



The Fleet Air Arm Association



Airey Fairey

Issue No. 20 – Winter 2011



THE FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

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Fleet Air Arm Association

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Editorial

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IT has been a busy period for the Fleet Air Arm Association and as such plenty to report in Airey Fairey 20 – not only a full set for Memory lane but two big events to report – the AGM at Bournemouth and the Eastchurch Memorial Service. Those attending the AGM have been asking for copy of the photographs taken at the AGM. Given the large number I have received there will be a display at the 2012 AGM (Bournemouth) for all to see. Thankyou Gordon for a ‘job’ well done.

The Fleet Air Arm Association now has three new honorary members - two presentations still to be made. The detail is given on Page 2 and the presentations will be reported in Airey Fairey 21. The dedication of the memorial cloth at Yeovilton has also to take place.

Despite the changes to the Fleet Air Arm due to Defence cuts, there is still plenty of activity to report in the Squadron Section- including articles from Midshipman Robert Andrews who has just started his career in the FAA and Padre John Morris serving in Afghanistan. There is also an article on the Lynx 3 and Airey Fairey 21 will carry a report on the planned transfer of the RAF Merlin Mk 3 airframes to provide the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) Merlin Mk 4.

Within the Obituary section you will find copy related to a House of Commons Speaker’s Secretary and a Pearly King. There is also a tribute to Roy Gibbs – Editor of the TAGs Magazine for many years, who crossed the Bar in April 2011.

There have been changes to the National and Branch Officers (see back cover for the Secretary details). Arnold Thompson is no longer responsible for the Daedalus Branch – Peter Roalf will be his replacement. Peter will in time be contacting the Daedalus members. Members of the Eastbourne branch should be aware that there is a venue change – still to be decided as copy goes to print.

Once again I have to stress that ‘Crown Copyright’ MUST be respected. No reproduction of photographs in any form please!

Once again a big thankyou to Terry (Hubby) who continues to help bring the Airey Fairey to print and to all who have been providing me with copy and updates – without the support from Members, the magazine would NOT survive. Finally always remember the AIREY FAIREY is your magazine and it needs your input and support. My contact details are:

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Margaret

HMS Illustrious

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The Nation's On-call Helicopter Carrier



HMS Illustrious, fresh from a £40m refit, has now begun two months of intensive training off the South Coast. When the training is complete, the Portsmouth-based warship will be the nation's on-call helicopter carrier, ready for global missions. Merlins of 820 Naval Air Squadron from RNAS Culdrose and Lynx helicopters from 702 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Yeovilton and their crews will be 'on board' for seven weeks – until Christmas. During their time 'on board' they will be 'in the hands' of the Navy's most exacting training organisation, Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST). For the Squadron personnel it is an opportunity to reacquaint themselves with their traditional role of operating en masse from an aircraft carrier and as a consequence the flight deck of HMS Illustrious will be in operation almost all the hours of the day and night. Some of the exercises planned by the FOST staff include: dealing with battle damage, crashes on deck, machinery fires, tracking and destroying incoming aerial threats. Although there are many experienced people onboard the ship, for some of the ship's company this will be their first taste of the FOST experience. The seven-week package will test the 750-plus men and women aboard on everything the 22,000-tonne ship might be expected to deal with in the real world.

In the New Year HMS Illustrious will 'take over' from HMS Ocean currently deployed east of Suez. Picture shows HMS Illustrious (2 years ago) approaching Portsmouth Harbour.

The front cover picture for AF20, which is Crown Copyright MOD, shows HMS Illustrious leaving the dock at Fife following a re-fit. It also shows the Goliath Crane (dark blue) that was recently purchased from China to assist in the construction of the Royal Navy Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. The crane will be used to manoeuvre the various sections into position in the new dock.



FAAA National News

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National Committee Derby October 1st 2011

Attendance at the Derby meeting was very poor. The National Committee outnumbered the number of full FAAA Members attending. Key to the management of the Committee was: Vice Chairman Ray (as stated at Hanworth) will not be taking over from Arnold as Chairman. Ray agreed to become Vice Chairman two years ago when there was the possibility of two people known to Arnold, who might have been willing to join the Committee. This is no longer the case. So in the interest of the FAAA, it was agreed that Arnold would continue as Chairman and if no one came forward at the AGM Ray would continue to support Arnold.

There is a need to make changes to Rule 2(b) of the Fleet Air Arm Association Constitution. Following the rules of the Association, the Rule 2(b) and other possible changes will be on the Agenda at the AGM (Bournemouth (March 31st 2012)).

The post of Treasurer is up for election. Four people have put their names forward including Ben Worship our current Treasurer. Peter Roalf (Essex Branch) is expected to take over the post of Secretary to the Daedalus Branch following a 'hand over' from Arnold Thompson.

The FAAA Secretaries will receive copies with detail of other items on the Agenda.

Honorary Membership

Vice Chairman Ray has been co-ordinating the three Honorary Membership plans following the acceptance of the proposals put forward in July 2011. All proposals have been accepted and we have three new Honorary Members and the presentations programmed.

Mr Charles Tobias MBE the proprietor of Pussers Rum. He was awarded the MBE for services to the Royal Navy and to the community of the British Virgin Islands. He also assisted the late Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin of Greenwich in the founding of The Friends of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. October 2011 presentation Tortola British Virgin Islands.

Lt Cdr USN Rtd Tim Manna a strong supporter of both the Historic Flight and the Heritage Trust and the owner of Seafire 17 which has been loaned to the historic Flight. September 2011 presentation hosted by Essex Branch at North Weald Aerodrome.

Mr Lawrence Critchley has worked for a number of years to promote public awareness of the role played by the Fleet Air Arm in WW2. In seeking to preserve the memory of HMS Ringtail (RNAS Burscough) he persuaded the local council to erect a memorial and to name roads that run close to the site Ringtail, Swordfish and Merlin. The Industrial Park named Merlin, the Business Park Swordfish are further successes. There is more! November 2011 presentation hosted by Greater Manchester Branch.

Ray continues to coordinate these awards and liaise with Peter Roalf and George Rose. There will be more details in AF21- once all the presentations have taken place.

Dedication and Location of Memorial Cloth

Peter Roalf's embroidered Memorial Cloth now hangs on the wall in the chapel at RNAS Yeovilton. It was transported from Harlow to Yeovilton by Nick Foster of the FNHT. The latest signings included Captain Winkle Brown, Commodore Westwood and Rear Admiral Cunningham. The total number of signatures is over 1000. Peter paid £250 for the framing of the cloth and has been reimbursed by the Association. A dedication service will take place once a date can be agreed with the Baptist Chaplain. It is intended that the dedication will be on a mid week day to give an opportunity for those attending to visit to the Historic Flight.

The National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)

The £1000 donation towards the extension of the groundwork on the FAA All Ranks Memorial has been welcomed by the FAAO Association. The additional work has now been given the 'go ahead'. In July Len Owen visited the NMA and is concerned that the paintwork on the FAA Crest has almost completely faded away. This is to be reported by our Chairman Arnold Thompson at the Federation meeting in October 2011. Our thanks to Alan Breward, a NMA Volunteer, for keeping the flight deck clean.

Airey Fairey Magazine

There has been a great deal of discussion related to the price and weight of the Airey Fairey Magazine. At the AGM the pricing for the Airey Fairey was increased such that starting with issue 20 and 21 it would be £2.50 per copy and for issue 22 onward it would be £3.50 per copy.

This cost/price ratio should hold good until 2013/14 and possibly beyond depending on inflation. It is now agreed that cost and pricing is now correct and viable. Due to the geographic spread of the Daedalus Membership the subscription for Daedalus Members UK will be raised to £8.00 and Overseas to £10.50. It was accepted that TAGs who do not wish to join the Association but wish to buy the Airey Fairey may do so. The price agreed will be £7 inclusive of postage for two issues.

The Fleet Air Arm National Standard

Alan Breward is seen here at the Battle of Britain Memorial (Capel le Ferne). Additional Events to those detailed in AF20: April 25th- Anniversary of ANZAC day (Gallipoli memorial at the NMA), May 28th - Help for Heroes parade in Birmingham and in memory of Cpl. Jon Crooks, July 28th - Funeral of the ex RM who always organised the Bedworth Remembrance parade.



Events

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HMS Edinburgh Reception and Capability Demonstration Bob Ridout Yeovil Branch

I received a phone call from the office of the Naval Regional Commander Wales and Western England inviting myself and Daphne and any other couple from the Yeovil Branch to a Reception and Capability Demonstration aboard HMS Edinburgh on February Friday 25th 2011 from 1800 to 2030. I thought about it for at least a second and accepted.

The appointed evening arrived, I picked up branch chairman Tommy Thomson and his Eleanor and we drove to Portland through thick fog and drizzle, arriving at the ship with about 20 minutes to spare. It was nice and clear but a bit breezy. Up the gangway, to be met by our hosts for the evening and welcomed aboard. We were taken to the hangar, helicopter garage, for a 'social' hour with drinks and a variety of nibbles. Commodore A.J.G. 'Jamie' Miller then gave a synopsis of the evening's routine – why it was being organised and the way it was going to happen. I believe he thanked all the VIPs by name and gave a brief description of what they did. The CO's short briefing followed and we were asked to join the groups to which we had been allocated on arrival.

The next hour + was spent visiting strategic parts of the ship to observe action stations, as seen in the Operations room where they had to deal with a simulated air and missile attack on the ship. The ability to identify what was civilian non-threatening and hostile aircraft, type of missile and how to deal with it in the short time available before impact was 'Fascinating'. Next, to the bridge to observe how they treated the same simulated air attack. Still Fascinating. The sickbay was next, staffed by one naval surgeon, a P.O. and a rating. We were briefed on facilities and capabilities both in peacetime and during hostilities.

In the dining area we were given a talk and dry run on the fire fighting equipment and method of use, followed by a visit to the galley for an explanation of what could be done under the various possible states of readiness and time to taste the food they had prepared, lovely chocolate brownies. The galley has a budget of £2.48 per person per day to provide three meals a day, working on a 7 day menu choice. Tommy asked if they still cook pot mess. Answer, yes, during action stations. Finally, we arrive at the flight deck for a short brief on the role and capability of the Lynx helicopter and crew.

Now it was time for more drinks and nibbles whilst waiting for the ceremonial colours, complete with bugler and guard of honour. Then it was time for the 'thankyous' and the trip home through even thicker fog and driving rain.

All in all a wonderful evening and an appreciation of what is the same as when we served and the differences. **I can honestly say we are in safe hands but fewer of them.**

HMS Edinburgh is a Type 42 destroyer, pennant number D97 commanded by Commander P Russell RN. The Ship's Company is approximately 260; divided between four main



departments – Warfare, Logistics, Weapons engineering and Marine engineering. She is known as the Fortress of the Sea. The ship is equipped with the Sea Dart medium range air defence missile system. In 2011 the crew had the opportunity to test fire missiles at the Royal Navy's Hebrides firing range in preparation for a seven month patrol of the British South Atlantic Islands (including the Falkland's and South Georgia) – May 2011 Cdr P Russell '... a region of high profile political and joint military interest, where the Royal Navy has had continuous and significant effect over many years'. She left Portland in May 2011 to conduct marine security patrols and to police and protect Islanders living in the British Overseas territories, followed by a high profile regional engagement in South America, the Caribbean and the USA.

Editor: On a few occasions our Warships have the opportunity to visit non naval ports in the UK. This is not just for rest and recreation, though that is an important element but to allow what the Navy calls 'regional engagement' to take place in the form of a 'Reception and Capability Demonstration'.

