634 852431.

## HMS Collingwood Seamstress Service (Daedalus)

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**I**(Editor) met Des Mardle at the Cenotaph parade. He was staying over night at a London Hotel and here he and his wife met the seamstress – one of a group staying at the same Hotel with some of the service people who had performed at the Royal Albert Hall on the Saturday. They were staying over for the Parade on the Sunday.

Did you know that at HMS Collingwood there is a seamstress employed by the Ceremonial unit to bring uniforms up to Tip-Top condition and to be fit to be worn at the Ceremonial to be attended? The uniforms are assessed and the seamstress makes the alterations. The alterations are required when weight is gained or lost. Weight loss can occur especially after sea service (the lower hangar on a carrier can be construed as a free sauna and Flight deck duties when in the Indian Ocean will sweat pounds off) or increased with maturity and perhaps assignment to a desk job. There may well be other reasons for the body change but the seamstress changes will probably be more accurate, quicker and above all cheaper than the buying of a new uniform.

My thanks to Desmond Mardle (Angus/Deadalus Branch), for this 'tale'.

### Essex

**O**n the afternoon of September 27<sup>th</sup> 2009 (Back to Church Sunday) the Essex Branch celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Service of Thanksgiving. The service was held at Bromfield Parish Church. It was conducted by Branch Chaplain Peter E Ball. The celebration continued at the local Kings Arms Public House where a buffet had been arranged.

Peter Roalf (a life FAAA Member of the National Branch) was asked by the Harlow (Eastgate) Branch Lloyds TSB to officially open the 'Bank' which had under gone renovation. He was chosen because Peter is a long standing customer of the Bank and knows all the staff.

It was also seen as an opportunity for Peter to gain some publicity for the FAAA whilst helping the Bank with the Ribbon cutting ceremony. There was just ONE snag – the scissors were blunt! But he was not beaten. He became the 'hero' of the day – ribbon eventually cut – job completed. Significant for Peter perhaps is the shop name in the picture 'Diamond(s) (a friend's nickname for Pearl) and Pearls'.

Recently the Bank staff gave Peter a lot of support and advice when Pearl his wife 'crossed the bar' in July (2010). Three Members associated with the Bank joined the 100+ relatives, friends, members of the FAAA and RNA, at her funeral. Pearl was a much loved and respected lady.



## Great Yarmouth – Roy Colbeck Sandy Colbeck, Social organiser

It was over 25 years ago when I (Roy Colbeck) went into the pub around the corner, the 'Kings Head', Belton, and met Bob Browning the new publican. I was surprised to find that we knew each other from our Royal Navy days -I served in the FAA for 23 years. We had joined within a month of each other and served on the Ark Royal at the same time. The King's head was now my 'local' and we often had the odd tot or two together. One day I went into the pub and was introduced to Bernard Alkins who had moved into the area from Birmingham. He informed us that there was a FAA Association so we decided to try and form our own Branch. We put an advert in the local paper to see if there was any interest and on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1985 the first meeting took place. (Guess where!).



From this small meeting we are still going strong 25 years later. A celebration was 'in order'. On March 12<sup>th</sup> 2010 our Anniversary Dinner took place at the Cliff Hotel, Gorleston. There were 58 of us attending and all said it was an excellent event. The music was supplied by RNA member Leo Whisstock of 'Harbour Lights' fame.

Many members have now crossed the bar, including both Bob and Bernard and sadly on the 19<sup>th</sup> March we lost Bill Boys a long standing member of our Branch. We still proudly parade our Standard at local events and have many social outings. We have associate members which include our good ladies. Our meetings are held at the Conservative Club, Gorleston and are well attended, with the exception of those who are far a-field -one residing in Michigan USA.).

## A Branch for Oldham?

Matt Gilmore has for some time been making enquiries about the possibility of starting up a local FAAA Branch in Oldham. He has been elected onto the Committee for the Liaison Of Ex Service Associations. The Committee is keen to help him form a local branch if enough interest could be found. There is a very successful well established British Legion Group in Oldham and the Poppy appeal for the town raised nearly £45,000. Good support here. He went to the Oldham R.N.A. to suss out any F.A.A. veterans (if any) but there were none. Are they all with the Greater Manchester Group? Sadly Matt is of the view that the Oldham Branch is currently a 'non goer' and quote 'the lads at the R.N.A. are a good crowd and they have been pestering me to join them so I duly signed on, paid my tenner and joined, it's the nearest thing I could find with Naval connections locally'. Matt went on board Illustrious on her visit to Liverpool in 2009 (more on this Event in AF19 when there is space for photographs) and he's not the man to give up easily. Any further help for Matt contact the Editor.

## Watford Branch – Terry Gidman

### The National Lottery sponsors Arboretum Visit

In early 2009 someone suggested, at a Monthly Watford branch meeting that we try to obtain a Lottery Grant to fund our visit to the National Arboretum for the dedication of the Fleet Air Arm Memorial. The membership secretary Peter Murray took on the task of researching and applying for the grant. Peter had to complete a 20 page questionnaire. Fred Good was asked to provide an independent referee. He went 'to the top'. He was successful in gaining the support of Watford Mayor Elect Mrs Dorothy Thornhill'. Other Branch Members supported Peter where required.



Off went the request on the 11th June. We knew we were in with a chance when a request was made for a 'letter of endorsement from our parent organisation'. Brian our National Chairman promptly obliged. The letter was signed and agreed on Ford Open Day. July 2nd Peter's e-mail came to tell us we had received the grant. A lot of work, some tense moments but the result was a successful application and an opportunity for 35 Watford Members to attend the dedication service.

On the morning of September 10th we boarded our coach for the journey to Alrewas. Not the best of starts as the motorway was closed, but we eventually joined it further north and without any more delays were soon at the Arboretum. After lunch we met our guides for a tour of its principal sites which included the FAA memorial (of course!). We were able to watch the final preparations for the unveiling ceremony the following day. It was also a good photo opportunity whilst the area was quiet. Our tour ended at the Armed Forces Memorial, definitely a spot to behold as the sun fell on the golden pinnacle.

After expressing thanks to our knowledgeable guides, it was off to the Newton Park Hotel (one time home of the Worthington brewing family) for an overnight stay. After an early breakfast the next day, we assembled for a branch photo call. Chaos – everyone wanted to take a picture! So back to the Arboretum to see more of the individual sites, visit the Chapel, ride the little train or, for the less fit the time to find a seat for the Dedication Ceremony. Suffice to say, we were all much moved by the ceremony. The service description has been covered in the Birmingham Article.

