



FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION



## "THE AIREY FAIREY"

Issue Number 2  
Summer 1999

# NATIONAL FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

## PATRON

*Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo K.C.B.*

## PRESIDENT

*Rear Admiral Iain Henderson CBE*  
*Flag Officer Naval Aviation*

## VICE PRESIDENTS

*T.Larbalastier      R.Golightly*

## CHAIRMAN

*D.Wyatt*

Hon.Editor.

*Barry Simons*  
*38 Badgers Walk*  
*Deanland Wood*  
*Golden Cross*  
*Hailsham*  
*East Sussex BN27 3UT*

*Tel: 01825 872539*  
*e mail Basimo@tesco.net*

The contents of "The Airey Fairey" are strictly copyright. All original articles are the copyright of the credited authors whilst others are the copyright of The National Fleet Air Arm Association. None may be copied or reproduced in any way without prior written permission.

The views contained herein are not necessarily the views of either the Hon. Editor or the National Fleet Air Arm Association and accordingly responsibility for them is not accepted.

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

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT (CHRISTMAS) ISSUE IS**  
**16<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 1999.**

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE FAA.

I was delighted to be given the opportunity of writing an article for the Fleet Air Arm Association, an organisation which gives such wholehearted support to the most professional air force in the world.

As such we are very much on the evolutionary path in the wake of the Strategic Defence Review which not only added impetus to the concept of Joint Operations i.e. Navy/Army/RAF but also spelled out that expeditionary warfare was to be the future modus operandi of Britain's Armed Forces. This will result in two new conventional aircraft carriers being the centrepiece of defence (not just the Navy) which is a very exciting prospect for the Fleet Air Arm, and the vessels will carry the Future Carrier Borne Aircraft (FCBA) which will replace both the RN's and RAF's Harrier aircraft and be flown jointly by RN/RAF pilots. All this will happen in approximately 2012 but, in the meantime, the Government announced the formation of Joint Force 2000 which will bring together the RN and RAF Harriers under a single command, together with RAF Nimrod and Sea King Search and Rescue Force. This new group will be commanded by a Royal Navy Rear Admiral (me) and be embedded in RAF Strike Command. I believe this initiative to be in the best interests of naval aviation for the future, and I will also continue to be the Head of the Fleet Air Arm as the post of FONA lapses and the new post comes into being.

Besides the formation of the Joint Force 2000, the Strategic defence Review also heralded the creation of the Joint Helicopter Command (JHC) which is the bringing together of all battlefield helicopters, in our case the Sea King Mk 4 Commando helicopters, under a single Command within the Commander-in Chief Land's empire. Again, this is a sensible evolution of Joint Operations. The Remaining naval helicopters, essentially Anti-Submarine, Airborne Early Warning and Anti-Surface Warfare, will come under the command of a Commodore working to the Commander-in-Chief. All in all a rich mix.

I can say with considerable pride that the Fleet Air Arm continues to be equipped with first rate aircraft. The Sea Harrier FA2 with the AMRAAM missile system is extremely potent, whilst the new Merlin ASW helicopter entered squadron service last December to eventually replace the still very capable Sea King Mk 6. The Sea King 4 continues to be a remarkable workhorse around the world, with a replacement planned, whilst the AEW variant of the Sea King is to receive a powerful update. Finally, the Lynx

Helicopter has steadily evolved and we are delighted with the new Mk 8 version which will be in service for many years to come.

But, even with the best equipment around, it is the quality of the people which really makes the difference. Having been in the Navy for over 30 years, I have seen much change which continues apace, but one area where there has been marked change is the professionalism which has shown itself both in peace and war. The Fleet Air Arm today is second to none, and as the privileged leader of this unique organisation, I intend to keep it that way. Your unstinting support would be most welcome and much appreciated.



Iain Henderson  
Rear Admiral  
Flag Officer Naval Aviation.

#### COMMENT.

There was some worry following an article published in one of the National daily papers to the effect that “the Fleet Air Arm was flying into history”. Both the item from FONA and a letter to the Patron of the Wrekin Branch, Bruce Grocott MP, clearly show this to be a possible misunderstanding of the facts.

I quote from the letter from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to Bruce Grocott. “Specifically, as part of the SDR, the Government announced plans to purchase a joint aircraft for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force along with the replacement of two aircraft carriers. The new assets are due in service in 2012, but in order to maximise the benefit of joint operations now, and to oversee the introduction of the new aircraft, the early rationalisation of existing command structures was necessary.

The joint aircraft will be operated in both the Land and Maritime environments and be staffed by personnel from both services. Consequently, there is no question that 'the Fleet Air Arm was flying into history'. Furthermore, the Royal Navy will continue to operate some 160 rotary wing aircraft and the aircrew and maintainers, along with their fixed wing colleagues, will continue to be serving members of the Fleet Air Arm irrespective of changes to command and control arrangements".

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Ceremonial

As National Parade Marshall I have had a number of requests for me to clarify the position regarding the wearing of commemorative medals e.g. National Service Cross, National Service Medal etc. Having made the necessary enquiries I am now in a position so to do.

Commemorative medals should only be worn in such a way as to not be confused by the general public with Service or Campaign medals and as such should only be worn on the RIGHT BREAST. Standard Bearers should never wear them when on duty. The Central Chancery state that they should not be worn at all.