The Reunion Weekend Bournemouth 2011

The overall view was that the AGM weekend at Bournemouth was well received, so much so that the AGM will once more be held at Bournemouth (March 30th to April 2nd 2012). The weekend weather was just great – days full of Sunshine. This was Barry and Dorothy's last year for making the arrangements – now it is time to sit back and relax whilst Brian and Blenda take up the 'reins' with the Isle of Wight Travel firm. Our donation to the FNHT of £77 included the donation collected by some golfers staying at the Heathlands Hotel during the AGM.

Our Guests at the Gala Dinner this year were Chief of Staff (Aviation and Carriers) Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham and his wife Sally. He has asked that his thanks be passed to all, particularly the organisers. His thankyou letter also had a message:

"It was great to see the Association thriving. At a time when us serving members are fighting to ensure that the FAA gets the recognition it deserves, it really is heartening to meet with the people who established our reputation and maintain a passion for the spirit of our FAA. Times are not easy but you will all be reassured to know that this generation remains fiercely proud of the FAA reputation and sustain it not just in battles in London but in operational areas and on the seas worldwide."



Eastchurch Aviation Pioneer Memorial Service

May 6th 2011 12 noon. The Eastchurch Aviation Pioneer Memorial Service has now become an Annual date in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm calendar following the success of the Fly Navy 100 event in May 2009. More than 100 people took part in the third outdoor service honouring the pioneering first flyers, the founders of the Navy's Fleet Air Arm. It was not only a day to commemorate the birth of powered flight and remember those aviators from 1909 onwards but a social occasion for those attending to 'mingle' in the Village hall where excellent refreshments were provided. It was also a great opportunity for the teachers and children of Eastchurch Primary school to meet and question the RNAS Yeovilton Helicopter Crew who took part in the Flypast.

At noon, past and serving members of the Royal Navy, local dignitaries – including the Mayor and Mayoress of Swale, members of the Parish Council, Mayoral Cadet -Sheppey Sea Cadet Unit TS Kent, veterans of the old Sheppey Aviation Industry and the teachers and children of Eastchurch Primary school gathered around the Memorial to await the arrival

of the assembled standards (including those of Hanworth (Fred Wadley) and Watford (Mick Wyatt) FAAA), led by the National Standard Bearer of the FAAA Alan Breward and finally the colour guard.

The service which was led by Father Barry Birch from All Saints' Church started with a bidding prayer followed by the FAA Collect and a Reading by Commander Martyn Skeer (at the time stationed at RAF Cranwell).

The address given by Commodore Martin Westwood Royal Navy, Assistant Chief of Naval Aviation, included this message: "... It is vitally important to remember where we have come from and today we remember the bravery of the early pioneers and we honour Eastchurch and the Isle of Sheppey in giving birth to the Fleet Air Arm..."

Prayers followed and the service concluded with the blessing and a flypast by a Royal Navy Lynx carrying the white Ensign, a Hawker Sea Fury, which was more than just a welcome sight for all attending and a Grob Tutor from RAF Cranwell.

Travelling with the Aircrew (Yeovilton) were two plates from the Museum's Royal Navy Centenary of Naval Aviation collection. These plates were presented at the Village hall



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by Commodore Westward on behalf of the Fleet Air Arm Service, to the Parish Council represented by Chairman Cllr Kathleen Carter and the Head teacher of Eastchurch Primary school, whose continued support and that of the villagers, is key to the continuation of the May Aviation Pioneer memorial service in future years.

Finally it was time for the children to question the Aircrew and to learn more about the Lynx helicopter. Many key questions were asked and the helicopter was well inspected. Some children went into the cockpit 'to have a go'. There was no rush and the aircrew did a grand job. Then it was time for them to leave. What detail, everyone was given ear plugs prior to the take off.

The event organiser Lieutenant Ian Brannighan said:

“It’s great to be involved in such an event. The people of Eastchurch and Sheppey have been extremely supportive and welcoming to the Royal Navy and with their help this event will flourish in future years”.



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Our thanks to LA (PHOT) Chris Mumby, the RN photographer on the day. © Crown Copyright MOD



A Fish head visits Air Day Yeovilton

Kenneth (Ken) Satterthwaite

Dorset is a lovely County so I decided along with my good lady that we would book a cottage holiday for a week in the early part of July 2011. As it turned out this cottage was on the Dorset/Devon border.



On searching the net for activities to do during our stay (yes – fish heads can use computers), I came across the web of the Air Day at HMS Heron. As it was on the way back from our holiday I thought “I will have a shillings worth of that” (except it cost more than a shilling, a lot more), “plus being an Associate member of the Watford Branch of the FAAA, I had better brush up on some of the lingo they used at meetings, such as ‘Hands to Flying Stations’, ‘Away Sea Boats Crew’ – sorry the last one was for the seaman to go and rescue a ‘downed pilot’”.

We were travelling in a northerly direction on the A303 and as we approached the vicinity of the Air Station we were redirected through the metropolis of Yeovilton to a field adjacent to the RNAS Station which was about a five minute walk to the venue. “Picture above is to prove I was there.” I had pre booked tickets so there was no queuing for us to enter. I decided to purchase a programme as there were pretty pictures in it, as well as large writing (not joined up thank goodness), though I must say, what happened that day is what it said ‘on the tin’!

The day was packed with flying displays and side shows of present and past aircraft some bringing memories back to me. Yes, I did serve with some Airy Fairies, but more about that later. Being a bit of an amateur photographer it was a field day for me, what with the, Sea Vixen, Sea Hawk, Phantom and Wasp helicopter, which were all of my ilk, though I did not see a Wessex – perhaps I missed it with all there was to see. The flying displays were of the finest quality; with the RN Black Cat Helicopter display up amongst the best in show.



The historic RN flight as usual was a sight to see with the Swordfish, Sea Fury and Seahawk showing their paces, of course it was sad to see no modern fixed wing FAA aircraft flying, but perhaps this will happen in the not too distant future. The RAF put on an excellent show with their Typhoon, Tornado and the fabulous Red Arrows who never cease to amaze the public.

Further displays by the armed forces from other nations – Germany, Jordan, France etc., were part of the day's entertainment which added variety to an interesting day.

Though one of the highlights and exciting events of the day was the flight of the Vulcan bomber, she looked and sounded like the menace she wanted to portray back in the 1960s when she represented Britain's Nuclear Deterrent, it was a sight to behold and very popular with the public as there was a long queue to look her over after the flight.

We left the Air Station late in the afternoon before it closed as we had a lengthy journey home though I must say we had a most enjoyable day and all those we came in contact with were courteous, helpful and informed so a BZ to all concerned. Though I do have one question, "no serving member was wearing head gear, from a four ringed Captain to Junior Rates, I thought it was a safety aspect due to flying, but civilians were wearing hats and stall holders were selling them, so I am confused.com".

*Editor: Earlier Ken said he would mention his contact with the Airy Fairy fraternity: this will follow in the next edition. His first real contact was whilst he was serving in Whale Island (WI), the late Gunnery School in Portsmouth. BZ – Bruno Zulu. The NATO Signal Book's 2-letter signal group meaning – Well Done. Not quite as it was used in war time. Example given 'We got a *BZ from the Flagship for that attack'.*



Bournemouth Air day 2011 Raymond Wrigglesworth, Bournemouth Branch

Bournemouth Air day was set to run from Thursday 18th August until Sunday 21st and four glorious days of flying by various types of aircraft, from piston, helicopters and fast jets, was anticipated. Arnold tried very hard to get us into the Military village but was unsuccessful. So our position was as last year; not in the best of places, but as it was free one can't be too choosy. Set up day was Wednesday, the weather was fine, Thursday was a complete wash out, the sky just opened up and we had floods everywhere and the Air day was cancelled. Friday, well we could not have had a better day. The sun came out in all its splendour, flying commenced and was watched by 'masses of people'. Saturday and Sunday saw slight rain and low cloud early morning, but as flying time came closer the sun came out and the public were delighted with the spectacular display of flying. Lancaster, Spitfire, Hurricane, Typhoon, Red Arrows, and other types of aerobatic displays thrilled the public. As we were manning a Navy stand we were thrilled to see and hear one of the most iconic fast jets of the Fleet Air Arm the Vixen. She gave a wonderful show of her lines and her speed. Once again the Red Arrows gave a very good display of their type of display flying, but tragically whilst the team was coming in to land at Bournemouth Airport RED4 went down and lost his life. There was lots of interest in the Fleet Air Arm Association Display stand manned by Arnold and Dorothy Thompson, Lawrie and Peggy McCarthy, Harry Haskell, Elaine Hart and myself. The stand prompted members of the Public to ask questions. The one asked the most was 'why have we no carriers whilst other countries have?' Well how can you answer that? It was a very good show despite the tragic loss.



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A Tribute to Flight Lieutenant Jon Egging

Lest we forget the risks that young pilots take when providing the spectacular air displays that are enjoyed by so many. At the Bournemouth Air Show Flight Lieutenant Jon Egging's Hawk T1 aircraft came down near Bournemouth airport in Dorset after the Red Arrows had given a spectacular display over the town's sea front. At age 33, he was found by a river bed with his parachute open, but not in his ejector seat. It is thought that he guided his plane away from houses and people before it crashed into a field and came to a standstill with its nose in the river Stour. It is currently thought that he gave his life that others may live. Colleagues described him as a "true team player" and a "gifted aviator". The Commander of the RAF's central flying school – Group Captain Simon Blake, said "Throughout his winter training and the display season to date, his professionalism, skill and humility have shone through. In such a close-knit team, this tragedy will be keenly felt by his fellow team members the Reds and all of the engineering and support staff, the Blues." However life still goes on. The team is now 'back in training' with an eight aircraft formation. The team will, when appropriate, continue to take part in the displays planned for the current season. But many will remember the pilot that died after entertaining the public in August 2011.

Memory Lane

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HMS HUNTER (ii)

Attacker – Class Escort Aircraft carrier

HMS Hunter (ii) was one of 10 Class Escort Aircraft (CEA) carriers obtained under the USA/UK Lend Lease agreement. She was originally destined for mercantile use (SS Mormacpenn – laid down on 15th May 1941 at Pascagoula, Mississippi by Ingalls) but was requisitioned by the US Navy (December 26th 1941) for conversion to an auxiliary aircraft carrier (CVE) – USS Block Island (launched May 22nd 1942).



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When selected for transfer to the Royal Navy, the intention was to name her HMS Trailer, but in November 1942 it was changed to HMS Hunter (ii). Hand over was January 9th 1943, two days before the build conversion date.

Prior to ‘hand over’ changes were made to include a larger hangar, propulsion machinery which consisted of two steam turbines driving a single shaft as compared with diesel engines used for previous conversions (Archer Class) and British radar equipment. She was the 18th Royal Navy warship to carry this name first introduced for a captured vessel in 1646 and last used in 1936 for a destroyer lost during the Battle of Narvik on 10th April 1940.

HMS Hunter’s war activities included the ferrying of USAAF aircraft to North Africa, FAA squadrons 807,808, 834, 899, 1700, Escort convoy duties to Gibraltar, Operation Dragoon and the liberation of Greece, Salerno, etc. prior to joining the East Indies Fleet in 1945. After the formal surrender of Singapore HMS Hunter was handed back to the USA Navy (December 29th 1945) and finally saw service as a mercantile (SS Almdijk). She remained in commercial use until ‘break up’ (Spain at Valencia) in 1973. Her name was carried forward in 1983 when given to a Patrol craft which was deployed for training Reserve personnel in London.

