

# Jabberwock

The Magazine of The Society of  
Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum

No. 96  
August 2019



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS  
**FLEET AIR ARM**  
MUSEUM

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Wasp

*Plus all the usual features:  
Readers' letters, Snippets  
from Council meetings,  
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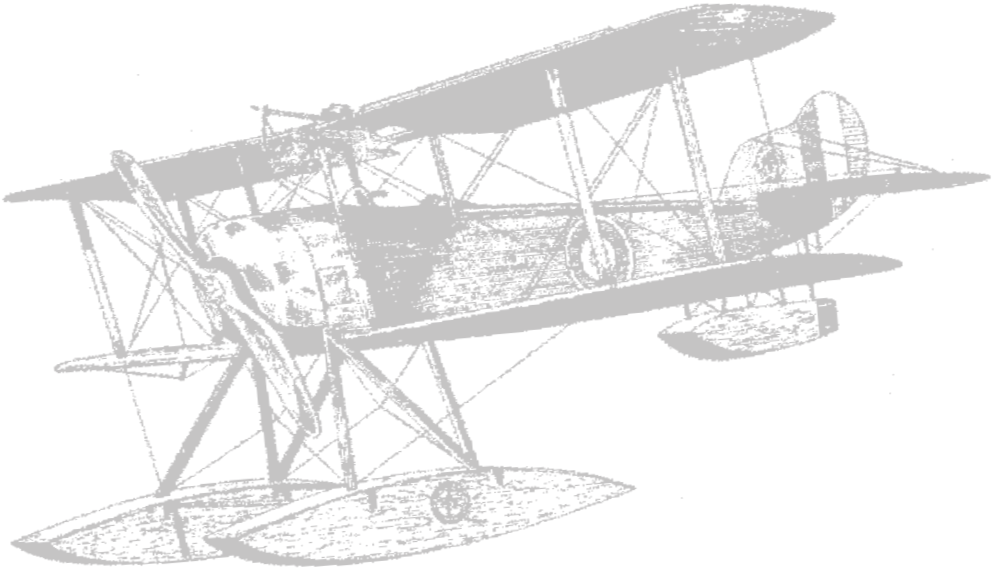
THE  
NATIONAL  
MUSEUM







**SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**  
**FLEET AIR ARM**  
**MUSEUM**



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### **Admission**

*Members are admitted to the Museum free of charge, on production of a valid membership card. Members may be accompanied by up to three guests (one guest only for junior members) on any one visit, each at a reduced entrance fee, currently 50% of the standard price. Members are also allowed a 10% discount on goods purchased from the shop.*

*Note: These concessions are provided at the discretion of the General Manager of the Museum and could be removed at any time.*

### **Copyright**

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### **Contributions**

*We are extremely grateful to all those who contribute articles and material to the magazine, even though it is not always possible to use every item!*



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*Replica Bristol Fighter at Aerospace  
Bristol, p20*

### COVER PICTURE:

Replica Bristol Scout at Aerospace Bristol. An RNAS Scout was the first landplane to be flown from a ship, when Flt. Lt. H. F. Towler flew No. 1255 from the flying deck of the seaplane carrier HMS *Vindex* on 3 November 1915.

## EDITORIAL

In this issue, we carry the concluding article by our Chairman on the operations of the RNAS in the Aegean during the Dardanelles campaign in 1915. Graham makes the point that, although the military campaign was a humiliating debacle, resulting in a serious blow to the prestige of allied forces, the deployment of the RNAS, which included the first sinking of a ship by an air-launched torpedo, was a supreme achievement. This was sadly overlooked in the aftermath of the army's withdrawal from the theatre.

We supplement this article with extracts from the diary of one of the RNAS aircrew at the time, George Bentley Dacre, one of the two torpedo-dropping aircrew. These anecdotes bring home the primitive nature of the aircraft deployed in the Aegean.

The recent visit to Aerospace Bristol, home of the last Concorde to fly, was a great success. We provide a centre spread of photographs, courtesy of our photographer, Ernest Lear.

The next Society visit is advertised on page 23. This is

to the Fly Navy Heritage Trust on 3 September. Limits on numbers mean that this visit has to be restricted to members only.

It is hard to believe, in these summer months, that it will soon be time for the Annual General Meeting in September. Details of this event, to which all are welcome, are to be found on page 22. As usual, all the places of Council members are up for election.

The recent discovery of a ditched Barracuda in the Solent is briefly covered. The Museum's Dave Morris attended part of the recovery operations, which have already brought up a wing, and we will be hearing more in future as to the condition of any recovered material.