Lunch in the marquee gave us a chance to meet comrades old and new. I spoke with someone who had spotted the 890 Squadron badge on my blazer, a pleasant surprise. All too soon, goodbyes had to be exchanged and it was onto the coach for the return to Watford. Everything had gone as planned and it was with a vote of thanks to the National Lottery for their extremely generous grant to us and to those who had done the donkey work. There was also a follow up article in our local paper and of course much time reminiscing with friends, comrades, relatives, and neighbours.



## Kent Branch

By June 2009 the newly formed Branch membership had reached 19. Their Secretary Michael Foote has started to keep a History of the Branch. Various items are listed including the trip to Southwark Crown Court following an offer made by Jim Loveday of a tour of Southwark Crown Court where he works as a Police Liaison Officer. Dick Richards and Mike Foote made the trip to London for the visit and also met up with members of HMS Belfast Association, of which Jim is an honorary member. The Branch laid wreaths on Remembrance Day at both Ramsgate and Margate Parades (8th November). In October the HMS Belfast Association invited members to join them in a Trafalgar Day lunch in London. This was taken up by three members, Jim Loveday, Mike Foote and Dick Richards; it proved to be an excellent run ashore. A further invitation was extended to them to attend the Christmas lunch on HMS Belfast. Moving on to 2010 on July 26th a Branch meeting (13 members were expected to attend) was held at Pembroke House in Gillingham. Future plans include a Taranto Night Dinner and a Christmas lunch.

## Isle of Wight (Peter Campbell)

A Service of Thanksgiving for Commander Michael (Mike) Crosley, who crossed the bar July 2010, was held at the Holy Cross Church at Binstead (Ryde July 25th). His wife Joan requested that the IOW FAAA standard, carried by Peter Campbell, should lead the RNA, Aircrew, Mariners of Wight, 2 RBL and Cadet Standards to the Service, which was led by the Venerable Arch Deacon of the Isle of Wight. A choir of 10 (arranged by his son) came down from London to provide some moving Hymns and Psalms. The Church was 'Standing room' only (estimated 150 people) and many Senior Officers attended. A tribute was given by Captain Peter Hore RN of The Fleet Air Arm Association. Further Tributes were made by his sons and Captain Peter Jackson read 'High Flight'. After the Service, the Standards and Congregation stood outside the church to conclude the Thanksgiving with a salute by a lone Seafire from Yeovil which flew over at low level in 2 Runs. (Further copy in AF19).

## Bournemouth

Jo Towler has stepped down as Secretary after 17 years of service to the Bournemouth Branch. Thanks Jo for all your hard work. Her replacement is Ray Wrigglesworth. Jo has agreed to be 'in charge' of the FAAA Gazebo at the Bournemouth Air Show.



## Greater Manchester

Bishop Peter of Chester was visiting the St Cross Church, Appleton Thorn, where there is a strong link with HMS Blackcap and the Rev Elaine Chegwin Hall. (See AF17). He expressed, at the very last minute, an interest in meeting Members of the Greater Manchester Branch. Fortunately the Branch meeting in May was 5 days prior to the visit and as a result six members and two wives attended.

There was a photo call for the occasion. Some folk here you may recognise: LHS Gordon Pinkey, Muriel Milward, Kay and John Wade, RHS Len Milward, Arthur Gardner, Jim Buie, George Rose (thanks to Jim and George who provided the info). Regular services at the Church have now become a meeting place for those who served at HMS Blackcap.

The Members of the Branch have for the last 5-10 years taken a three-day break in September to visit the War Memorial at Lee on Solent to lay a wreath. This year is no exception (September 8th). The Chaplain from HMS Sultan will conduct the Service which is held every year at 11.00. Maybe next year others may wish to join then?





## Yorkshire Branch

Colin Ramsden and other Members of the Yorkshire Branch enjoyed a day out with a visit to the Eden Camp Childrens Day Event. The Eden camp is in north Yorkshire. It was a german prisoner of war camp during 1938/45 and the hutted camp still remains. It is privately owned and has ex army guns, tanks, aircraft etc.



Colin took with him his model of the Swordfish. The children were given a transmitter which enabled them to move parts of the Swordfish. The art of flying the plane was demonstrated. Here you see the A/c sitting on a bench at the Centre. The children were to the left – copy cropped to protect the children who were very keen, involved and certainly enjoying every minute of their ‘instruction’. Colin built this large scale Model in his workshop at home. It has been an Annual tradition for the Branch to have the Swordfish displayed at the Taranto lunch.

Last year a Sea Fury joined the Swordfish. Why the Sea Fury? Colin had heard the story of Lt Peter (Hoagy) Carmichael who has been credited with the first piston-engined aircraft to shoot down a jet-engined aircraft. Colin knew about Hoagy’s war efforts but wanted to know more about his later years. With a Web search the Editor was able to fill in the details. The Sea Fury had its debut together with a potted history of the Lieutenant (see AF19 for the details). At the Taranto dinner plenty of Pussers Rum was available! S/M Tom Meredith, Rum Bosun was kept busy and Albert Firth was presented with a shield for S/M of the year by the Branch President.

Sadly on that same day Colin came home to find his wife Pamela dead on the floor. So this year the arrangements will be different. There will be no Taranto celebration lunch but a ‘get together’ lunch on the 27th November.

The models have since been exhibited at Leeds Town Hall on Armed Forces day June 27th where the Yorkshire Branch had a stand. There was a comprehensive programme of activities for the day which included a ‘special launch of war memorials exhibition’.



## Brigadier Mark Noble Royal Marines CO RNAS Yeovilton

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In the summer of 2008, I was serving in a brigadier's dual appointment as Assistant Chief of Staff, Littoral and Land Manoeuvre and Deputy Commandant General Royal Marines in the Navy Command Headquarters on Whale Island. I had been advised by my "career manager" to expect to see out my remaining time in Portsmouth. I greeted with considerable surprise, therefore, the words of the previous First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, when he told me that he wanted me to succeed Chris Palmer as the Commanding Officer of HMS HERON, Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton. I could not suppress a huge grin spreading across my face immediately; a grin that I had quickly to chew back in as he followed up with, "But you can't tell anybody!" apparently on pain of death.

I was thrilled to bits. Whilst the job I was in was very busy, very rewarding and at the heart of Corps business, this unexpected turn of events represented a most welcome return to the Fleet Air Arm environment; a return to a place that I know and love well and a return to command. (This latter aspect was particularly important to me. In the Royal Marines, I have had the privilege to command at every rank I have held and there is simply no substitute for it.)