Russian convoy 70th Anniversary

British and Russian veterans marked the 70th anniversary of the Arctic Convoys in the far northern city of Archangel. It is now 70 years since the ships and men braved the icy waters of the arctic to bring aid to the Soviet Union. Among the reports of the event were those of the BBC and an online supplement produced and published by Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russia). The campaign for a medal still continues.



834 Squadron bound for Gibraltar

Neville N Bradpiece

Editor: The story below is an extract taken from a long article (passed to me by Brian Saxby) written in November 1998, by Neville Bradpiece who joined the RN in 1943, as a TAG. Neville and pilot Brian crewed together on many occasions when 742 Squadron was operating in India and Ceylon. After the war they continued to 'keep in touch' until Neville sadly crossed the bar in September 2009.

In the time that I served with 834, the squadron was subject to one disaster, in which all the aircraft were lost without any aircrew casualties. We were aboard HMS Hunter, bound for Gibraltar, and off (or in) the Bay of Biscay when a gale warning was received. The order is given to double-lash all aircraft – this is most important, for Hunter is ferrying aircraft and engines well in excess of her usual complement. The order is never implemented. Why it was never implemented is a mystery that involves squadron stores, ships stores, and the respective authorities over each, but whatever, a colossal but typical naval balls-up is the result. The gale is not a gale so much as a hurricane in which Hunter begins to pitch and roll to an alarming extent. At around midnight all hands are piped to the hangar deck and muggins dons his jolly jack bell-bottoms to present himself on the hangar deck, but finds that there is no one there from his squadron, or so it seems. There is no time to contemplate such matters for a loose Seafire is coming straight across the steel deck directly at me so; I scramble up a bulkhead ladder. The sharp wingtip of the Seafire severs the oil-rotted ropes holding its sister and this is repeated astonishingly rapidly, so now we have a few Seafires careering around the hangar deck, and this is the first time I have been to sea and I am far from being a happy witness to the developing scene. I see a Flight Deck Officer and his party trying to manhandle a Seafire from disappearing into the lift well but as the ship rolls again, they are carried like straws on the leading edge of the Seafire's wing as it departs for a tour down the hangar.

A little later, I see the Flight Deck Officer galloping down the hangar pursued by a Grumman Wildcat and now I am trying to dodge crated aero engines as they fall from the stacks. I hear the shouts and screams of someone trapped by a runaway Swordfish. Its wings flapping loose like a pre-historic bird, and every aircraft in sight seems hell-bent on self destruction. Inevitably, a swordfish collapses its narrow undercarriage rupturing its belly tank and now we have gallons of aviation spirit slopping around the hangar. Almost as a complement, another Seafire with collapsed under-carriage trailing sparks crosses the petrol and now we have a fluid fire and I am aware of the uncombed hatch leading down to the aviation fuel control and automatically think of HMS Dasher blowing up in the Clyde.

Whether on orders or on initiative, someone has turned on the hangar spray system and the deck is covered in foam, which puts out the fire but gives rise to choking fumes. After a fearful roll (which legend has it, measured 50 degrees on the engine-room indicator) the helmsman finally turns to head into the sea with an increase in pitch but an obvious reduction in rate of roll, however, by this time it is much too late to save the contents of the hangar; all the aircraft are loose and smashing themselves against each other and the bulkheads.

The fumes in the hangar are incapacitating so someone sends down the after lift and immediately the hangar lights are extinguished. There is a Seafire half in and half out of the after lift well and there is no way I can get to a pendant. The descending lift bites into the Seafire fuselage, tilts and comes to a grinding stop. It is now thoroughly unserviceable. I try to time my dash across the hangar but as soon as my plimsolls contact the foam I am on a skating rink and can't control my direction so I am clobbered by a Seafire – the point of contact my face, which I can no longer feel. Nothing useful I can do now – I have no sensation from my forehead to my teeth, so I make my way to the sick-bay up forrard.

The sick bay is littered with broken glass, there are no doctors or SBAs and I lie down totally exhausted and it may be that I dozed or slept. Still having had no treatment I made my way to the hangar where to my surprise, it is daylight and people are netting-off the debris of totally smashed-up aircraft comprising of assorted bits of wings, engines and fuselage. There are no complete aircraft other than Seafires lashed to the deck head.

The strength of the storm may be judged by the extent of the damage. The four inch gun on the fantail is half torn from its welded mountings. Complete containers of depth-charges are torn off the deck and are now secured with ropes, 18 inch torpedoes are swung off their storage mountings to roll about the deck. A 20mm cannon in a wooden box has gone through the side of the ship which opened up like a salmon tin. Various ships boats have disappeared and the fighter last seen lashed to the after lift went some time during the night.

Neville missed roll-call and was listed as missing. He was given seven days stoppage of leave which is of no consequence at sea but the ship had been detached and was heading for Liverpool for repair and to replenish 'stock' (approximately 24 Alc lost that night) before returning to Gibraltar. Ironically the other Escort Carriers in the Fleet came through without losses.

An Air Artificer remembers Petty Officer AA Joe Ainley (deceased)

Editor: Joe Ainley (Birmingham Branch) crossed the bar in March 2010. He had many stories to tell. We join Joe just before the news broke that HMS Ruler (a Class Escort Aircraft carrier previously named USS St Joseph and obtained under the USA/UK Lend Lease agreement 1943) was off to Sydney (1945) to join Admiral Bruce Fraser's Pacific Fleet (1945). There is some additional researched text as background information.

In December 1944, 885 Squadron embarked on HMS Ruler equipped with 24 Grumman Hellcat Is and IIs, still needing to be converted for photo reconnaissance, followed by 1772 Firefly Squadron January 1945. 1772 was on transit to the Far East and disembarkation but 855 remained on board for the rest of the war.

“I (Joe) was sent on a one-day course to Blackburn Aircraft Company (Renfrew) to see how they handled the conversion. Quite a big job – the factory estimate was 250 man-hours apiece – and that was in a spacious factory with modern plant, with the job farmed out between 40 specialists, and with the added advantage of not bobbing up and down with the waves. The squadron had its own maintenance staff – the ship's Air staff were there in case of need. The news soon broke – we were off to Sydney to join Admiral Bruce Fraser's Pacific Fleet. The Air staff were used on passage to help convert the photo reconnaissance role for the Hellcats. The Air Engineer Officer worked out a schedule for



the conversions and set a target. Leave on Port calls was dependent on the target being met. Three large portholes had to be cut in the fuselage and the frame strengthened, aided by a trepanning tool I fixed up in the workshop. The transverse mounting rails were fitted for the three cameras, as well as hot air ducting to prevent misting up inside. Rain and spray deflectors were fitted outside, controls were wired up, and the exterior re-sprayed to US Navy style deep blue Pacific camouflage. We started each day at 0600 and worked until 2200, popping off for meal breaks only”.

After leaving Ceylon (Colombo), en-route to Sydney Joe received a telegram dated 3rd March 1945 from his mother-in-law saying “A girl – both well”. Welcome news for Joe.

“I found Sydney to be a city of contrasts, ranging from the ultra modern Central Railway Station to the nearby single storey houses with corrugated iron roofs and Victorian paraffin lamps and suburban stations with equipment from the 1890s. Ashore in the beautiful natural harbour of Sydney there was one big snag. The pubs were open most of the day but closed sharply at 1800. Shore leave started at 1630 and we could enjoy a peaceful hour imbibing the superb beer, until the locals, mainly dock workers streamed in – there was chaos with the thirsty workers trying to get refreshed in 30 minutes. Admiral Bruce Fraser, however, established a Fleet Club in central Sydney where beer was served on a ticket system.”

After arriving in the Far East HMS Ruler became part of the fleet train for the British Pacific Fleet. Her role was to provide fighter cover over the fleet replenishment area (Area Cootie). “Once the ship and Squadron were operating in the forward area, my main job was charging the aircraft oxygen cylinders for high altitude flying. They were indispensable items of equipment for the aircrew, but the British fittings were not compatible with the ship’s American oxygen transfer system. So I had to make some adaptors for filling the aircrew cylinders to 300 pounds per square inch (psi) from the ship’s supply of 1200psi, which was potentially quite dangerous. By keeping to the proper procedure scores of oxygen replenishments were done in my compartment below the waterline without mishap or endangering the ship”.

During the invasion of Okinawa HMS Ruler provided cover while the main fleet took on supplies (May 1945) including air cover for the damaged destroyer HMS Quilliam which was towed to Area Cootie by HMS Black Prince. In June the British Pacific Fleet carried out a raid on the Japanese base on Truk. The main strike force was provided by the newly arrived A/c Implacable, – HMS Ruler was included to provide an emergency flight deck which was put to good use on the first day of the attack (June 14th), when six Seafires lost sight of the A/c Implacable. In later year’s Joe was to meet one of the Master Pilots who asked what ship Joe was on. “HMS Ruler – you’ve probably never heard of her”. The reply “What? Do you remember some Seafires landing on after the raid on Turk? Well I was one of the pilots and was I glad to see HMS Ruler – there was about half a pint of petrol left in my tank, and to me the ship was the most important ship in the navy!”

HMS Ruler continued to serve as a replenishment carrier until VJ Day.

The Grumman Martlet/Wildcat

The Grumman F4F Wildcat or Martlet was Grumman's first monoplane. The American fighter was called the Martlet by the Royal Navy until March 1944 when it reverted to its US name Wildcat. Grumman provided a total of 1172 Martlet/Wildcat to the FAA (1940-1945) and developed six versions of the aircraft, which became 'standard equipment' for the 114 Escort carriers. The last delivery of the Wildcat as it was named then was in 1945 and most saw service in the Far East and Australia.

The first aircraft, with its British name of Martlet was delivered to the Royal Navy in July 1940. Squadrons 804 and 778 were the first to receive the aircraft, followed by Squadrons 759 (Yeovilton) and 802 (Donisbristle). Other squadrons later to fly the Martlet included 787, 806, 890, 892, and 896. The Wildcat (Martlet) was the FAA's primary naval fighter, until the end of 1942 when some squadrons were re-equipped with the Grumman Hellcat or the Chance-Vought F4U Corsair. In 1944 Grumman Wildcat VI were delivered to AHU Stretton and 881 squadron.



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Fleet Air Arm Martlet BJ561

Editor: Joe returned to the UK and drafted to HMS Jackdaw, RNAS St. Andrews and left the Navy in March 1946. Squadron 855, after providing fighter cover for the Fleet, disembarked at Ponam in June 1945. The aircraft were refitted with rocket projectiles and prior to VJ day they were due to join the new 12th Carrier Air Group, and HMS Indefatigable, but after VJ-Day the squadron disbanded at Schofields in September 1945. HMS Ruler was returned to the USA and was broken up in 1946.

Telegraphist Air Gunners Association (TAGs)

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Telegraphist Air Gunners Association Memorial Weekend Lee-on-Solent May 15th 2011

Following the October meeting 2010 there was a great deal of concern that the 64th Memorial weekend would not take place at Lee-on-Solent. However thanks to Val Sayer (TAGA) and Arnold Thompson (National Chairman FAAA) it was 'Business as usual.' Arrangements were made for the Memorial Service, an Evening buffet (36 attended) and a Sunday lunch (60 attended) to follow the service. All went like 'clockwork' including the weather – Sunday was a lovely sunny day. Guests at the Sunday lunch included Sir Adrian Johns, President of the FAAA, Governor of Gibraltar and a Knight of the Order of St John, Lady (Susie) Johns, HMS Diamond's sponsor, and the Honorary Vice President of the FAAA Tom Cunningham. The MP for New Forest East, Dr Julian Lewis was at the evening function and volunteered to place a copy of the Aircrew Association on SOS for Defence Liam Fox's desk.