If you have read the "Snippets from Council Meetings" in recent issues, you will be aware of the continuing efforts to make Paypal available for membership payments. This has finally been achieved and the link to the membership site is listed on our Membership page. We hope that this might contribute to expanding our membership numbers!









## SNIPPETS FROM COUNCIL MEETINGS

### From the June Meeting:

• *The General Manager gave the following report:*

**Capital Works.** Our two large scale capital projects will be both underway in the coming weeks. It is great to finally see the start of works to re-furbish the Hall Two roof, due to begin on the 17th of June. The project will run for approximately 13 weeks and will be delivered in partnership with Artelia, the NMRN's project management specialists, and Rooftech (who won the recent tender to complete the works). Work to replace the 'Bomb Lift' in Hall Three (Carrier) will also commence from the 1st of July. This project is expected to last no more than 5 weeks.

**D-Day.** This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Normandy Landings, centred on D-Day 6 June 1944. The Museum will unveil some new graphic banners / basic interpretation, and a small trail to sympathetically introduce D-Day to children from a Fleet Air Arm perspective.

Our very own Graham Mottram has also agreed to host two lectures during the summer to further highlight the importance of D-Day and contribute to the commemorations.

**WRNS.** The Museum is continuing to progress work on the WRNS gallery, with a soft launch targeted for 15 July 2019. SOFFAAM has made a significant contribution to these works and the Museum would like to formally thank the society for yet another contribution which will greatly aid the Museum to enhance its offer. A formal opening will be scheduled following conclusion of the roof project.

**Events.** June is a busy month for the Museum as we also host the annual Big Band event under Concorde and 'Moto Fest' in partnership with the Somerset County Council's road safety team.

The next **Cobham Tours** of the Aero Hall are scheduled for the 5th and 6th of September. Tickets are £15 and available now from the Museum website and Ticket Desk. Tickets are already on sale for dates later in 2019 which include 5th / 6th December.

Tickets are already on sale now for traditional favourites, such as the Christmas Concerts under Concorde (12/13 Dec). Please visit the Museum website at [www.fleetairarm.com](http://www.fleetairarm.com) for more information unless otherwise stated.

**Concorde 50.** The Museum received lots of national and local television and radio coverage for the Concorde 50 celebrations on 9 April 2019. The Museum enjoyed great visitor numbers on the day (9 April), with children's activities, goody bags, lectures all helping to entice visitors to the Museum. The Museum even hosted the Concorde Cavalcade, with 200 members of the public travelling from Aerospace Bristol to FAAM by vintage bus to see both Concordes – even if in the reverse order!

• *The Chairman gave the following report:*

He was making steady progress with the introduction of PayPal and hoped that it would soon be possible to put a link to the application in the electronic version of the new Join leaflet.

He was sad to inform the meeting that Derek Moxley's wife had died recently.

He discussed the proposed Members' Day, which would take the form of an augmented visit to the Air Station, possibly also to include a visit to Cobham Hall. He proposed that the event should be held in 2020.

• *The Talks and Visits Organiser gave the following report:*

The visit to Aerospace Bristol on 16 May had been very enjoyable. The next planned visit would be to

Navy Wings on 3 September.

• *The Membership Secretary gave the following report:*

Membership numbers - Our non-stop decline in membership numbers is now alarming. Since the last meeting the number has fallen by 8 (16 lost and 8 gained). Of the 8 new applications received since the December meeting, 5 have been downloaded from the website and 3 are from 'Join' leaflets picked up in the FAAM.

For over 12 months now I have reported that I look forward to PayPal being activated. I find it very disappointing that I still look forward to it being activated. In a similar way I am still looking forward to being aware of new SOFFAAM promotional activities. For several months now there has been a great deal of discussion, but summer is now upon us and nothing visible has changed.

• *The Publications Editor gave the following report:*

Richard Macauley will shortly be given editorial access to the Society's website, while Tim Smith has now taken over all responsibilities of video recording and distribution. On these subjects, the Chairman commented that there is a need for a more formal policy for these important avenues for recruitment and advertising.:



## MONTHLY TALKS REVIEW

*Summarised by Robert Heath*

### April 2019 TALK

#### **“The Defence of Malta from 1940 to 1942” by Christopher Shores**

“Faith”, “Hope and “Charity” were the three obsolete Gladiator biplane fighters based on Malta, which heroically and alone fought off the Axis forces in those early days in the Mediterranean in WW2. It is a lovely story, but as Chris Shores reminded us, it is just a story, possibly created by a journalist to inspire optimism at home in Blighty, during an otherwise unsettling stage of the war. You will not be surprised to learn that this is just one possible version of the origins of the story.

