



## FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION



## “THE AIREY FAIREY”

Issue number 3  
Winter 1999



## FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

Dear Member,

### FLEET AIR ARM MEMORIAL

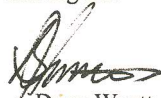
I am sure you will remember that some three years ago a Trust comprising of our own Association together with the FAA Officer's, TAG's, the Aircrewman's and the Aircraft Handler's Associations was created to look into the possibility of a memorial in London and to raise sufficient funds to enable us to commission a design, sculptor and architect as well as meet the costs of obtaining the necessary consents and planning approval.

I am delighted to tell you that formal approval for our memorial design has now been granted. It has been a tricky business to achieve with a number of Authorities to satisfy, not all of whom are well disposed to memorials, still less those of a military nature. Features of the early designs were rejected and a number of compromises had to be made. Despite this I believe that James Butler's final design is stunning, and a highly attractive exposition of modern sculpture. The memorial will be situated outside the MOD Main Building (Whitehall Extension) in Victoria Embankment Gardens.

With the necessary approvals now in place we are moving into the construction phase and of course the main expenditure. Our intention is that the unveiling ceremony should take place in early June 2000, and our Patron, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has said that he would be delighted to do this.

Now that we have all the important planning permission, and in order to meet the timescale, we are asking members of the Fleet Air Arm Associations to help us – we need to raise a further £200,000 which includes an endowment to Westminster City Council for the maintenance of the memorial in perpetuity. There will therefore be no further call for funds. The committee of the FAA Association is very strongly in favour of this splendid project, which will record for all time, the sacrifice made by over 6,000 men and women of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm.

I ask you personally to support the Memorial Appeal if you possibly can by sending a cheque to the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Trust. If you have already contributed I hope you will excuse this letter which, in the interests of speed and the ease of administration, is being sent to our full mailing list.

  
pp Doug Wyatt  
Chairman

Fleet Air Arm Memorial Trust, 4 St. James's Square, London, SW1Y 4JU.

# NATIONAL FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

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

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT (SUMMER) ISSUE IS**  
**30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2000**

## EDITORIAL.

First I must apologise for the error which occurred in the last issue. As has been pointed out a number of times, there were two page 20's but no page 22. I could of course do the same as many large organisation and blame the computer, but as I am one of the first to point out that "the computer does not make errors but it is the operative," I must own up and put it down to digit trouble (or is it just getting old?). I did find the error but unfortunately gave the printer the incorrect version. Hopefully Branch Secretaries managed to send out the missing page.

I must thank those members of the Eastbourne branch, particularly Ted Cuff who produces all the address labels and affixes them to the envelopes, for their help in mailing copies of the last issue.

There is always a need for more articles from our members, without continual support we cannot continue to produce a magazine. There must be many members who have interesting stories to tell – why not share them with others. Don't be shy let's have your input!

As a matter of interest, I have been passed a copy of the TAGS Journal and noted that Les, whoever he may be, did not like the name chosen for our magazine. I quote "I have recently had a copy of the Fleet Air Association first magazine. Quite good for the 1<sup>st</sup> issue but the name 'Airy Fairy', what brain of Britain thought this up". Without wishing to get into a slanging match, you would have thought that he could have got both the correct name of our Association and the correct spelling of the magazine name – after all they are both printed on the front cover and therefore plain to see!

The magazine printers have suggested a better method for the reproduction of photographs which we will be using in this and future issues. Due to production costs they will still only be produced in black and white. .

I have received a number of queries regarding the Daedalus Branch. It would be helpful if you could please address queries to the secretary, Len Owen. His address is 33 Gisborne Close, Mickleover, Derby, DE3 5LU. Tel: 01337 514030 and e-mail LOwen33@aol.com

## WHAT IS AN AIRY FAIRY?

Long, long ago, before Puss in Boots became a brand name of Paul Raymond or "7 Up" had to rethink their decision to use Snow White as a PR icon and fairies at the bottom of the garden was unlikely to cause anything other than mild amusement or a slightly raised eyebrow, the horny handed sailors and sweaty steam bosuns of His Britannic Majesty's Imperial Navy decided to dub the men of the Fleet Air Arm "Fairies". This was largely because they did not understand the function or routines of these men who worked with the flying machines which cluttered the upper deck of their warship, and caused the ship to have to turn into wind at odd times, and sometimes even prevented the stokers making smoke, something they enjoyed very much as it caused the dabtoes to keep scrubbing the after parts of the ship, or worse still made them work even harder to raise steam to accommodate flying stations.

So to annoy these interlopers the aforementioned general service sailors called them Fairies and for some time this did annoy the FAA personnel but very soon their superior intelligence saw that by turning the jibe back on the perpetrators and accepting it as a distinction bestowed upon them, the insult would be meaningless and harmless. This they did and even adding the Airy prefix to give further distinction to the appellation.

So we became the "Airy Fairies".

Remember Taranto (the Japanese used it as a model for their attack on Pearl Harbour), Bismarck would very likely have made port undetected and without damage to her rudder and screws which sealed her fate had it not been for the 'Stringbags' and think on what a handful of Sea Harriers achieved in the Falklands and what more could have been accomplished – or perhaps more quickly if we had had an 'Ark Royal' out there with her Gannets, Phantoms, Buccaneers and Sea Kings. The Argies would not have lasted five minutes. But blame the lack on the big gun sailors by whose decree the carrier force ceased to be.

BE PROUD TO BE AN AIRY FAIRY  
I KNOW I AM.

*Bill Watson.*

## FLEET AIR ARM

In 1907 the Wright Brothers offered the patents for their aeroplane to the Admiralty and received the following reply:

**“Their Lordships are of the opinion that they would not be any practical use to the Naval Service”.**

History has since proved how wrong those gentlemen were and it turned out that aviation was not to be ignored. First the Navy went ahead with the building of a rigid airship, meanwhile various Naval officers were learning to fly at their own expense and were responsible for the application of aircraft to Naval use by their somewhat daring experiments. In 1912 Lieutenant Samson took off from a stationary ship for the first time, from HMS AFRICA in a Short S27.