The Memorial Service was conducted by the Reverend Peter Sutton (St Faith's Church) assisted by the Reverend Ralph Barber (HMS Sultan). The names of 11 TAGs known to have departed this life in recent months were read out and the opportunity taken to remember those TAGs who did not survive the war and those who have since passed away. Tribute was also paid to the Pilots and Observers and the ground crews who kept the aircraft flying. Given the response this year, the 65th Memorial Weekend will take place next year on May 19th /20th 2011.



Editor: Our congratulations to Sir Adrian who was appointed Knight of the Order of Saint John (KStJ) – an honour in the personal gift of Her Majesty The Queen – February 2011.

Roy John William Gibbs PO(A) TAG MID

Roy crossed the bar April 12th 2011 aged 86. He volunteered for active service in the Fleet Air Arm, and began training with course 52 on February 16th 1943. He trained as a Telegraphist Air Gunner completing Morse and Gunnery Training in Yarmouth Nova Scotia and crewed-up flying in Barracuda Dive Bombers. He joined 829 Squadron in September 1944, only to find it was to convert to American Avenger Glide Bombers prior to embarking on HMS Indefatigable for the Far East.



Roy's first taste of action against the enemy was during Operation Meridian, the two raids against the heavily defended Japanese held oil refineries at Palembang Sumatra in Indonesia (January 24th and 29th 1945). Following these successful attacks the fleet sailed to Australia to form the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) which joined the American Fifth Fleet, as Task Force 57. The BPF were to keep the airfields and other installations on the islands of Sakishima Gunto, out of action. During one of these raids the aircraft Roy and his crew were flying was hit by flak. The Observer was injured and the aircraft wing was set on fire. Roy dealt with the fire, attended to the Observer's wounds and re-engaged the carrier which enabled the pilot to return safely to the ship. For this action Roy was awarded a Mention in Despatches (MID). The British Pacific Fleet later joined the American Third Fleet in full scale attacks on mainland Japan against shipping and other strategic targets until the war ended with the dropping of Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 1947 he married Joan. Roy and Joan were 'to be together' for almost 64 years and celebrated their Diamond Wedding in 2007. During this time Roy returned to his former career in Journalism with the Daily Express. He was responsible in his early years for the Editorial production and advertising revenue of the garden feature which included: 'Adam the Gardener' strip and the 'Week by week Gardening Book', followed by feature items such as 'Men's Wear' and the first 4 page spread 'Cruising'. Finally he became a Member of the Management Team (Training Personnel Manager Beaverbrook newspapers). He retired age 61 after 43 years with the company.

Roy became a Member of the Telegraphist Airgunner's Association (TAGA) when it was formed in 1947. In 1990 he took over as Editor of the Association's magazine and for the next 20+ years maintained its high standard. He remained Editor until the Association wound down in October 2010. He also served as Chairman during the Association's Sixtieth Anniversary year. It was hoped that Roy, who joined the FAAA Daedalus Branch in 2011 would work with the FAAA Editor to provide copy for the Airey Fairey. Margaret received 2 articles one printed (AF19) the second follows this article. Fifty to sixty people attended Roy's funeral and the final tribute by the TAGA Members to the man who had served them so well, was a 'special' version of the TAGA Anchor wreath set in deep blue and white.





The Monopoly Mystery

In 1941 an increasing number of British Aircrew found themselves uninvited guests of Nazi Germany and the British Government were looking for ways to assist their escape. One of the most useful aids to escape would be an accurate map showing locations of safe houses where they could go for food and shelter. Paper maps were bulky, wore out quickly and if they got wet became useless. Someone in MI5 got the idea of printing escape maps on silk, which could be folded up small and was very durable. Most TAGs will remember being issued with these when on operations. They were also very popular with wives and girlfriends who used them as silk headscarves.

At that time there was only one manufacturer in the UK that had perfected the technique of printing on silk. That was John Waddington, who, when approached were only too pleased to do something for the war effort. They were also producers of the popular board game Monopoly. As it happened games and pastimes was a category of item qualified for insertion in 'care packages' dispatched by the International Red Cross to prisoners of war.

Under the strictest secrecy in a closely guarded workshop in the grounds of Waddington's, a group of, sworn to secrecy, employees started producing silk escape maps, keyed to each region of Germany or Italy where Allied POW camps were. When processed these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they would fit inside a Monopoly playing piece.

These clever workmen also managed to produce: a playing token containing a small magnetic compass, a two part file that could be screwed together, useful amounts of high denomination German, Italian and French money, hidden within the piles of Monopoly money.

British and American aircrews were briefed how to identify a rigged Monopoly set by means of a tiny red dot, located in the corner of the Free Parking Square, which looked like a printing fault.

Of the 35,000 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated third were aided by the rigged Monopoly sets. Everyone was sworn to secrecy as the British Government might want to use this method in another war.

Eventually in 2007 the story was declassified and the surviving craftsmen at Waddington's as well as the firm itself were honoured in a public ceremony.

Next time you play Monopoly don't forget to look for the red dot, you may have a piece of history!

Editor: John Waddington started off as a theatrical printer in Leeds in 1896 and the firm began printing playing cards in 1921. The game 'Monopoly' owes its genesis to an American Quaker woman who believed in the common ownership of land. The British rights to the game were acquired by the Leeds firm of Waddington's in 1935 and the choice of London streets was based on a flying visit to the capital by one of the firm's employee. (There is more on the BBC website). A special limited edition based on Leeds was published by John Waddington Ltd., possibly to celebrate the centenary of the City of Leeds in 1993.

Donations and Awards

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Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT)

The FNHT has reached a stage where a full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was needed to drive forward the plans to expand the Trust's activities and to ensure the financial future of the Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF) whilst providing support for the Fleet Air Arm Museum and St Bartholomew's Memorial Church. The Trust now has a new CEO Mike Nixon, who served for 30 years in the Royal Navy and 8 years as the Senior Vice President and Military Advisor UK for Rolls-Royce Defence. He is uniquely qualified to lead the Trust in a major ten year programme to preserve and promote the nation's Naval Aviation Heritage. The Trust has a regular supporter's newsletter and for those who shop on line you can raise extra money for the Trust at no additional cost to yourself. There is more information on the FNHT Website: www.fnht.co.uk and the 'shop' address is: www.easyfundraising.org.uk

The Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF)

The RNHF has a new Commanding Officer Lt Cdr Ian Sloan. He joined the Royal Navy Historic Flight as a Sea Hawk pilot in 2009 and took over as Commanding Officer May 2011. Prior to this when with 801 NAS he served in HMS Ark Royal and HMS Invincible. After leaving 801 NAS, he moved to RAF



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Valley where he was the Royal Navy Qualified Flying Instructor on 208 Squadron, responsible for the Advanced Flying Training of RN, RAF and Indian Air Force student pilots on the Hawk. He then migrated to the Harrier GR9 at RAF Cottesmore where he deployed to Afghanistan (Operation Herrick). The RNHF Chipmunk, WK608, is a vital part of the RNHF makeup. It is used for pilot assessment, training, refresher, keeping current etc, and is out most weeks, treading the RNAS Yeovilton circuit and its surrounds. The RNHF is very fortunate to have access to civil registered aircraft, namely a Piston Provost and Jet Provost. The RNHF Commanding Officer uses these aircraft for training in the lead up to flying the RNHF Sea Furies. For the first time the word in plural can be used T20 VX281 becomes resident in the RNHF hangar alongside Sea Fury VR930 (which we hope to see back in the air later this year).

The T20 seen above with Swordfish LS326, is owned by Naval Aviation Limited (the business end of the FNHT). All the aircraft act as a living memorial to those that have served in the Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm and when attending air shows provide a link between the Royal Navy's historic past and today's audience.

www.royalnavyhistoricflight.org.uk



Visit to the Royal Chelsea Hospital Chairman Arnold Thompson

For the past three/four years our Association has donated a sum of money to the charity UK4U, which provides Christmas boxes for all our servicemen serving abroad at Christmas time. We have received letters of appreciation for our donations which have put the Association in some limelight. Last November our Treasurer received an invitation to attend a Thank You Dinner from the Trustees of UK4U, the event was to take place at the Royal Chelsea Hospital. As Ben could not make it I went to represent the Association and was warmly welcomed when I arrived and they spotted my blazer badge. I was introduced to their Patron the Duke of Westminster and many other VIP's including Liam Fox's deputy. We were advised that the Royal Chelsea Hospital had put up a prize for auction; the winner a firm of Solicitors based in Northern Ireland. They returned the prize, a private tour and dinner in the Hospital, to UK4U and asked them to use it. The FAAA were one of 6 to receive an invitation from UK4U. In Ben's absence, Arnold attended the tour conducted by Colonel Mark Baker whose title was Captain of Invalids; he had been there for two years and was very knowledgeable about the history of the hospital and made the tour very interesting. The dinner which was the same fare that the 'In Pensioners' eat, but we were served wine with the meal. It was an interesting day. For anyone interested in a tour of the Royal Chelsea Hospital or the BFPO Centre, I have the details – Chairman Arnold Thompson 023 92786443.

Leslie Sayer Award for Outstanding Achievement 2011



Elle-Marie Palmer was this year's winner of the Leslie Sayer Award for Outstanding Achievement. This is the third year that the award has been presented at the Chappel Church of England Primary school and she is the third girl to receive it.

To win the prize a pupil has to show fortitude, compassion and strength of character with or without academic aptitude. The Swordfish Trophy was donated by the Royal Navy Historic Flight. The RNHF exists as a living memorial to all those who have served in the Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm since the birth of naval aviation in 1909. It also provides a shop window on the Fleet Air Arm, representing different eras of our history.

The Dr Rotman plate HMS Sultan re-visited – Brian Bingham

After 55 years I returned to HMS Sultan (nee HMS Siskin), to deputise for our Chairman and to present the Fleet Air Arm Association, Dr Rotman trophy. I was lucky enough to be accompanied by one of the Daedalus members Debbie Whittaker, who as an ex grubber herself had a lot in common with the recipient LAET(M) Cathy Campbell – some of the people that Debbie had served with were now Cathy's watch chiefs at RNAS Yeovilton.

The presentation was made at full divisions, itself a passing out parade, so there were lots of families and friends. I followed the Vice Chairman of the TAGs as it should be with Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) also in attendance. Divisions lasted about an hour (30 minutes quicker than estimated, I think the admiral was cold as well).

We then repaired to the training hangar to present Cathy with her certificate and personal trophy, which I understand is now centrepiece in her Mum's cabinet at home, and the group Photograph.

I would like to say a few more Words about Cathy. We could not have had a more worthy Recipient, she recently came joint 1st in a Maintainers Competition with the RAF and the week after we met her she was off to Canada to represent the UK and if that went well the world cup (bit different from our day!).

Plus I would like to say a big thank you to the Members of the North East Hants Branch (Mike Pomeroy, Alan Baxter) and Southdowns (Gerry Prince and Gerry Mitchell) for their support – not only at the parade but in the bar afterwards. All in all, a good day I think we managed to spread our message and image to a wide audience. **Our congratulations go to LAET(M) Cathy Campbell.**

If we can do this, as well as give recognition to our young people, it is money well spent.





HMS Heron field gun champions 2011



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Twenty teams from across the UK and Gibraltar participated in the 2011 Field Gun Competition – still an annual event that culminates at HMS Collingwood's open day. Each team hopes to win the Brickwoods Trophy. In the preceding week, it was evident that the two fastest crews were HMS Heron and the winners for the last two years – Portsmouth Naval Base who broke the world record with a time of 1:17.78 during the heats. They were looking for their 3rd win. On the final day the Field Gun was fired for the last time. HMS Heron led from the start and dominated throughout. Portsmouth were worthy opponents, but on the day they were no match for the 'Men of Air'. HMS Heron crossed the line in a winning time of 01:18.97 and took the trophy back to Somerset for the first time since 2002. The crew, were all volunteers, trained by CPO Mark 'Ollie' Twist, the Field Gun Officer was WO1 Colin Bauld RN and the Captain of this year's crew was CPO Jules Werner. Many of the crew members had recently returned from operations overseas including Afghanistan and the Arabian Gulf.