Many of you will know our speaker, Chris Shores, not only as a long-standing SOFFAAM Council Member, but also as prolific and well-informed military aviation history writer. If you have not read any of his books, go to it now. You will learn a great deal. Meanwhile, what really happened in those early days on Malta? There were no Gladiators to be seen in the spring of 1940: in fact there were no operational RAF squadrons on Malta at all. Italy had not yet declared war, but the signs were that it was simply a matter of time. HMS *Glorious*, the aircraft carrier converted from a WW1 battlecruiser, was recalled from

her Mediterranean base to support proposed operations in Norway. On board *Glorious* were 18 crates containing Sea Gladiators, which were unloaded at Malta before the ship continued her journey. Due to the possibility of imminent attack by Italy, the small RAF contingent erected four Gladiators and set aside two for spares. At the same time, the Air Ministry deployed Hurricanes across France, to be based on Malta and in North Africa.

On 11 July 1940, the day after Italy joined the war alongside Germany, the Regia Aeronautica made a heavy bombing attack on Malta. The island was then a British Crown Colony and of strategic importance to Britain in the Mediterranean, referred to by Winston Churchill as ‘an unsinkable aircraft carrier’. During this first conflict one Italian Macchi fighter was shot down. With the arrival of the Hurricanes, 261 Squadron was formed and sustained fighting continued against the Italian air attacks. Chris told us that the rather superior Macchi fighters were withdrawn temporarily around this period, due to mechanical problems, and the RAF was instead up against the Fiat CR42 fighters. These looked remarkably like the Gladiator and were undoubtedly agile, although not as fast as the Hurricane.

The time had come to take the war to the Italians. A reconnaissance

flight made by Pilot Officer Adrian Warburton in an ex-French Martin Maryland aircraft spotted a large build up of warships in the Italian harbour of Taranto. This was too good an opportunity to miss. Without delay plans were executed to launch the highly successful night raid by carrier-based Swordfish biplanes. Not only was this was a terrific blow for the Italian Navy (and a great inspiration to the Japanese for the later attack on Pearl Harbour), but Italian forces were becoming over-stretched due to the various assaults they were making against other Mediterranean countries. In parallel, it was all going wrong for them in Libya where their army was beaten heavily by the British 8th Army. The British Army had always had the upper hand in fighting the Italians and Mussolini needed help. He turned to Hitler, who sent a German army and aircraft to restore the initiative in North Africa and on Sicily. Among the aircraft now based on Sicily was the formidable Messerschmitt 109e. In response, 12 Hurricanes were embarked in HMS *Argus*, which was ordered to sail towards Malta and fly them off as soon as the ship was in range of the Island. That was the theory, but the Captain of *Argus* worried about the high risks to his ship and launched the Hurricanes before they were comfortably within range of the island. Consequently eight of them ran out of fuel and ditched, leaving only four to complete the journey and be of any use. In the meantime, HMS *Ark Royal*

made several successful runs into the Mediterranean to fly off dozens of Hurricanes to bolster the defences of Malta. *Ark Royal* earned a reputation for being a lucky ship, having survived many near misses during its sorties into the Mediterranean. However, in November 1941 a devastating blow was struck when she was torpedoed by U-81, and sank the next day. By the end of 1941, Hurricanes were able to attack Italian and German aircraft and bases on Sicily. However, the attrition of British fighters on Malta was so heavy that RAF bombers were sent away from the Island, because they could no longer be protected. By January and February 1942 there were hardly any airworthy Hurricanes left on the island. By then, the Hurricane could no longer match the Me 109. Up to this point, the Air Ministry had never allowed the Spitfire to be sent outside of the UK, in what was seen as the higher priority of Home Defence. This had to change and HMS *Eagle* was sent into the Mediterranean with 12 Spitfires from 249 Squadron, to be launched for delivery to Malta. Also around this time, 89 Squadron, equipped with Beaufighter night fighters, was deployed to Egypt, where they were used with great effect against Italian bombers making night raids on the Island.