In 1912 the Royal Flying Corps was formed with separate Naval and Military Wings and plans were approved for a chain of Naval Air Stations around the coast. On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1914 the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) became the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and this marked the real birth of Naval Flying. It had 228 officers, 700 ratings with 40 aeroplanes, 31 seaplanes and 7 airships – a force to be reckoned with, as it was soon to show. Successful bombing raids were carried out against German Zeppelin sheds and the first night aerial bombing raid was against the German gun batteries at Oostende. In 1915 the first Victoria Cross to be awarded to a Naval airman was gained by Sub.Lt.R.A.J. Warnford who attacked and destroyed, in the air, Zeppelin LZ37 and overnight became a national hero.

What was needed most of all, however, was to be able to take aeroplanes to sea with the Fleet. This began with seaplane carriers; HM Ships Engadine, Riviera and Empress, but rough seas too often prevented effective flying. Experiments subsequently took place with conventional wheeled aircraft taking off from platforms mounted on gun turrets of battleships and from lighters towed behind destroyers. On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1917 Squadron Commander Dunning made the first deck landing by flying a Sopwith Pup on to a flight deck built over the forward section of HMS Furious. This event laid the foundations for future purpose built aircraft carriers.

In 1918 the RNAS and RFC were merged into one service, the Royal Air Force but, after a long struggle, the Naval Air Branch, later to be known as the Fleet Air Arm was returned eventually to Admiralty control in 1937. World War 2 gave a new impetus to Naval flying, which gradually changed

Naval tactics from a ship versus ship conflict to aircraft versus ships, with devastating effect. The crippling of the Italian Fleet in Taranto Harbour by Swordfish biplanes carrying torpedoes in a night attack in 1940 was undoubtedly the most notable Fleet air arm success of the war.

By the end of World War 2 the strength of the Fleet Air Arm was: 59 aircraft carriers, 3,700 aircraft, 72,000 officers and ratings and 56 air stations all over the world. The aircraft carrier had replaced the battleship as the Fleet's capital ship and its aircraft were strike weapons in their own right. However, piston engined aircraft were reaching the limits of their development. The Sea Fury together with the Firefly, bore the brunt of the next conflict – the Korean War. From the Fleet Air Arm's point of view the light Fleet carrier had more than proved its worth. The squadrons had brought their efficiency to new heights and the experience would serve in good stead for the new generation of jet aircraft about to come into service on the larger strike carriers Eagle and Ark Royal.

*Derbyshire Branch.*

### BARRACUDA

Following the article, which appeared in our 1st issue, there have been comments both for and against the Barracuda. One of these is included below.

“The article on the Barracuda gave it quite a reasonable write up which, in my experience, was quite the opposite. I was instructing in operational training at Fearn in Scotland. One beautiful clear night – odd for Scotland – we were flying low just off the coast, and one bloke had been banging his wing tip against us, very keen to keep in formation, when suddenly he just went straight down into the sea. Not a sound from them so we told the other pupil to buzz off home whilst we carried out a search. The next thing there was a big flash and the clot had flown straight into the cliffs. Did we get lonely? We never did find out the causes of either crash, but it did not enamour us to the Barra.

A week later, we were just about to take off on another daylight exercise and were watching another instructor friend of mine with his two pupils practising dive-bombing and on the way down his wing came off. He had been on a course with me and this crash came as a complete shock. I hadn't had the 'twitch' but was certainly about to.”

*J.D. Baring-Gould.*

I have been reliably informed that there was a material fault with wing locking pins that caused them to rapidly wear thus becoming loose fitting. This in turn caused 'flutter' during a dive and resulted in wings coming off.



## 'OPERATION JUDGEMENT'

4<sup>th</sup> May 1945

The last World War 2 operation carried out by the Fleet Air Arm in Europe was 'Operation Judgement' the object being to sink the Norwegian cruise line 'Blackwatch' which was being used as a U-boat depot ship together with other shipping in the fjord.

The following is a copy of an account by Lieutenant (A) J.Lloyd RNVR Rtd.

HM Ships under the command of Vice Admiral R.R.McGregor CB, DSO RN, flying his flag in the Cruiser HMS Norfolk (Capt. J G Y Loveband RN)

HM Carriers	- Searcher	(Capt. J W Grant DSO RN)
	- Queen	(Capt. K J D'Arcy DSO RN)
	- Trumpeter	(Capt. K S Colquhoun DSO RN)
Cruiser	- HMS Diadem	(Capt. AM Knapp RN)
Destroyers	- HMS Opportune	(Cdr. R E D Ryder VC RN)
	- HMS Zambesi	(Lt.Cdr. J M Palmers RN)
	- HMS Carysford	(Lt.Cdr. S J Rich DSO RN)
	- HMS Scourge	(Lt.Cdr. C G H Brown DSO RN)
	- HMS Savage	(Lt.Cdr. C W Malin DSO DSC RN)

### **Operation**

To attack the U-boat depot ship 'Blackwatch' (formerly owned by the Fred Olsen line) at Kilboten on the eastern side of Hinnoy near Narvik. Other shipping was expected in the vicinity and to be attacked once the 'Blackwatch' had been despatched. The Avenger force included 853 Sqdn. from HMS Queen, 882 Sqdn. from HMS Searcher and 846 Sqdn. from HMS Trumpeter. There were 44 Avengers in total. A strong escort of Wildcat fighters accompanied the Avengers.