I mulled over the prospect, privately, I wondered how a Bootneck running "VL" would be received, not least by the readers of this magazine! I quickly reassured myself that, whilst it had never happened before at Yeovilton, it was entirely appropriate. I will not rehearse here a lengthy essay on the place of "Royal" within the Fleet Air Arm. You will know full well that one of the first four Naval Service officers to be selected for pilot training in 1911 was a Royal Marine and that his numerous successors have figured importantly as aircrew in every significant operation in which the Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm has been involved subsequently including the Norway Campaign, Battle of the Atlantic, Taranto, Eastern Fleets and Palembang, Korea, Suez, Northern Ireland, The Falklands, First Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Second Gulf War (Invasion of Iraq) and, very actively today, in Afghanistan. Royal Marines have flown virtually every Fleet Air Arm type in its historic and current inventory, including piston and jet fixed



wing aircraft and, of course, rotary, predominantly within the Junglie community. Some may be surprised to know that we have found our way back into fixed wing aviation and that there is a growing cadre of Bootnecks flying the latest Harriers in 800 NAS. I was content, therefore, that the Royal Marines pedigree within the Fleet Air Arm was robust. Personally, I had a characteristic as “CO VL Desig” that would have troubled the late Maj A E Marsh RM. For those that don’t know of him, he was a distinguished WWII Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot who was profoundly exercised by the decision in the early 1970s that the bulk of Royal Marines pilots would in future be trained by the Army Air Corps at Middle Wallop. This move was logical enough since, at that time, Royal Marines Commando units were being equipped with an Air Troop that flew the Bell Sioux helicopter in a successor role to that of the Army’s Air Observation Post Austers. It was largely “land force” business. So, consequently, I qualified in 1982 with, to Marsh, the “wrong wings”. No matter, I told myself. All my flying post “wings” had been conducted alongside the Junglies from Yeovilton or on deployment or on exchange flying attack helicopters with the United States Marine Corps, largely from amphibious shipping. Thus, I did not lie awake, worrying about my maritime credibility for the appointment at Yeovilton. Since taking up the post, without exception, everyone I have met has been extremely generous in welcoming me back to the fold; to my face, anyway!

It’s time for a statement of the blindingly obvious. Commanding Yeovilton is a huge privilege! The Air Station remains big, diverse, complex and, from a command perspective, quite hard to get one’s arms around. It seems to vary from day to day but, on average, there are some 4,300 people within “the wire”. Some 3000 of these are military and mostly Naval Service, predominantly Fleet Air Arm. The two primary operational outputs remain the Lynx Helicopter Force and the Commando Helicopter Force. The maritime Lynx community are firmly “mine”. On the other hand, the Commando Helicopter Force is a different kettle of fish. Whilst I exercise Full Command over them, on behalf of Commander in Chief Fleet, their Operational Command and the direction of their day to day business is exercised by the Joint Helicopter Command Headquarters, deeply embedded within the dark heart of the Army at Headquarters Land Forces, Wilton. Whilst the boss there is currently Rear Admiral Tony Johnstone-Burt, his successor will almost certainly be a Pongo or a Crab. There is a host of other lodgers and residents that live on at Yeovilton. Many contribute directly to the generation of naval aviation. Some have almost nothing to do with it.

Large numbers of the rest of the military personnel at Yeovilton are working on the north side of the road; on my turf but for a range of agencies including the helicopter support staff of the Defence Equipment and Support organisation or Defence Estates. Across the Station, much engineering, maintenance and enabling “Contract, Retail and Leisure” support is provided by civilian contractors, as is a lot of what we fashionably call “hotel services”. (We have a “Business Centre” too. I must try to change some of these titles back to something identifiably naval or military so you understand what I’m writing about.) We also have significant numbers of MOD Civil Servants. The challenge here is the management of people that I do not command as much as the leadership of those I do.

With such a diverse mix of people here, it is sometimes testing to maintain a unity of purpose. The front liners have no difficulty with this issue. The Lynx and Commando Forces are absolutely focussed on their operational commitments around the world, as are the many other departments and unit personnel who act directly in support of operational and training activity. The Royal Marines of the Armoured Support Group that lodge here are equally in tune with their primary purpose. Keeping some of rest of the resident population's minds on the fact that Yeovilton exists solely to generate aviation and support its employment in the defeat of the Queen's enemies sometimes requires a bit of effort!

Whilst most here is very familiar to me, the place has changed since I was last serving here in the mid-90s. We still operate Hawks in the Fleet support role and we have had the ex-Roborough "grading squadron", 727 NAS, operating Grob trainers here in an important range of roles for some years. But the Harriers have, of course, gone. I understand the logic (at the time) of the decision to move them to collocate with the RAF but to my eye (and ear) it definitely leaves a void. Their presence contributed a vibrancy and operational "edginess" to the place that kept everyone else sharp. I don't mean to imply that the rotary community is anything other than "cutting edge" but the mix of types induced a running competition, between fixed and rotary wing communities, not to be seen to mess up in the eyes of the other. I definitely miss the jets. Suffice to say that I am in receipt of very clear direction from Navy Command HQ to maintain the Station's capacity to operate the full range of aircraft types in case fixed wing naval aviation returns in a big way.

All in all, I believe that Yeovilton is in good shape. I was handed a tight ship and I intend to keep it that way. I have likened the Air Station to a hot air balloon. It is pretty well fully inflated and heading in the right direction, blown by the policy winds that flow from Navy Command HQ and my boss, the Chief of Staff (Aviation and Carriers). My role really is to make sure that everyone understands the direction of travel and to see that the burners are exercised regularly and in the right places to keep the "balloon" at the right altitude. Every now and then, it is inevitable that some part of the organisation will cool off and a bit of heating needs to be applied to it. It's my job to see that this happens. This year sees us celebrate 70 years since HMS HERON opened on 18 June 1940 and we plan a number of events to mark the occasion. Notably, on 17 June, we will exercise our right of the Freedom of the Borough of Yeovil. I also intend to host a dinner in the Wardroom for all the previous Commanding Officers that are available. The future is clouded with uncertainty in the detail but I am sure that HMS HERON, at the forefront of naval aviation, is as secure as any other element of the Armed Forces, recognising that a Defence Review is imminent.

## Junglies in the mountains

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The Commando Helicopter Force enjoys a reputation for high standards of professionalism and flexibility. This is, in no small part, attributable to the exacting and thorough instruction provided by 848 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), or the 'Jungly Training Academy' as it is colloquially known.