### Remembrance Sunday

On behalf of myself and Geoff Lonsdale (my No1) I would like to thank those Branches and individuals who supported the Association at the Remembrance Service and Parade in Whitehall last November.

I realise that most of you attend your local event but I am sure with a little planning and effort each Branch could be represented by one or more members. For those of you who have never taken part on this very special occasion I cannot describe the feeling when you are there on parade. We would ask you to do your utmost to be represented this year.

Don't forget if you wish to attend the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> November that it is up to you or your Branch to make the booking.

Haydn Taylor.

### FAA Association National Standard

The Association National Standard has been paraded on 4 occasions over the past year. These were The Channel Dash Memorial Service in remembrance of those members of 825 who sadly lost their lives on that fateful day, Tarrant Rushdon airfield in remembrance of FAA personnel who were seconded for the D-Day operations, the FAA re-union at Yeovilton including

the handing over of HMS Daedalus paying off pennant and finally the Remembrance Sunday parade at HMS Sultan.

Terry Lowden

#### FAA Association on the Internet.

Over the past few months many opinions have been raised and several discussions have taken place about ways in which the Association can try to increase its membership, currently done by word of mouth, posters and notices in magazines or National newspapers.

The idea was suggested that perhaps we should be looking at a more dramatic project opening up a greater membership potential for the Association both within the UK and the rest of the world. This untapped channel is the Internet or the World Wide Web.

After some initial pricing it was deemed to be an expensive project for us to go to a specialist Internet Service Provider (ISP) so the project almost stopped before it had even begun. Fortunately a page was developed locally by one of our members and an approach was made direct to the Royal Navy's PRO asking if it is possible for this page and contact e-mail address could be added to their own recruitment page. They accepted our request and we have received a number of enquiries from both the UK and abroad,

One such request has enabled us to expand this project even further. It was an offer from Scott Spencer, the chairman of the FAA Special Interest Group, who are a group of model making enthusiasts in the USA who are solely dedicated to the aircraft and associated carriers relating to the Fleet Air Arm. We gladly accepted his kind offer to give the Association FREE web space and to place our page on his own FAA SIG Internet site. Currently our page is active and if you have access to the Internet, can be found at the following address; <http://www.faaSIG.org/faaasoc.htm>. The current page located on the Navy site will remain but we are request that they now point any further enquiries to our new page on the FAA SIG site.

We are now in the process of getting a membership application form attached to this web page to allow potential members to complete and return it direct to the Membership Secretary for processing. They will also forward the necessary payment to the Treasurer and may opt to become members of either a Branch nearest to them in the UK or if they so wish for either overseas or UK residents, to become members of the Daedalus Branch (HQ roll).

Fred Wadley

# THE NATIONAL FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

## HOW IT ALL BEGAN.

In 1980 it was suggested to me that we should consider trying to form a National Fleet Air Arm Association. This seemed to be a great idea and long overdue, so I wrote to the other two existing Associations, Gosport and Hanworth, suggesting that we meet to discuss the idea. It was arranged that this meeting would be held in the W.O's and C.P.O's mess at H.M.S.Daedalus. The mess manager, George Mills, arranged everything and we had a very constructive meeting. A further meeting was arranged at Hanworth where it was agreed that we should meet at the Nautical Club, Birmingham and set the wheels in motion to form the National Fleet Air Arm Association.

This historic meeting was arranged by the Birmingham Branch and took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1981 with four members from each of Birmingham, Gosport and Hanworth Branches attending.

Our first Chairman, Les Langford, was elected together with myself as Secretary. As we intended to recruit more members into what would be a National organisation it was agreed that as a matter of urgency we should select a President. One of my first jobs as Secretary was to undertake the task of 'sounding out' prominent people. We finally contacted Rear Admiral Middleton, DSO, who readily accepted our request and became our first President. Since then the incumbent of the post of Flag Officer Naval Aviation has kindly agreed to continue in this role, our current President being Rear Admiral Iain Henderson CBE.

Since that date we have grown in stature and have a Patron in Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo K.C.B., two Vice Presidents and an enthusiastic and hard working committee together with some 28 Branches. Hopefully we can grow from strength to strength and continue to be representative of not only ex-serving members of the Fleet Air Arm but also of the present generation who are continuing to uphold the finest traditions.

Good luck to you all.

"Doc" Halladay,  
Birmingham Branch.



## FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

### MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS.

The Association welcomes new members and membership is open to all ex-service and serving personnel of the Fleet Air Arm irrespective of rank or rating.

Full membership is restricted to RN personnel who underwent or are undergoing training for duties specific to the operation of aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. Other RN personnel and members of other services who served for a period of 3 continuous years in a discreet unit of the FAA may be granted full membership. Spouses of personnel qualified as above are automatically Ordinary Members of the Association.

Life Membership of the Association may be awarded at the discretion of the National Committee.

The National Committee or Branch may award Honorary and Associate Membership at National or Branch level as applicable.

Only Full Members names will appear on the National Roll and only they may hold National or Branch Office.