Take off time was 1615 with an expected arrival over the target area of 1700. The force was led by Lt. J Toner (Snr. Pilot), Lt.Cdr. C L F Webb (CO of 846 Sqdn. Observer) and PO Tyler (TAG)

On arrival at the target area it was observed that a U-boat (U711) was lying alongside the 'Blackwatch' and a tanker and anti aircraft ship were also in the vicinity. Flack was thick around the target and aircraft 'C' the second aircraft to attack was shot down, jettisoning its bomb load some distance from the target. Aircraft 'P' (Lt. D Bunyan, later to become CO of the Squadron) was also hit but made it back to the ship.

The 'Blackwatch' was set on fire and sank, as did the U-boat and the tanker. There were no further casualties from 846 Sqdn. But one other Avenger was lost.

After this operation the ship steamed south to join the force proceeding to Copenhagen to receive the German forces surrender. Air cover was maintained throughout VE Day. The ship returned to Scapa Flow leaving again on 14<sup>th</sup> May. Whilst sailing through the Pentland Firth a U-boat was sighted and an aircraft was launched to escort it to Loch Eriboll. It was flying the black flag of surrender. Two frigates eventually took over the escort duties.

Lt.(A) J Lloyd.

Arthur Howes, a member of Tamworth Branch and of 846 Sqdn. Association, was recently contacted by a Norwegian film company who wished to make a film about Russian convoys and 'Operation Judgement'. They wanted the view of squadron aircrew who took part and of the squadron maintenance personnel.

The day of shooting was 21<sup>st</sup> June this year at the FAA Museum, Yeovilton starting at 1000. The filming was completed at 1815. Previously the film crew had already been both to Russia and Germany to get accounts from Russian naval personnel and German U-boat commanders.

The figurehead from the 'Blackwatch' was raised in 1960 and is on display in the grounds of Forrestgate, Dalry, Castle Douglas, Scotland.



"Battle Flag" of 846 Squadron.

Various patrols were therefore organised, their main purpose being to straffe and blow up enemy floating mine going westwards through the landing areas along the coastline with the ebb tides.

By 20<sup>th</sup> July, the Spitfires had been returned to the RAF, 886 and 808 were amalgamated, as were 887 and 895 Naval Air Squadrons. They were then re-armed with F6F-5 Hellcats from the US Navy for future operations in the Far East.

The four Naval Squadrons could claim to have carried out about 1400 spotting sorties over France during the period when the ships' guns were in range of the enemy – from 6<sup>th</sup> June to 8<sup>th</sup> July. Air control or ship control radio directions were usually given using the clock code. A clock was hung over the target, 12 o'clock being due north. Ranging shots were then fired in pairs until the target had been 'bracketed'. Fire for effect was then ordered by the pilot and up to fifty shells in a series of broadsides would land somewhere near the last ranging shots' position and, hopefully, demolish the target. Having done about 30 sorties per pilot, each pair would have been at the receiving end of about 1500 shells each.

But the four Naval Squadrons had lost five Seafires to flak and three to German fighters in the first 2 days of the operations. Six more were lost some to 'friendly' fire, by 30<sup>th</sup> June. The two RAF Squadrons flew 969 sorties (compared with the Navy's' 1400, losing 8 aircraft in combat and claiming 1 Me 109. The US Navy lost 8 aircraft in 209 sorties.

Returning to the Seafire activities in the Orkneys once more, 801 and 880 Squadrons' Seafires had made 7 trips over Norway in Furious between February 11<sup>th</sup> and July 17<sup>th</sup> where they supplied the Fleet's air defence. The Fleet included Formidable, Victorious and Indefatigable on some occasions when the Turpitz was the main target. The use of several carriers together with much larger numbers of fighters aboard as their air defence, marked a change in policy in the Royal navy's use of their Home Fleet tactics against the Germans, both in the Mediterranean and in the North Sea. It was an admission that their AA gunnery was an insufficient defence against the Germans air threat. Furthermore, battleships' heavy guns were no longer the main attack weapon. Strike aircraft operating from carriers were beginning to be recognised as the Navy's main attack force. The strike squadrons were mainly 829, 830 and 821, Barracudas together with Corsairs of 1831 and 1834, Wildcats of 881 and Firefly's of 1771. Hellcats operating from escort

carriers such as Emperor, Pursuer, Searcher, Fencer, Nabob and Trumpeter. The end of 1944 had replaced most Barracudas by the US Navy's Grumman Avenger TBM.

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 1944, on operation Lombard, a dozen Seafires of 801 and 880 Squadrons had again escorted 16 Barracudas of HMS Furious on a strike against a German convoy off Aalesund, damaging six ships and sinking another. On July 17<sup>th</sup> a few Seafires from 880 Squadron had again taken part in operation Mascot – another strike against the Turpitz. 887 and 894 Seafire Squadrons also supplied Combat Air Patrol from Indefatigable. Furious also carried 3 Swordfish of 842 Squadron as anti-submarine patrol. 44 Barracudas made the attack on Turpitz, in Altenfjord, with an escort of 48 fighters. They were spotted by German radar operating on the cliffs above them as they approached the land and by the time they arrived on the scene, a smoke screen largely obscured the Turpitz as she lay alongside the steep sided Fjord, making accurate bombing impossible. In fact, the bottom of the Turpitz, by that time in her useless life, was full of concrete to repair damage done by the brave midget submarine attack by Godfrey Place, VC undertaken in the previous September. Her AA guns had been moved ashore to allow them to aim at dive-bombers having, like most battleships' AA guns, a minimal elevation and slow traverse speed. The remainder of 802 and 880 Squadrons remained ashore at RAF Skebrae in the Orkneys working up newly joined pilots.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July I received a buff envelope from 'Their Lordships' appointing me to 880 Squadron to relieve t.dr. 'Moose' Martin, DSC, RNVR, as CO. After two weeks leave I arrived at the Naval Air Station at Hatson in the Orkneys, wondering what had hit me?