The origins of the Naval Field Gun stem from the gallant action fought during the Boer war. Guns from HMS Terrible and HMS Powerful were despatched to assist in the relief of the 119 day siege of Ladysmith. The guns were manhandled across the rugged terrain of the South African Veldt. In honour of this great feat, 20 crews from all over the country and Military bases across Europe compete and fiercely fight every year to win the Trophy.

It is just over 100 years since Sir John Brickwood, Chairman of Brickwood Brewery accepted a design submitted by Elkington & Co and bought the trophy for £85. It is an exact reproduction in silver of a 12 pounder field gun and its sailor crew of seven. The intention was for the trophy to be shot for annually by sailors and marines in the port of Portsmouth. In 1971 Brickwood's was acquired by the London based brewer Whitbread and Co Ltd.

In December the British Military Tournament at Earls Court will be presented by ABF The Soldiers' Charity, in association with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and the Royal Air Force Benevolent fund. A tri-service show with the legendary Field Gun Run included.

771 Squadron win the Royal Navy shooting contest

In May 2011 Lieutenant Dave Anderson from the Search and Rescue 771 Squadron based at RNAS Culdrose led a Combat Shooting Team that swept the board at the Naval Air Command Skill-At-Arms competition held annually at Bisley, Surrey. To prepare for this arduous competition the Fleet Air Arm team (eleven personnel from RNAS Culdrose and one from RAF Cottesmore) had to follow a strict training regime for several months whilst receiving individual coaching and advice. They won all the team trophies and were once again crowned Team champions. In addition Lieutenant Dave Anderson capped a fantastic week by winning all the individual matches to become the 2011 Champion Shot of the Fleet Air Arm. The successful Fleet Air Arm Team will now represent the Royal Navy at the Central Skill-At-Arms Meeting (CENTSAAM). Here they will be competing against the best from the Army and the RAF.



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Fourth Ladies Charity Night at Culdrose

The 4th Ladies Charity Night at RNAS Culdrose was an evening of fun and fundraising for over 300 women. It was organised by Petty Officer Sue Gibson and her Committee of 9 service and civilian ladies. They raised the magnificent sum of £6027. The evening kicked off with a fashion show sponsored by Mrs Sue Stuart of “Cargo” and by “Ann Summers”, both of Truro. The evening dresses and lingerie were modelled by local ladies and the Entertainment was provided by Chief Petty Officer Mick Eley and his ‘Marching Soldiers’ The ever popular ‘Full Monty’ raised £480 on its own. Live music ensured a full dance floor throughout the evening. Chief Petty Officer ‘Bill’ Bailey was the compère for the evening and auctioneer of lots ranging from a tandem paragliding trip raising £275, to a sunset flight over Cornwall which raised £245. The 45 raffle prizes on offer (gathered by Mrs Ali Pheffe) were donated by local supporters and businesses, some of whom were displaying their products on the night. Since 2005 the ladies events have raised over £21,000 for Charity.

The ladies are not the only ones at RNAS Culdrose who raise money for a charity. For example 771 SAR Squadron ran the Bath Half marathon in support of the RNLI Lizard Life Boat appeal (expectation to raise £2000) – an obvious choice due to their working relationship with the RNLI. This was followed later in the year with a cycling marathon from John O’Groats to Lands End with a planned finish on Air Sea Rescue day. Plus a coffee morning has raised £230. Also Nathan Rilstone, an Air Engineering Technician was to cycle from London to Monaco to raise money for the British Legion. The distance to be covered 1000 miles – 140 miles per day to be completed within 7 days. His target was £3500.

Branch News

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The Collectors of Hitchin and Essex

Les Hutchin (often accompanied by his wife Dorothy) and Peter Roalf are always willing to go out with the collecting box. A range of charities benefit but there is usually a Service link. The Poppy Appeal is a regular plus the FAAA, RNHF, 'Help the heroes' etc. Les and Doreen's favoured one is the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust. A £1300 cheque was presented by Les to the President at the RNBT AGM (Royal Marine Museum Portsmouth). Peter is well known for his Memorial Cloth and the money it has raised for the RNHF. Where they both meet is at the North Weald Air Shows to promote the FAAA. Below Les and Peter at Eastchurch with representatives of the 'younger generation' from HMS Heron (Yeovilton) and other FAAA Members.



Greater Manchester Branch

A Dutchman remembers

This year the war grave section of the Church of St. Cross Appleton Thorn had a visitor – a gentleman (in uniform) originally from the Netherlands but now resident in England. Paul Bosnan was there to visit the war graves of 2 Dutch pilots who had died in action (WW2). The date was May 4th – on this day, the Dutch people hold the '**Remembrance of the Dead**' in memory of those who fought and died during WWII and in wars in general. He came on this day not only to salute the pilots and place a wreath on their graves but to remember others buried in the War grave section of the Church, by placing a single rose on each grave. On the following day he returned. Why? May 5th is the Netherlands 'Liberation Day'. On this day throughout the Netherlands a two minute silence is observed at eight p.m. – the exact time in 1945 that the Capitulation document was signed. It is now a day to both remember and to celebrate.

Editor: The Greater Manchester Branch intends to follow the Dutchman's lead by continuing to observe, in May, the Dutch 'Remembrance of the dead,' at the Church of St. Cross where the Blackcap services are held.



Wrekin Branch celebrates 25th Anniversary

Gareth Price

The Wrekin Branch celebrated the 25th Anniversary of its formation on Sunday 17th July 2011 with a Service of Thanksgiving at Dawley Holy Trinity Church, followed by a celebratory buffet lunch at Dawley Royal British Legion Club. The Wrekin Branch was first formed in 1986, it comprised of just a few members meeting up for a 'pint and a chat' at the Valley Public House at Coalbrookdale. Twenty five years later, it has over 35 members and has its headquarters at TS Wrekin, Donnington, home of Telford Sea Cadets. As one of many Fleet Air Arm Association branches that cover the whole country, the Branch has a full social programme and a firm commitment to the welfare and well-being of its members. It also actively supports other locally like-minded organisations – the Royal British Legion, Royal Naval Association etc. – and gives encouragement to the TS Wrekin Sea Cadets in their activities.

Branch Members were joined by Lord and Lady Grocott, (Lord Grocott was the Branch's first Patron – prior to his elevation to the Upper House) – together with local civic dignitaries from Dawley and Donnington and the Mayor and Mayoress of Telford & Wrekin Council. Nine standards were present – including the National Standard, Watford and Wrekin Branch standards and that of the Parachute Regiment Association. Also present were FAAA members, members of Royal British Legion (Dawley and Jackfield), the Royal Naval Association (Shrewsbury), and a contingent of Sea Cadets from TS Wrekin. The following week at the National Memorial Arboretum, Branch Members were joined by members of Jackfield RBL to pay their respects to 'shipmates' who had 'crossed the bar'. The celebrations concluded on the 5th August when the family of the Branch's late shipmate Peter Lunt, and Chairman Dave Fairley, met Petty Officer Kevin Hoyles from Telford Sea Cadets to complete the presentation of the £400 cheque (from the Peter Lunt Memorial fund which was shared with the Branch).



New Chairman for Derby

Len Owen has 'stepped down' as Chairman of the Derby Branch. His successor is Ivor L Hall. Len and Ivor left the Birmingham Branch in 1984, to set up the Derby Branch. The Derby Standard, was donated by Ivor in memory of his brother Roy who, at the age of 16 died when HMS Oak was hit by a torpedo at Scapa Flow.

The Ark Royal V Ship's Bell Albert Firth Chairman Yorkshire Branch

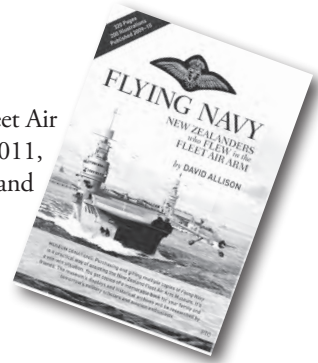
On Thursday 19th May 2011, three members of the Yorkshire Branch FAAA and members of the Leeds RNA Branch were present at the renaming of the 'blue room' in Leeds Civic Hall to 'The Ark Royal Room'. The unveiling of the ships bell, was performed by the Lord Lieutenant of West Yorkshire Dr. Ingrid Roscoe accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Leeds Councillor Jim McKenna and Lady Mayoress Mrs McKenna. The Ark Royal Room has been so named to commemorate the close ties that Leeds and its people had with the decommissioned ship. This follows the Freedom of the City Parade earlier this year where Yorkshire Branch gained a new member – 90 year old ex crew member of the wartime 'Mighty Ark' CPO Fred Jackson. Seated with the Mayor is the Secretary of the Yorkshire Branch, and celebrating his 88th birthday on the same day, S/M Albert Firth. Bringing up the rear, flanking the Mayoress, are Branch Acting Chairman Mick Grubb and Treasurer S/M Bob Sharpe.



Editor: The connection between the ship and Leeds goes back almost 70 years to 1941 when Leeds 'adopted' the third Ark shortly before it was torpedoed by a German submarine and sunk off Gibraltar with just one fatality. Leeds residents raised £9m – equivalent to an estimated £267m today – for a replacement (Ark Royal IV). The fourth Ark Royal was granted the Freedom of Entry into the City in 1973 in a ceremony attended by The Queen. Since 1973, the ship's company have exercised their right to march through the streets of Leeds every two years. This year to celebrate the securing of the Ark Royal bell Leeds' Council invited the Ship's company to parade, for one last time before they dispersed following the decommissioning of HMS Ark Royal V (1985-2011). Other artefacts include the 'Freedom of the City scroll, a wooden model and a panel displaying battle honours.

New Zealand Fleet Air Arm Association Auckland Branch

The Auckland Branch - the only one left in the New Zealand Fleet Air Arm Association decided at its general meeting in September 2011, to prepare to go into recess. Only John Rowntree (Editor's contact) and Ray Richards were well enough to attend and in the last 18 months the Branch Welfare Officer, Chairman and David Allison (historian of the museum and author of the book *FLYING NAVY*) have 'crossed the bar'. A sad occasion, for an Association that has been active for over 60 years, but, there are some positive activities taking place to ensure that the historical information/records 'have a home'.



Some members of the Auckland Branch have been active in advising the MOTAT staff on updating the Fleet Air Arm displays within the Museum. The FAA archives have been gifted to the new Royal New Zealand Navy Museum in Devonport (around the waterfront from the naval base, harbour side and at the foot of North Head for those who may know the area). This Museum will also receive the residue of the Association's funds, after they have been audited, as a contribution towards, the safe custody of the archives and the provision of a facility to ensure that historians, families and friends have accessibility, in future years, to the archives and of the utmost importance to the members, their personal service records, wartime service records, photographs and memorabilia. For the future, the Auckland Association are planning to meet for lunch four times a year at the Bays Club and are considering a closing down function later this year possibly at the Navy Museum or the Bays Club.