### Sub Lieutenant R.A.J.Warnford V.C.

On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June 1999 the Exmouth Town Council in company with the R.N.A. and other ex-service associations, are dedicating a plaque at the Exmouth Town Hall to the memory of two Royal Navy holders of the Victoria Cross, Sub Lieutenant R.A.J.Warnford V.C. (Fleet Air Arm) and Lieutenant D.R.Sandford V.C. (submariner).

The parade of Standards, including our National Standard together with various Branch Standards, and a Guard of Honour from the C.T.C.R.M. will be led from the Yeovilton Band. There will follow a Fly Past of the FAA Historic Flight.

It is intended that senior officers representing both Fleet Air Arm and Submarine Service will unveil the plaque.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

and 8/6  
(Return to Post  
Office)

8th June, 1918.

*My dear Balfour,*

If you agree, the King would like to send the following telegram from him to Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warnford:-

"I most heartily congratulate you upon your splendid achievement of yesterday in which you single handed destroyed an enemy Zeppelin. I have much satisfaction in conferring upon you the Victoria Cross for this gallant act. GEORGE R.I."

His Majesty feels that if this is to be sent the sooner the better.

*Yours very sincerely  
Stanfordham*

The Rt. Honble.,  
Arthur Balfour, M.P.,  
First Lord of the Admiralty.

Copy of letter by courtesy of the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

This was the swiftest award of a VC following an action, and is the first to be made by telegram.

Full details of Sub.Lieutenant Warnford's exploit can be viewed at the Museum.

## NEWSLETTER FROM AUSTRALIA

Many wartime RN personnel and their allies will remember the port of Hobart in Tasmania as a busy deepwater port where they could relax and enjoy a run ashore. Battleships, cruisers, carriers, destroyers, submarines could find secure berths alongside the many wharves or safe anchorage's close to the city. In the post war period up to the mid sixties it continued to be a busy port with frequent visits by RN ships. In that period the entire Harbourmaster's department was officered by either ex RN or MN, many doing much in the later development of the port.

So popular was Hobart that many of us stayed on or later migrated here, attracted by the delightful scenery, the mild climate and better opportunities for advancement in civilian life. Our members are fewer now but whenever a RN ship comes in, albeit a rare event these days, they like to go aboard to 'make their number' and enjoy reminiscing about the old days.

The port is different now, no more queues of cargo ships waiting for berths to load apples and other commodities. Many of the old wharves are gone, replaced by larger, modern installations catering to the cruise liners, container ship, roll-on-roll-off ships, Antarctic exploration and supply vessels. HMAS Huon, the naval depot, has gone the victim of defence budget cutbacks. Our only RAN contact is with an occasional ship exercising in the area. More frequent are the visits by U.S. Navy ships; mostly the larger aircraft carriers whose crews favour Hobart for R & R leave after spells of duty in the Gulf.

Then there is the annual Sidney to Hobart yacht race, this year ending so disastrously. In the days of sail, many fine ships were built in Tasmania and to this day the boatbuilders' art is still evident in the fine yachts and replicas of ships of two hundred years ago being built in the traditional manner. More so, the shipbuilding industry is booming with the development of the Sea Cat wave-piercing catamaran ferries being built in Hobart and now operating throughout the world.

We expatriates are proud of our maritime heritage and our link with ships and squadrons through Navy News, Warship World and FAA Association Magazine. Good luck with your proposed overseas branch.

Eric Mutton  
Ex PO AMA.

## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

### Angus

In October 1998 Angus Branch celebrated their 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The photo shows some of their many members attending the celebration.



Picture courtesy "Arbroath Herald".

### Bristol & District

For the fourth year running Bristol Branch and their Standard will parade at the Military and Veterans Festival Parade on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999 along with about 2,500 ex-service and serving personnel.

The parade is quite spectacular with each branch of the services led by senior military bands. This year's parade pays tribute to the Royal Air Force, who will lead the parade.

Other Branches are urged to attend to make a substantial FAA Association presence.

Bournemouth & District

We mourn the passing of our much-loved Secretary Peter Abbot, who has been with the Branch since its formation.

Congratulations to the editor and all concerned for producing the excellent first edition of the "Airey Fairey". Thank you Yeovil for your kind comments on the July visit (we shall be delighted to welcome you again) your hard work in organising the Yeovilton reunion was for us most enjoyable.

Our Chairman and several members attended the closing of HMS Osprey and enjoyed the hospitality of the mess. A stirring day, crowds thronged every part of the displays.

Our Tarranto night was a huge success held at the Ferndown Royal British Legion Club. The dinner was excellent, there was music and dancing followed with a loud rendering of Auld Laing Syne.

Christmas again saw us in the party mood with a buffet at our usual venue. With new members we are going from strength to strength and are looking forward with fingers crossed for a sunny evening in June for our BBQ.

Will any prospective visitors please note that our meetings are now on the first Tuesday of the month?

Jo Towler,  
Secretary.

Derbyshire

Visit to Osnabruck.

Taking advantage of the twinning arrangement between Derby and Osnabruck in Germany, the Marineverein, their equivalent of the RNA, invited the RNC to visit and attend the Stifunfest celebrating the founding of the Marineverein in 1892 and which coincided with twenty years of twinning.

This was celebrated with a traditional Labskausessen (beef hash and pickled herring) washed down with plenty of wine, beer and schnapps. Many other very enjoyable activities were undertaken.