After a few deck-landing practices in Ravager on August 10<sup>th</sup> I joined the squadron on 14<sup>th</sup> August in time for 'Operation Goodwood' where 880 Squadron in Furious joined with Indefatigable's 30 Seafires for yet another series of attacks on the Turpitz on August 22<sup>nd</sup>.

At dawn on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, eight of us took off for CAP. In our case we had permission to carry out our patrol over Nord Cap, about 40 miles north of Altenfjord where Turpitz lay. This patrol area was still within Indefat's low level radar cover yet near enough to shore to allow us to intercept any Gerries making their way out to the Fleet. We were also able to cover the strike withdrawal. The strike on the Turpitz was made by 22 Barracudas armed with 1,000lbs. Armour-piercing bombs, followed by Corsairs armed with 500lbs. Bombs. Because of the Corsair's higher approach speed and rapid climb to

dive bombing height, the Corsairs achieved surprise before Turpitz could lay her usual smoke screen. She never went to sea again.

On the same day, Indefat's two Seafire Squadrons had taken part in a strike on an enemy seaplane base at Banak and had sunk seven seaplanes at their moorings. Next their CAP had intercepted two BV 138 floatplanes below Indefat's radar cover at 700 feet above sea level. In spite of appalling weather S/Lt. Dick Reynolds and Lt. H. Palmer (SANF) shot them down. It was good news for the Seafires to learn that our new 20mm cannon plus the gyro gunsight improvements made it easier for us to outrange the defence guns in BV's and to pierce their armour plate.

Seafires used 15 degrees of the normal 45 degrees of flap for take offs from a carrier. (The take off run in a fleet carrier with a guaranteed 30 knot wind over the deck was no more than about 250ft. – or the same length as a short catapult run is today. The early Seafire III's only had a two position flap selector and the 15 degree position required for take-off was therefore obtained by fitting wooden blocks to jam the flaps open at 15 degrees for take off purposes. Following take off, the blocks were freed by momentarily selecting flaps down. The propeller slipstream and the slight crosswind from port carried the blocks backwards depositing them on the bridge. We in 880 and Stuart Dewars 801 squadron had a competition to see how many times we could hit the Officer of the Watch.

Seafires carried out five more strikes over Norway from September 12<sup>th</sup> until December 7<sup>th</sup> 1944. The strike on Aaramsund on 12<sup>th</sup> September was the last from Furious. In this sortie 4 ships were sunk and oil storage tanks at Sandnessjoen set ablaze. 880 Squadron Seafires, using oblique F24 cameras in the photo-recce role also took part in the strike.

The next four strikes by Seafires on Norway were to be from Implacable only. Only two of the four strikes were accompanied by 887 and 894 Squadrons as they were having to leave UK in Indefatigable in November bound for the Far East to take part on January 4<sup>th</sup> in the attack on the Sumatra oil refinery at Pangkalan Brandon and later, on January 24<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> on the oil refineries at Soangi Gerong and Pladjoe. Further strikes in March, April and May by 887 and 894 Squadrons' Seafires providing support for the US Navy in its invasion of Okinawa.

*Mike Crosley.*

The following Article was found among the papers of our late Shipmate Vic Phillips BEM, Isle of Wight Branch, who crossed the bar in Dec 1997.

### THE STORY OF A PRE-WAR EX-RAF WAFU

I joined the RAF as an Aircraft Apprentice at RAF Halton in August 1934 and after 3 Years training passed out in July 1937 as an Aircraftsman 1st Class (Fitter 2 airframe and engines). Posted to 58 Bomber Squadron first at RAF Boscombe Down and later at RAF Linton on Ouse, and, in addition to my maintenance duties, I volunteered and was accepted as an Air Gunner, flying in Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Aircraft as the Rear Gunner.

In the summer of 1938 an Air Ministry Order was issued to the effect that RAF Aircraft Maintenance Tradesmen could volunteer for transfer to the Royal Navy. The intention being to become the nucleus of the maintenance organization of the Fleet Air Arm, which, until then, had been the responsibility of the RAF but would now be taken over by the Navy. About half a dozen of us on 58 Squadron volunteered and on 1st Dec 1938 two of us, Doug Teasdale (now deceased) and myself, found ourselves entering the gates of the RN Barracks at Portsmouth. We were green as grass as far as naval procedures were concerned, and we had no idea of the shocks in store for us. We found that just fewer than 100 of the RAF Volunteers were the first batch to 'turn over' with another 100 or so to join 2 weeks later. Including Doug and myself there were about twelve of us arriving at the same time.

Having been checked in at the Regulating Office we were handed over, by what I later discovered to be the RPO, to someone called 'Stripy' who we thought at first was a Sergeant (at least he had three stripes like a RAF Sergeant) with the order to show us to the mess. 'Stripy' took us to what looked like a Barrack Block and led us into something like an empty Church Hall and then he said, "this is your Mess". No beds - so someone said "Where do we sleep? 'Stripy' replied "See those bars up there above your heads, you sling your hammock between them". To say that we were shocked was putting it mildly, even as Apprentices in the RAF we had very good dormitories with beds etc.

The second shock was going out or "ashore" by "Liberty Boats". We had been used to reporting at the Guardroom when leaving an RAF Station, but this was ridiculous having to fall in at specific time in order to be Inspected by the Officer of the Day before being marched through the main gate as a "Liberty Boat".

Of course we were still in RAF Uniform until we were kited out with our Naval Uniforms. Naval Officers complained that we were not saluting in a Naval Manner. RAF and RN Salutes were as different as Chalk and Cheese. However, we insisted that until we were in Naval Uniform we would still use the RAF salute and we did. With regard to the hammock slinging business, our stay in RN Barracks lasted for 14 days, but Doug and I (with quite a few more) went "ashore" every night and stayed at "Aggie Westons" in Arundel St., Portsmouth for the princely sum of ninepence the night in old money, with a good clean bed in a wooden partitioned cubicle having wire netting over the top; wonderful value and it meant we did not have to sling our hammocks until we joined our first ships.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1939 (Empire Day), the end of our stay in RN Barracks I was drafted to RAF station Worthy Down, later to be commissioned as HMS Kestrel. Shortly after I was drafted to HMS Liverpool, which had a complement of 3 Walrus aircraft, on the East Indies Station. Doug, in the meantime, had been drafted to HMS Glorious in the Mediterranean and we did not meet again until the end of 1940 whilst we were both at Lee-on-Solent.

