



The Fleet Air Arm Association



Airey Fairey

Issue No. 21 – Summer 2012



THE FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION

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<i>Chairman</i>	Arnold Thompson

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Fleet Air Arm Association

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Editorial

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Once again there has been much to report. Some of the items will have further reporting in Airey Fairey 22 (AF22). In particular items related to the Standard Bearers and the 2012 AGM. Of note is the Section giving an account of the Honorary Member Presentations. Apologies to those who may have attended the Presentations or been involved in their organisation, for repeating the facts but this is part of the FAAA historical record. Similarly with the feed back from the AGM programme.

There have been changes to the Activities related to the Royal Naval Air Stations but there is still plenty to report. For example there is copy related to HMS Illustrious on exercise in the Arctic, RNAS Culdrose and the Olympic Torch. But there is no follow up on the Merlin Mk 3 as was promised in AF20 – as many are already up to date on this topic due to press reports. There is an enthusiastic response when speaking to the 'new FAA recruits' but it has to be a long term view given the time it will take for the new carrier(s) to be built. Training is being maintained as you will see from the articles in AF21.

The Obituary Section itself is short but some copy has been included in the appropriate Section of the magazine. As many will know our Patron Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo, KCB crossed the bar in March 2012. There is a small tribute to the Admiral in AF21 and there will be a further report of the Thanksgiving service in AF22.

There are two requests, one from your Editor and one from a researcher (Russell Brown) who would like to contact anyone who served at HMS Nightjar (RNAS Inskip) during its operational period. He is researching other Air Stations in this area and would like further information on HMS Nightjar – I have the contact details if required.

As Editor I have realised that there is a gap in my knowledge of the history of the FAAA. I would welcome information from any FAAA member, on the 1980s and early 1990s history of the Association. I know that newsletters were produced (I have a few) but there must be more. If you have no newsletters but you do have memories of those years please contact me – my details are below. If I get a similar response to that received from the Standard Bearers I will be able to give new members some 'feed back' and others a chance to go down 'memory lane'.

Well, time to thank everyone for the help and support that I am given to bring the Airey Fairey Magazine to print. This time it is a big thank you to our Standard Bearers and the Branch Secretaries for all the information supplied and not forgetting Terry (hubby) for helping me to bring copy to print (this time it has not been an easy task collating and proofing AF21). Now it is time to remind everyone that the AIREY FAIREY is your magazine and needs your input and support and to wish you all good health and happiness always.

My contact details are:

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Margaret

Fleet Air Arm Association National News and Events

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The National Committee

At the Annual General meeting (March 31st 2012) the results of the Postal vote were presented by Fred Wadley and Ron Golightly. Brian Bingham is now our Vice Chairman; Peter Roalf has replaced Bob Ridout who did not stand for re-election to the Committee. Both Ben Worship Treasurer and George Rose Committee member were returned for another term of office. Ray Thomas continues to look after the arrangements for Eastchurch (May 2012) following his previous involvement in 2011. Patron Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo has 'crossed the bar' (March 7th aged 87). Our new Patron will be Sir Adrian Johns (Governor of Gibraltar) and Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham has agreed to be our President.

Amendment to the Constitution

In order to gain some flexibility of tenure in the position of Chairman, Rule 2.1b and 2.1c have been amended. Key to the change is that the Chairman may remain in office beyond two years if approved by the Executive Committee. Branch Secretaries have been sent copy of the changes to paste in the rule book.

Derby General meeting

The poor attendance at the Derby meetings is causing concern. After discussion at the AGM the following actions were agreed: the attendance at the next meeting will be closely monitored and reviewed; Branch Secretaries will notify the National Secretary of numbers attending at least two weeks before the meeting; Rum will no longer be provided and finally the National Secretary will make it clear on the Agenda that it is an Open Meeting. The hope is that money on catering and travel will not be wasted and that attendance at the next meeting will improve. Regarding the Hanworth Committee meetings, they are not closed meetings. Branch Members/Delegates may attend but can only participate if invited.

Daedalus Branch

Peter Roalf has replaced Arnold Thompson as Daedalus Branch Secretary. To date, all members should have received from Peter two Newsletters. He is happy to receive 'feed back' by phone or e-mail. Peter hopes to re-establish contact with members who have 'drifted' away and to review the methods used for payment of the capitation fee. For the future, Peter will be contacting the FAAA Branch Secretaries to see if there are any organised events/activities that might be practical and close enough for a Daedalus Member to attend. For Navy personnel who have been made redundant the capitation fee for the first year will be waived ie membership for the first year will be free.



The Fleet Air Arm National Standard

In October 2011 Vice Chairman Ray Thomas received a letter of resignation from National Standard bearer Alan Breward who has attended a wide range of Events during 2010/2011. He was always available (and still is) to attend at the National Memorial Arboretum and other key Events. As Birmingham Branch standard bearer he still continues to represent the FAAA. As Ray said at the AGM “we were sad to lose Alan – he has done a sterling job”. At the AGM Ray also introduced our new National Standard Bearer Gordon Appleby who was handed the National Standard on October 19th 2011. Despite the sudden loss of his wife, Gordon paraded the National Standard at Blind Veterans UK on March 7th 2012.

Not Forgotten Association

Twenty members of the FAAA will be attending the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Priority in future years will be given to any members in receipt of war pensions. Currently there are six known Members on the list. Are there more? At the request of the National Secretary, the Branch Secretaries have been asked to provide the names of others who should be put on the Priority List.

Goodwood September 14th – 16th 2012

The FNHT is the nominated charity for the Goodwood Revival Event - this will be a great showcase for the Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT). The Trust has accepted the offer of the use of the FAAA display tent. It will ‘sit’ alongside their Trailer. Volunteers are required to help with the manning of the display. Their reward is free entrance to the Event. In 2013 the Battle of The Atlantic Celebrations will take place in Liverpool, May 24th–27th – another flagship event for Naval Aviation Heritage. On the 26th there will be a Service of Remembrance at the Anglican Cathedral followed by a parade attended by our National Standard

The Navy Campaign Website

Started in November 2010, the Navy Campaign is a ‘small, independent, non-profit group that campaigns to promote the Royal Navy and all its constituent parts’. They have been working hard on Fleet Air Arm issues. Included on their website are views on a range of topics, including some of the recent Parliamentary decisions related to the new Carriers and the F35-B and F35-C. In the case of the Carriers there is a ‘call’ for professional drive, from both the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm, to enable the UK to introduce the new carrier(s) into service with the jets chosen by the Government and to forge them into a world leading capability. For more information, visit www.thenavycampaign.com

FAA Diary

Order numbers this year were very low. The handover delays left it too late to organise the ordering and distribution of the diaries. Its continuation in paper format is in jeopardy unless orders increase. Further enquiries are being made by the National Committee.

Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo KCB

The Fleet Air Arm Association was privileged to have Sir Raymond Lygo as their Patron in the early 1980s. He remained in this position until his death, following a short illness, on March 7th 2012 aged 87. He will be remembered by the FAAA in recent years for his attendance with his second wife Lady Janette Lygo at the Eastchurch 'Service of Thanksgiving for 100 years of Naval Aviation' May 1st 2009 (see AF16 Pg4). Admiral Sir Raymond Lygo KCB was a man of many talents who maintained his love of flying throughout his life – he sold his personal aircraft only a few months before his death. A Service of Thanksgiving is to be held at Chichester Cathedral June 21st 2012.

As a young 14 year old without qualifications he became a messenger to the editor of The Times. In November 1940, inspired by the news of the Fleet Air Arm's successful attack on Taranto, he resolved to join the Service. He practised reading without the glasses he had worn since childhood: he was passed into the Royal Navy as a Naval Airman 2nd Class in 1942. He gained his wings in Kingston Ontario (Canada) and was commissioned as a Sub-Lieutenant RNVR and trained as a Seafire pilot at Yeovilton. In 1944 he joined the Aircraft Carrier Indefatigable on Russian Convoy duties with 887 NAS and covered attacks on the Tirpitz. He was later to contribute to attacks on Japanese installations.

Postwar he transferred to the regular Navy, and qualified as a flying instructor before going to the USA to fly with the first East Coast jet squadron. On returning to Britain in 1951 he converted to jets, learned to fly helicopters and was type-qualified in the four-engine Lancaster bomber.

Some 'firsts': he commanded the Navy's first jet training squadron to embark on Ark Royal, introduced aviation-style checklists for all procedures (HMS Lowestoft) and commanded Ark Royal from 1969 to 1971 when he became a national figure after he was exonerated by an official board of inquiry following a collision with a Soviet destroyer during a NATO exercise. Senior appointments in the Navy followed, as Flag Officer Commanding Carriers and Amphibious Ships, Director General Naval Manpower and Training, Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, and acting First Sea Lord. In 1977 Sir Raymond Lygo was appointed KCB and in 1978 retired as a full admiral at the age of 54. He left the Royal Navy to join British Aerospace. His autobiography 'Collision Course: Lygo Shoots back' was published in 2002.

FAA Memorial – National Memorial Arboretum

Phase 1 of the current task to lay the base and studs for the tiles is now complete - the Stud holes were drilled in the back of the tiles, the blank tiles were then dry laid on the pegs. When an Association has purchased their plaque the tile will be laid and secured onto the pegs.

The FAAOA are to ask the engravers to confirm the electronic format required for the logos and crest.

Photograph from Alan and Vicky Breward's Collection.



Events

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Bournemouth AGM 2012

The AGM weekend was an enjoyable weekend for many and it was a weekend with a difference. Our thanks go to Blenda and Brian for all their efforts.

It was a 'first' in more ways than one. Use of the Isle of Wight Tours to help organise the reunion has proved to be most satisfactory. Their hostess (Shirley) was very helpful and looked after many of the 'details'. She was also there to help

anyone in need of specialist help. We had our own 'sign in' desk behind which was the Association 'banner', a room dedicated to the FAAA where 'live' entertainment was arranged for the 3 reunion evenings and the 'rolling coin' competition. Our Sunday trip to RNAS Yeovilton was well chosen. A full report on the trip will be given in AF22.

Our Guests at the Gala Dinner were Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham and his wife Sally. Our thanks to Arnold Thompson who set up, at the entrance to our dedicated room, an impressive Photographic Display of our 2011 Events which gave much pleasure. Another thankyou goes to Gordon Appleby who had a 'working weekend' as our photographer - there are some great photographs of the weekend.

What are they doing? Rolling coins! (see picture)

The roll a coin is simple enough to organise, just place a bottle of Pussers rum at one end of the dance floor. Then it is 'technical': make a start line, the coin must be rolled and not thrown or slid. The winner: the one whose £1 coin lies closest to the Rum. In the event of a tie a roll off takes place The prize? - the bottle of Pussers Rum. Concentration definitely required! Simple but good entertainment and the 'fellas' didn't have it all their way - Sunday we had a lady winner. Money was raised for 2 Charities. Friday night's takings of £56 made up to £100 with the savings on flowers, was presented to the CO of the Historic Flight at RNAS Yeovilton on the Sunday. The Sunday night 'run' was even more successful - we were warned to bring £1 coins to the evening entertainment. By the end of the evening £160 (£40 of which was raised by the auction of the winner's bottle of rum) was presented to Nigel Whiteley on behalf of Blind Veterans UK, for which Brian has already received a 'nice letter of thanks' and a receipt from their headquarters. So folks start saving your £1 coins if you plan to go to the AGM next year.

Next year (2013) the reunion will be held at the Tillington Hall Hotel in Stafford over the weekend of Friday April 12th to Monday April 15th, and once again we will have the help of IOW Tours. Booking forms are available from Branch Secretaries.