On Sunday morning the group assembled at the British Army Barracks, Osnabruk. The parade, which followed, included the four Naval Associations of the RNC, the WRAFA, the Osnabruk RBL and the Marineverin and was led by a piper in full regalia together with the Standards. We marched to the Memorial where the Chairman and Secretary of the RNA laid a wreath. A bugler sounding the Last Post and two minutes silence followed this.

The praise for the way our German hosts had entertained us was unanimous. Two of their members (acting as interpreters) accompanied us wherever we went and they would not allow us to put our hands in our pockets for anything. Thanks are also due to Derby City Council for their financial contribution and to the Tour Company for the comfortable and efficient transport.

Bob Johnston

N.E. (Tyne & Wear)

In January of this year, members of our Branch were invited to a tour of HMS Ocean when she visited Sunderland, her adopted city.

Lieutenant Jason Freeborn, Ocean's Navigation Officer, was our guide for the day and we were given a very warm welcome. We had a very comprehensive tour and Lt. Freeborn fully explained the workings of the carrier. Perhaps a little different from the carriers we had served upon?

A marvellous day was had by all and as a gesture of our appreciation a plaque together with an Association diary was presented to Lt. Freeborn.



## IMPORTANT NEWS RELEASE!

**Senior Citizens are the Nations leading carriers of AIDS!!!**  
*Hearings AIDS, Band AIDS, Walking AIDS, Government AIDS and most of all Monetary AIDS to their Children.*

### Yeovil

Yeovil Branch started the year well with a very successful AGM, all the officers being re-elected and only a couple of changes in the committee, replacing some very hard working members. Six new members joined us one as far away as Exmouth.

Our programme for the year is in place with most activities and events already organised.

February included a visit to the Isle of Wight and a very informative talk on the history of VTOL aircraft by David Hobbs, Curator of the FAA Museum.

Various other activities including our annual dinner, Tombola, blessing of our Standard at St.Bartholomews in conjunction with our local RNA and Association of Wrens and lunch in the WO's and Senior Rates mess at Yeovilton. In May we had a guest speaker telling us about 'swimming with dolphins'.

Yeovil football ground hosts a Military Tattoo in aid of the Royal Star & Garter Home. A very well supported event with 40 to 50 standards in attendance.

Future events: **June** – horse racing night, **July** – speaker (ex navy) from a local garden centre and a trip to the Royal Tournament, **August** – quiz, **September** – Tombola and theatre trip, **October** – talk on cake decorating, **November** – everybody's favourite Rum + cheese + wine **December** – Christmas draw and social (tickets now on sale).

We think that this is a fairly comprehensive programme that should cater for everyone's taste. Visitors are most welcome.

Bob Ridout

## Yorkshire

To celebrate our move to the Royal British Legion Club, Headingley our Branch held a 'commissioning party'. Coinciding with this the Yorkshire Branch was presented with the White Ensign from HMS Osprey. We consider this to be a great honour and much credit for obtaining it must be given to our President Lieutenant Commander John Wellham DSC, RN (Retd). He was a wartime commander of 815 Squadron.

Another note of interest is that Andrew Linsley who led the team to raise a Blackburn Skua from the bottom of a Norwegian lake has now joined the Branch.

Alex Hodgins

Here endeth the Branch News.

+++++++

### **WE ARE SURVIVORS**

*(IF YOU WERE BORN BEFORE 1940)*

We were born before penicillin, polio shots and frozen foods, before Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, videos, Frisbees and the pill. We were born before radar, credit cards, split atoms, laser beams and ball point pens; before the tumble drier, dishwashers, electric blankets, air conditioners, drip cloths and before man reached the moon.

We got married first then lived together afterwards (how quaint). We thought fast food was what you ate in Lent, a big Mac was an oversized raincoat and crumpet – well? We ate this for tea. We existed before househusbands, computer dating, and dual careers; and when meaningful relationship meant getting along with cousins and sheltered accommodation was where we waited for a bus.

We were before day centres, group homes and disposable nappies. We'd never heard of FM radio, tape decks, electric typewriters, artificial insemination, word processors, yoghurt and young men wearing earrings. For us time-sharing meant togetherness, a chip was a piece of wood or fried potato, hardware meant nuts and bolts and software was not a word.

Before 1940 'made in Japan' meant junk, the term making out referred to how you did in your exams, a stud was something that fastened a collar to a



shirt and going all the way meant staying on the bus all the way to the depot.

Pizzas, Macdonald's and instant coffee were unheard of. In our day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mown, coke was kept in the coal shed, a joint was a piece of meat you had on Sundays and pot was something we cooked with.

Rock music was a grandmother's lullaby; Eldorado was an ice cream. A gay person was the life and soul of the party and nothing more whilst aids just meant beauty treatment or help for someone in trouble.

We, who were born before 1940, must be a hardy bunch when you think of the way the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are so confused and there is a generation gap....but by the grace of God....

**WE HAVE SURVIVED!**

Anon.