In spite of the trials and tribulations of transferring from the junior to the senior service, I must have been a glutton for punishment to accept the naval way of life, because I continued to serve until my retirement in October 1965. What happened in the intervening years is the subject of another story.

Suffice it to say that this is only the story of the transformation of a young RAF Aircraftsman into a Ldg. Air Fitter (E) of the Fleet Air Arm. Incidentally the official numbers of the ratings of the FAA started at FX7001 with the first 50 being Naval Apprentices. The numbers of the first batch of transferees from the RAF started at FX75051 and mine was FX75066 so I guess I was the sixteenth adult lower deck member of the Fleet Air Arm.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
YOUR NATIONAL COMMITTEE



A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
"A GUID NEW YEAR TO ANE AND A"  
FROM  
THE ANGUS BRANCH

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
ALL AT THE ESSEX BRANCH



A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A VERY PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
ALL AT SUNNY EASTBOURNE

TO MEMBERS OF THE FAA ASSOCIATION  
RON GOLIGHTLY WISHES YOU ALL  
A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A VERY PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR





TO ALL MEMBERS  
A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM THE MEMBERS AT HANWORTH



A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
THE GREATER MANCHESTER BRANCH

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
THE WATFORD BRANCH



TO ALL MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES  
A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR  
FROM  
ISLE OF WIGHT BRANCH

THE  
COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON  
FROM  
THE HORDE FROM FORD



## AROUND THE BRANCHES

### FORD

Just a few words from the Ford Branch. Still running at around 40 members meeting in the Ford prison officers' club on the last Thursday of the month. (Some would say an apt place for the types who form the branch.

This effort is rather limited due to the reluctance of our lot to indulge in any other activity than the monthly pint and the 'rabbit' that goes with it! The Social Committee however had no difficulty in filling a bus to visit the penultimate performance of the Royal Tournament. This was enjoyed by all, despite the obvious nostalgia and disappointment that this was to be last performance in this form. As a sop, the so-called Minister of Defence has promised us a run-out on various venues throughout the country. I can just imagine watching this effort on Horse Guards in the middle of a summer thunderstorm!

A note on our charitable fund raising. For the past three years the Ford branch and the Littlehampton branch of the RNA have sponsored an 'Ukkers' match during the Littlehampton Regatta weekend. The proceeds of this little thrash are divided between the KGFS and the Swordfish Trust. To date we have achieved yearly totals of over £1,000 and much credit must go to one of our members, Peter Newton, who has personally raised over £600 in sponsorship. This year our thanks also go out to the Hanworth and Angus branches who responded generously to an appeal by our organizer Dave Perrott. The way the score over the years is progressing, Ford must appear to be the Joshua Lomu of the 'Ukkers' world to our RNA opponents. I will not embarrass the 'fishheads' by revealing the results to date or our method of play, only to remind them that's it is all for a good cause.

### BOURNEMOUTH

A group of our members joined the many across the Channel to the Normandy beaches in June.

Some of our members also attended the service at the well named 'Windy Corner' at Tarrant Rushton to honour the many who left from this corner of Dorset to take part in the 'D Day' landings.

**BOURNEMOUTH** (Len Wellington – Canada).

I am now the Aircraft maintenance Boss at one of the aircraft clubs to which I belong. We only have aircraft built before 1960 as they are considered 'classics'. They are all two seaters in the trainer category as used in the Commonwealth training schools in Canada during the war years. There is a Tiger moth of 1942 vintage, it is the English version – a 'tail dragger', a Fleet Cannuck (1946), an Aeronca Champ (1946) and in the shop we are rebuilding a 1939 Stinson. We have three wrecks from which we are building just one. It is a lot of hard work but also a lot of fun. We are nearly all ex something so you can imagine there are a lot of stories to be told. I am the only ex Fleet Air arm member so I have to hold up my end against all the RCAF bods.

In July we held our annual 'Gathering of the Classics' when we invited thirty aircraft to fly in between 8am and 9am so we were very busy first thing in the morning. They were mostly on static display but some of them gave rides, all of our aircraft gave rides for between 60 to 75 dollars. That is mostly for fuel, nothing is cheap anymore. I must say that I very much enjoy doing this work and it does bring back some fond memories of my days in the Fleet Air Arm.

Les Wellington (Canada)

As a matter of interest, one of our Daedalus Branch members, Fred Sandy, is actively involved with the Shearwater Aviation Museum. So we are spreading our net worldwide.

Ed.

**CAN YOU HELP ?**

Ralph Hudson wishes to compile a book recording experiences of people who served in the FAA during the 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.

## EASTBOURNE.

A number of activities have taken place during the past year and among these was a short break taken in Weymouth. During this break we took the opportunity to visit the FAA Church at Yeovilton where our Standard together with those of the Eastbourne RNA, Association of Wrens and RNOCC were paraded. The church service was followed by lunch in the WO's and senior Rates mess.

Our Branch Standard was also paraded at the Battle of Britain Memorial Day at Chapel le Ferne, Folkestone and at the RNA Parade of Standards, Royal Tournament.

Some members of the Branch spent a short break in Brugge, Belgium and whilst there we took the opportunity to visit the Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres. This Memorial recalls the sacrifice of the fallen soldiers of the British Empire in the defence of the Ypres Salient during the 1914 - 18 war. The names of nearly 55,000 missing service men are engraved on the panels of this memorial.