Holy Trinity Church – Thurgoland February 12th 2012

Mick Grubb QPM, Chairman Yorkshire Branch

Perhaps the greatest hero in the Fleet Air Arm during the Second World War is Eugene Esmonde. He received the DSO (February 1942), for his attack on the Bismarck (May 1941) and 48 hours later led 825 squadron's 6 Swordfish torpedo bombers in an attempt to stop German battleships escaping through the English Channel to their home ports. For this he gave his life. He was posthumously awarded the VC, presented by King George VI to his mother on St Patrick's Day. Winston Churchill referred to him as



a great Irishman who gave his life to help defeat the Nazi tyranny. Later Irish Historian Richard O'Doherty was to prove that although Eugene's family was of Irish origin he was born in Thurgoland and therefore a Yorkshire man. When the Yorkshire Branch became aware that Eugene Esmonde was a Tyke, they contacted the Thurgoland Parish Council and the Thurgoland Historic Society to arrange a meeting. The 'link' was already known to the locals - a stone vase at the Thurgoland war memorial bears his name but no dedication date. It was agreed that a Memorial service to mark the 70th anniversary of Eugene's death should take place at Holy Trinity Church Thurgoland (Sunday February 12th 2012). The local vicar – Reverend Keith Hale would conduct the service. Following the meeting, Chairman Bob Blythe took Mick Grubb, Wendy van de Veen and Stan Mclellan to see Eugene Esmonde's birthplace. Shipmate Alec Hodgson, contacted RBL branches in the area to request Standards and support for the Service.

On the day, the villagers turned out in their hundreds with veterans from the FAAA Yorkshire branch, RNA, RBL, Victorious Association, Parachute Regiment, West Yorkshire Regiment, members of the Barnsley Metropolitan Council and the Thurgoland Parish Council. Preceding an excellent sermon, Mick Grubb paid tribute to the outstanding bravery and courage shown by Lt. Commander Eugene Esmonde RN and Royal Marine Commando David Marsh also from Thurgoland, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2008 (aged 23) – his grandmother presented a Book of Honour to the Yorkshire FAAA which included the names and details of all Thurgoland servicemen who had died since the start of WW1. Barnsley Sea Cadets formed a guard of honour at the war memorial. Wreaths were laid and tributes paid. A buffet lunch followed, at the 'local' Green Dragon and a raffle raised £60 for the Barnsley Sea Cadets. To honour Lt. Commander Eugene Esmonde VC, DSO and Royal Marine Commando David Marsh was a proud moment not only for those attending but the RN and the FAA.

Eastchurch Aviation Pioneer Memorial Service

The Eastchurch Pioneer Memorial service has become an Annual date in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm calendar - this year (May 4th 2012) was no exception. The service was well attended and to the delight and pride of all attending, Captain Nick Blackman RN OBE, Deputy Chief of Staff Air Engineering from Fleet Headquarters, Portsmouth unveiled a brass plaque to 'Commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the founding of Britain's first Naval Air Station at RNAS Eastchurch'. The plaque will be replaced by a stone monument - paid for by serving Fleet Air Arm Officers. It will become a permanent reminder, particularly to the Royal Navy and the FAA, of the historical importance of RNAS Eastchurch - the birth place of the Royal Naval Air Service and where, close by on the River Medway the first powered take off from a ship's deck was achieved. The liaising Officer for this Event was Lt. Luke Edwards (702 Sqd RNAS Yeovilton) and for the FAAA the then Vice Chairman Ray Thomas.

Eastchurch's historical importance, in the early development of Naval Aviation is immense. The first four naval pilots trained at Eastchurch and the first naval aircraft were built there. At that time, Eastchurch was at the heart of research for example: the first bomb dropping experiments, the first machines mounted in an aeroplane and fired whilst a machine was in the air, the first wireless signals transmitted from air to ground.

The Commanding Officer of RNAS Eastchurch in those early days was Commander Charles Rumney Samson, the pilot behind the first take off from HMS Africa in 1912. He was also a major innovator in the development and the use of armoured cars – the precursor to the first tanks. His name can be found amongst others on the Eastchurch memorial.



The Standard Bearers of the Fleet Air Arm Association (2012)

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The Fleet Air Arm National Standard



The National Standard Bearer

Gordon Appleby our National Standard Bearer was handed the Standard on October 19th 2011 and was introduced by Ray Thomas to those attending the AGM at Bournemouth 2012.

The Branch Standard Bearers

Birmingham	Alan Breward
Bristol	Ron Sandry
Derbyshire	Roy Pym (expecting to train a volunteer replacement)
Eastbourne	Don Armstrong-Rich
Essex	Harry Bass
Greater Manchester	Len Milward
Great Yarmouth	Roy Colbeck, 'reserve' Mike Denton
Hanworth	Fred Wadley
Isle of Wight	Peter (Bill) Campbell, when indisposed RNA and Sea Cadet
Solent	John Grant 'reserve' Ron Chitty
Tamworth	Douglas Heath (Standard officially 'laid up')
Watford	Mick Wyatt, 'reserve' Kenneth (Ken) Satterthwaite
Wrekin	Stan Allett – from mid April 2012 Rodney Howe
Yeovil	Allan Jones
Yorkshire	Ron Summers

Editor: A big thank you to the Secretaries and the Standard Bearers for all the information I have been given. Our Standards are important, they are a visual sign that the FAAA exists. In some cases I have followed up for more detail and always information has been supplied. All 'feed back' has been gratefully received and will be covered in AF21/22. It is good to have such feed back and I hope it will be of interest to all.



Basic Facts from the Survey

Here are a few basic facts. The FAAA can ‘muster’ 15 Standards ALL of which are in use – where there are difficulties some Branches have ‘Standard training’ in progress for ‘new’ recruits and others have a ‘back up’ route if required. The replies show that we have 7 (includes Daedalus) Branches with no Standard – the Branch numbers in some, but not all cases, are small. One of our longest serving Standard Bearers is Peter Campbell who represents the FAAA on the IOW in many ways (more in AF22). Understandably some of the Branches have to restrict the ‘carrying of the standard’ to funerals and ‘key’ memorial services or can no longer provide a Standard for parade. Others are more fortunate and the Standard is taken to a wide range of activities.

Bristol and District

The Bristol and District Standard is carried by Ron Sandry and in common with other FAAA Standard Bearers the month of November is a busy month. At Bristol there is a Festival of Remembrance, Field of Remembrance Service, the November 11th two minutes silence and for Ron one with a double meaning, 44 Royal Tank Regiment Memorial Service – his father who served in this regiment was killed in action in Belgium; and in June, Armed Forces Day. Ron’s list also includes the Dedication of the new Merchant Navy Standard, memorial services for the Merchant Navy and the Royal Engineers, Mayor’s Carol Service and the RBL Parade and Service.

Great Yarmouth (Mike Denton)

The Great Yarmouth Standard is carried by Roy Colbeck and Mike Denton if Roy is not available. Amongst their list of parades were two that were of local interest.

HMS Invincible – a Third Rate 74 gun – sailed out of Yarmouth in March 1801 to join the Baltic Fleet under Admiral **Sir Hyde Parker** with Lord Nelson Second in Command, shortly before the Battle of Copenhagen. A strong tide and fresh wind forced her off course and she struck Hammonds Knoll, a sandbank just east of Haisbro Sand. The crew laboured all night to save her, cutting away the masts and pumping continuously, but at daybreak on March 17th she went down. A smack, fishing for cod rescued some of the crew, but out of 590 men, some 400 perished, including her Captain – the last to leave his ship. During the next few days many bodies were washed ashore, and at Happisburgh cart loads were gathered up and taken to a mass grave in the churchyard. The loss of lives from *HMS Invincible* was greater than the casualties at the Battle of Copenhagen.

For many years no memorial marked the place, but on July 24th 1998 a simple stone given jointly by the Ship’s Company of the present *HMS Invincible* and the Parochial Church Council was dedicated to the memory of all from the earlier *HMS Invincible* who died at sea. This service is now carried out by Great Yarmouth FAAA and Beccles RNA. It is hoped that this year Norwich RNA will also attend.

Fishermen’s nets – Great Yarmouth were invited to attend the Lowestoft Service for the dedication of the Fishermen’s Nets when the Patrol Service meeting was discontinued due to small numbers. The nets are blessed each year and money is raised for the fishermen’s society.

Honorary Membership Presentations

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Presentations for our new National Honorary Members – Charles Tobias, Tim Manna, Lawrence Critchley and Henry Cooke took place in 2011/2012. Our co-ordinator was Vice Chairman Ray Thomas. The proposers were respectively: Ray Thomas, assisted in the contact stage by George Morgan (Essex Branch USA, and at the time visiting the British Virgin Islands), Peter Roalf (Essex), George Rose (Greater Manchester), and Bob Ridout (Yeovil).

Charles Sydney Tobias MBE October 24th 2011

In May 2011, Charles Tobias MBE was offered Honorary Membership of the Fleet Air Arm Association in recognition of his services and numerous charitable undertakings associated with the Royal Navy and for the saving of Pussers Rum – which many still continue to enjoy. Mr Tobias first point of contact was with FAAA Member George Morgan (USA), who was on a visit to the British Virgin Islands (BVI).



This was then followed up by Vice Chairman Ray Thomas who negotiated the challenges, from a distance. It was to become a lengthy communication process, involving the secretaries of Charles Tobias and the British Virgin Islands (BVI) Governor, Boyd McCleary and the Governor himself. The presentation was to co-inside with the docking of RFA Wave Ruler at Tortola. On board were Senior RN and RFA officers and the Flight Commander of the helicopter Lt. Simon Stuart. Diaries had to be ‘manipulated’ to keep the arrival date free – no easy task. The Certificate had to be sent to Tortola and guaranteed to arrive on time. The use of the BFPO address for the Embassy was granted (a story in itself). Anxious moments, but on October 24th a formal presentation was made on behalf of the FAAA, by Governor Boyd McCleary, at a private reception at Government House (BVI). Amongst the guests was Flight Commander Lt. Simon Stuart who read out a letter from Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham, and Lt. Cdr RN Phil Ponsford and Captain Robert Allan OBE RFA.

Charles James Tobias MBE was born in Toronto, Canada, and attended University in the USA. After graduating with degrees in Engineering he decided to remain in the USA.

It was during the days of conscription that Charles received a draft notice and decided to join the United States Marine Corps. He qualified as Marine Corps pilot and flew the A4- Skyhawk carrier-capable ground attack aircraft and Special Operations propeller aeroplanes during the Vietnam conflict.

He later moved to the British Virgin Islands (BVI) where he has been an active member of the BVI Tourist Board for over 20 years. In 1979 he was able to convince the Admiralty to allow him to produce Pussers rum. In doing so he became responsible for saving the Pussers product and brand identity whilst maintaining the original standards using the original equipment stored at Gibraltar; thus making the rum available to the public. Money received from the sale of the rum is donated to the Royal Navy Sailor's fund.

Charles also assisted the late Admiral of the Fleet Lord Lewin of Greenwich in the founding of the Friends of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich where he served as Vice President for more than 10 years. There is so much more that could be said about Charles and his 'love' of the Royal Navy both surface and air, past (particularly Admiral Lord Nelson) and present and above all his generosity and enthusiasm that he has for the Royal Navy, despite being a very busy business man in BVI (Tortola).



Picture: Lt. Cdr RN Phil Ponsford, Jenny McCleary, Governor Boyd McCleary, Charles Tobias, Joanna Tobias, Captain Robert Allan OBE RFA

Editor: A big thankyou to ALL involved. There is more to follow in AF22 the tale of HMS Manchester in Tortola and the RFA Wave Ruler Exercise.

Timothy (Tim) Manna October 27th 2011

Tim Manna's love of 'old' aircraft and his pleasure in seeing them brought back to their former glory, whilst addressing the challenge of keeping them airworthy, made him a 'natural' to give support to the Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF) and to become a trustee of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT).

The presentation, by Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham was made at North Weald Airfield – very appropriate given that Tim Manna's aircraft are stored and serviced/ repaired at the Airfield.