### **FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM**

*Extract from the FAA Museum Newsletter.*

We have mentioned our enthusiasm to collect material but our heritage focus needs more than that. We are not just a collection of artefacts but a centre for the human story of Royal Navy aviation and, through people's recollections, the details of ships and air stations that cannot be physically preserved can be kept alive. If you can find time to write, record or e-mail, do let Jan Keohane, the Assistant Curator responsible for personnel records, know your story.

e-mail [curator@faam.org.uk](mailto:curator@faam.org.uk)

The next edition of the Newsletter will include details of our 'Wings' Card for members of various Fleet Air Arm Associations, which will allow free access to the museum until December 2000.

#### *Restoration.*

Among the collection of 90 aircraft in the museum, there are a number that need work ranging from "tender loving care" to full restoration.

Most are in the Reserve Collection which we hope to move into our new preservation hangar when it is complete this year. David Hobbs is trying to gauge how much support is available to bring these historic aircraft back to display standard.

### "THE SPITFIRE GOES TO SEA".

The following is an extract from an article written by Commander R.M.Crosley, DSC\* RN (Ret'd). It is hoped to publish various extracts over the next issues of the Airey Fairey.

In the first few weeks of 1944 the only Royal Navy aircraft carriers at sea were on trade protection duties. However Furious, together with a couple of battleships, two cruisers and seven destroyers, sailed from Scapa Flow on February 9<sup>th</sup> with a typical load of fighter/attack aircraft – 12 Barrucas, 15 Seafire 1B's and 10 Seafire LIIC's of 801 and 880 squadrons. The aim of this strike against shipping along the Norwegian coast near Stadlandet was to gain experience in the interdiction of military transport ashore and afloat in Norwegian waters and to assess the weight of German air opposition should an attack on the Turpitz which was sheltering in a Norwegian Fjord be undertaken by the new Fleet Carriers, Indefatigable and Implacable, whenever they became available.

During their 150-mile trip, their target being the 5,000-ton Ensland off Vaaagso, the Barrucas were spotted by German radar on the cliffs as they climbed slowly to their target. The 12 Seafires became involved in low level combat with five 109's and two FW190A's. Three enemy aircraft were shot up and 8 hits from the Barrucas sank the Ensland.

At this time in the war over Britain, about 72 Seafires, mostly destined for the new Fleet Carriers, were attached to the 'Air Defence of Great Britain', the peak of their numbers being reached at about the time of the Normandy invasion. The Naval Air Stations at Yeovilton and Henstridge were fully occupied in Seafire pilot training, most of the instructors being experienced Sea Hurricane pilots.

In March 1944 I had been appointed PGI (Pilot Gunnery Instructor) to number 3 Wing. The wing consisted of four squadrons, 808, 885, 886 and 897, of twelve Seafire LIII's each destined for use in the forthcoming invasion of Normandy as bombardment spotters for a line of battleships to be moored some ten miles off the landing beaches.

Between March and June, the four squadrons freshly equipped with the new 'cropped blower' LIII Seafires had learnt the art of using the new gyro gunsight in air-to-air and air-to-ground firing, the Franks anti-G flying suit, the vagaries of the new 35 gallon 'slipper' tank and, flying from Ayr had

practised bombardment spotting with live shot in pairs over the Isle of Aran.

According to my logbook, 3 Wing, commanded by Cdr. N. 'Buster' Hallet, DSC RN, flew in to RNAS Lee-on-Solent on 17<sup>th</sup> May where we got ready for the invasion of France, wherever and whenever it might be.

We were joined there by some RAF Spitfires and an American Navy squadron, VCS 7, the latter learning to fly Seafires in 14 days, preferring to fly them rather than their OS 2U Kingfisher amphibians.

The Wardroom at Lee was like a five-star hotel compared with our usual corrugated-iron Nissan huts. There were white-gloved stewards padding about carefully sliding powdered eggs-on-toast our noses at breakfast, Spam stew for lunch and perhaps shepherds pie for dinner. The whole was surrounded by tennis courts, sylvan walks for senior officers on the Staff to salute each other, impressive, sweeping entrances and glorious Wrens everywhere. One hundred and twenty of us aviators plus about one thousand maintenance crew - all except four were RNVR - had to try to remember our manners. We were allowed special flying rations to equal the excellence of the RAF arrangements and 'Buster' Hallet arranged that our cabins were the best with a sea view thrown in.

'Time' said the philosophers, 'is nature's way of preventing everything from happening at once', but on June 6<sup>th</sup>, D-Day, the flying programme that was given to us at 0400, looked impossible. The rain and wind was driving against the windows and in the semi-darkness of dawn we thought for the thirty thousand troops in their three thousand landing craft, together with their escort of 500 Naval ships as they battled across the English Channel. How many would arrive without seasickness to drive ashore during the next 48 hours? Would we be able to hit the many concrete heavy gun emplacements before they landed their shells on the Trouville coastline where the British and Canadians were due to make their landings?

My first of three 'shoots' that day, with my number 2 Don Keene, was with the battleship Warspite. Cloud was rather low which meant we had to go down well below light flak height to do our spotting. My diary says:- four blokes were shot down, another managed to bale out over the Isle of Wight with only a broken arm as damage. On our first trip we spent 45 minutes directing shot on a heavy gun position near Trouville. The shooting was fairly accurate being at short range against a vertical target but it seemed to have no effect as I could still see the Germans firing their guns through the

the concrete dust blown up by Warspite's shells hitting the emplacements at the same time.