Based at the RNAS Yeovilton the Squadron has a complement of one hundred ratings and thirty officers. The Squadron is responsible for the instruction of up to fifty pilots and aircrewmembers each year. Operating the Sea King Mk 4, pilots undertake an Aircraft Conversion Phase that includes handling the aircraft in various emergencies and how to fly with sole reference to instruments – before crewing up with the aircrewmembers, taken from Royal Navy Ratings and Royal Marines, to learn how to operate the aircraft in a tactical environment during the Conversion Phase.

The Squadron also trains more than one hundred and fifty helicopter maintainers annually before sending them to the front line. Aircrew and maintainers receive military and amphibious training and individuals are also taught how to operate in the field and from the deck of a ship.

Sister Squadrons 845 and 846 NAS conduct very successful deployments in Afghanistan, operating their Sea King Mk 4 at the edge of their flight envelope with temperatures in the summer reaching 50 degrees and a sand ridden environment that challenges both aircrew and engineers alike. Afghanistan was not a location originally envisaged for the North Sea anti-submarine Sea Kings on which the Mk 4 is based. In the knowledge that these challenges await anyone potentially joining a 'Jungly Squadron', 848 NAS trains both aircrew and support personnel to operate in both maritime and land environments, to ensure aircrew are fully prepared for future operations in Afghanistan. It is essential that the students are primed for the mountainous and high altitude environment – several thousand feet above sea level.

For 03/08 course, comprising four pilots and two aircrewmembers, this would entail a two week detachment of two aircraft and associated engineering support to the German Air Force base at Landsberg, just north of the German Alps. The objective: to give the trainee aircrew experience in operating the aircraft at altitude, in mountainous terrain without the comfortable power margins available at Yeovilton. This gave the students an opportunity to plan and conduct a Continental 'Navigational Exercise' in a military helicopter. For some of the Engineers, also under training, it would be the first time they had maintained aircraft serviceability away from the well equipped hangars back at Yeovilton.



Fortunately for the instructors and aircrew alike the deployment out to Germany was relatively uneventful, although an unplanned weather diversion to a distinctly surprised German Tornado base was the highlight. Eight and a half hours later the Sea Kings landed in Landsberg. Sorties in the mountainous terrain concentrated ‘minds’ on the vital techniques of valley flying and approaches to pinnacles and ridges with the simulated end result of dropping off troops or stores. This resulted in some epic flying for the students with the seasoned instructor in the left hand seat constantly pointing out all the potential pitfalls that await the unwary mountain flyer. These range from violently down drafting air to wires strung across entire valleys at helicopter height.

On completion of their serials the students would have at least six hours mountain flying each under their belts, some of which are solo. On the last day of the detachment both aircraft lifted into low stratus and had to transit the first leg of the journey in cloud. This was a steep learning curve for all involved. Halfway across the continent they descended and continued visually under low cloud before refuelling at GAF Norvenich (less surprised this time). The transit continued at medium level into Belgium. The aircraft refuelled and picked up a Met update at the Belgium SAR base at Koksijde. The weather was suitable but overcast at 300ft. The resultant decision to launch left two Sea Kings transiting along the south coast at 50 feet before entering a cloud bank near Hastings. A text book formation break in cloud, a rapid climb to safety altitude and the aircraft transited to Yeovilton safely.

One non flying related highlight was watching the Belgians fit a new tail wheel, to an aircraft that did not belong to them in 30 minutes flat! Thanks go out to the German Air Force and specifically to LTG 61 SAR Squadron for hosting the Detachment.

## Land Owner’s day at Yeovilton

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As part of Commando Helicopter Force’s on going commitments to training of Aircraft crews, it relies on the help of farmers and landowners from around the South West to provide sites for its personnel to train prior to their deployment. Helicopters from CHF regularly use remote landing sites away from the Air Station and its satellite airfield at Merryfield, Ilminster. Operations are invariably conducted at night in all weather, and aircrews practice manoeuvres and tactical landings into relatively ‘unfamiliar’ sites. These operations are essential training for the demanding environment of Afghanistan, and the provision of land is vital to the success of the Force’s mission.

In November 2009 the CHF played host to the local farmers and landowners. The aim of the ‘Landowner’s Day’ is to enable the aircrew to personally thank everyone for allowing them to use their land and to emphasise the importance of this training to their current operations. The landowners receive no financial reward for offering their land, but always look forward to this informative day. A Sea King was available to fly the guests over the Somerset Levels, which provided an opportunity to experience the flying skills required of a Commando helicopter pilot – they were later able to explore the vehicles, weapons and other military hardware on display at Yeovilton.



## My Afghanistan Experience

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By PO Duckworth 845 NAS

There I was in the departure lounge at Brize Norton, this was my first time deployed with the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF). Sure, I had been away before but that was on the back of a Type 23 with a Lynx Mk3 as a baby Artificer. This time was different, I was a Petty Officer (PO) on 845 Naval Air Squadron and it will be up to me to lead my team and set the example. What was I expecting? I was not really sure, lots of sand and tents? So imagine my shock when I was greeted by a bunch of grinning suntanned sailors happy to see us, we were their reliefs! I was pleasantly surprised with the accommodation; it had proper beds and air conditioning. With highs of 55 degrees the luxury of air conditioning soon became a necessity, ensuring that the engineers got adequate rest during their off watch time. A key flight safety enabler often overlooked.



Day 2 – off to get acquainted with the detachment real-estate that would become my life for at least the next 90 days. It consisted of a small rub hangar, only big enough to house one aircraft, and 2 Porta-cabins. Although the HERRICK detachment was 5 aircraft, there was only hangar space for one! This was often an issue during my tour and it had an adverse effect on maintaining the material state of the aircraft. Day 2 ended with time on the range to zero my personal weapon. It was reassuring to know I could hit something if push came to shove! The rest of the week was hand-over week, allowing the on coming flight to get up to speed with the current engineering situation and acclimatise to the high altitude – a factor that cannot be underestimated.

Hand-over complete, we said good bye to 845 NAS C flight and my flight, D flight, took over the engineering responsibility for the Sea Kings. We were about to undertake a real baptism of fire. The next four weeks we would have every scenario imaginable thrown at us!

We had arrived during a time of particularly poor serviceability; largely due to the desert conditions. The fine sand particles got everywhere and affected nearly every aircraft system. Even basic tasks like applying phantom tape to electrical looms seemed impossible. In the short time it rolled off the tape and on to the loom, it was covered in very fine dust and would not stick. It was becoming very apparent these hostile conditions would present some real engineering challenges.