We were privileged to attend the Last Post Ceremony which was performed by buglers of the local voluntary Fire Brigade something which has been carried out daily, come rain or shine, since 1928. A very moving ceremony.



At the Menin Gate Memorial.

**H.M.S. CONDOR**  
**R.N.A.S.ARBROATH**

*By David Gardener*

(By Courtesy of the Gosport Aviation Society)

At the outbreak of the Second World War the government foresaw that established RAF and Fleet Air Arm stations such as Lee-on-Solent, Gosport and other south coast airfields would be likely to come under attack by enemy bombing. The Admiralty took an early decision therefore to build several air stations in Scotland, hopefully far away from enemy action and to move many of it's training, second line squadrons and those squadrons "working up" to these new airfields.

As a result, on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1940 four naval officers arrived on a scene of desolation which had once been one of the finest pieces of agricultural land in Great Britain. They had been invited by the Admiralty to launch, commission, cherish, expand and cause to function at the earliest possible moment, a new Naval Air Station which had just been named H.M.S.Condor.

The scene that met their eyes was far more suggestive of the arena of a tank battle in full swing than of an aerodrome. Acres of dried mud, deep trenches, up-rooted trees and chaotic heaps of bricks and mortar gave little encouragement to hope that flying operations were likely to commence within a few weeks. Yet within two months, H.M.S.Condor had shaken her wings and rid herself of sufficient dross to fly. In fact, she had suddenly become the Observer training School for the United kingdom after 753 squadron had moved in with it's initial equipment of Blackburn Sharks, plus a few veteran Fairey Seals from Lee-on-Solent following the bombing of HMS Daedalus on 23<sup>rd</sup> August, six days prior to the move.

Simultaneously she had made room in her nest for the Deck Landing Training School, 767 Squadron equipped with Swordfish and 778 Squadron, the Service Trial unit at the time operating Fulmars, Martlets and Sea Hurricanes. &51 with its Walruses arrived on 19<sup>th</sup> August having made a hurried departure from Ford following a German attack. Completing the initial move to Arbroath was 754 Squadron equipped with a mixture of Walrus, Vega Gull and Lysanders which had also suffered as a result of the bombing of Lee-on-Solent. These units were to remain for most of the war to be accompanied later by newly formed front line squadrons in the process of being equipped prior to working up elsewhere.

The 27 Blackburn Sharks of 753 Squadron moved in to be parked behind the reserve hangars at the furthest corner of the airfield and were flown off half finished runways by ex-airline pilots, ex-stockbrokers, ex-Shakespearean actors and ex-everything else, of an average age which would shock a medical board of today. In the reserve hangars went the score of Proctors and Walruses of 754 Squadron which were presided over by a genial officer who had lately been one of the most experienced pilots of Imperial Airways.

In the main block of hangars was 778 Squadron complete with the latest of the Fleet Air Arm aircraft. This most jealously guarded of all was the latest hush-hush torpedo bomber, which was said to be the Albacore.

In a huddle of half-completed buildings, a notice went up to announce that it was to house the Observer or 'O' School as it was to become known.

Unfortunately, the Admiralty's plan to evacuate squadrons to the safety of Scotland went somewhat awry when the enemy took photographs of the remarkable scenes which were now to be witnessed daily and not unreasonably decided to record their displeasure. On a fine autumn evening he came over and dropped twelve 500 pounders in those places where they were likely to hurt. Four of them failed to explode but ticked on for several hours until eventually one did, removing the doors of a hangar which wrapped themselves around the wings of the hush-hush Albacore. The next attempt at sabotage was a lone Hienkel which let go a land mine a few thousand feet above the Wardroom. History has it that the Chief Gunner's Mate ran out shouting "He's mine! He's mine! He had mistaken the mine for a parachutist – an error which could have cost him dear had the clockwork mechanism done its duty when the mine came to rest opposite the Wardroom.

The winter of 1949 is best forgotten. For one period of ten days, the thermometer hanging in 754's Squadron office never rose above 22 degrees F.

Early 1941 saw a visit by HM King George VI and heralded intensive flying activity as the weather turned to spring. A feature of the Observer School training of the 1941 period was the camera gun exercise which took place each afternoon and consisted of a diving attack upon a class assembled in the middle of the parade ground. As there was no specified minimum height at which the aircraft was ordered to pull out, the competition among the pilots for the job was keen. A break away between the Captain's Office and the Electrical Workshop without touching either was an achievement to be aimed at. The nervous strain imposed upon those occupying the Captain's office block was not lessened by the arrival of a smoke float which passed through the roof and landed on a Wren's desk.

Meanwhile the arrival of the prototype Barracuda for service trials gave rise to universal feelings of astonishment and admiration.

Brief appearances were made of other types of aircraft from time to time and among them were beacons of hope which suggested that one day the luck of the FAA, in the manner of its tools, would turn. The first Spitfire with a hook arrived which 'deck landed' between chalk marks on '26' runway. The result was that 778 took it over for it to be tried out on a carrier. The Seafire was born!

The last of Condor's widespread interests was inaugurated on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942 with the arrival of No.1 Air Signals Officers Course flying Ansons and Swordfish.

At this time the Station was proud to have as it's Captain, Captain R.St.Vincent Sherbrooke VC, DSO, RN., who had received his Victoria Cross in a engagement against the German pocket battleship Lutzow during which he was badly wounded.

As the war progressed, 751 and 753 Squadrons moved from Swordfish to Barracudas for Observer training. Seemingly almost every other month saw new types of aircraft arriving at the Service Trials Unit including later marks of Barracuda, Sabre engined Firebrands, the first Fireflys, Seafire III's and later the Griffon engined Seafire XV's. The Sea Mosquito and towards the war's end, the first Sea Hornet appeared for deck landing trials. These were mainly conducted firstly on HMS Argus and later on HMS Indefatigable and HMS Pretoria Castle belting up and down the Scottish coast.