The next two trips that day, each on average lasting about 1½ hours, were against impromptu targets; the last hitting a gun emplacement 5 miles north of Caen alongside the canal. In better weather, enemy fire against us was fairly easy to avoid. The main difficulty came from our own AA fire and a few Spitfire 9's, from the 50 or so top cover hovering overhead at 25,000 feet, who had as yet no radar direction.

c R.Mike Crosley

+++++

### FIRST FLIGHT

Two articles in the first issue of "The Airey Fairey", the "Barracuda and "On The Murmansk Run" got my attention because of a personal connection. The Barracuda story brought to mind the first time I came into contact with the aircraft, a little background before I explain.

On completion of my AM(A) course at RAF St. Athans in June 1946, I was drafted to HMS Daedalus, before the end of the month another draft and I was on my way to 778 sqdn. At RNAS Ford. 778 being a service trials unit it had several types of aircraft. On completing my striker training the squadron chief gave me my Q.S. exam, I became qualified to sign the A700 on certain types of aircraft, one being the Barracuda, from that day on it was my aircraft to D.I. and service. Every time it flew I was up there with the fitter to help strap in the pilot and start up. As the rigger I did the marshalling in and out of the bomb blast pen. A Lt. Frakman (I am not sure if his name is spelled correctly) seemed to be the only pilot who flew it.

Here was I an 18-year-old sprog who had never flown when one day I asked Lt.Frakman for a flip. His reply was " get a chute and a helmet" these I managed to borrow. The next thing I knew was strapping myself into the observer's seat between the two side windows. I will never forget my first flight in the Barracuda, out over the channel and a low-level flight along the beaches as far as Portsmouth. Despite it's reputation and history, to me, that day, the 'Barra' was the safest aircraft flying.

I served with 778 until April 1947 before returning to Canada. I will never forget that day or Lt.Frakman. I heard some time later that he had been killed in a Sea Fury accident. I would like to know if this is correct and if anyone

can confirm or deny this I would be pleased to hear from them. I can be contacted via the Greater Manchester Branch.

The first two Canadian Squadrons, 825 and 826 were equipped with Barracudas in August 1945 at Rattray but were re-equipped with Firefly Mk.1's by the end of that year.

How did a Canadian end up in the FAA – well that's another story.

Don Bailey,  
Ex P.O. Avn. Tech. R.C.N.

+++++

### GOSPORT AVIATION SOCIETY (GAS)

In 1991 a small group of enthusiasts formed the Society to research and promote the history of aviation within the Gosport peninsula. The ultimate aim of the GAS was and still is, to operate a comprehensive museum which would display photographs, documents artefacts and eventually aircraft, connected with activities in this area.

Three famous bases located within the relatively small area are involved, and are well known to many FAA and RAF personnel: RNAS Lee-on-Solent, HMS Daedalus from 1939 until its closure in 1995, RAF Gosport from 1913 and as HMS Siskin from 1945 until its closure as an airfield in 1956 and the Royal naval aircraft Yard, Fleetlands, now known as NARO.

The Society is at present allocated a small building in the Gosport heritage area of the defunct armament depot at Priddy's Hard. Our premises contain many display boards which are periodically exhibited to the public in-situ or at other locations, a good collection of scale models, salvage aircraft parts and other artefacts including many rescued from HMS Daedalus during the present period of uncertainty whilst the MOD is trying to dispose of the site. We are also being allocated Dragonfly VX595 an ex Gosport machine from RNAS Portland, when we are able to house it.

Our Patron is John Farley who carried out most of the development test flying of the Harrier and we boast that Capt. 'Pug' Mather of Sea Fury/Mig fame in Korea and Ray Sturtivant the Naval Aviation author are among our members.

+++++

## *Just Gassin*



by Alan Key



Westland Dragonfly ( VX 595 ) being restored at Portland in time for the closing down ceremony on October 17<sup>th</sup> 1998

The main 1998 display season closed on a low with the final aviation event on October 17<sup>th</sup> at HMS Osprey.

The base held a FREE open day prior to its closure when it opened its gates to all for a final visit at a base that is due to close in March just short of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the worlds first military helicopter.

The Fleet Air Arm were the first force to place an order for helicopters for military use back in 1943 when it originally ordered Hoverfly I's.

For me it was a sad day as I had served at the base from the early 1970's as a naval air mechanic on 829 squadron with Wasps and left as a newly qualified CPO in 1978 after serving on 772 sqdn. and in the workshops. It was a good base at which to be located although, like Culdrose, a bit in the sticks as far as travelling was concerned, that aside you either liked or hated it.

I digress, the Captain at Portland should be congratulated for allowing the event to be free entry. I remember the days when most aviation events at UK bases were either free or a low minimal charge was made, after all they are OUR aircraft we are paying to see.

The open day had 14 helicopters, covering 50 years, on display. The only types missing being the Hoverfly and Hiller but of special interest to us of the GAS was the Dragonfly VX595, "Our Dragonfly"??

The aircraft first flew on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1949 and spent most of its life as a trials helicopter before eventually going into store at the RAF museum at Henlow. When the storage hangar at Henlow was declared unsafe the helicopter was loaned to RNAF Fleetlands before GAS secured it for rebuild and moved it to HMS Sultan.