One of the key issues in Afghanistan is the altitude, at 3600ft. The amount of lift the aircraft can generate is greatly reduced. To offset this, the Sea King was modified with Carson main and tail rotor blades. This particular modification presented challenges in vibration control. The high temperatures dried each blade at different rates making Vibration analysis challenging to say the least. However, with a bit of innovation we appeared to win the vibration war. We would routinely remove the tail rotor blades, weigh them and refit a more balanced pack to each aircraft.

Another engineering issue was the Sea King engines; all theatre aircraft had the modified 1T engines fitted. This allowed the engines to run hotter on start but on the edge of permissible temperature limits, over temps were inevitable and resulted in engine changes. In the first four weeks we changed several engines. No problem I hear you say. But due to the dislocation of manpower spread over 3 different operating locations, we often had only one or two M (Mechanical) trade supervisors on the watch, so everyone had to get involved in the rectification work. The avionics trades took on the paper work and WRAM, leaving the Mechanical trades to work the aircraft. Typical I hear you say, but very soon the situation would reverse.

Just as our serviceability started to improve, disaster struck. During an operational insert, one of our aircraft suffered a tail rotor strike, forcing the aircraft to set down in the middle of hostile territory. This incident occurred while I was off watch. The on watch responded to the incident by sending a down bird team in the back of a second Sea King. With a massive amount of kit, the pilot skilfully inserted the down bird team in hostile territory. Force protection was carried out by 2 Para and two apaches remained on station throughout the recovery. In a fantastic engineering effort the aircraft was patched up and flown back to KAF 'one flight only'.

Thinking we had used up all our bad luck and the worst had happened, we settled back into our working routine. How wrong we were? Early in the third week an urgent call came from Camp Bastion. One of the forward operating aircraft had ripped off the undercarriage and stub wing during a dust landing. Fortunately the pilot managed to get the aircraft back to Camp Bastion, albeit missing port landing gear. Under the direction of a very experienced engineer a sandbag landing platform was erected and the pilot managed to bring the aircraft to rest safely on it.

By now surely our baptism of fire was over. Wrong again! While flying back to KAF an aircraft took a 7.62mm round to the fuel tanks, always good! Again we adapted, improvised and overcame. Using a non standard repair kit, two rubber washers and a bolt, we repaired the holes in the tank and within a week, we had the aircraft back in the flypro. After the first four very eventful weeks, we found ourselves in a good run of serviceability. The aircraft would land on every day after a period of tasking. Then we would jet wash the aircraft (with the borrowed rig from the Americans) in an effort to maintain their material state and routinely remove all unnecessary clutter from the cabin LRUs (this helped prevent them from over heating) The aircraft were behaving, so the Sea King detachment took over tasking from the Chinooks, given they were experiencing a major run of 'un-serviceability'. At this time, the Sea King was the most serviceable British Support Helicopter asset in Helmand!



Up to this point most of the un-serviceabilities were mechanical but this was about to change! I was soon to experience my first aircraft change over. Then I really started to earn my pay with the arrival of the new aircraft into theatre! There were lots of avionic faults that forced me to draw on every strand of my training, often thinking out of the box to achieve successes.

There were many more incidents during my tour, some of which I can not divulge due, to security reasons. I can state in conclusion that the long Artificer training I undertook at HMS Sultan, with its endless wiring diagrams and diode and transistor operation explanations did help. Especially when I worked on the systems with which I had little experience. My first operational tour on CHF was fantastic. I enjoyed every minute. Afghanistan was definitely diverse, certainly challenging but most of all a life changing experience for an engineer on 845 NAS.

*Editor's note LRUs – Line Replaceable Units ie equipment boxes you can easily change on the a/c  
WRAM Work Recording and Asset Management – computer system to record and plan a/c maintenance*

## Sweets for the Junglies

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Wincanton and District Branch of the Support our Troops Organisation has found another way of saying thankyou to the Sailors and Marines from the Commando Helicopter Force based in Afghanistan – a gift in the form of boxes of sweets donated by various members of the Wincanton and district public. Major Del Stafford Royal Marines, Executive Officer for 845 Squadron after accepting, at RNAS Yeovilton, the gift on behalf of 845 and 846 Squadrons, said: *'This extremely thoughtful and generous gift will not only put a smile on our people deployed but will also raise the morale of the passengers who fly in our aircraft. I can assure all those who have given so generously that both Squadrons are heartened to know that we are in the thoughts of such wonderful people'*.

Wincanton British Legion and others raised over £400 to provide the sweets. Hard boiled sweets were the favourite, especially the lollipops. The aircrew in the helicopters hand them out to the soldiers and marines when they are picked up from the front line.

RNAS Yeovilton is the home base for the Squadrons. 845 and 846 who operate Sea King Support Helicopters (SH), whilst 847 NAS operate Lynx Battlefield Helicopters (BH). 848 NAS train aircrew and engineers for the SH role. Whilst all the squadrons are part of the Royal Navy, 847 NAS is very much a Royal Marine unit.



## WO2 Carl Bird – Helmand 2007

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A Staff Sergeant from Suffolk (656 Squadron Army Air Corps) was awarded The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators (GAPAN) award – The Master’s Medal.(2007) – in recognition of his role in a daring rescue mission in Afghanistan. That pilot was the son of Dicky Bird – our Secretary.

Carl Bird (later to become a WO2) was flying one of two Apache AH MK1s operating within the area where a Royal Marines ground force had just finished a river crossing and raid on a Taliban stronghold. They had come under heavy fire and had received several casualties. The casualties were evacuated by Chinook helicopter but check of those ‘on board’ the committed Chinook revealed that one casualty was missing. The two Apaches were as a consequence, diverted to give a speedy but risky recovery of the casualty using the emergency extraction procedure. This entailed the strapping of a rescue party to the aircraft. A routine taught to Apache helicopter crews as an extreme method for recovering fellow pilots forced to land. It

had never been conducted by a British crew – either in training or on operations and, although initially considered too risky, this audacious but extremely dangerous plan was authorised.

Carl knew his aircraft would be facing an aggressive, tenacious and prepared enemy that expected a return to pick up the injured soldier. This was to be proved correct. On arrival at the stronghold where the area was too small to land the two helicopters, Carl was told to land close to the casualty – lying prone along the side of the Fort wall – in a dust cloud whilst his colleague landed inside the compound, only 50 metres from the enemy. Immediately both aircraft were fired upon, but fortunately, neither was hit.