Guests Nick Foster (FNHT) and John Beattie (former CO of the RNHF) flew in from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in one of Henry Cooke's Provosts. The weather was kind – a lovely sunny day. Twenty eight Fleet Air Arm Association members attended this very successful and enjoyable occasion. A big thankyou goes to Peter Roalf who was responsible for the preparation and organisation of the presentation.

After the presentation, Tim took the group on a tour of Hangar 4. He owns a number of WW2 aircraft including Seafires and a Skyraider. He loans one of his S17s to the RNHF for air shows and 'special' occasions. This aircraft, last year unfortunately had a 'wheels up' landing and suffered considerable damage. Tim gave a detailed explanation of the restoration in progress on this S17 – even to the showing of a bag of dirt that had been taken out of the S17's engine during restoration and the damage done to the wooden propeller blades. He also owns other Seafires – a S17 and a S46, which are undergoing restoration and are intended to be finished in UK original colours.



Lt. Cdr USN (Rtd) Timothy Manna joined the USN 1977-1983 and then joined the US Navy reserve. In 1989 he came to the UK to work for J P Morgan (1989 -1997). During that time he set up Kennet Aviation almost as a 'glorified hobby' in 1990. His main goal, to restore 'old' aircraft. It all started when he bought an Aircraft to restore and fly and one to provide the spares. He then decided both deserved to be restored. These aircraft changed his view from 90% Pilot /10% Restoration to one of 50/50. It is perhaps no coincidence that he lives not too far away from the Old Warden aerodrome and the Shuttleworth Collection.

Lawrence Critchley November 7th 2011

At the November 2011 meeting of the Greater Manchester (GMB) Branch, President John Maybank presented National Honorary Membership to their Honorary Member Lawrence Critchley. It was in recognition of his work to create within the local community an awareness of the Fleet Air Arm and its past local history and for future generations a long term visual memory.

At the start of Lawrence's campaign the existence of a local wartime naval airfield in the Burscough area (Lancashire) was not widely known to the locals. Lawrence's first step was to campaign for a memorial to be placed on the site of the airfield. He approached the local business community and individuals to raise the necessary funds and persuaded the local council to fund the Memorial which was unveiled in October 2004 (see AF17 Pg28). The ceremony was attended by over 400 people and was covered by radio and television.

To build RNAS Burscough (HMS Ringtail) the local primary school (Lordsgate, Burscough) had to be demolished and a replacement, funded by the Admiralty, was built at the end of the war. To keep the memory of HMS Ringtail alive and to ensure that the children would know its history GMB (at the suggestion of Lawrence) presented the school with the Ringtail Trophy. The Trophy is awarded annually to the most promising pupil. Annually, two children and the head teacher lay a wreath at the Memorial on Armistice Day. Lawrence in his spare time also gives talks on the Fleet Air Arm at the request of local schools and groups.

There are visual reminders of the historical past – an Industrial Park named Swordfish, three new roads in the area Ringtail, Swordfish and Merlin and Burscough Brewery has a 'special' – Ringtail Beer – all indirectly promoting the Fleet Air Arm.

There is a new industrial park (Ringtail Retail Park) being built on land that would have been inside the perimeter fence of the airfield and close to the Memorial. Lawrence's latest achievement has been to persuade the owner of a new Supermarket, which is to be built on this site, to agree to the building being built in the shape of an aircraft hangar. Within the building, it is hoped that a one third size model of a Firefly will be suspended from the ceiling. Finally his latest effort has been to provide copy for a website (a sub section on the Lathom & Burscough Military Heritage Society website) – www.hms-ringtail.co.uk.

What an impact one man has made to the promotion of the Fleet Air Arm – and a town has part of its history preserved. Congratulations Lawrence – we will look forward to the promise of an update.

Editor – my thanks to Jim Buie for helping me to develop this article



Chairman, Arthur Gardener, Lawrence with Certificate, President John Maybank and Jim Buie

Henry Cooke February 10th 2012

Rear Admiral (retired) Ian P G Tibbett CBE representing Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham, made the Honorary Presentation to Henry Cooke at RNAS Yeovilton, by kind permission of Commodore Chivers RN, on a day when snow could for some have disrupted travel.

Henry, described by the Rear Admiral as having “an abiding passion and commitment for Naval flying and preserving our ‘Naval heritage’” has for many years been an active Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT) Trustee. Without his practical support and wise business advice over the years the Trust and the Historic Flight would not be as successful as it is.

In 2007, Tim Manna persuaded Henry to buy his two Provosts – the Piston Provost and the Jet Provost – on the basis that he should allow the Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF) to use them! The aircraft are used at RNAS Yeovilton as training aircraft and Henry makes no charge for this service – without his generosity it would be difficult to properly train pilots for the Sea Fury and the Sea Hawk. Henry displays the aircraft when he can persuade the RNHT to let him use them. Not to be beaten he has bought a Kit Seafire – which he hopes to fly this year to represent the FNHT. Henry’s wife also flies the Provosts – and spends as much time in flying overalls as Henry does – despite telling him that he was mad to buy them!

As young Henry loved to sit and listen to his Granddad speaking of his time when he flew as an Observer in Mosquitoes; his father gave him a book on the Swordfish; and his ‘toys’ were numerous radio controlled aircraft models. Now Henry aims to assist the FNHT to step up to a new level and to raise an endowment to create the best collection of flying naval aircraft in the world and to promote the true history of Naval Aviation. His Honorary Membership to the Fleet Air Arm Association is well deserved.



Memorial Cloth Dedication

Following the presentation there was time to look around the aircraft currently in the Historic Flight Hangar before going to the RNAS Chapel for the Dedication of the Memorial Cloth. The Reverend Tudor Botwood conducted the Service which included the FAA prayer. For Peter Roalf it was recognition and reward for his efforts with the embroidery needle over many years. After the service a visit to the WOs/SRs Mess for drinks, a buffet lunch and an opportunity to mingle with the invited guests, members of the FNHT (including Nick Foster who had helped Bob Ridout with the RNAS Yeovilton arrangements) and other members of the FAAA, especially Bob Ridout and the Yeovil Branch who were hosting the occasion.



Editor: Rear Admiral (retired) Ian P G Tibbett CBE, MA, CEng, FRAeS, FIET, MAPM, completed a highly successful career in the Royal Navy and the Defence Acquisition community in 2009, retiring having been Senior RN Air Engineering Officer and Director General Safety and Engineering, within Defence, Equipment and Support. He has a wealth of multi-service operational, procurement, supply and change management expertise.

Memory Lane

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885 Squadron and HMS Ruler 1944/1945

William (Bill) R Bazley PO RM(A)

Editor: AF20 carried an article written by Joe Ainley. It prompted Bill Bazley to write this article. Joe was 'ship' and Bill was 'squadron' and both were on HMS Ruler in 1944. Bill joined the Navy on a notable anniversary (Trafalgar Day, 21st October 1942). He reported to HMS Impregnable, a Signals training establishment in Plymouth. About halfway through the Telegraphists course, his father, who was at that time a serving officer in the destroyer depot ship HMS Tyne, suggested that he applied for the Radio Mechanics course; Leading rate at the end of the course and advancement, after a further twelve months, to Petty Officer. This he did and was soon on draft to Cardiff Technical College for the Basic electricians. Those on the course were later split into two groups; general service, and in Bill's view, the 'more fortunate half' the Fleet Air Arm. After completing the course at HMS Ariel, Bill picked up Leading rate. His first draft was to HMS Vulture (RNAS St. Merryn) to work in the radio workshop. After a few months he was on draft to Lee-on-Solent to join 885 Naval Air Squadron which was reforming with Seafire 111s (February 1944). We join Bill at St Merryn (1944) to continue with the squadron 'point of view'.

We were off to St. Merryn where the pilots developed air-firing and combat tactics. Then, north to RAF Ayr to carry out bombardment exercises with ships in the Clyde. What we did not know at the time, was that all this training was a build up to participation in the Second Front operations. We returned to Lee-on-Solent during May (1944) and in early June all our Seafires were painted with the famous black and white stripes to identify them as Allied. Then, with other squadrons we became part of No 3 Naval Fighter Wing.

The weeks that followed were a very exhausting time for the squadron personnel, ground crew and pilots alike. Sometimes we worked throughout the night to keep everything flying.

The Squadron spent most of June and well into July spotting suitable targets (such as tank concentrations, supply columns etc.) for the bombarding ships of the Allied fleets with quite successful results. During this period our CO (Lt. Cdr S L 'Tiny' Devonald) won the DFC over Normandy. Sadly we also lost two of our pilots during this period.





The squadron moved to RAF Ballyhalbert in Northern Ireland, following the Second Front operations to convert from Seafires to the Grumman Hellcat. Quite a change for the pilots but we had several months of working up and in mid December 1944 we embarked in the escort carrier HMS Ruler. She had earlier completed several Atlantic crossings ferrying aircraft. There followed a few weeks of deck landing trials in the Clyde (there were several accidents, especially in bad weather (January 1945)). In late January we 'loaded up' with extra aircraft and 1772 Squadron Fireflies ready to sail east, not knowing what our ultimate destination would be. We joined a convoy at Gibraltar and went through some of the worst weather the Mediterranean could produce, so much so that the heavy seas lifted the forward end of the flight deck (loaded with planes) and we had to go into Alexandria for repairs. Then it was through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and a stop at Colombo before arriving at Sydney (mid March).

885 Squadron left the ship temporarily and were accommodated at RANAS Schofields a few miles west of Sydney. It was time for the pilots to re-familiarise themselves with the Hellcats.

Then back on board to go through deck landings all over again in Jarvis Bay. Finally we left Australia and proceeded north, along the Japanese occupied northern coast of New Guinea (flight deck still loaded, but with an aircraft on the catapult) to eventually arrive at Leyte Gulf (Philippines) to join the British Pacific Fleet as part of the Fleet Train and to provide combat air patrols covering fleet replenishments. On May 6th HMS Ruler, with other units of the Fleet Train was about 300 miles off the Sakishima group of islands in support of the main fleet attacking Okinawa (Task Force 57). The first flight of Hellcats took off at about 0600. After about two hours the first planes landed back on. I was on duty on the flight deck. One of the planes had landed on and taxied forward and I jumped up on the wing to speak to the pilot and check his R/T etc. just as he happened to release the wing locking mechanism. The wing swung in (it had an up and under sort of swing) and the fine edge of the overlap started cutting into my leg. Fortunately the deck crew saw what was happening and stopped the wing from progressing further but the damage was done. I was carried down to the Sick bay, where the SMO stitched me up. Three weeks later I was transferred to the hospital ship Tjitjalengka where it was decided to fly me down to Sydney for a further operation. I was put ashore at the Admiralty Islands and a two day flight by Dakota followed. First touchdown was Milne Bay (New Guinea), then an overnight stop at Townsville, (Queensland), onward to Brisbane and finally Sydney and the Naval Hospital at Herne Bay. After the operation I was unfit for further sea service. I had a calliper fitted to my leg to keep my foot in position and was later drafted to MONAB 3, a mobile naval air base situated at Schofields, until the war ended. I sailed home in RMS Andes in the December and was demobbed the following August.

I would have liked to have been aboard HMS Ruler to witness the arrival of the Japanese representatives for the surrender and been part of that momentous occasion. But, I would have missed seeing Sydney (Forces concessionary rail ticket 3 shillings I think for a fortnight's travel) and the Blue Mountains, leave on a sheep station and the generous Australian hospitality.