An Anzac Tale – a son remembers Warren Baxter McIvor

Dad (James Stewart McIvor) played golf for thirty years. He is dead now but he once told me about his first visit to a golf course. It was 1943. Dad was based in Scotland and training pilots for the Fleet Air Arm. He flew Hurricanes and Spitfires. One time over Scotland Dad spotted some manicured paddocks far below and being a farm boy from the Waikato, he decided to drop down for a closer look. Dad described the event as coming up one of the fairways at nought feet and full throttle. I asked if anybody was playing golf. "No" he said "but there were lots of people lying on the ground and some people were running under the trees". Dad told the other pilots that evening about his outing and one of the older guys told him to be careful. "The Air Force top brass play their golf there and they will get your number".

Dad might have been a bit reckless but he was always careful. He decided that in future he would stay away from the Royal St Andrews Golf course. Dad did drop in a second time around some 35 years later but he had slowed down a lot by then.

The publication FLYING NAVY: New Zealanders who flew for the Fleet Air Arm is available from the Museum of Transport and Technology (MOTAT), the New Zealand Royal Navy Museum and the Association's remaining postal address: PO box 31-240, Milford, Auckland 0741. Price overseas NZ\$60 (includes delivery).

Watford Branch

Nine members of the Watford FAAA together with their Standard Bearer Mick Wyatt attended the unveiling of a new memorial made from Portland stone dedicated to the memory of all those from the Watford District killed in conflict since the end of the Second World War. Two benches were also dedicated to the town's two fallen soldiers in Afghanistan: Captain Tom Sawyer (29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery, Age 26) and Corporal Chris Harrison Royal Marine (40 Commando, Age 26). It was a lovely sunny October day, and more than 100 veterans, servicemen and members of the public watched with the families of the two soldiers who had died, the moving unveiling ceremony and listened to a poem written by a serving soldier and read by Watford Mayor Dorothy Thornhill. The benches – one for each soldier -were funded by the Watford RBL, RNA, FAAA, and Watford Council. In addition to the Watford FAAA Standard were standards from the Korean Veterans' Association, Royal Navy Association and the Royal Air Force Association.



Essex Branch

Dave Saltmarsh

The Bulwark Albion and Centaur Association (BACA) annual reunion was held at South Downs Holiday Village Bracklesham Bay over the weekend of Friday 13th May until Monday May 16th. There was entertainment each evening, the food was top quality, very well presented and served by friendly waitresses and waiters. The weekend coincided with the annual reunion of the Italy Star Association – more entertainment than expected with some of the members able to 'swing the lamp' with tales of their exploits. On the Sunday after our AGM the majority of us boarded 4 coaches to take us to Chichester where a service of remembrance and dedication was held in the Cathedral followed by a short parade. The BACA website: www.bulwarkassoc.plus.com

RNAS Culdrose

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RNAS Culdrose takes delivery of new aircraft

Work to resurface the main runway at RNAS Culdrose is now complete and the runway has been handed back to the Royal Navy for full fixed-wing operations. The runway which is over a mile long and 150 feet wide is equipped with an Instrument Landing System (ILS) to enable pilots to land in poor visibility or bad weather conditions, and Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPIs), which also assist pilots when landing. RNAS Culdrose now has the capability to operate the Hawk jet and King Air Avenger aircraft and 750 Naval Air Squadron has already taken delivery of the new King Air Avenger aircraft for the training of Naval Observers, and in the future Royal Air Force navigators.

The King Air Avengers are part of the United Kingdom Military Flying Training System (UKMFTS) – a tri-service flying training organisation which caters for the Royal Navy, the RAF and the Army Air Corps. It provides training for Observers and Navigators to equip them for further operational training in modern aircraft like the Merlin and Lynx, where advanced technology is extensively used. Cobham Aviation converted the King Airs for rear crew training and will continue to provide in-service support for the operation of the aircraft from 750 Squadron at Culdrose. The King Air has a top speed of over 350 miles per hour and a maximum range of almost 2000 miles making it an ideal aircraft for training the naval and air force students. Supported by Ascent Flight Training, 750 Squadron is now fully equipped for the challenges of the modern technology-based world of military aviation.

This year (2011) the first Observer students to enter the UKMFTS pipeline began their Initial Flying Training and Elementary Navigation Training in June at RAF Barkston Heath in Lincolnshire and they will transfer to 750 Squadron in October for Basic Flying Training on the King Air Avengers. After graduation from 750 Squadron, the students will move to one of three Operational Conversion Units to prepare for frontline tours of duty.





The Helicopters of Culdrose



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Editor: There are many stories to tell of the Helicopter Squadrons of RNAS Culdrose. The short articles below demonstrate some of the capabilities of the helicopters and their crews.

Culdrose Southend Air Show

A Merlin HM Mk1 helicopter from 824 Naval Squadron was seen by crowds in excess of 300,000 at the Southend Airshow (June 2011). This was the first display of the summer and was reported on BBC Radio Essex – the ‘highlight of the day’. Throughout the Summer the crew expected to attend a number of Airshows including, Wales National Air Show, RAF Waddington International Air Show, Bournemouth Air Festival, and their own Airbase RNAS Culdrose. The 2011 display pilot, Lieutenant Matt Robinson, said: “... As a Royal Navy helicopter crew we obviously operate extensively over the sea and out of the public eye, so these air shows are a fantastic opportunity to showcase what the Fleet Air Arm can and does do.”

On Board RFA Argus Gulf of Aden

A team of aircrew and engineers from 820 Squadron embarked in RFA ARGUS, conducting counter-piracy and operations in support of the ongoing unrest in the Middle East, received a distress call from a merchant vessel at the eastern end of the Gulf Aden with a crewman needing urgent hospital treatment. The nearest suitable hospital was in Djibouti over 300 nautical miles from RFA ARGUS and at the limit of the range of her Merlin Mk1 helicopters. The operations team onboard RFA ARGUS immediately set to work, liaising with the **United Kingdom Maritime Component Command (UKMCC)** in Bahrain to figure out the most efficient way to get the casualty to a medical facility. A plan soon came together; there was a suitably equipped hospital on the American aircraft carrier USS Enterprise 120 nautical miles west of Argus and a South Korean frigate operating only a few miles from the merchant ship in question. The South Koreans quickly dispatched a Lynx helicopter to recover the casualty, but the Lynx didn’t have the endurance to reach the Enterprise. ARGUS closed their position at best speed to enable one of 820s Merlin to carry out a CASEVAC (casualty evacuation) to the American carrier.

Exercise SPONTEX

Merlin helicopters from 829 Naval Air Squadron RNAS Culdrose deployed to France on Exercise SPONTEX during May (2011). Two of the helicopters operated from the French Naval Air Station Lann-Bihoué in Lorient. Also taking part in the exercise was the Merlin helicopter on board HMS Westminster (a T23 destroyer).

Exercise SPONTEX – a major multi-unit Anti-Submarine Warfare exercise set on the Western coast of the Brest peninsula involving various ships, aircraft and submarines from the UK, USA, France, Germany and Sweden. The exercise provided a realistic and demanding training environment to improve the readiness, proficiency and tactical skills of all participants. It gave the Merlin crews an excellent opportunity to practice their primary role of Anti-Submarine Warfare, when operating against a variety of exercise ‘enemies’ not normally encountered in British waters.

Flight Pilot, Lt Chris Suckling said: “SPONTEX is a fantastic opportunity for us to practise our Anti-Submarine Warfare skills in an exercise which will give us an intense period of concentrated tactical activity. It provides a great chance to improve interoperability as we will be working closely with other NATO maritime air, sub-surface and surface units.”

Yachtsmen Rescue 100 miles off Cornwall

July (2011) a Search and Rescue helicopter of 771 Naval Air Squadron was scrambled to the yacht ‘Andrietta’ 75 miles southwest of the Isles of Scilly which was reported to be in distress in mountainous seas and gale force winds, unable to steer, with damage to her sails and an unserviceable engine. The helicopter crew assessed that due to the high sea state, the wind, and the violent movement of the yacht, the safest method of rescue was for the two yachtsmen on board to leave the yacht and take to their liferaft. Aircrewman, Sergeant Tony Russell Royal Marines, was then winched down and the first yachtsman was hoisted out of the liferaft but due to severe wave motion, gusting wind and the change in the balance of the liferaft, it capsized throwing the second yachtsman into the sea. Sergeant Russell recovered the first yachtsman to the safety of the helicopter and returned to find and rescue the second man. He was nowhere to be seen. Sergeant Russell then dived under the raft to check if the second yachtsman was trapped there. He duly located him but then had to deal with the yachtsman desperately clinging to him while he released himself and his survivor from the various ropes and lines now tangled around them. This done, Sergeant Russell and the second yachtsman were safely lifted to the helicopter. The yachtsmen were shaken by their experience but unhurt. They were flown to RNAS Culdrose and transferred to HM Coastguard, Falmouth.

Sergeant Russell said: “The job was up there as a “Grade A”. It’s a strange thing to say, but I actually enjoyed the experience although there were times when I thought my time was up.”



Operation Kipion RNAS Culdrose

A Merlin Maritime Patrol Helicopter from RNAS Culdrose – 829 Naval Air Squadron, has recently been upgraded to carry the latest M3M Heavy Machine Gun, bullet proof armour and a missile warning system. HMS St. Albans, the Merlin and her crew left for the Middle-East (Operation Kipion) in June 2011. Prior to this the ‘St. Albans Flight’ team (engineers and flight crew) completed operational sea training with the ship.

In addition to the anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare capabilities of the Merlin, the new equipment enables the Merlin to protect itself in potentially hostile environments. It also provides HMS St. Albans’ Commanding Officer, Commander Tom Sharpe OBE, with a powerful offensive capability when providing oil platform security and anti-piracy operations. Other assets available to the aircrew include an electro-optical camera and highly accurate radar. Potential targets can be identified at long range and the thermal imaging facility means the pirates will not be able to hide using the cover of darkness. Complete with a Royal Marine Sniper Team and heavy calibre weapons the Merlin packs a serious punch. Lieutenant Commander Hamish McKee said: “We are prepared and equipped to deal with any situation we might encounter – the Merlin represents a unique capability for HMS St. Albans...”.

HMS St. Albans is the 16th and final ship in the ‘Duke’ class of frigates. Since her departure she has played a key role in a major exercise (Starkenet) in the Gulf, with amongst others the US, UAE and Saudi military, to test the abilities of naval forces to defend the region’s scores of gas and oil platforms -vital to the UK and global economy.

Starkenet is an annual exercise run under the banner of Combined Task Force 152 (the Bahrain-based maritime force responsible for security at sea in the entire Gulf).
Editorial: Devonport based HMS Somerset (type 23 frigate) has also conducted maritime security exercises in the Red Sea with the Saudi Navy. The regional monsoon season is about to end and an increased threat to the free passage of trade, in one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, and illegal maritime activity is expected. Safe transit is beneficial to both the UK and Saudi Arabia; consequently, when HMS Somerset and His Majesty’s Ship Taif ‘met’ they took the opportunity to rehearse ship handling manoeuvres and to conduct a boarding rehearsal for the Royal Marines team. HMS Somerset returns from her duties in February 2012.



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RNAS Yeovilton

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Basic Flight Training for a Royal Naval Officer Midshipman Robert Andrews



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All aircrew applicants begin their career with Initial Officer Training (IOT) at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) in Dartmouth, where they learn the necessary skills and leadership to become an Officer in the Royal Navy. The Fleet Air Arm (FAA) philosophy being that they are Officers first and pilots second.

Potential pilots undergo a third term at BRNC to study flight academics and, attend flight grading at 727 NAS, RNAS Yeovilton – a short intensive course designed to assess a Young Officers (YO) flying ability. Successful YO's progress to Air 424; a five week course covering first aid, land and sea survival and aviation medicine prior to joining their first Squadron, 703 NAS RAF Barkston Heath for Elementary Flight Training. This course consists of 55 hours of basic flight training covering general handling, instrument flying, navigation and formation – all taught on the Grob Tutor 115e. The Squadron employs both military and civilian instructors with the support of ground staff including Operation Officers, Air Traffic Controllers, Engineers, Handlers and Admin staff.