The helicopter was progressed slowly and was next taken on by Osprey for completion prior to display at the open day where it was without doubt the star of the show with many "old WAFU's" admiring it and remembering their days working on the type. Well done Osprey, you did a marvellous job.

### **"I SEE NO SHIPS"**

*by Freddie Longman*

**Courtesy of the Gosport Aviation Society**

After each seaplane patrol away from our ship HMS Alcantara, we returned to a position where we expected to find her again. After one dusk patrol in October 1942 flying Seafox L4531 with observer S/Lt. Wilson we arrived back – and there was nothing in sight. It was October 13<sup>th</sup>, but I can't remember if it was a Friday! I should point out that it does not get dark.

We were deep in the South Atlantic, many hundreds of miles south of the Cape of Good Hope. There were no shipping lanes or fishing grounds in this area, just open sea.

I told my observer that I would continue on the same course for another 10 minutes while he checked his plot to see if he could work out what had gone wrong. All I had to do now was to fly the aeroplane and make plans for the inevitable, when we ran out of fuel. We had been airborne for just over 3 hours so I calculated that we would have about 15 minutes before the main tank ran dry and then about 20 minutes in the reserve tank. A voice over the intercom informed me that there was no obvious navigational error, so the only thing now was to search either side of our course until our fuel ran out. All decisions now had to be mine, as the safety of the aircraft and our lives depended on a successful forced landing. Taking my eyes off the horizon from time to time, I studied the sea conditions. The wind was fairly light, about 10 knots, and was blowing almost at right angles to the movement of the large ocean swells which are always present in these southern waters.

This would give me the opportunity to land on the top of a swell and still be roughly into the wind.

After 10 minutes with the engine coughing, I switched over to the reserve tank. I chatted once more over the intercom and decided that it was now time to break wireless telegraphy silence and send a 'Mayday' signal, ever hopeful that it would be heard by Alcantara and that she would be able to get a bearing on us. I also decide to drop a smoke float to confirm surface wind speed and direction. We were still at 2,000 ft., visibility good but no sign of the ship. I had decided that I must now concentrate on preparation for landing when the engine gave a final cough and stopped. I turned into wind, trimmed the controls for a glide, eased back on the stick until I got a judder, just before the stall, and noted the air speed: 65 knots.

We were now down to 1,000 ft.; time to pick my spot. I turned the nose slightly to port and starboard of the wind to check my track in relation to the ridge of a swell. Now it was time to pick which ridge. At 100 ft., I trimmed elevators to slightly tail-down attitude, held air speed by pushing the stick forward and kept track in line with the ridge of my chosen swell. Must concentrate on touching the water tail first, both floats together, otherwise we may turn over. We touched the water just as I had planned, both rudders of the floats dragging in the sea which tipped the nose forward until the whole keels were in the water and we were stopped. Everything was so quiet: only the sound of water splashing against the floats. ( I think our heartbeats and breathing were quieter)

Time to take stock. My observer put his code books and charts into a canvas bag provided for this purpose, with holes in the sides and base so that it would sink if thrown into the water should our rescuers arrive in a U-boat. I checked the aircraft then lifted the hatch in the top of each float and took out our heaving line and canvas bucket just in case we needed to use them as a sea anchor. I also took out our boathook always hopeful that someone would turn up soon and take us back home. I re-secured the hatches and tied the gear to a strut. I then remembered our emergency flying rations and felt in my pocket to make sure I had mine. These were a bit of a joke. They consisted of 8 glucose sweets in four different flavours. I often wonder how long they were supposed to last. The tine was marked ' break seal and open, only in emergency' so I put mine back in my pocket until we had one.

All we could do now was wait and hope that Alcantara had picked up our signal and not a U-boat. A small seaplane floats like a cork and I must say the next few hours were very uncomfortable, especially for my "oppo" who



was a young wartime only volunteer. He was beginning to feel ill and wished he hadn't volunteered for aircrew duties.

It must have been about 6 hours later that I saw a puff of smoke on the horizon, then the hull of a ship heading straight towards us. I shouted 'look' – I think that word must have been one of the quickest cures for seasickness known to man, for he was up on his feet, binoculars to his eyes and calling out "it's Alcantara", but we still had another 45 minutes to wait before she was close enough to pass a line.

When within hailing distance the 'buffer' called out that they would pass us a line by Costain gun and suggested that we retire to the tail end of the floats. This we did while the gunner took aim at the propeller end of the aircraft and fired. Unfortunately the wind was a little stronger than he estimated. The steel rod to which the line was attached didn't quite clear the aircraft and it went straight through the top wing. I moved rapidly forward to the bow of the float, grabbed the line off the wing, cut it clear of the flying wires, tied the end to a strut and then hauled the stronger line over and secured it to the bollard on the bow of the float. As soon as this was done we were slowly hauled towards the crane.

My observer was by now on the top wing with the hoisting gear ready to hook on and we were hoisted inboard in double quick time. We climbed out of our cockpits on to the deck and stamped our feet just to make sure it was real.

A board of enquiry sat to investigate this incident and it was concluded that a compass error was the most likely cause. A 1930's aeroplane did not have the luxury of a gyro compass and we relied on a magnetic compass in both pilot and observer's cockpit and these developed large errors in waters near to the Antarctic and Arctic.