Whilst the arrangements were made to strap the casualty to the helicopter Carl remained in his aircraft calling in supporting fire onto enemy positions from 2 additional Apaches who were overhead. Finally, once ‘all’ were secured Carl took off in ‘brown out’ conditions that rendered flying conditions incredibly challenging, especially with a precarious load strapped to his aircraft. – 3 attached people instead of the authorised 2 – and in a combat zone. This, plus he was also extremely low on fuel and on reaching the nearest friendly location he had to rapidly ‘deposit’ the rescue party and casualty before returning safely to base and to secure his aircraft!

No wonder at the time he said “It is the most dangerous rescue I have been involved in”. He certainly deserved the Master’s Medal for distinguished conduct which was awarded by the Court of the Guild (GAPAN) in 2007. This award is for any person in aviation.

## Cottesmore

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Although there is a contact with the Squadron at Cottesmore the last report was for April 2010. The squadron had at that time been re-named. It is now 800 NAS. Prior to this, in March 2010 seven jets left Cottesmore for HMS Ark Royal – the ground crew having embarked the previous day in Newcastle. The Harriers joined the ship just off the coast to the north east. This was the first time that the ship's crew had worked with fast jets for many years. The Harrier pilots were made to feel very welcome. The Ship adapted very quickly to both fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft simultaneously. Then the exercises began. It was a very successful period for gaining 'pilot qualifications'. Since then it has been assumed that the squadron has been on 'exercises' in the North and West Atlantic. The Royal Navy flagship Ark Royal returned to Portsmouth in August after a four-month deployment. There may be more to report in the next edition of the magazine.



## Members who have ‘crossed the bar’

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### Members who have passed away – 2009-August 2010

Joe Ainley	AA4(O)	Birmingham
Michael Armitage	AM(E)	Yorkshire
John Baker	AM(A)	Birmingham
Leslie Blackett		Daedalus
William Boys	AM(L)	Great Yarmouth
Edgar (Bos) Bosworthick	CAA(AE)	Watford
Frederick (Fred) Burgess	LAM(A)	Hitchin
James Bright	AM1(O)	Hitchin
Ernest Coulthard	AM1	Daedalus
Anthony (Tony) Clarke	AM(L)	Bristol and District
Mike Crosley	CDR	Isle of Wight
Stanley Filmer	POAF(E)	Essex
Roger Fenn	Sub Lt	Essex (request)
Harold Fox	AM(O)	Greater Manchester
Alan (Doc) Halladay	CEL(A)	Birmingham
Arthur Hawker	L/Wireman	Birmingham
Sid Hayes	Lt	Hanworth
William (Bill) Hewitt	AF(E)	Greater Manchester
Ronald Hibbs	PO TAG	Bournemouth & District
William Huckelsby	Lt(O) RNR	Southdown
James (Jim) Jackson	POAF(O)	Greater Manchester
Barry Keen	LAM(A)	Bristol & District
Maurice Kemp		Solent
Douglas Lewis	CEL(A)	Yeovil Branch
Kenneth Lowe	LAF(O)	Bournemouth & District
Thomas Merryweather	LSA(Air)	Essex
David Moulam	Sub Lt	(Request)
Victor (Vic) Miller	POAF(A)	Bristol & District
Tom Rogers	AM(E)	Greater Manchester
Peter Shannon	CPO(Pilot)	Southdown
Peter James Smith	CAF(A/E)	Daedalus
John Shearsmith	AMN1(AE)	Solent
Leonard Smith	CAF(A/E)	Southdown
Frank Warrington	CAF(A)	Watford
Peter Wells	CAF(A/E)	Southdown
William Woodall	AF1	Birmingham

May all who have ‘crossed the bar’ rest in peace

*Issue 18 includes the names of those known to have crossed the bar and are not mentioned in previous Issues of the Airey Fairey. There are some short summaries but priority has been given to the list. Copy for the Navy News should hopefully be in September edition. Recent summaries will appear in AF19.*

## A tribute to Alan (Doc) Sidney Thomas Halladay

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**D**oc Halladay crossed the bar on the 3rd May 2010 aged 78 years. He led a full life and as such many will have memories of Doc (one of the Founder members of the National FAAA) and his wife Sue. He spent 22 ‘wonderful years in the Royal Navy. He loved every minute – every single day whether on shore or at sea’. He always felt privileged that he saw so much of our world, while Sue worked hard at home paying her Income tax towards his keep. This is his ‘story’.

Doc was born 30th Oct 1931 at Villa Cross, Hansworth, Birmingham. In March 1950, National Service being compulsory, he made the decision that he would join the Royal Navy rather than become a ‘foot soldier’. He signed up initially for 3 years. He entered the Fleet Air Arm.

Initial or basic training was at HMS Collingwood followed by trade training at HMS Ariel. As an EM(A) his first draft was to HMS Seahawk with his first “Sea” time on HMS Theseus. He was promoted to A/LEM(A) and in 1954, after a short stay at HMS Gamecock he returned to HMS Seahawk to work on Sea Venoms.

When the Sea Venom squadrons moved from HMS Seahawk to HMS Heron, Doc moved with them on 809 Squadron, where they were quickly moved to Merryfield (Ilminster) as the Yeovilton runway(s) was/were undergoing repair and lengthening for the arrival of the “Jets”. During this time the squadron re-embarked onto HMS Albion, going out to the Far East, Australia and New Zealand, various cross-operations were completed with the USS Yorktown during SEATO exercises. The ship and squadron returned home via Madagascar, South Africa and South America.

809 Squadron was disbanded in 1959. Doc was drafted once more to HMS Ariel.

During the early 60s Doc completed his POEL (A) course at Royal Arthur between working on Mk I Buccaneers at Boscombe Down. In the mid 60s Doc saw duties with 803 Squadron Scimitars on HMS Hermes in the Mediterranean and then the Far East as well as HMS Fulmar during 1964. He was to return to HMS Hermes after a draft to HMS Goldcrest and then HMS Heron (893 squadron Sea Vixens) for further eastern trips. Doc gained his Chiefs "buttons" whilst at HMS Goldcrest in 1970 and his final draft was to Lossiemouth HMS Fulmar.



After his discharge in November 1972 he was presented with the RN LS&GC medal and his conduct throughout was always Very Good.

After this retirement Doc found solace in the Nautical Club Birmingham, where later he was to become the Membership secretary for 15 years. In 2005, he was very proud to become the Secretary of the club.