From 703 NAS and post Strategic Defence Spending Review, pilots then progress onto 705 NAS, the Defence Helicopter Flying School currently based at RAF Shawbury.



My Life so far, in the Fleet Air Arm

Having been in the Royal Navy for a little under two years now, I have spent 10 months of my time within the Basic Flying Training pipeline. My first experience of flying in the Navy came from Pilot Grading in July 2010 at RNAS Yeovilton. I went through a short 14 hour intensive course designed to push the individual close to their capacity and to determine their effectiveness as a future pilot. From the beginning, the amount of work required from me in such a short space of time came as a shock, however this was soon pushed to the back of my head as I became settled, determined and focused on the ultimate goal.

After successfully passing Pilot Grading, my thoughts went back to my colleagues and friends that did not manage to make it. This highlighted to me the harsh reality of how demanding Pilot training has been and will be in the not too distant future.

The next stage of my Basic Flying Training involved no flying whatsoever, but in fact found my course mates and I on a five week course conducting realistic first aid, land and sea survival, aviation medicine and attending the Under Water Escape Training Unit collectively known as Air 424. This course was a definite highlight in my career but also served as a very valuable and essential skill based experience.

From here my next port of call was joining my first Squadron, 703 Naval Air Squadron based at RAF Barkston Heath. Here the Army and the Navy work side by side as part of the Defence Elementary Flying Training School. As soon as I arrived I immediately felt welcome and could sense a strong, positive and friendly working environment, something I feel is of upmost importance on a training Squadron. After being on the Squadron for over 7 months and having faced many difficulties due to weather and aircraft availability I successfully completed my Elementary Flying Training in May 2011.

My experiences to date have been truly remarkable and as such I have no doubt in saying that I am both glad and proud to be part of the Fleet Air Arm.

Editor: There will be a further article in AF21 in which Midshipman Robert Andrews provides a summary of the History of 703 Squadron. He has successfully completed his Elementary Flying Training and is waiting for a course at RAF Shawbury.

The last Lynx Mark3 Embarkation and HMS Ocean

After more than 30 years' service one of the mainstays of the Fleet Air Arm has made its final appearance at sea. Nearly four decades to the day that the very first Lynx helicopter took to the skies, the Mk3 variant lifted off from the flight deck of HMS Ocean the Royal Navy's purpose built helicopter carrier. The last flight was a short 35-minute hop from the helicopter carrier in the Channel to the home of the Lynx, RNAS Yeovilton. The aircraft – tail number XZ693 – shared the deck of the Mighty Ocean with Apaches, Merlins, Sea Kings, Chinooks, Dauphins and the newer Mk8 Lynx. The Lynx has been the backbone of destroyer and frigate operations, as well as the Antarctic patrol ship, since 1979. Over the past few years, however, the trusty helicopter has increasingly been replaced in the front line by the Mk8 Saturn – SATURN the anti jamming tactical UCH radio for NATO.



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HMS Ocean, after conducting her aviation trials in the Channel, was to have deployed with the Cougar amphibious task force to the Mediterranean, however with the escalating events in Libya, the British Government took the opportunity to re-task HMS Ocean to support the enforcement of the United Nations Security Council resolution to protect Libyan citizens.

She carries Apache attack helicopters from 656 Army Air Corps, assisted by the Sea King Mk7 of 857 Naval Air Squadron to provide airborne surveillance and Lynx Mk7s of 847 Naval Air Squadron to provide force protection.

She currently carries the Broad Pennant of Commodore John Kingwell, transferred from HMS Albion and will be replaced by HMS Illustrious currently at Portsmouth (September 2011) undergoing final preparation to 'go to sea'.

Mk8 Saturn

A report on the MOD Website (08 09 2011) describes Milestone trials flying 2 Lynx Mk8 Saturn aircraft from the back of HMS Dauntless (type 45 destroyer). For two months on the other side of the Atlantic members of 815 Squadron – 5 aircrew and 13 technicians and engineers + 2 Lynx Mk8 Saturn – were given the unique opportunity to simultaneously operate a pair of Lynx – understandably the team leapt at the chance to take 2 aircraft to sea again. Other challenges included setting the Lynx down on the back of US, French and Russian ships.



Lynx restored to its former glory

This year (2011) the Fleet Air Arm is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Lynx helicopter. To mark the 40th anniversary, the Lynx Helicopter Force (LHF), based at RNAS Yeovilton, carried out preservation work on historic Lynx XX910, the first constructed Naval version of the Lynx which is currently owned by the Weston-super-Mare Helicopter Museum.

The LHF Operational Support Team at RNAS Yeovilton rebuilt the rear of the aircraft from its original parts. Delivery was in February this year (2011). The Lynx was restored to its former 'glory' ready for display at the RNAS Yeovilton International Air Day on 9th July 2011. After the display the helicopter was returned to the museum in Weston-super-Mare as a welcome addition to their iconic Fleet Air Arm aircraft collection.

Warrant Officer David Lloyd, the Project Team Leader said:

“A project like this gives the opportunity to reflect on how this aircraft type has been delivering to the front-line continually for 40 years. It highlights the heritage of the FAA and how we can be justifiably proud of the contribution we have made to operations throughout the decades.”



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Flying into the void

Sub Lieutenant Fred Durrant, (second pilot on board)

Editor: Sub Lt Durrant, second pilot on board a Navy helicopter operating in Afghanistan describes a night time flight and landing.

It's the middle of the night, a few thousand feet above the Helmand 'Green Zone'. The moon is nowhere to be seen and it's so dark that we can't see the line of the horizon, let alone the ground, towards which we will shortly be rapidly descending. The other aircraft in formation appear only as three lights – the fuselage indistinct. The mind is focused; the next **Landing Site (LS)**, somewhere in the vacuum of darkness below, is ready. The radio crackles as the Joint Tactical Air Controller confirms our clearance "LS is clear and secure, beware Enemy Forces operating to the North and West, you are to ingress and egress from the SE over". This is our indication to commence the run in and the lever is lowered to initiate the tactical descent.

This is the view from the cockpit of the Royal Navy's Sea Kings from 845 and 846 Naval Air Squadrons CHF, working for the Joint Helicopter Force operating in **Red Illum (RI)**. RI is classed as any night where the light levels are so low that the **Night Vision Goggles (NVG)** struggle to work effectively.

In the UK this is not a huge issue due to the amount of background lighting and differing terrain, which plays well with the NVGs. Over Afghanistan's low contrast terrain, in RI and no ambient light, it is incredibly dark. The definition of the ground through NVG does not start to become visible until around a few hundred feet, naturally making the aircrew's job somewhat trickier. Without looking through the goggles, crews are simply faced with an inky blackness, other than a few blinking lights from Camp Bastion or one of the local towns.

It is as a result of this RI condition, encountered for many of the nights in Afghanistan, that the Sea King crews, or 'Junglies' as they are more commonly known, have made a name for themselves. Operating in such conditions requires additional training, a slightly heightened awareness of one's surroundings and use of techniques and equipment not routinely employed by other helicopter forces. One such piece of kit is Display Night Vision Goggles, which were introduced to the Junglie world relatively recently. It is essentially a fast jet's '**head up display**' (**HUD**), which is mounted on the end of one tube of the NVG. It is an invaluable asset, showing essential data such as navigational information, engine performance and height. Without it, RI operations would be considerably more challenging.

So we return to the Sea King pair, currently descending into the RI murk of the Green Zone. As we descend, the height is called and the crewman and door gunner respond with 'guns outboard'. The radar altimeter begins tracking; a quick movement of the



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collective lever confirms the two Rolls Royce Gnome gas turbine engines are responding correctly. As the aircraft descends to low level the ground is still not visible and the aircraft is initially levelled out. As the Patrol Base location becomes clear, the height is nudged downwards, all eyes in the aircraft trained outwards.

By now, as the surrounding area becomes clearer and the definition of the LS becomes more obvious, the aircraft is manoeuvred onto a final approach for the landing. As the aircraft descends the final few feet it is engulfed in a cloud of dust thrown up by the aircraft's downdraft.

This story is true of most nights for the Royal Navy Junglie Sea King crews. It is now standard for crews to only have a tiny percentage of day flying hours at the end of a tour in Afghanistan. Credit is to be given to the supporting engineers who work tirelessly to keep the Sea Kings in the air, in conditions that range from searing heat and dust storms, to freezing cold and torrential downpours. It is no mean feat and of which the aircrew and more importantly, the ground forces that we support, are most appreciative.

Most importantly, this all goes to show the Junglies are still at the forefront of Battlefield Helicopter aviation and are an invaluable asset to not only the Joint Helicopter Force (Afghanistan), but also to the wider Royal Navy and Joint Helicopter Command. RI operations are just another feather in the cap of the CHF and serves to remind all that this part of the Fleet Air Arm continues to support troops all around the world, from land or sea, in rain or shine, day or night, and now in RED ILLUM!

Editor: Where Junglie Aircrew go, their support elements follow. CHF is a deployable entity, fully self sufficient comprising of engineering, stores, vehicle accommodation, medical, a mobile air operations team that is commando and parachute trained an intelligence unit and even its own Chaplain. The picture shows Engineers preparing for night time operations



'Adam's Ale' the Bish's Tipple

My name is John Morris and I will soon enter my twentieth year of service as a Chaplain RN (or "Bish" as we are known colloquially). Having served all over the world on a variety of ships and submarines, my current UK appointment is as Chaplain to Commando Helicopter Force, based at the Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in rural Somerset, but I am on loan for three months as Chaplain to the British Garrison, Kabul. The standard terms of reference for a Naval Chaplain are to be the friend and councillor to all on board. This presents a challenge in Kabul when your flock is scattered over eight different bases in various parts of a city in a potentially hostile environment. This means that I cannot ask for transport whenever I want as we try to keep vehicle moves to a minimum.



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Sitting in the back of an armoured Ridgeback, the view is limited. Inside is cramped and as you are jolted over the speed bumps you can try and work out where you are on your route. The interior is stripped out and what space there is left after being filled with a driver and a vehicle commander and four passenger seats. I sit sideways with knees interlocked with the person opposite, wearing full body armour, ballistic eye protection, and combat helmet. The new Multi Terrain Pattern clothing is comfortable and both warm and cool at the same time in this winter climate.

Home is Camp Souter – which is about as comfortable as you can get in Afghanistan. It's based on an old Russian fertiliser factory and the cabins are in proper buildings with more or less proper showers and heads (toilets). The perimeter is the ubiquitous wall of "Hesco" mesh cubes. Lined with hessian and filled with local sand and rock they are built into walls topped with sight denial fencing on top and have reinforced concrete sangars (think watch tower) at regular intervals. I sometimes spend an hour or two walking around visiting the sangars, chatting to the soldiers and occasional sailor watching from their sentry post. For anyone who has done any sentry duties, you will know how welcome a friendly face and some nutty (chocolate) can be.

The mission is all about preparing to hand over to the Afghans. Many of the people I look after are involved in training the Afghan National Army (ANA). We also recruit all the Afghan interpreters ('terps' in local slang) who work with Allied Forces. I also look after the British working for General Petraeus and all the UK forces working in the headquarters for current operations. This gives me a unique glimpse into what is happening around the country. Sunday duties are the easy bit. I take regular services in the camp and in the British Embassy.