The hole in the fabric covering was repaired and my log records that we were flying again two days later. This particular sortie in the South Atlantic always stands out in my mind for two reasons. One it was the longest we did being at sea for 93 days without seeing land and two, when we arrived back at Simonstown there was a letter to say I was a Dad. My wife had given birth to the first of our three daughters on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Note: At the time, Freddie Longman was a P.O.Pilot in the FAA and finally retired as a Lieutenant Commander.

HMS Alcantara was an armed merchant cruiser.

## CAN YOU HELP?

Ralph Hudson wishes to compile a book recording experiences of people who served in the FAA during Second World War. He would like to hear from those who served in fleet, light fleet and escort carriers, on CAT and MAC ships, on MNAB's or any other for that matter. His address is: 21a Lane Hackings Green, Lower Cumberworth, Huddersfield, HD8 8PW.

Historian seeking photos and personal information on the World War 2 Supermarine Seafire for future book. If you were a Seafire pilot or have personal photos and information of the Seafire, please contact Scott Spencer, 4429 Englewood Road, Helena, Alabama 35080 USA. (Note. Scott is the one mentioned in "FAA Assn. On the Internet" page 7. He has given the Assn. A lot of help setting up our web page, so please give him all the help you can).

Graham Druckers of 91 BIS Zwijsenstraat, 5021 KA, Holland would greatly appreciate any information regarding his uncle Lt.Cdr. Roy Baker-Falkner D.S.O., D.F.C., R.N., ex 812 Sqdn. (Swordfish) and 827 Sqdn. (Barracudas).

Ron Davis of Corradaghy, Magheraveely, Newtonbutler, Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, N.Ireland, BT92 6NY would like to contact any former members of 1850 Sqdn. who knew his father Ronald Edward Davis who served between March 1944 and July 1947.

Mrs. Jewel Spencer-Scroggs, 26 Braemar House, Lanark Road, Maida vale, W9 1NT, Tel: 0171 286 3409 wishes to contact two brothers, Dicky and Jack Trubshaw, 121 Sqdn., both of whom were in RAF but attached to FAA.

Adam Watson of 70 High Street, Stonehaven, Kincardineshire, AB39 2JQ, Tel. 01569 767905, e-mail cazad@cwcom.net would like to contact anyone serving on 766 squadron on or about 16<sup>th</sup> May 1949.

J.Prooi, Plevierstraat 38, 3181 TM Rozenburg zh, The Netherlands would like to contact any family members of Sub.Lt. F.L.Lees of Newport, Fife and Sub.Lt. B.P.Grigson of East Harling, Norfolk, both of whom were killed on the night of 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1940 when their Swordfish, L7647, crashed on the island of Rozenburg, Holland. They were members of 825 Squadron.

**848 SQUADRON MALAYAN EMERGENCY FORMATION**

Annual reunion in Pine Lodge Hotel, Bromsgrove on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1999.  
Please send SAE for details to L.Smith, Oakdale, Church Lane, Ashford  
Carbonnel, Ludlow, Shropshire, SY8 4BX.

**FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION – NAMED LAPEL BADGES**

Lapel badges with your name engraved within 40mm x 10mm rectangle  
mounted over a 30mm dia. FAA Assn. Crown over anchor in winged laurels  
emblem available from S/M R.Frost at £4.20 each. Print the name you wish  
to be engraved (Maximum 14 letters) and send together with cheque payable  
to R.G.Frost, 10 Charfield Road, Kingswood, Wooton-under-edge, GL12  
8RL. Profits go to the Swordfish Heritage trust.

**IT IS WITH REGRET THAT WE ANNOUNCE THE NAMES OF  
THOSE WHO HAVE "CROSSED THE BAR."**

*They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.*

**PETER ABBOT**                      **BOURNEMOUTH**

**HARRY BARKER**                      **YORKSHIRE**

**JIM LAURIE**                              **YORKSHIRE**

**BRIAN MORRIS**                              **SOLENT**

**SAM PORTER**                              **GREATER MANCHESTER**

**DEREK POWNALL**                      **ANGUS**

**PAT RESTALL**                              **ANGUS**

**ROD STURROCK**                              **ANGUS**

**STAN TRAVIS**                              **GREATER MANCHESTER**

LIST OF ACCOUTREMENTS ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER.

4<sup>th</sup> March 1999.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>Cost (Incl. P&amp;P)</u>
Ties	£7.25
Gold Wire Blazer Badges	£11.00
Silk Emb. Blazer Badges	£8.50
Life Member Lapel Badges	£1.00
Members Lapel Badges (Gilt)	£1.25
Associate Members/Spouse Lapel Badges (Chrome)	£1.25
Ladies Head Scarves	£8.50
Beret Badges	£6.75
Car Stickers	£1.25
Membership Cards	£0.15

ITEMS BOUGHT TO ORDER

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

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

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

Note: Berets may be obtained from: Uniform Clothing Store  
H.M.S. Collingwood  
Newgate Lane  
Fareham, Hants.

Last known price - £6.71

Tel: 01705 722351

*Front Page  
HMS ARK ROYAL, 1978.  
Crown Copyright, Fleet Air Arm Museum.*