A Fish head's contact with the Airy Fairy fraternity

Kenneth (Ken) Satterthwaite

My first real contact with the Airy Fairy fraternity, was whilst I was serving in Whale Island (WI), the late Gunnery School in Portsmouth. I was then a recently qualified POGI and Churchill decided to leave this mortal world and was to have a State Funeral. All training ceased in WI and the country was scoured for RN personnel to partake in the ceremonial parade. The gun carriage crew and guard came from ratings serving in WI, but the street liners had to come from those drawn in from other establishments. I was given, along with other colleagues the job of training the street liners, who were, Airy Fairies. On the first morning we mustered them on the parade ground in No 1's. What an eye opener that was, and the excuses for some not having a full kit was interesting to say the least, so then it was the day of the slop wagon and empty pockets for a few – remember this was the days when we had 'Kit up Keep Allowance'. The next hurdle was to get them marching and into rifle drill. In their defence I expect most of them had not seen a parade ground, a rifle or worn their No 1s for a number of years. It was January, so great coats were going to be the rig of the day for the funeral. However once they got into the swing of things, they like all sailors, gave it their all. We had a very short period of training before we decamped to Woolwich Barracks (our base near London for a couple of days) where training continued in the snow. The accommodation in Woolwich was basic to say the least but nobody complained and the street liners, as I'm sure you saw on the day, were a credit to the service as always.

My next contact with a flight was when I was on HMS Fife for its first commission. We carried a 'Wessex' helicopter which was used amongst other things to take the landing party ashore of which I was a member; I remember Merry England was one of the chief's in the flight.

During trials in the Atlantic in 1967, we were suddenly sent into the Mediterranean to provide helicopter support to HMS Tiger for the Wilson and Smith's talks on Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe); at that time Tiger did not carry a flight. On another occasion the flight excelled itself during a rescue operation off Fiji when the island ferry 'MV Tui Lau' ran aground on a reef. The Wessex was very beneficial in rescuing passengers.

My penultimate contact with the FAA in the RN was on HMS Tartar (1974/76 commission). Our first Captain was Commander Mann a FAA pilot. We carried a Wasp helicopter and low and behold Merry England turned out to be the Chief of the Flight.

I joined the ship as Chief of the Operations Department, a conglomerate of the old Seaman & Communication branches, of which the flight was part when embarked. My first meeting of the flight was prior to commissioning.





Ships Flight 1966-68 Commission. Perhaps you as readers were there?

I was invited by the Captain along with the 1st Lieutenant and the Gunnery Officer, to attend the passing out of the Royal Marine detachment at Poole in Dorset – they were to be part of the Operations Department when embarked. This involved amongst other things, a mock landing with our helicopter in support. We were flown from HMS Vernon to Poole in the Admiral's Green Parrot (a Wessex), an advantage of having a FAA Pilot as Skipper. After the morning inspection the Gunnery Officer and I were invited to observe the landing from the air in our 'Wasp'. Unbeknown to me the pilot (whose name escapes me) and the Gunnery Officer were friends. I strapped myself in, as the side doors had been removed and we lifted off. The pilot put the machine through some manoeuvres which I was not expecting – I did not know a 'Wasp' could do some of the things he did with it – the flight in, to support the marine detachment was tame to what antics the pilot had done on the way out.

We eventually deployed to the West Indies for six months. One event sticks in my mind which involved the 'Wasp'. We were to escort the Royal Yacht Britannia, with the Queen and Prince Phillip embarked, from Nassau to Mexico for a state visit. The ships eventually arrived off Mexico in the 'Gulf of Campeche' to disembark the Royal cortège who went ashore in one of the yacht's barges. Unfortunately the weather deteriorated and the Royal baggage still had to go ashore. Our helicopter was called upon to undertake that task by VERTREP. I was led to believe, it was 7 tons in total, of course the flight was then nicknamed the 'Royal Knickers Lifters'.

My association with the FAA did not finish when I left the RN as I was invited to join the Watford Branch of the FAAA at which my wife Sheila and I have made some great friends, even if they are Airy Fairies.

'Fools admire, but men of sense approve-Alexander Pope-1711'. That's all Folks – from Ken S.

Editor: VERTREP – The use of a helicopter for the transfer of material to or from a ship.

The Ongoing Story of Yokkaichi

Bill Jones Former TAG 820 Sqd HMS Indefatigable

At the end of August (2011) I was contacted by Irene Kusnadi, a Dutch lady, who told me that her father, Ferdinand W Baumeister, had been one of the Dutch prisoners in Yokkaichi POW camp. Her phone call was to be a new chapter in a story that began when the war with Japan ended in August 1945.

At that time HMS Indefatigable, one of the Fleet Carriers of the BPF, was still operating alongside our American allies. One of her Fireflies had located an unregistered POW camp at Nagoya on the edge of the Inland Sea: three wooden huts, with the letters PW painted on their roofs, among a cluster of industrial buildings. Stones in the sand indicated that the camp held 195 American, 75 Dutch and 25 British prisoners.

An appeal to the ship's company by Captain Graham produced enough chocolates, cigarettes, tinned food and other items to fill 15 kitbags to be delivered by parachute, on the camp, by two successive sub-flights of Avenger Aircraft (August 24th and 30th). My crew led the first sub-flight and Roy Gibbs (former Editor of the TAGA Magazine) flew on the second drop. I haven't the words to describe the range of emotions that engulfed me as I looked down on the scantily-clad figures staring up and waving as our aircraft circled the camp. All the while we were fulfilling our mission most of the figures remained rooted, as if afraid to look away, lest we should disappear. This was to be the most satisfying mission I had taken part in.

While HMS Indefatigable was in Tokyo Bay, two letters were delivered to the ship via the Red Cross. The first from G. Rochester, a Lance Corporal in the Northumberland Fusiliers, addressed to S/Lt. John Walker, the Observer of our crew, was in response to a message delivered uniquely by home-made parachute: a Very-cartridge case and the cut-off ends of Pussers pyjamas. The second letter from Major Donald G. Thompson, US Army, and senior officer at Yokkaichi POW Camp, was addressed to Captain Graham. Both were very moving letters expressing gratitude for the unexpected gifts and saying how wonderful for the men's morale had been the sight of British aircraft flying at will above their camp. Later, an attempt to trace Lance Corporal Rochester proved to be unsuccessful.

In 1955 a second chapter was added when we were contacted by Sid Redgment, another of the British POWs Yokkaichi. Supplies dropped on the camp had included personal messages of encouragement from crew members, often including name and rank of the sender. Sid had gathered-up many of these and kept them for over forty years. I sent him copies of aerial photographs of the camp and the maps and charts we had used. He sent me a typewritten list of names and ranks written on the messages. Sadly Sid was unable to attend our next Reunion: illness prevented him from making the journey. He died before we could meet him.





The third chapter of the story was written in 2005 by Sharlet Small, an American lady from Los Banos California, who had traced HMS Indefatigable through the Internet. She explained that her two great uncles, L A and G Trotter had been in Yokkaichi and on their return to the States had brought with them a length of yellow parachute silk which their niece, her mother, had made into a Christening dress for Sharlet, which she always referred to as her 'parachute' dress. At the time of writing, the dress was again in 'service' for her granddaughter, Maggie.

Irene's phone call has provided two more to the story. Following the death of her father, she discovered a diary detailing all that had happened to Ferdinand Baumeister from the time he was taken prisoner by the Japanese until his release in 1945. Among the scraps of paper that composed the diary, held in a fragment of folded corrugated cardboard secured by a length of shoelace, were sheets headed, 'The Boys of HMS Indefatigable who dropped food to us at Yokkaichi, 30 Aug 1945'. This list was almost identical to the typewritten one that Sid had sent to me in 1995. It led Irene to search the Internet, where she discovered not just the Indefatigable Association, but also the identity of another American prisoner, Carl Ruse.

Irene's translation of her father's diary told us that before the war Ferdinand had worked at the Dutch East Indies National Railway in Soengaigerong, Palembang – a name familiar to everyone involved with the British Pacific Fleet.

The latest chapter is provided by Carl Ruse's grandson Tim. Whilst still in High-school he had written the story of his grandfather, but was to discover much more from Carl's diary after his death. He learned that Carl had been injured in an earthquake and had been forced to use make-shift crutches until his release. Engaged in forced labour in a copper factory near the POW camp, Carl had formed an unlikely friendship with a young Japanese boy who had from time to time passed him food. On his release from captivity he took food dropped from US Aircraft to the boy to thank him and was given the boy's photograph.

Tim travelled to Nagoya and tried to locate the boy who had shown such humanity to his grandfather. It transpired that the boy had died from a respiratory illness when he was thirty years old.

In September of this year (2011) Irene Kusnadi travelled to England and with the help of Les Willis, the Chairman of the Indefatigable Association, she was able to meet some of the ship's crew who had provided the supplies and some of the fliers who were privileged to deliver them. Plus to do what she most wanted; to thank everyone involved on behalf of her father, her family and herself. Among those she met were Roy Hawkes, former Sub.Lt. Avenger Pilot, who led the first supply drop and Val Bennett, former Sub.Lt. Observer who discovered the POW camp.



Editor: Picture taken at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in September 2011. From Left to right; Roy Hawkes, Irene Kusnadi, Les Willis. Sitting in the wheelchair is Val Bennett

Telegraphist Air Gunners Association (TAGA)

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Memorial Service – Lee-on-Solent

Sunday May 20th 2012

The 65th Anniversary of the Telegraphist Air Gunners Association (TAGA) Memorial Service was held at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial at Lee-on-Solent on Sunday May 20th 2012. This year an unarmed guard platoon of Junior Ratings from the Royal Naval Air Engineering & Survival Equipment School attended to show their respects. HMS Sultan Gunner Officer, Warrant Officer Simon Cox Royal Navy ensured the proceedings went off with true military precision.

The Bledworth Brass Band provided the musical accompaniment. Wreaths were laid by Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham and Commander Nick Bowser RN representing HMS SULTAN, and members of TAGA, FAAA and the Aircrewmans' Association.

Lt. Roly Lane, HMS Sultan Guard Officer said "It was excellent to see that so many members of the public took time out to support this memorial. The parade also allowed new trainees a chance to show their respects to past members of the Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm whilst also gaining an understanding of the history behind the Fleet Air Arm".

Next year it will be 'Business as usual' but responsibility for organising the parade will fall to the FAAA. Val Sayer will organise the evening function (May 18th) and the lunch (May 19th).

Editor: The social events 2012 will be reported in AF22.





The Channel Dash Association (CDA) 2012

This year is the 70th Anniversary of 'Operation Fuller'. On February 11th a Remembrance Service was held at the 825 Sqd Memorial (Ramsgate Royal Harbour). Sixteen Standards were on parade and a Bugler from the Princess of Wales Royal Regiment Kohima sounded the 'Last Post and Reveille'. At the same time a Remembrance Service and wreath laying ceremony took place out on the waters of the Dover Straits where 13 members of 825 Sqd were killed and where the ashes of 3 of the surviving members had been scattered in 2010. The same day a dinner was held at RAF Manston which was presided over by Admiral the Lord Boyce. During the dinner David Kingsmill, grandson of one of the survivors, read out a short Requiem, his tribute to all 18 airmen of 825 Sqd. His dress – an authentic aircrewman's flying uniform of the period (loaned to him by FNHT). Airfix presented the CDA with a boxed set of a limited edition containing Fairey Swordfish and Spitfire models. The crest of 825 Sqd and the Channel Dash Memorial Trust appear on the box. The set is available from Model Zone stores and possibly 'on line'. A further Remembrance service was held on February 12th at St Mary- in-Castro Church – situated within the walls of Dover Castle. After the service guests were taken to Admiral Ramsey's secret war rooms where he conducted 'Operation Fuller' and 'Operation Dynamo' – the Miracle of Dunkirk. There has also been an Offshore Sailing Event which culminated in a flotilla of yachts, travelling from Boulogne line astern 'to attend' an Act of Remembrance and to lay wreaths at the place where the brave attack was launched.

A significant event, later this year, to commemorate the 70th Anniversary will be the unveiling and dedication of the 'Operation Fuller' Memorial at the Marine Parade Dover on September 22nd 2012. This will be a Memorial to all those who participated in this operation.

Operation Fuller, more commonly referred to as 'The Channel Dash' was a Tri Service operation involving units of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force. At the spearhead were 6 Swordfish aircraft of 825 Squadron based at RAF Manston, with the support of Shore Batteries, Destroyers and Motor Torpedo Boats (MTBs) from Coastal Command.