The Birmingham Fleet Air Arm Association (formed 1970) was his other love. He joined in 1973. When in 1981 Birmingham, Hanworth and Gosport formed the National Fleet Air Arm Association Doc was one of the Founding members. He was the first Secretary for many years. He was very proud of this and presently 23 branches exist and account for some 1000+ members. He was made a lifetime member of the National Association in April 2002.

Some 22 Standards attended the funeral where the chapel was packed to overflowing, the leading or main Standards were from The National Fleet Air Arm Association and the Birmingham Branch, other National, Area and Branch Standards showed their support immediately, coming from far and near to show their support. Amongst the shipmates saying farewell was Rear Admiral Terry Loughran who recalled his various visits to the Nautical Club.

Doc will be greatly missed by all members of the Fleet Air Arm Association, along with the Birmingham Branch and the Nautical Club.

*Our thanks to "Mac" B. McGeoch FAAA Birmingham for the photograph. The Nautical Club (Birmingham) during its formative years has received an invaluable collection of ships plaques, paintings, photographs and other Naval memorabilia. It is the home to fourteen different associations and has always kept to its Naval traditions.*





## Short Summaries

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**T**hese summaries are a selection of those received. Others will appear in the next issue.

### **John Albert Baker FX 589650**

John Albert Baker crossed the bar on 14 November 2009 aged 84.

John served in the Fleet Air Arm from 01.09.1943 to 25.09.1946. His port division was HMS Daedalus. During his service John served as an Air Mechanic (Airframes) with the FAA 885 Squadron. In 1986 he joined the Birmingham Fleet Air Arm Association and although unable to attend the Birmingham Branch meetings he was always receptive to all letters and documents sent to him by the Branch and kept in regular contact with its Secretary. After leaving the FAA, John joined the Police Force. He was stationed at Pangbourne Police Station and was appointed 'village bobby' for Yattendon Berks. Yattendon, where he always had the support of the village if there was a serious crime, was to be his home for the rest of his life.

When it was time for John to retire from the police force the then local Lock keeper at Whitchurch Lock on the Thames suggested that he apply for a job as a boatman on the then Thames Conservancy. He did and got the job. The years spent 'on the River' were to become 'some of the happiest years of his life'. John's funeral (26.11.09) was held at the Reading Crematorium Caversham. May he rest in peace.

### **Edgar (Bos) Bosworthick CAA(AE) FX75121**

Bos Bosworthick crossed the bar on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2010, aged 94, and served in

the FAA from 1938 to 1958. Bos was a life Member of the FAAA Watford Branch. He was also a Member of the HMS Unicorn Association whose reunions he attended with his wife Eleanor the Membership/Social secretary for the Association. He served on Ark Royal, Furious and Unicorn.

### **William John Boys AM(L) LFX 741871**

Bill Boys crossed the bar March 2010 aged 80. Served 1945 to 1947. He was a member of the FAAA Great Yarmouth Branch. (see Great Yarmouth copy).

### **Frederick (Fred) Burgess LAM(A) FX 681874**

Fred Burgess crossed the bar on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2010, aged 85 and served in the FAA from 1943-1946. He was a Founder Member of the Hitchin Branch of the FAAA and Secretary for a number of years. Fred will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

### **Sub Lt Roger Fenn**

Sub Lt Roger Fenn crossed the bar in June 2009, aged 89. The Essex Branch of the FAAA was recently contacted by his daughter for help in informing former members of the FAA of her father's death. Sub Lt Roger Fenn joined the Observer training course at HMS St Vincent (Gosport) in 1941 prior to taking up 'air' training at HMS Goshawk (Piarco Airfield). He travelled far during his time in the FAA (New York, Australia, Africa, Ceylon, India) before returning finally in 1946 to serve his last days in the FAA at Ford. There will be further details in the next Magazine.



### **Stanley Filmer POAF(E), SFX64**

Stanley Filmer crossed the bar on January 21st 2010, aged 89. He enlisted in the FAA in March 1939 and was promoted to PO in 1942. Aboard HMS Victorious he was 'present' when the Bismarck was sunk, and later was to serve on a series of Russian Convoys and to become involved in the relief of Malta and Operation 'Pedestal'. He survived World War II and after seven years of continuous service and fifteen years in the Royal Naval Reserve he embarked on a career as a Press Toolmaker (having trained as a 'Fitter and Turner' prior to his Naval enlistment), and finally joined a National Research Organisation as a Production Engineer consultant liaising with companies in both Britain and Europe. He retired at the age of 68 and continued to be an active Member of the RNA. Stanley also wrote under the pen name of William Hermitage. His book – Through the Other end of the Telescope was a semi autobiographical novel of a sailor (Jim Bennet) – "a naive recruit in the FAAA who experienced an enforced rapid maturation with the outbreak of the Second World War". A book, which many have enjoyed but is now sadly 'out of print'. He will be missed by many – especially his wife Dorothy who was his bride at 16. Stanley's ashes are to be scattered at sea.

### **Lt Sid Hayes**

Sid Hayes was a Member of Hanworth Branch before he moved to Southampton about seven years ago. He crossed the bar aged 91. Sid donated his body to Science. His Memorial Service was held on June 14th 2010 in a 'lovely little Church' in the suburbs of Southampton. Five Members of the Hanworth Branch attended – Fred Wadley, Ron Golightly, Terry Lowden, Pat Casey (who carried the only Standard

present) and his wife Olive. Sid had four children – 3 sons who are Captains in the Merchant Navy and a daughter.

### **LSA (Air) Thomas Douglas Henry Merryweather C/Mx765319**

Thomas Douglas a member of the Essex Fleet Air Arm Association, crossed the bar on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2010, aged 82 years. He served in the FAA from 1945 until 1948. Sadly he died unexpectedly after a short illness. His funeral was on March 5<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the City of London Crematorium (Manor Park). May he rest in peace.

### **Sub Lt David Fletton Moulam**

David Moulem crossed the bar on 2nd June 2009 aged 72. He served most of his 2 years National Service training with the Royal Air Force and served on the air craft carrier HMS Theseus. After National Service he joined the Reserve and attended FAA reunions at Yeovilton. After National Service he also joined British European Airways as a pilot – rising to rank of Captain with British Airways. He retired to Jersey.

### **Tom Rogers AM (E) SFX 2630**

Tom Rogers crossed the bar on October 15<sup>th</sup> 09 aged 88. He served in the FAA from 1941-1948, at HMS Kilele (RNAS Tanga) and subsequently on HMS Implacable and at HMS Blackcap where he met his wife Pat. He was a member of the FAAA Greater Manchester Branch of the Fleet Air Arm.