In 1944, with the build up for the Pacific Fleet putting even greater demands on available resources, centralised maintenance in training squadrons was pioneered in the FAA by Condor in order to reduce demands for both aircraft and manpower. For instance with three squadrons of Barracudas operating from the same airfield, by pooling their aircraft the economics became obvious. As an example if one squadron required to fly 11 aircraft in the forenoon and only 1 in the afternoon whilst another squadron required 1 in the forenoon and 11 in the afternoon centralised maintenance would provide a total of 12 aircraft and 12 ground crews and these would meet the needs of both squadrons for the whole day. Aircraft spares also became more available as the old shell-backs of squadron storekeepers who had amassed great hordes of material for the sheer love of hoarding which might have filled the starved needs of other units, became generally available and thus the serviceability levels of squadrons became more efficiency.

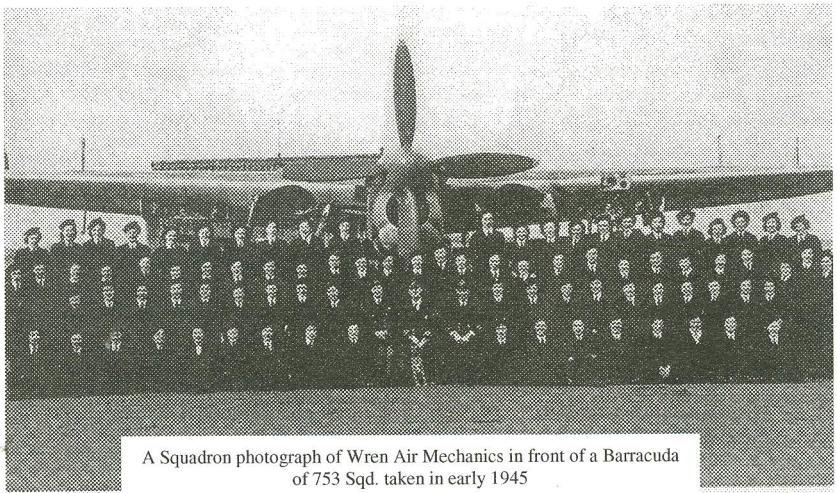
Demands for experienced ratings for front line squadrons saw more Wrens being trained as Air Mechanics so as to release men from second line squadrons. The centralised maintenance pools were manned entirely by Wrens with male senior rates supervising the work and for signing the 700's. Although there was some criticism that the impersonal system of centralised maintenance did not foster the team spirit of a squadron, the relationships which developed between the sexes more than made up for it. Who said, "War is hell"?

During May and June of 1945, 802 and 903 Squadrons formed, first with Seafire III's but were then almost immediately re-equipped with the first of the Griffon engined Seafire XV's to see service. 803 Squadron became the first all Canadian Squadron which took its planes onto the new carrier HMCS Warrior. To start with there was some minor friction between Canadian and British ratings largely due to the fact that the Canadians were paid about twice as much as the British. This was soon overcome by the Canadians seemingly endless supply of "Sweet Caporal" cigarettes, which they were willing to swap for "slops", which were easier to obtain by the Brits despite rationing.

So the war drew to a close. Shortly after "VE Day" the Station held a visitor's day to which it seemed that the whole Arbroath population attended.

The local population had always given generous support and indeed hospitality to the “matelots” and the opportunity to return some of this was well appreciated. The highlight of the day was a mass flypast of every serviceable Barracuda which amounted to over fifty aircraft including those drawn from Condor’s satellite airfield at Easthaven – a sight to behold.

The station records show clearly how much Condor contributed to the Navy – at least in the numerical sense. More than 27,000 ratings and 6,000 officers passing through the station from its commissioning to the war’s end. Most of them arrived completely untrained or only half trained. They left to win distinction in every theatre of war and Condor will be remembered with pride and affection by those FAA personnel who are still alive and who served there.



A Squadron photograph of Wren Air Mechanics in front of a Barracuda of 753 Sqd. taken in early 1945



## PANTLINS CIRCUS

by Eric Mutton

Would you believe that I was once a circus performer? Not the clowns and acrobats type of circus but a circus nevertheless. All the performers, hundreds of them, were dressed in naval uniform and in the same role, a drill squad. The ringmaster was of course Warrant Officer Pantlin.

I was serving my requisite year as acting Petty Officer and had to do my HRD (higher ratings disciplinary course) at the naval gunnery school on Whale Island in Portsmouth Harbour. Under the eagle eye of the Gunnery Officer, Warrant Officer Pantlin and his team of the navy's toughest GI's, we did it the hard way, believe me! There CPO's and PO's had to undergo three weeks extensive drill, learning how to take charge of a drill squad and instil discipline. Two weeks on the parade ground followed by a week on the range and the assault course. Sometimes there were squads of officers getting the same treatment.

W.O. Pantlin was small in stature but a martinet. (*Why is it that many small officers and senior ratings are the hardest disciplinarians, do they have something to prove?*).

Every day, after six hours of intensive drilling, all squads under training had to close ranks for half an hour of "Pantlins Circus". There, standing on top of an air raid shelter at the edge of the parade ground we Mr.Pantlin, with his tallest and straightest GI at his side, put us through his drill routine, every movement in the book and woe betide anyone who got it wrong. "*Round the Island*" was the standard punishment. That was double-march with a rifle at the slope, the 3-mile perimeter of the island. With orders of "about turn" from bloody-minded CPO's on the way round. It was a very long 3 miles.