For more information: www.channeldash.org/ or email: paternixon44@talktalk.net

The Oxford ('Ox Box') Aeroplane

The Oxford entered service in the Royal Navy in 1939-1940 and served until 1945-46. Over 8000 were built. It was the favoured trainer for the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) or BCATP. It enabled training in navigation and direction finding, high-altitude bombing, air gunnery, aerial photography, night-flying and twin-engine flying. In 1940, at the height of the Battle of Britain over 300 were transferred from the RAF to the FAA. Trials were held at RNAS Donnisbristle. It was to remain in service with the FAA after WWII.

Frederick (Fred) Lewis Good PO TAG3



Fred crossed the bar December 16th 2011 aged 87. He was a man of many talents and interests and seldom was he seen without a welcoming smile. He was 15 years old when war was declared and lived a short walk from the Thames embankment, close enough to see the ‘pyrotechnic display’ of the bombing of the London Docks. He joined the Air Training Corps in 1941 and experienced for the first time use of the Morse code. On his 18th birthday he joined the FAA (1942) and was looking forward to his first ship – it was Butlins and St Vincent for Fred! Like many, he was to go to Canada, (a small fishing town – Yarmouth

(a Prohibition Town)) on 45A course (the first TAG course in Canada), to fine tune his skills (Vickers Gas Operated (VGO) .303 gun and air firing, semaphore, Morse code, a/c recognition etc.). Later he joined 836 Sqd – a Merchant Aircraft Carrier (MAC) Ship squadron. He became the ‘champion’ for MAC Ships, in particular his MAC Ship the Empire MacKendrick. In later years he wrote articles, gave talks on the importance of MACs, the life of a TAG and the faithful MAC Swordfish whose presence prevented the German Submarines surfacing, despite not carrying a gun. His love for the Swordfish was always with him and as such he was keen to support and promote the RNHF and the FNHT. In 1997 he was to fly once more in the Swordfish. As a Defensively Equipped Merchant Shipping (DEMS) Member he made efforts to contact ex MAC ship colleagues to keep the MNA TAGs together. It was a very sad day for Fred, when in 2010 the decision was made to ‘wind up’ the TAGs Association.

After the war Fred returned to his ‘civil’ employer – NCR. It was the start of a very successful career in Marketing and Training – Fred reached the position of NCR Deputy and Manager of Educational Services. More importantly he met his wife Beryl at NCR. During this time they were to have two children. In March 2008 they celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary.

Fred left NCR to set up (with his son,) a boating business beside the Grand Union Canal at Rickmansworth, he turned a leisure pastime into a successful business.

Fred, after retirement, joined the Watford FAAA Branch (2001) and was its Secretary almost until the day he died. His ‘Local Government’ links helped the Branch to secure a Lottery Grant. He was also known for his wood carpentry skills – his ‘side line’ was small garden items such as tubs and bird boxes. A gift the family will treasure, especially the four Grandsons – to them he was a fascinating link with the past – is a well documented history of his early years. A great guy – his enthusiasm, humour and energy will be missed by all who knew him.





Lt. Brian Saxby

FAAA TAG

Brian Saxby was both a member of the FAAA and an Associate Member of TAGA. Many will remember him from time spent at the Lee-on-Solent Memorial weekend. Born in September 1923 he was, like many too young to join the FAA at the start of the war so he joined the Home Guard until 1942, and then he joined the FAA as an air mechanic. He passed out top in his group and was recommended for flight training and accepted at HMS Waxwing. From here, he moved to HMS Daedalus for medical checks and an Admirals selection board plus a written exam. Basic training followed at HMS St Vincent.

Initial training completed, he travelled on the troopship Aquitania to New York and overland to Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) Munton – a dispersal centre at New Brunswick Canada. Ontario was his home whilst taking flying, bombing and gunnery training. Training complete he returned to the UK (HMS Macaw 1944). ‘Crunch time’ for Brian – Admiral’s Board and then further training. This time multi engine training. Good news came in April 1944 he was ‘Commissioned’ and joined his first Squadron at HMS Godwit (758 Sqn) where he flew the Oxford and took the Instrument flying course. Later at HMS Goldcrest (762 Sqn) he flew the twin engine heavies -Beaufort, Beaufighter, Wellington – before going back to HMS Godwit for advanced Instrument flying. In November 1944 he boarded the escort Carrier HMS Khedive en route to HMS Vairi (Coimbatore (Sular) Southern India) where the entire 742 Sqd were assembled to form the Naval Air Transport Squadron (NATS) to connect up all naval air stations in South East Asia Command (SEAC). Here he flew the then new twin engine, Beech Expeditors. In 1946 he flew back, with 8 others to the UK and HMS Merlin where he continued to fly the Expediter and the Dominic DH 89 with 782 Sqd. His last flight for the FAA was from HMS Daedalus when in 1946, 782 Sqd was on detachment forming a ferry service to Oberpfaffenhofen Air depot (Munich) to return ‘lease’ aircraft to the USA. In his time with the FAA Brian flew the following aircraft: Oxford, Beaufort, Beaufighter, Wellington, Expeditor UC45F, Stinson Reliant, Dominic DH 89.

Following ‘demob’, Brian returned to Woodford Green and took up work as an engineering buyer. He worked for various companies before taking retirement and finally moved to Dorset with his wife Barbara to join his daughters and their families. Here he still continued to keep an interest in flying– he joined the Friends of RNAS Yeovilton and attended its ‘Airdays’ as well as enjoying a couple of Tiger Moth flights from Compton Abbas Airfield.

Editor: Brian’s daughter sent me a detailed copy of his service career. This article is not only a tribute to Brian but I hope it will also be of interest for the detail it gives of Pilot training during WWII.

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) - later termed ‘the aerodrome of democracy’ by President Roosevelt, was formed in 1939 following a meeting of Government representatives from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand. Aircrew (137,000) came to Canada from all corners of the globe to earn their wings.

Branch News

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Remembrance Sunday Lee-on-Solent Michael (Ben) Worship Solent Branch

Unlike 2010 the day dawned bright, sunny and warm with little wind – rather exceptional for the time of year – November 13th 2011. At Lee I met Arnold Thompson and our then new National Standard Bearer Gordon Appleby who I



took to the Assembly point to meet up with the Solent Branch Standard Bearer Ron Chitty. Modifications had been made to the Fleet Air Arm Memorial – the pavement had been enlarged and a small garden placed in the centre of the pavement – this has made the corner tighter but has allowed more room for those attending to mingle. There is also a ‘Help the Heroes’ Memorial Garden on the corner where Richmond and Kings Road meet. The HMS Sultan Volunteer Band was seated in Richmond Road with corps of drums alongside.

At about 1045 the Guard and the Veterans platoon made up of 37 members of the Solent branch and four ‘buggies’ at the rear. They marched on to the beat of a corps of drums as there is no Drum Major. Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham (Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm) read the exultation, and two minutes silence. Wreaths were laid and on completion the Rear Admiral took the salute at the march past with the band playing ‘Hearts of Oak’ as the guard marched past and then changed to ‘Wings Over The Navy’ when the Veterans marched past. Afterwards tea and biscuits were provided by the Help for Heroes’ committee.

A Dutchman returns

Jim Buie Greater Manchester Branch

Lt. Paul Brosnan, a retired Dutch Naval Officer now living in England returned on May 4th 2012 to the Church of St Cross Appleton Thorn where two Dutch pilots are buried in the War graves section. May 4th is when the Netherlands hold their service ‘Remembrance of the dead’ (reported in AF20). The Greater Manchester Branch (GMB) were unable to support the event last year but when Lt. Brosnan arrived this year with his family they were met with the Dutch Flag flying at half mast from the church flagpole and parishioners and members of the GMB supporting their Standard carried by their Standard Bearer



Len Milward. After a short service conducted by the vicar and GMB Chaplain Rev Canon Elaine Chegwin – Hall, Lt. Brosnan, as in 2011, went to the War Grave section and placed a wreath on the Dutch graves and a single Tulip on each War Grave.

Missing – 75th Fleet Air Arm Anniversary Quilt

Peggy McCarthy (Bournemouth Branch)

I have a puzzle that I hope your Readers can help me solve. I am an ex Wren and had to leave the service when my Husband was commissioned. He was an Observer flying in Gannets.

Whilst visiting the FAA museum at Yeovilton during the early 1990s he came across a Patchwork Quilt on display, which had been made by Wrens and Wives at RNAS Culdrose to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the FAA. This Quilt was well thought out. The embroidery includes the Squadron badges of 809, 812, 814, 819, 820, 824, 826, 845, 846, 849 and 892. Also mentioned in the embroidery, are HMS Gannet, Seahawk, Osprey and Heron and pictures of various Aircraft.

I was teaching the history of Patchwork and Quilting at this time, and wished to include this Quilt. I phoned the museum and asked if I could have a photograph of it. There was a silence at the other end of the line, then a voice said “I am sorry Madam; I think you have the wrong number – This is an aircraft Museum and we do not have Quilts here”. I explained that my Husband had seen one and persisted in requesting a photograph. Another silence and the Matelot at the other end of the phone had an idea, “I’ll take your name and number and we can contact you”. About three weeks later, I received a letter from Cdr D White, saying that there was a Quilt in the museum, but it was in a glass case and could not be photographed, but when it was taken out for cleaning a picture would be taken. This picture duly arrived

For the next twenty years I went out talking about the History of Patchwork including the Fleet Air Arm Quilt. When I finally got to visit the museum, I asked the latest curator where the Quilt was. He knew nothing of it. There was no record of the Quilt. It was suggested it may have been returned to RNAS Culdrose. I have been in touch, but no one there has been able to help. Has anyone seen it? Does anyone know where it is? Did you help to make it? I would love to know. If you have any information please contact the Editor.

Editor: In January 2012 further requests for help were made. The Museum records were checked and those who had a ‘long memory’ of the Museum’ were contacted. The Community Relations Officer was also involved in making enquiries. Sadly the result was zero. However there is one thread of hope, if the Quilt was taken down, rolled up and stored with other textile material before the cataloguing system really came up to museum standard, it may be found. The Museum is clearing the old textile/uniform store prior to moving items to Cobham. The hunt will continue at RNAS Yeovilton.



St Dunstans National Standard

Barry Simons Eastbourne

The National standard for St Dunstans was 'laid up' on March 7th 2012 at the Charity's Chapel, Ovingdean and its new Standard (carrying the new brand name 'Blind Veterans UK') dedicated. Nigel Whiteley (Blind Veterans UK National Standard Bearer) and the Rev. Peter Clark (who conducted the service) organised the event, and Barry Simons was invited to undertake the job of Standard Marshal – all are members of the Eastbourne FAAA. Gordon Appleby, the FAAA National Standard Bearer attended with 17 other standard bearers from a wide range of Associations. The main building and the Chapel are situated on a steep hill facing directly out to sea. On the day there was a howling wind and heavy rain, so the Standard bearers were inspected inside the Chapel by Captain Paul Quinn, General Secretary (RNA). After the inspection, all adjourned to the main building for a buffet lunch provided by Blind Veterans UK.



Blind Veterans UK is the new name for St Dunstans. The Charity's message is still the same – *'no one who has served our country should battle blindness alone'*. Why the re-brand? St Dunstans was founded in 1915 by Sir Arthur Pearson to help veterans blinded during the First World War. Now (2012) the charity has a wider brief to work with young veterans who have lost their sight in recent conflicts, whilst still helping the older veterans whose blindness is caused by age or disease. The new name has been chosen to take full advantage of the communication channels offered by the World Wide Web and Internet facilities. Often an electronic search using 'St Dunstans' led to confusion – it being a common name and one often linked to a Church. The new name clearly describes who the charity helps. It can be found with ease, is more easily legally recognised and simplifies the making of wills and legacies.