Most of my time is out and about visiting and talking to lonely soldiers, sailors and airmen far from home doing routine jobs where nearly every day is the same. The old saying about war being 99% boredom and 1% excitement (or terror) still holds true, and I have rarely been as warmly welcomed as when I go and say hello to people in a UK uniform when I am doing my rounds in Kabul. I also administer Storybook Soldier – where I make a digital recording of the soldier or sailor reading a children's story. The digital recording is posted back to UK on a memory chip and is edited onto a CD complete with sound effects and posted to the family home within a few days. Children and families really appreciate the service. It helps keep dads (and the occasional mum) in touch with their children when they are deployed.

Sometimes I blag my way into joining a patrol from Camp Souter out on the ground. I help by carrying the Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) kit. It's heavy and one less thing for the soldiers to carry. I don't carry a weapon so I generally stay somewhere near the middle of the patrol. The patrols are to fly the flag and gain the trust of the locals. The children come over asking for chocolate or 'dollars' and the poverty of the nation is obvious all around you. The average wage is only a dollar or two per day and it makes you wonder how they survive. If the children get to be a nuisance the German Shepherd dog that comes out on patrol soon persuades them to keep a safe distance.

Looking at the poverty all around, aid doesn't seem to go very far, but every little helps and over the last year Camp Souter has helped repair the local schools, built a playground and handed out numerous aid parcels.

All theatres of operation bring their own defining images. For me in Afghanistan a lasting image is of bottled water. It's everywhere. In almost every workplace you will find a fridge with stacked ranks of bottled water. Some teetotal churches call water 'Adam's Ale' (since it was the only drink Adam and Eve had) but it's the soldiers and sailors only here – Afghanistan is alcohol free for serving personnel. The image of stacks and stacks of blue bottled water is one that anyone who has served in Afghanistan will recognise. Another lasting impression of Kabul is the smog and the dust. The winter temperature drops well below zero and the only heating for many locals is burning wood. With the smoke, sand and dust comes smog and perhaps that is my strongest image of this strange and beautiful place. For a Naval Chaplain it's a long way from the sea, but serving soldiers, sailors and airmen are much the same everywhere. Being their friend, living out the gospel, praying for them and reminding them that they are children of God and loved by him is much the same here as it is on a sleek "Pussers Grey" Ship anywhere on the Oceans of the world.

Editor: John completed Commando Training with the Royal Marines in 1996 and is entitled to wear the coveted RM Green Beret. He has recently returned from Afghanistan and his family home is Honiton, Dunkerswell. This is an abridged version of his memories of time spent in Afghanistan.

Members who have 'crossed the bar'

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March 2011 – September 2011

<i>Rayment (Ray) Castle</i>	<i>NA1 (AH3)</i>	<i>Great Yarmouth</i>
<i>Marcus J Cook</i>	<i>AB Air. Handler</i>	<i>Hitchin</i>
<i>Leslie Cooke</i>	<i>NA2</i>	<i>Great Yarmouth</i>
<i>John Day</i>	<i>POAF(L)</i>	<i>Solent Branch</i>
<i>James Cowel</i>	<i>NAMI(AE)</i>	<i>Essex</i>
<i>Roy Gibbs</i>	<i>PO(A) TAG MID</i>	<i>Daedalus</i>
<i>Larry Golding</i>	<i>AM(E)</i>	<i>Essex</i>
<i>John (Richard) Hughes</i>	<i>AM(Elect&Inst)</i>	<i>N.E. Hants and District</i>
<i>Ron Jones</i>	<i>POAF(E)</i>	<i>Solent Branch</i>
<i>Eric Lomas</i>	<i>AM1(E)</i>	<i>Wrekin</i>
<i>Don Lord</i>	<i>CPO (AH1)</i>	<i>Hanworth</i>
<i>Peter Lunt</i>	<i>LAM(AE)</i>	<i>Wrekin</i>
<i>Albert Merritt</i>	<i>A/POAM(A)</i>	<i>Daedalus</i>
<i>Pat Rogers</i>	<i>Wren AM</i>	<i>Greater Manchester</i>
<i>Donald Short</i>	<i>AM(E)</i>	<i>Greater Manchester</i>
<i>Robert (Bob) Stirling</i>	<i>TAG</i>	<i>Daedalus</i>
<i>John Wood</i>	<i>CPO(A/E)</i>	<i>Bristol and District branch</i>

May those who have 'crossed the bar' rest in peace.

The Cenotaph Parade Whitehall

The Centotaph Parade and Remembrance service will take place on November 13th 2011. The Parade will be followed by the laying of wreaths at the London Embankment Fleet Air Arm Memorial. We will have a Marshall this year to ensure that all units are together as they move from Horseguards to the Embankment.

The Fleet Air Arm Memorials

Alrewas Staffordshire	The National Memorial Arboretum
Eastchurch	The Eastchurch Aviation Pioneer Memorial
Lee-on-Solent	A tribute, to those with no known grave
London (Embankment)	The Fleet Air Arm Memorial
RNAS Yeovilton	The Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church



Short ‘Stories’

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Don Lord CPO AH1 MBE

Don was Vice Chairman of the Hanworth FAAA. He entered the Navy in 1950 and left in 1972, having served aboard HMS Ocean, HMS Bulwark and HMS Victorious, to take up a very different career. He worked at the House of Commons from 1972 until 1995.

In the first instance he was a doorman but after promotion he became the Speaker’s secretary and trainbearer serving under Selwyn Lloyd, George Thomas, Bernard Weatherill and Betty Boothroyd. Others will know Don when he was heavily involved with the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust as a local welfare visitor. He was also social secretary of HMS Ocean and member of Hersham RNA. He was awarded his MBE in 1993.

Larry Golding AM/E

Larry, a member of the Essex Branch joined the Navy in 1942 - just short of 16 years old. He smoked a pipe in the hope that he looked 18 years old! He did his FAA training in Scotland then shipped to Malta, the Middle East and Ceylon; his last ship was HMS Glory. He left the Navy in 1946 and became one of the London Cabbies who supported the outings for war disabled veterans and disabled children. As the Pearly King and Queen of Old Kent Road and Bow Bells Larry and Doreen supported many charities. Larry, although suffering from a long term illness was still able to give Doreen help with events such as the traditional September Pearly Kings and Queens Costermonger’s Harvest Festival, in the Guildhall court that gives so

much pleasure to those attending. Life and the festival will continue and Larry will always be remembered as the Pearly King who was proud of his Navy roots – pearl buttons form aircraft carriers, anchors + more to decorate his suit.

Mick Farrington AM(O)

Mick was Chairman of the Yorkshire FAAA, life member and secretary (last 10 years) of the York and District RNA Branch and one of the Rum Bosuns for the Armourers Association. He was a proud family man and had many and varied interests. Ships Bottler (made honorary member of the 8th Destroyer’s Assoc. when he started to make ships in bottles for their annual raffle), Fly Fisherman, Home Brewer, Pusser’s Rum Tester just to name a few. As young he was a keen Rugby man and played Rugby Union for York Railway Institute. Mick organised the Trafalgar night dinners and was the after dinner entertainment. He provided readings from the officers’ log books and his own rendition of the battle, playing Nelson and Hardy. Mick’s main passion was his nationally recognised “Beechwood” herd of Pedigree Tamworth pigs. At the 2010 Great Yorkshire Show Mick showed two pigs and won the cup for the Tamworth Breed Champion (best in show) and was presented with a credible third place, to round off a very successful show. The Friday lunchtime Club, (Yorkshire Terrier pub Stonegate), will be one light, from now on. Mick was always there putting the world to rights and swapping stories of our time in the service.

Peter Lunt LAM(AE)

Peter joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1954 (HMS Gamecock) at the age of 17½. In addition to his other training (which included time at HMS Fulmar (Scotland)) he trained as a Diver at HMS Vernon and learnt to check the underside of ships for mines. His sea time was spent on HMS Eagle and HMS Hermes. He joined the FAAA in 2002 and was Chairman of the Wrekin Branch from 2007 to 2009.

The Fleet Air Arm Website

The number of FAAA members who are now 'online' appears to be on the increase. This is good news. As you can see from the 'Request received' information that there are non members who use the website to seek information and this could also be true for you the FAAA Members. The Website has a general area for all to read and a Membership Section. There is a regular News update so a frequent visit to the site is suggested.

The FAAA website also has some useful interactive Service links and news on future Events. Your Webmaster Ray 'Happy' Day (Daedalus Branch) is always looking for items to populate the Website: for example Branch activities, related local news, general news, with perhaps photographs to support the copy but, hopefully not too often news of Members who have crossed the bar. Copy and photographs should be sent to the e-mail address below.
Email: webmaster@faaa.org.uk
Website: www.faaa.org.uk

Requests received

Harold Walker (TAG)

Harold is trying to contact TAG Frank Waring - he no longer has his Address book.

Spennymoor RNA

News of the death of shipmate Sydney Thompson who died alone following a heart attack. Crossed the bar October 3rd. Funeral took place in St Aidan's Church Chilton County Durham.

Albert Edward Wade

A request from a son looking for information related to his father's service career. At the time his father was in hospital (Merseyside), in a very serious condition and his son wanted to 'find out as much about his father's Fleet Air Arm career in the shortest possible time'. The details he gave: born Loughborough 1926 (age 85), volunteered for the FAA towards the end of WW2, underwent pilot training on Harvard aircraft in Canada, believed to be unable to take up officer training as this would have placed financial hardship on his family.

Feed back information

During October 2011 we had three electronic contacts (Web (2) email (1)) related to people with a FAA connection. These requests prompted the Editor to see what Associations were available to help surviving relatives 'fill in the gaps'. As Branch Members of the FAAA you might receive similar requests for help. I have been given two contacts:

Centurion A phone line:

Names A-K 02392 720433 and

Names L-Z 02392 724939

VETERANS- UK Veterans-uk/service_recordservice_records.html. This is an interactive 'online service'.



List of Accoutrements

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ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER – March 2011

ITEM	Cost (Incl. P&P)*
Gold Wire Blazer Badge	£13.50
Silk Blazer Badge	£ 9.25
Tie	£ 9.00
Beret Badge	£ 9.00
Ladies Head Square	£11.50
Member's Lapel Badge (Gilt)	£ 4.50
Member's Spouse/Association Lapel Badge (Chrome)	£ 2.50
Life Lapel Badge	£ 1.50
Baseball Cap	£ 7.25
Plastic Medal Holder (Large)	£ 5.00
Plastic Medal Holder (for Miniatures)	£ 3.50
Car Stickers	£ 1.50
Membership Cards	£ 0.00

ITEMS BOUGHT TO ORDER

Short Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 16.00
Long Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 16.00
Sweaters, Acrylic	£ 18.00
Sweater, Lambs wool	£ 26.00

Colours Available: White, Navy, Red, Light Blue, Maroon, Black, Grey, Bottle Green.

White and Light Blue not available in Lambswool

Sizes when ordering: Sweaters 32" to 59" in 2" stages.

Shirts, S, M, L, XL, XXL.

***Prices may change due to an increase in VAT (2011)**

ORDERS TO THE TREASURER

Cheques made payable to the **Fleet Air Arm Association**.

Money with order please to:

Michael Worship, 3 Arundel Drive, Fareham, Hants, PO16 7NP

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 FAAA 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 Thursday at 1100
Bournemouth War Memorial Home, Castlelane West
Secretary – Ray Wrigglesworth 01202 779321

BRISTOL AND DISTRICT - 2nd Monday at 2000,
The Royal British Legion Club,
Rodway Road, Patchway, Bristol
Secretary – Eric Pitt 01179 241803

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. Venue to be advised
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 812346

KENT - 4th Monday 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 023 925 80158

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 – Peter Murray 020 8428 2621

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

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

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

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