In those early days, we of the Fleet Air Arm were looked upon as not true sailors like seamen and stokers. In a sometimes derogatory fashion we were termed "men dressed as seamen" and often given a hard time. I think that at one time or another we all suffered the indignity of "*round the island*" for some misdemeanour. My particular RTI was for pushing my cap 'flat aback' during our 10 minute stand-easy at mid-morning. None other than Mr.Pantlin brought me to attention himself who gave the order "*slope arms, round the island, double march*". To the uninitiated, 'double marching' is like jogging only at attention. A rifle 'at the slope' when marching is quite comfortable but at the double the b\*\*\*\*y thing bounces. That's very painful and bruising. On my way round a window opened revealing a GI who yelled "*about turn*". I doubled back about a hundred yards until I heard another "*about turn*" and was able to continue on my way. Twice that happened. I was told later that I was lucky, some poor unfortunates got three or four such orders. Halfway round, my shoulder hurt so much that I 'right shouldered' my rifle only to finish my punishment with both shoulders bruised.

I was fortunate in that a friend of my father was a retired GI. On hearing of my

impending course he gave me a few survival tips. "When you are put in charge of a squad" he said, "you may be told to march them a short distance and order 'about turn' or 'right wheel', but quietly your instructor part of the squad to ignore that order and keep going. That is to see what you will do when things don't go as you want them. The trick is to yell as loud as you can "SQUAD HALT". They'll halt alright. Give them a b\*\*\*\*\*g if you want, make them 'about turn' and march them back to the starting point."

That is exactly what happened to me. When I ordered 'ABOUT TURN', the two leading files kept going, the rest of the squad obeying the order. I ordered 'HALT', they all halted. Reforming the squad I marched them back, halting them at the starting point. Regaining my position in the ranks, I said "permission to speak, chief?" "What?" he thundered. "Request permission to show you two fingers of my right hand". "Not granted" he thundered again, then with a grin added "if old Eagle Eye saw that he'd have your guts for garters and mine too."

We weathered the storm, finally finishing the course with a hard run over the assault course hassled by equally bloody-minded instructors and marines all the way. It was a relief to return to the relative peace and quiet of HMS Daedalus.

Eric Mutton

### ODE TO A DEPARTED MISTRESS

I gave you up six months ago  
Yet still cannot forget  
The thrill you gave me lingers on  
Your scent is with me yet.  
We rarely were apart, my love  
Come morning, noon or night  
I only had to touch you once  
To set your heart alight.  
To feel your clean cool rounded form  
Against my lips was bliss  
I breathed your very essence  
In the semblance of a kiss.  
I find that life without you  
Is something of a drag  
Or should we start it all again  
My dear departed fag?

The following is a news release issued by the  
Fleet Air Arm Memorial Trust.

## **MEMORIAL TO FLEET AIR ARM HEROES**

The Ministry of Defence has welcomed the announcement that planning permission has been granted for a permanent memorial to honour Naval men and women who have given their lives whilst serving in the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm.

Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, former Secretary of State for Defence, said he was delighted that Westminster City Council's planning authority had given its approval. He said:

"This National Memorial will honour the supreme sacrifice of more than 6,000 men and women who have died whilst serving with the Fleet Air Arm and its predecessor, the Royal Naval Air Service. It will serve not only as a tribute to the past but will also remind us all of the vital role that Naval Aviation has played in the Twentieth Century and will continue to inspire future generations. I must pay tribute to the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Trust, which is working so hard to raise funds to meet the cost of what will be a very fine and distinctive Memorial."

The design approved by Westminster City Council is a bronze figure of Daedalus, the man who in Greek mythology pioneered human flight with wings fashioned from wax and feathers, poised on a column of white Portland stone. Designed by artist and sculptor James Butler, the figure will be sited in the Victoria Embankment gardens beside the Ministry of Defence Main Building in Whitehall.

Patron of the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Appeal is His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who was himself a naval helicopter pilot. Work is expected to start on the construction of the memorial in a few weeks time and it is planned to hold an unveiling ceremony in June 2000, with a projected fly past of historic and present naval aircraft over the Thames.

The total cost of the memorial project, including funds for its maintenance, amounts to £350,000 of which £133,000 has so far been raised.

The following is a list of inscriptions which have previously discussed by the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Trust Committee.

Please note. Not included is a proposed Battle Honour for East Indies 1942–45. This, if it is approved, will be included in the list. A decision on this matter has been requested

(On the front of the lower stonework)

### **Wings Badge**

(Gilded)

(On the front face of the lower front stonework, below the 'Wings' badge)

### **FLEET AIR ARM**

(Gilded)

(On the rear face of the lower front stonework)

**TO THE EVERLASTING MEMORY OF ALL  
MEN AND WOMEN FROM THE UNITED  
KINGDOM, THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH  
AND THE MANY ALLIED NATIONS WHO  
HAVE GIVEN THEIR LIVES WHILST SERVING  
IN THE ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE AND  
FLEET AIR ARM**

***HE RODE UPON A CHERUB, AND DID FLY,  
YEA, HE DID FLY UPON THE WINGS OF THE  
WIND***

(On either side of the vertical column)

The 33 Battle honours of the Fleet Air Arm.

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

*They shall grow not 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.*

<i>Frank Lane</i>	<i>Angus</i>
<i>Burns Andrew</i>	<i>Bournemouth</i>
<i>W.Carmody</i>	<i>Bristol</i>
<i>F.Fletcher</i>	<i>Bristol</i>
<i>L.D.Bird</i>	<i>Bristol</i>
<i>Len Cooper</i>	<i>Derby</i>
<i>Ron Talbot</i>	<i>Essex</i>
<i>David Livingstone</i>	<i>Greater Manchester</i>
<i>Jim Walker</i>	<i>Hitchin</i>
<i>John Leadbitter</i>	<i>North East – Tyne &amp; Wear</i>
<i>H.Everett</i>	<i>Yorkshire</i>

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	£7.00
Car Stickers	£1.25
Membership Cards	£0.15

ITEMS BOUGHT TO ORDER

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

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

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

Note: Berets may be obtained from:

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

Last known price - £6.71

Tel: 01705 722351

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