Blind Veterans UK have just opened a new training facility in Llandudno, North Wales at a cost of £8m – financial contributions were received from Help the Heroes and the Royal British Legion. A Lottery grant was refused due to the Charity having too much money in the operating account. This could mean that the Charity will not be able to re-apply for a large sum for some 15 years. There are also centres at Sheffield and Ovingdean (near Brighton).

Many will still find it difficult not to refer to St Dunstans, but the hope is that Blind Veterans UK will be more appropriate for the electronic age and its wider brief. For further information contact:

Website: www.blindveterans.org.uk/

General Enquiries: Tel: 020 7723 5021

Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street London W1H 4HD,

Make a donation by post: Freepost RXXK-BRKC-YEXL,

Blind Veterans UK, Windrush Park Road, Witney, OX29 7EW





Solent Standard Bearer

Peter Westbrook Solent Branch

John Grant received his FAAA Life Membership Certificate at the Bournemouth AGM 2012. He has been a staunch member of Solent Branch and has had a long and dedicated career as the Solent Standard Bearer. When asked he has always responded with enthusiasm and has often taken the Standard to Dover for the Channel Dash Ceremony. Despite advancing years (he was 83 in February) and being the dedicated man that he is, last year John marched to the Fleet Air Arm Memorial at Lee-on-Solent carrying the Solent Standard and standing proudly by the Memorial as he does every year, even in inclement weather. He has persuaded Members of the Branch to attend the annual ceremony at the War Graves at the local Ann's Hill Cemetery. Sadly for the Branch in particular and the Association in general John has had to retire from active duties; however he has unselfishly offered to unfurl the Standard for any Member who has crossed the bar.



North Weald Airfield

Peter Roalf (Essex) and Les Hutchin (Hitchin) attended the Air Britain Fly-in on June 9th – 10th 2012 to represent the FAAA. It was a successful day and £30 was collected for the FNHT. There will also be another chance to 'fly the flag' on September 9th at the 'Norwegian Wings over North Weald Fun Day and Fly-in'. The Royal Norwegian Air Force F-16s will be there to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the Norwegian Sqds arrival at RAF North Weald. There will also be a flypast of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight (BBMF) Spitfire and RAF Sea King helicopter and Static displays, a Community Arena, and Fun games for the children.

The Fly Navy Heritage Trust (FNHT) is always looking for financial support for the Royal Navy Historic Flight (RNHF) as FAAA Members are aware. There is a new initiative, the Legacy Appeal. The Trust needs to raise £10M by 2015 to ensure the survival of the RNHF. If anyone is wishing to include the FNHT in their will there is help at hand. The Trust Legacy Adviser is available to help with the legal issues involved. If benefits to the Trust are already in your will make sure your request is known to the Trust. This will allow the Trust to plan for the future – the bonus for you is that they will provide flight updates.

First point of contact: Tel 01935 842005 or Email: legacy@fnht.co.uk

Editor: The mystery of the jeep on Guernsey in RN colours (AF19) has taken another twist. Lawrie Josey CAA (AE) founder member of the Coltswood Branch remembers the occasion well. The jeep was used when HMS Illustrious was in port to ferry people and goods from the airport and around the Island. Unfortunately we have now lost contact with the owner of the jeep.

RNAS Culdrose

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Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose

There was no Air Day 2012 at RNAS Culdrose this year. Planned re-surfacing works (Easter to October 2012) of the taxi ways to the main runway leave the base unable to host large numbers of visiting aircraft during the summer. This factor combined with Operational commitments across the globe and at home with the 2012 Olympics, it was not feasible for the base to man the event. The Air Day team has however already started to prepare for Air Day 2013.

The Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control Squadrons

The Sea King Airborne Surveillance and Control (SKASaCs) Squadrons, 849, 854 and 857 Naval Air Squadrons are based at RNAS Culdrose and are equipped with the Mk VII Sea King. They provide an 'eye-in-the-sky' capability to give vital information to Command at sea or on land. The Searchwater 2000 radar and system operators in the ASaC helicopters have proved highly effective at tracking both maritime and land targets over a wide area and in many different environments – most notably during current operations in Afghanistan. The specialist radar is housed in a giant sack – this gives the squadrons their 'Bagger' nickname. The Baggers have been in Afghanistan since 2009.

The flight line at Camp Bastion is always a busy place and there may still be the odd surprised glance at the 'Grey' maritime helicopters of the SKASaC but over the past two and a half years they have become well established in this initially foreign environment.

854 NAS have held the reins since November 2010 and their sister squadron 857 NAS was expected to take over in March 2012. The helicopters are manned by fewer than 50 personnel.

In one month the helicopters passed on more than 70 intelligence tip-offs which were followed up by the ground troops. Successful raids have captured more than 1500 homemade bombs and millions of pounds of drugs – one raid yielded 840kg of dry opium and 11kg of crystal heroin. Individually, these 'busts' can be quite small, but collectively, they make a very big difference – the impact of successful 'busts', spreads across Afghanistan. After the forces 1000th operational mission 854 Squadron returned to their more traditional Maritime roots at RNAS Culdrose where they have a 'new home'. The Squadrons have moved from hangarage (first built in 1946) to a completely new fully modernised facility named Palembang after the battle of Palembang in which all three squadrons took part.



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Submarine Hunting Off Sicily

Two Merlin Mk1 Maritime Patrol Helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron RNAS Culdrose flew 1400 miles across Europe to Sicily in order to take part in Exercise 'Proud Manta 2012'- NATO's largest Anti-Submarine Warfare exercise. The exercise was to hone submarine hunting skills. Personnel, including Aircrew and Engineers, travelled across Europe with their Merlin helicopters to reach the US Naval Air Station Sigonella (Eastern Sicily) – just 15 miles south of the volcano Mount Etna – to stay for the duration of the exercise. The exercise also involved ships, aircraft and submarines from the USA, Canada, Norway, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece and Turkey. The Squadron flew their aircraft alongside helicopters and fixed wing aircraft from NATO partners, working with NATO ships to counter underwater threats played by NATO submarines. The RNAS Culdrose Merlins flew 66 hours during the exercise, more airborne time and more missions than any other nation participating. Including the transit flights across Europe, 115 hours in total were clocked up by the two aircraft. Throughout this time they managed to detect and conduct simulated attacks against a variety of submarines taking part in the exercise. The challenges posed, whilst operating at a foreign base far from home to provide serviceable aircraft for the exercise missions, were met with gusto by the engineering team, engendering a close relationship with their Italian Merlin colleagues – an extremely valuable exercise. For 820 it gave the Squadron an opportunity to hone and demonstrate their skills at Anti-Submarine Warfare – the primary role of the Merlin Mk1 helicopter. The crews gained benefit from operating in a multi-asset, multi-national environment. The simulated attacks gave valuable insight into how NATO partners operate and demonstrated the submarine hunting capability of the Merlin helicopter.

Flying the flag at the Olympics and Paralympics Games

Lieutenant Alexandra (Alex) Kelley (31), who is currently serving as a Front Line Merlin Helicopter Observer with 820 Squadron at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, has been selected to take part in over 100 'team welcome ceremonies' and 805 'victory ceremonies' during the Games which will be seen by millions of spectators in London 2012 venues and a worldwide TV audience. Both ceremonies require the raising of the relevant country's flag. Lieutenant Kelley is a keen sportswoman and has represented the Combined Services, Royal Navy in snow boarding and the Royal Navy in Tennis and Hockey and was chosen through a Ministry of Defence nomination process highlighting those with sporting or operational achievements, or involved in their local communities. She will be part of a team consisting of six flag-bearers and one flag-manager.



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The Olympic Torch at RNAS Cudrose

The arrival of the Olympic Torch at Royal Navy Air Station Cudrose acknowledged the vital contribution that maritime and coastal search and rescue services undertake for our island nation. Lands End, the start point of the Olympic Torch Relay is not far from the Air Station where the ceremonial lantern was kept overnight awaiting transport to the site the following day and the start of the Olympic Torch Relay.

The 771 Naval Air Squadron Sea King Helicopter arrived at Lands End at 7.00am and Lt. Commander Richard Full carried the lantern to the world-famous signpost where the first Torch was lit in the presence of local dignitaries and members of the public. The very proud crew who flew the flame were: Lieutenant Commander Martin Shepherd, (Pilot and Commanding Officer of 771 Naval Air Squadron), Lieutenant Chris Whittington (Pilot), Lieutenant Commander Richard Full (Observer), and Corporal Justin Morgan (Aircrewman)



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771 Squadron

The 771 Squadron is on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year. It provides Search and Rescue cover across the South West. Squadron members fly across the Cornish Coastline in their red and grey Sea King helicopters on daring rescue missions, saving the lives of many in some of the most hazardous conditions, often putting their own lives at risk. At 15 minutes notice by day and 45 minutes by night (although they usually get airborne in less), the Squadron is capable of operating within a 200 nautical mile radius of Cudrose. They carry out over 200 rescues a year, ranging from long range medical evacuation from ships at sea, assistance to vessels in distress, to the safe recovery of stranded cliff fallers, swimmers, divers and surfers. The Squadron also helps with hospital-to-hospital transfers, road traffic accidents and assisting the police with aerial searches for missing people.



The journey of the Olympic torch

The Olympic flame was lit on May 10th and taken on an eight day relay around the Greek mainland and islands prior to the Flame Handover Ceremony at the Panathenaic Stadium in Athens. It arrived at Royal Naval Air Station (RNAS) Culdrose on May 18th 2012, on board a chartered gold liveried British Airways A319 aircraft, especially named Firefly.

The Olympic Flame now continues its 8000 mile journey across the UK to within 10 miles of 95% of the population until it finally reaches the London Olympic Stadium on the evening of 27th July. It will take 70 days for the 8000 torch bearers, (each running approx. 300 metres) to complete their task of delivering the flame to the London Olympic Stadium.

The Olympic Torch Relay has the support of British Airways and is presented by Coca-Cola, Lloyds TSB and Samsung.

Editor: As the Olympic Flame is classified as a symbolic flame it is permitted to be carried on board an aircraft subject to special authorisation from the Civil Aviation Authority. The Flame travelled in a ceremonial lantern secured in a specially designed cradle which was firmly fixed to its seat on the plane using a secure holding device. The lantern is designed so the Olympic Flame can burn safely for up to 30 hours.



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Armed Forces Day

The Sea King Crew from RNAS Culdrose and some of the celebrities found time after the ceremonies to take a photo call to promote Armed Forces Day Saturday June 30th 2012.

This year the City of Plymouth, with its historic and distinguished links with the military hosted the Armed Forces Day National event. Celebrations included a

parade through the city streets with troops from all three Services followed by a drumhead service at Plymouth Hoe. There was also a steam past of Royal Navy vessels on Plymouth Sound.



Image © Crown Copyright

RNAS Yeovilton

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The History of 703 Naval Air Squadron

Sub Lt. Robert Andrews

703 Naval Air Squadron (NAS) formed at RNAS Lee-on-Solent (HMS Daedalus) as a long-range catapult Squadron on 3 June 1942, equipped with eleven Kingfishers operating from Armed Merchant Cruisers and the light Cruisers HMS Enterprise and Emerald. An additional Flight of three 'Walrus' was based in South Africa, employed on convoy protection duties. The Squadron disbanded on 1 May 1944.

Reforming at RAF Thorney Island on 19 Apr 1945 as the Naval Flight of the RAF's Air Sea Warfare Development Unit it operated all major naval aircraft types.

In 1948 it returned to RNAS Lee-on-Solent and took on the additional task of Service Trials Unit, including the trial of a flexible 'Rubber Deck' using the Vampire.