### **Peter James Smith CAF A/E**

Peter Smith crossed the bar on 28 February 2010 aged 81 after a short illness. He joined the FAA in July 1946 and left in December 1968 having served 22 years (Excalibur, Kestrel, Fulmar, Gannet (15 CAG), Vengeance (15 CAG), Gamecock,



Simbang, Daedalus, Ariel, 800 Scimitar Squadron). He will be greatly missed by his son's Dave and Martin Smith both Ex POAEM, together with his family and friends. Peter was a Member in past years of the Daedalus Branch.

### **William S Woodall (AF1)**

William S Woodall 'crossed the bar', very peacefully fully on 3rd January 2010 at the age of 86. Bill served as an Air fitter from January 1942 to April 1946. In October 1980 he joined the Birmingham Branch of Fleet Air Arm Association. He was a 'truly' active member of the Association. During recent years he travelled from his home in Oldbury to the Nautical Club (where the Birmingham Branch meet) on a 4 wheel scooter – a journey which took an hour each way – he would have been 87 years old this June. As a consequence, he was quite a character and will be greatly missed at the Branch meetings. His funeral was held at Lodge Hill Crematorium, Selly Oak, Birmingham on January 20th 2010.

### **Frank Warrington CAF(A) FX76210**

Frank Warrington crossed the bar on January 21st 2010 aged 94. He served as an Aircraft Fitter from 1939 -1951. During his time in the FAA he was stationed at Daedalus, Sparrowhawk, Landrail, Blackcap, Caroline, Gannet, Vulture and Kestrel. He also served aboard HMS Activity, HMS Battler and HMS Chaser. In 1945 he was stationed at HMS Saker – Washington and did time with both the Med and Far East fleets, before moving to Malta where he enjoyed some prime family time.

In later years Frank became a life Member of the Fleet Air Arm Association – he and his wife Hazel were for many years loyal Members of the Association and

the RNA. He still kept his naval interests through the Bedford Branch of the Sea Cadets and became a Lt CDR in the RNR. His service was recognised with an MBE which was presented by Prince Charles in 1998.

Others may remember Frank through his interest in Boxing. He became judge, referee and time keeper for the ABA, and was President for Bedford and The Home counties Branches before becoming Vice President of the English ABA.

He finally 'retired' to a Residential home in Bedford. His funeral and Cremation took place on 9<sup>th</sup> February. The service was conducted by Paul Jarrett MBE and attended by close relatives and friends. Five standards from the FAAA, RNA and British Legion were present together with full contingents from Bedford Sea Cadets and Bedford Royal Marine Cadets. He will be greatly missed by his friends at the Watford FAAA and the family and friends of Frank's niece Jan and Hazel's niece Jocelyn (who spent time in Malta with the couple as a child).

### **Cenotaph News**

Once again Doug Wyatt, our Cenotaph Marshall will be looking for support on November 14th 2010 for the London Cenotaph Parade. He has already requested the tickets. It is appreciated that you all have local commitments to support but if you can spare someone to provide support at the Remembrance Day Service and Parade please contact Doug. Tel 01442 265121.

## 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 Arm 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 Air 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 Naval Air Service. The Memorial is situated on a site alongside the Ministry of Defence's main building on London's Victoria Embankment.

### The Fleet Air Arm Memorial - Alrewas, Staffsire

The National Memorial Arboretum, located in the heart of the country within the National Forest near Lichfield is devoted to the concept of Remembrance. It comprises of 150 acres of trees and memorials. It is here that the Dedication Ceremony of the Fleet Air Arm Memorial took place on September 11th 2009. The memorial – a plinth of Portland stone supporting a Granite aircraft carrier is set among an avenue of existing oaks in the naval Section. The monument will be further developed to include plaques from the various Associations related to the FAA. The Arboretum is located between Birmingham and Derby, just off the A38 north of Lichfield. For further information related to the facilities, donations etc. the number to Ring is: 01283 792333.



*There have been a wide variety of photographs taken of the plinth but this one has been included as a tribute to the 'navy' of today who helped to make the Dedication a special day for all to remember in the years to come.*



## List of Accoutrements

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### ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER – 2010

ITEM	Cost (Incl. P&P)
Gold Wire Blazer Badge	£13.00
Silk Blazer Badge	£ 8.75
Tie	£ 8.50
Beret Badge	£ 8.50
Ladies Head Square	£11.00
Member's Lapel Badge (Gilt)	£ 4.25
Member's Spouse/Association Lapel Badge (Chrome)	£ 2.00
Life Lapel Badge	£ 1.25
Baseball Cap	£ 7.00
Plastic Medal Holder (Large)	£ 4.75
Plastic Medal Holder (for Miniatures)	£ 3.25
Car Stickers	£ 1.25
Membership Cards	£ 0.00

#### *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 ME and sent direct to you by the supplier who will invoice me. 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.

Tel. 02392 822045. Cost £9.00 plus Post & Packaging (last known).

# FAAA Branch Details

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**BIRMINGHAM** – 2nd Tuesday at 1100  
The Nautical Club, Bishopsgate St. Birmingham  
*Secretary* – Sue Halladay 0121 3572783

**BOURNEMOUTH** – 4th Friday at 1930  
Bournemouth Flying Club, Bournemouth Airport  
*Secretary* – Ray Wrigglesworth 01202 779321

**BRISTOL AND DISTRICT** – 2nd Monday at 2000  
The Royal British Legion Club  
Rodway Road, Patchway, Bristol  
*Secretary* – Maurice (Bill) Sage 01179 760832

**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 at 1200  
Odd months only, 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 1930  
The Sportsman, Littlehampton, West Sussex  
*Secretary* – Peter Colston 01798 874977

**GREATER MANCHESTER** – 1st Monday at 1300  
Ex Servicemen's Club, Stretford  
*Secretary* – Jim Buie 0161 8653435

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

**HANWORTH** – 1st Wednesday at 2000  
R.N.A. Club, Park Road, Hanworth  
*Secretary* – Terry Lowden 0208 9483979

**HITCHIN** – 2nd Wednesday at 2000  
The Sun Hotel, Hitchin  
*Secretary* – Don Rice 01480 812848

**KENT** – 4th Friday at 1900  
R.N.A. Club, Church Hill, Ramsgate  
*Secretary* – Mike Foote 07789 080258

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

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

**SOUTH DOWNS** – 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* – Dennis Blackburn 01952 415423

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

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

**DAEDALUS** – Headquarters Roll, No meeting place  
*Secretary* – Arnold Thompson 023 92786443