Moving in 1950 to RNAS Ford, it was the first unit to operate from the new carrier HMS Eagle as part of its task of testing catapult and arrestor gear. In 1954, A Flight operated as an independent unit from RNAS Arbroath using six Fireflies with Bass Rock acting as a dummy carrier to evaluate Ferranti's new carrier controlled approach system. The same year the Squadron carried out intensive flying trials on the Gannet and Wývern before amalgamating with 771 NAS on 17 Aug 1955 to form 700 NAS.

On 22 Jan 1972 it reformed from the training element of 820 NAS as the Wasp Operational Training unit at RNAS Portland. In 1973 it won the Bambara Trophy for the best unit safety record. In 1975 it took over the Wasp Advanced Training element from 706 NAS and was responsible for aircrew Advanced Fast Jet Training, Operational Fast Jet Training and ground crew training. On 1 Jan 1981 it disbanded when all Wasp training moved back to 829 NAS.

Elementary Flying Training had previously been carried out by the Royal Navy Elementary Flying Training School based at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, Church Fenton and Leeming through the 1970s and 1980s. It disbanded at RAF Topcliffe in 1993 on the formation of the Joint Elementary Flying Training School (JEFTS), initially operating the Chipmunk. It was the first unit to receive the Bulldog. JEFTS operated the Slingsby Firefly and moved to RAF Barkston Heath in 1995. On 11 Jul 2003, 703 NAS reformed as the Naval element of the Defence Elementary Flying Training School which assumed the JEFTS task and aircraft. In 2010, DEFTS took delivery of the Grob Tutor 115e, which is also used by the RAF for Elementary Flying Training.

Editor: Mid shipman Robert Andrews (see AF20) after successfully completing his Elementary Flying Training has now been promoted to Sub Lt. and is currently at the Britannia Royal Naval College on the Initial Warfare Officer Foundation Course. I had not realised until this article arrived just how involved the 'story' of 703 Naval Air Squadron has been.

Royal Navy fast jet Student

Following Refresher Training on the Grob Tutor, Lieutenant Daley Simpson has been assigned to 727 Naval Air Squadron to maintain currency in fixed wing flying techniques, prior to joining the next phase of his fast jet training on the Hawk T2 at RAF Valley (Wales).

On completion of his Advanced Fast Jet Training he is destined for the USA where he will gain frontline experience on the United States Navy's F18 Super Hornet.

The exchange with the US Navy will prepare him, and other Royal Navy pilots, for the Navy's next generation Carrier based fighter the F-35 Lightning II, and operations on HMS Queen Elizabeth when it comes into service. His role whilst at RNAS Yeovilton is to provide Air Experience Flying to University Royal Navy Unit cadets, potential officers and members of the RN such as trainee Air Traffic Controllers and Air Engineers.



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Exeter Airport memorial

In March 2012 a memorial paying tribute to RAF Exeter and the Royal Navy Air Squadrons based there during the World War II, was unveiled at Exeter International Airport. The bronze statue depicts a pilot who made a safe return, scanning the sky for his missing comrades. The plinth has six plaques recording the history of RAF Exeter and those who flew from there. At the unveiling, Lt. Jerry Tribe from the Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch

based at RNAS Yeovilton, represented the Royal Navy and laid a wreath from the Fleet Air Arm. Amongst those attending the ceremony were surviving wartime aviators.

RAF Exeter became one of the most important air stations in the South West of England. Based alongside the RAF squadrons were Polish, Czech and American squadrons. A range of aircraft flew from the Air base – Hurricanes, Typhoons, Spitfires and the Royal Navy Albacores and Swordfish. All had a common mission – to protect the vital dockyards of Plymouth and Portland and to give fighter cover for RAF Exeter, which took its fair share of German air raids, but was proudly never out of action. RN Fleet Air Arm Squadrons 816, 834 and 841 operated at RAF Exeter during most of 1943. Their mission was to locate and attack the German E boats, which threatened and harassed Allied shipping in the English Channel and to escort our shipping into and up the English Channel, this was vital for the war effort.



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Naval aviator graduates from elite Commando Squadron

Sub Lt. Natalie Grainger (22), pictured here with Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham has graduated from 848 NAS (RNAS Yeovilton). In addition to earning her pilot wings she has been awarded the coveted Westland's trophy, which is given to the best overall Pilot on the course. To achieve this level she attended the Britannia Royal Naval College, to 'pass out' (December 2008), the Elementary Flying Training (2009), where she learnt to fly various aircraft, then 848 NAS took her training to a higher level. The instructors challenged her to start thinking about operating the aircraft in a multitude of different environments and situations. At this stage the ability to fly a helicopter to a high standard is taken for granted. Students are expected to fly the Sea King as second nature whilst having their captaincy and decision making process honed. Now 3 years later she has joined 846 NAS on front line operations. Natalie (22) is also a keen sportswoman and continues when possible, to represent the Royal Navy Women's Football team.



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The spirit of the Hunter Jet comes back to Yeovilton

This year the Hawker Hunter jet fighter was to be seen over the spring skies of RNAS Yeovilton. Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) had sponsored a trial (March 2012) to see whether the Hunter can be used to bolster the air-attack experience for the training of the front-line-Fleet.

Hawker Hunter Aviation (HHA) despatched three of its Hunters from its home base (RAF Scampton) to participate in the one month trial. Their role and that of the MOD Hawk and Falcon aircraft



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was to simulate missile and fast jet attacks against Royal Navy and visiting warships going through the rigorous test of Operational Sea training off of Plymouth. By offering this variety of different aircraft profiles to the ships, the training efficiency and diversity has improved. The Hunter set the then world speed record in 1953 (727.63 mph). They were to fly with the Fleet Air Arm in various capacities from the end of this decade until 1995. During 1972 -1995 the jets were based at RNAS Yeovilton with Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit (FRADU) and since their retirement from Somerset they have made occasional visits to the Air Station – the most recent visit was in 2009. There is now another event for 'memory lane' – the experience of the noise of fast jets from RNAS Yeovilton, on exercise with the Fleet operating off the coast in 2012.

Navy War Horse returns home

In 2009 Sea King helicopter (ZA298, RNAS Yeovilton) was hit by a rocket propelled grenade (RPG), whilst landing at a Check Point in the Nad-e Ali area of Helmand Province, and severely damaged. The rocket blasted its way through the aircraft narrowly missing the pilot and aircraft commander and slightly injuring the air door gunner. The recovery team had to extract the aircraft from the Check Point, return it to Camp Bastion and prepare it for its return to the UK. The mission was extremely challenging – a considerable amount of hazardous equipment and fuel from the aircraft had to be removed to ensure everyone's safety and to reduce its overall weight. The Senior Aircraft Maintainer in Afghanistan at the time was CPO Neil Copeland who said "... We receive military training in Theatre for this type of eventuality but working on the rotor head which was about 10 feet above the ground and four feet above the compound wall certainly concentrated the mind – we were in full view of the terrorists who were responsible for bringing the aircraft down. However the army did an excellent job in providing cover and ensured we were able to get on with the task in hand."

Its not the first time ZA298 has survived enemy fire. During the Falklands war one of the aircraft's rotor blades was hit by 30mm canon shells from an Argentinean Sky Hawk aircraft. Two hours later its maintainers had the aircraft flying on another mission. Two days later the veritable war horse ferried General Menendez to HMS Fearless where the initial surrender negotiations were held. When operating in Bosnia it suffered damage from small arms fire. Vector Aerospace at Fleetlands carried out the reconstruction. Eighteen months later the helicopter was returned to its rightful place – the front line of 846 Naval Air Squadron.

Fleet Air Arm Junglies Association

A new military association – The FAA Junglies Association is being promoted on the Web. Membership is open to any former or current members of the traditional Naval Air 'Junglie' Squadrons – 707, 845, 846, 847, and 848. The Membership fee is £10 (by standing order). There are future plans to provide a pin badge and more! Interested? Forms are available from the website: www.Junglies.org.uk or from 'Junglie' secretary Tina Cullen ext 5257 RNAS Yeovilton.



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Image © Francis Spurdash via Western Daily Press



HMS Illustrious

In February 2012 HMS Illustrious, Britain's 'on call' helicopter carrier, after 'ammunitioning' in Scotland, sailed from Portsmouth for 2 months of training in the North Sea and fiords of Norway. The tour culminated in large scale Arctic war games – NATO's Exercise 'Cold Response'. The temperature in northern Norway at the time the ship sailed was about -15°C with the expectation that in March temperatures could dip below -30°C .

Prior to the NATO exercise, and whilst in the North Sea, the Apache gunships of 656 Squadron Army Air Corps conducted training with 'Lusty' and the Sea Kings of 848 Naval Air Squadron (NAS). Later their front-line counterparts – 845 and 846 NAS, plus commando Lynx of 847 NAS were to replace them prior to the NATO exercise in March. Also on board for Cold Response was the Royal Marines of Kilo Company, 42 Commando, from Bickleigh.

On her way north for the Cold Response exercise HMS Illustrious 'stopped off' at the Danish capital Copenhagen for a 4 day visit. The ship hosted a Lynx helicopter from the Royal Danish Air Force for several hours of flight deck drills. The visit also allowed HMS Illustrious to open her hatches to the Copenhagen public for a day and 4500 visitors took the opportunity to see the impressive hangar and flight deck and to talk to crew members. Further links were forged when 60 RN officers on board, under training, paid a visit to the Danish Naval Academy.

After Cold Response, the British units returned home for a brief stay, before sailing to north-west Scotland to take part in Joint Warrior, the twice-yearly international exercise run from Faslane Naval Base.





NATO's Exercise Cold Response

Cold Response is an annual Norwegian led winter exercise carried out in the counties of Nordland and Troms. The main purpose of this year's winter exercise was to rehearse high intensity operations in winter conditions within NATO with a UN mandate.

Over 16000 soldiers from 15 nations participated in the exercise. The forces came from all Defence branches, including some Special Forces. The largest participation came from Canada, France, The Netherlands, Great Britain, Sweden and the USA. This was the second run-out for the UK Response Task Group, the naval force formed under the 2010 Defence Review and which proved its worth last year during operations off Libya.

The exercise took place, nearly 200 miles inside the Arctic circle – in the area between Harstad, Narvik and Tromsø with the Naval forces operating along the coast and fiords between Harstad and Tromsø and the aircraft, from air bases Andøya, Bardufoss, Bodø, Evenes and Ørland. A lot of the combat action took place on shooting ranges in Norway plus some Swedish territory was used. The 'participants' had to deploy to handle everything from high intensity warfare to terror threats and mass demonstrations and were expected to balance the use of diplomatic and military force whilst training in an international environment, here, they had to master a common language and procedures.

The British Navy sent its flagship, HMS Bulwark, HMS Illustrious, escorting destroyer HMS Liverpool, helicopters of Commando Helicopter Force and Culdrose-based Merlins and Royal Marines of Kilo Company, 42 Commando, from Bickleigh, near Plymouth – some 2000 Royal Navy and Royal Marine personnel. The British ships also served as the springboard for operations by Dutch and US marines, and Norway's Kystjegerkommandoen – an elite amphibious unit similar to the Royal Marines, but fewer than 100 strong.



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Cold Response was seen as an opportunity for Britain to test HMS Illustrious' ability to serve as the nation's on-call helicopter carrier and HMS Bulwark's ability to serve as the nation's on-call assault ship (and command/flagship) following the 'take over' from HMS Ocean and HMS Albion respectively. It was also an opportunity to test the ability of the staff Commander UK Task Group, based in Plymouth, to choreograph land, sea and air forces in the most challenging environment imaginable. For the sailors, air and ground crew and Royal Marines it was an opportunity to renew skills and to 'fight' in Arctic conditions. In the wider context it honed the long-standing relations between the Royal and Dutch marines.

A Press release from Yeovilton (March 14 2012) reported that for those working on the flight deck of HMS Illustrious, it was particularly challenging. Day and night, they were facing blizzards and strong winds (that could drop the temperature to -40°C) as they marshalled and refuelled the helicopters. On board were 8 helicopters, all from RNAS Yeovilton – 4 Sea King Mk4 (Naval Air Squadrons 845 and 846), 3 Lynx Mk7 (Naval Air Squadron 847) and a Lynx Mk8 from 815 Naval Air Squadron. With all of the aircrew needing to prepare for operating from the Ship in arduous conditions, the result was a very busy flight deck.

CINC Fleet receives warm reception in the Arctic

PO PHOT Merrill

Commander in Chief (CINC) Fleet, Admiral George Zambellas DSC visited Naval personnel some 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle at the Joint Helicopter Command (JHC) training base in Bardufoss, Norway (Feb 18th – 20th 2012). As well as receiving briefs on and touring the Clockwork training facilities, Admiral Zambellas was able to visit the surrounding area.

The inhospitable terrain, extreme weather conditions and temperatures as low as -35°C make Bardufoss the ideal location for cold weather warfare training. The base, known as ‘Clockwork JHC’, provides survival and operational training and support facilities to enable aviation capable units to survive, operate and fight in extreme cold weather environments.

During his visit the Admiral met some of the 200 strong Naval contingent from Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) – deployed to Clockwork to undertake training in preparations for Exercise Cold Response which took place in northern Norway in mid-March.

Captain Matt Briers Royal Navy, Commanding Officer CO CHF, was able to show the Admiral first-hand how well his command was prepared for Cold Response. He took him around a Forward Operating Base (FOB). The Admiral was able to view various key positions, talk to personnel, and share lunch with Captain Matt Briers – lunch in the form of Chicken Tikka from an Arctic 24 hour ration pack, in the dining room, a ‘lean-to’ survival shelter.

The highlight of the Commander in Chief’s visit was when he took to the skies in a Sea King Mk4. A helicopter pilot himself, he viewed a number of snow landings before taking control of the aircraft for a navigation sortie over the Norwegian mountains.

On completion of his visit Admiral Zambellas said, “‘Clockwork’ training at Bardufoss is a jewel in our defence crown. We are training about 700 personnel a year in specialist skills, in outstanding facilities, for a very good price... This is exactly what we need to maintain joint skills in a challenging environment.”



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Falklands Memorial Avenue

Between April and June 1982, the Falklands Campaign was one of history's shorter conflicts and one that put the spotlight well and truly on RNAS Yeovilton's men and machines. Every single RNAS Yeovilton based Naval Air Squadron participated in the Campaign. Ultimately, the base supplied a total of 126 aircraft and more than 1400 Royal Naval personnel. The Falklands Memorial Avenue was created in 1983 to commemorate the twelve members of RNAS Yeovilton killed during this war. Twelve Hornbeam trees were planted. Each tree has a Portland stone memorial individually dedicated to either a sailor or marine who never returned from the South Atlantic. A central memorial records their names and an epitaph. Family members regularly visit the stones, to some these trees are their only tribute.

Since their dedication the Avenue of trees and its stones have shown weathering with time. On the initiative of Chief Petty Officer Mark Howard, a Falklands Veteran who served with 846 Naval Air Squadron, the site has been given a 'face lift'. He realised when walking along the stones reading the names of old friends that action was needed before the Falklands 30th commemoration. His comment "....if we're going to have a memorial to the Falklands, I believe we should look after it".

On completion of the work, a small ceremony took place. The Commanding Officer of RNAS Yeovilton, Commodore Paul Chivers OBE spoke with the 'team' responsible for the project and admired the hard work of the ground work team and a local Stonemason who cleaned all the Portland stone work. Commodore Chivers, himself is a Falklands Veteran, who served on HMS Coventry – the ship that was sunk by an Argentine Exocet missile.

The hope is that the refurbished Falklands Memorial Avenue will be a fitting tribute to those from the Naval Air Squadrons of RNAS Yeovilton, who sacrificed their lives during the Falklands War – by offering a place of solitude, to pause and reflect.

Editor: Wreath and Rose laid in remembrance of one of the fallen – Petty Officer Aircrewman Ben Casey (26) April 23rd 1982.



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Members who have ‘crossed the bar’

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October 2011 – May 2012

Norman (Darby) Allan WO (AEM)	FAA
Leonard (Len) T Boyton POAM (A)	Hanworth
S/Lt. (AE) Ray Brant	Birmingham
Raymond Charles Carter CPO (Pilot)	Essex Branch
Thomas (Tom) R Chisnal AM1 (A)	Wrekin
John Day POAF (L)	Greater Manchester
Frederick (Fred) Good PO TAG3	Watford
Thomas (Tom) Hall LAM (A)	Birmingham
Ray Hepton AM (E) 1 st Class.	Yorkshire
Albert Home POAM (A)	Ford
Victor (Vic) Ralph Jennings NA1 AH3 (D)	Birmingham
James Litchfield AM (A)	Daedalus
John Edward Marchant CAA	Bournemouth
Don Moore A/F (L)	Derbyshire Branch
Robert (Bob) Patch LAM (AE)	Bristol and District
Lt. Brian Saxby	Daedalus
Sydney Thompson NAM 1 (AE)	Daedalus
Roy Turner AM (A)	Birmingham
Lt. Cdr George M Warren	Cotswold
Kenneth George Whittingham Acting PO (A)	Kent

May those who have ‘crossed the bar’ rest in peace.

The Cenotaph Parade Whitehall

The March (November 13th 2011) and post-march gathering at the FAAA Embankment Memorial following the Cenotaph Parade and Remembrance service went considerably more smoothly than 2010. The Marshall was Billy Cotton (AHA). The FAAA was represented by Peter (carrying the wreath) and Jenny Murray (plus a friend), Terry and Margaret Gidman, and Michael Tunley. Despite being a small group there was TV coverage of ‘our line’. It is a big ask but it would be great if more could join them this year.

The Fleet Air Arm Memorials

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

Short Stories

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Kenneth George Whittingham PO (A)

Following the family tradition Ken joined the Royal Navy in 1944 after finishing his five year apprenticeship as a carpenter. His first posting was to HMS Gosling where he was to be trained as an Aircraft mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm. Not what he had expected but at that time the RN did not require a 'chippy'. More training for Ken, before in 1945 he was stationed at HMS Merlin (RNAS Donnibristle) and HMS Nighthawk (RNAS Inskip) servicing the Blenheim, Martinet, Seafire, and Hurricane aircraft of 770 Sqd. But he still wanted to be a 'chippy' and in June 1945 he was posted to HMS Daedalus. He was re-classified to Carpenter/Joiner and was promoted from A/LAM to A/PO and posted to the Royal Navy Aircraft Direction Centre (RNADC – Keat) – Works Maintenance Unit (WMU2). He had a team of 12 whose job was to carry out repairs etc for the camps within the HMS Daedalus area. When Ken was discharged (December 1946) he set up his own carpentry business and later worked as a Building Inspector for the National House Builders Registration Council. He spent his final days as a resident at Pembroke House (RNBT); he was a member of the FAAA (Kent), RNA (Gillingham) and the Freemasons.

John Edward Marchant BEM – CAA

John Marchant was born in Gosport. He joined the Royal Navy in September 1941 as an apprentice and completed his training in 1944. He became an air fitter and later an artificer in the Fleet Air Arm. In 1947 he trained as a pilot but returned to ground work to continue as an aircraft engineer and later to work on helicopters. At the end of his naval career he had perfected a rigging system for helicopters which enabled the rotor blades to be adjusted and set ready for flying at sea. Previously this had been impossible to do accurately due to the pitching and rolling of ships. This invention, known as the Marchant Inclinometer, was recognised as a significant contribution to improving safety and efficiency in the Royal Navy and for this he was awarded the British Empire Medal in 1965. He was also commended for his work in the jungles of Borneo. He never lost his love of flying – at the age of 70 he looped the loop at the controls of a Tiger Moth. As a civilian he was a maths teacher who was active in the local Neighbourhood Watch, a voluntary driver for Monday lunches and ran Tai Chi courses. John joined the Bournemouth branch in 1995 and gave many talks to the members ranging from Astronomy to Tai Chi. He was proud to belong to the Association and enjoyed the camaraderie and open friendship of the meetings.

William (Bill) Challis NAM (E)

Bill Challis – a founder member of the FAAA Essex Branch joined the FAA in November 1949. During the seven and half years he was in the FAA he served on various ships including Daedalus, Gamecock, Illustrious, Gannet, Seahawk (849 Sqd) and Peregrine (771 and 760 Sqds). *Editor: This is a late entry 'on request'.*



List of Accoutrements

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ON SALE FROM THE TREASURER – May 2012

ITEM	Cost (Incl. P&P)
Gold Wire Blazer Badge	£ 13.75
Silk Blazer Badge	£ 9.50
Tie	£ 9.25
Beret Badge	£ 9.25
Ladies Head Square	£ 11.75
Member's Lapel Badge (Gilt)	£ 4.75
Member's Spouse/Association Lapel Badge (Chrome)	£ 2.75
Life Lapel Badge	£ 1.75
Baseball Cap	£ 8.25
Plastic Medal Holder (Large)	£ 5.25
Plastic Medal Holder (small for Miniatures)	£ 3.75
Car Stickers	£ 1.75
Membership Cards	£ 0.00

ITEMS BOUGHT TO ORDER

Short Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 16.25
Long Sleeve Pilot Shirt	£ 16.25
Sweaters, Acrylic	£ 19.50
Sweater, Lambs wool	£ 27.50

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

White and Light Blue not available in Lambswool

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

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

Prices may change due to an increase in VAT (2012)

ORDERS TO THE TREASURER

Cheques made payable to the **Fleet Air Arm Association**. **Money with order please to:**

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

Items will be ordered by ME, and sent direct to you by the supplier, who will invoice me.

This is to safeguard against non-Members of the FAAA purchasing these items.

Berets can be obtained from:

Baun & Co. Naval Tailors & Outfitters, 14, Queen Street Portsmouth. PO1 3LH.

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

FAAA Branch Details

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BIRMINGHAM – 2nd Tuesday at 1200 Noon
The Nautical Club, Bishopsgate St. Birmingham
Secretary – Sue Halladay 0121 3572783

BOURNEMOUTH – 4th Thursday at 1100
Bournemouth War Memorial Home, Castlelane West
Secretary – Jo Towler 01202 303135

BRISTOL AND DISTRICT – 2nd Monday at 2000,
21 Egerton Rd, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8HN
Chairman/Secretary – Eric Pitt 01179 241803

COTSWOLD – 1st Friday at 2000
18 Commercial Road, Gloucester
Secretary – Mike Humphries 01453 547436

DERBYSHIRE – 4th Wednesday at 1200
The Royal British Legion Club, Allenton, Derby
Secretary – Roy Pym 01332 701993

EASTBOURNE – Last but one Thursday at 1200
Odd months only. The Old Polegate Station, Polegate
Secretary – Barry Simons 01825 872539

ESSEX – 2nd Thursday at 2000
RAFA Club, Chelmsford
Secretary – Peter Roalf 01279 431599

FORD – Last Thursday at 1930
The Sportsman, Littlehampton, West Sussex
Secretary – Peter Colston 01903 715139

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

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

HANWORTH – 1st Wednesday at 1200
R.N.A. Club, Park Road, Hanworth
Secretary – Terry Lowden 0208 9483979

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

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

NORTH EAST HANTS – 4th Tuesday at 1230
The Brewers Fayre, Aldershot.
Secretary – Mike Pomeroy 01276 502358

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

SOUTHDOVNS – 4th Wednesday at 1915
The Restaurant, Shoreham Airport
Secretary – Alec Braybrooke 01273 505187

WATFORD – 2nd Sunday at 1100
Carpenders Park Community Hall, Herts
Secretary – Peter Murray 020 8428 2621

WREKIN – 1st Friday at 2000
T.S. Wrekin, Donnington, Telford
Secretary – Gareth Price 01902 773197

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

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

DAEDALUS – Headquarters Roll, No meeting place
Secretary – Peter Roalf 01279 431599