In August 1942 another setback occurred when HMS *Eagle* was successfully attacked by U-73 and sunk by four torpedoes off the Spanish Island of Majorca. This was a great

shock and put an immediate stop to aircraft deliveries to Malta. The Island was in a desperate situation. Without these constant aircraft replacements, Malta would be lost very quickly. The Germans were once again building up their air strength on Sicily and along with Italian bombers were subjecting Malta and the supply convoys to intense bombardment, so that the fighter defence was simply being overwhelmed. Fortunately, USS *Wasp*, a large carrier, capable of operating fixed-wing Spitfires, was made available by the USN and, having put her own aircraft ashore in the UK, embarked 601 and 603 Spitfire squadrons, ferrying them within range of Malta. Sadly, the first detachment flew off and (all but one) landed successfully only to be all destroyed by an immediate air raid. A second delivery by USS *Wasp* was quickly arranged. As the delivery pilots landed on Malta and climbed out of the aircraft, everything was ready for them and ground crews promptly re-fuelled and re-armed the aircraft, while experienced pilots jumped in and flew them immediately into battle, with great success. Further aircraft deliveries followed, to the point where Malta at last was well equipped with fighter aircraft and 601 Squadron was posted to North Africa. The Hurricane squadrons continued to fare so badly in combat that they were eventually disbanded.

The siege of Malta still continued and the lifeline of supply convoys remained very tenuous. 'Operation

Pedestal' in August 1942 was one such convoy, that was terribly savaged on-route. You probably already know the story, where the tanker SS *Ohio*, carrying precious aviation fuel, was set on fire, but so desperate was the need for fuel that the fire was contained sufficiently for the ship to be secured to escorting warships that pulled it into Grand Harbour, Malta. Only five of the 50 ship convoy arrived, but the delivery of the fuel cargo saved the Island.

Coincidental with the build-up of RAF aircraft on the Island, was the departure of many German aircraft in support of 'Operation Barbarossa', Hitler's surprise invasion of Russia, Germany's supposed ally. By October 1942, the final big raid was made on Malta by the Germans. Suddenly the bombing stopped, due in part to losses, but also due to Germany becoming aware of the concentration of Allied Forces in readiness for 'Operation Torch', to retake North Africa. From mid-1943 onwards, the forces on Malta were, at last, able to go on the attack. The siege was over.

Thank you Christopher Shores for a very well-informed presentation on this intense and dramatic period.



### **MAY 2019 TALK**

**Mr Tim Prince OBE, FRAeS. The Royal International Air Tattoo - from small beginnings.**

This was an exhilarating gallop



rough nearly 50 years of air shows, conducted by one of the founders of the Royal International Air Tattoo, Mr Tim Prince. Truly modest about his own contribution, our speaker explained that the first of these air shows was held at North Weald Airfield in 1971. Inspired by him and a fellow air traffic controller, Paul Bowen, this relatively low-key event, organised wholly by volunteers, was held in support of the Royal Air Force Association. Over the years this volunteer force has grown into an army, more than 3,500-strong, who bring with them a wealth of aviation and event-management experience that has helped the Air Tattoo grow into the enormous event it is today. The Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) as it is now known has become the world's largest military air show. After being held at a variety of military airfields, RIAT now takes place each year at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire. Tim is the Vice Patron of the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust Enterprises (RAFCTE) which is responsible for staging the event.

Tim downplayed his personal role in managing to entice Air Forces from all over the world to take part over the years. Participating aircraft were copiously illustrated and it would be impossible to list all the varieties of exotic machinery shown in this compelling talk.

In 1983, Tim and the late Paul Bowen set up Flying Scholarships for Disabled People (FSDP) as a living

memorial to the indomitable spirit of Group Captain Sir Douglas Bader, whose love of flying is the inspiration behind the Charity. After losing both legs in an air accident in 1931, Sir Douglas went on to achieve fame in World War II as a fighter pilot and a gifted leader of men, pursuing his talent into a long and successful civilian career in aviation. Throughout his life he was a dedicated supporter of physically disabled people, to whom he set an outstanding example of courage and perseverance. FSDP have now helped over 400 disabled men and women change their lives, by experiencing the joy of freedom in the air, learning new skills, regaining confidence, and who have "reached for the sky". This was illustrated by Tim in a moving film of one of the participants, whose life has been transformed by the experience.

This talk was both highly entertaining and inspiring, given by a man who has not only made a major contribution to the general enjoyment of aviation, but also to the welfare of hundreds of disabled people and, of course, their families.

***Summarised by MTS***



**JUNE 2019 TALK**

**“Naval Fighter Pilots in the Battle of Britain (Forgotten Few)” by Paul Beaver**

If there is one very simple fact that I have learned in life, it is that nothing

in life is simple - and this absorbing talk clearly demonstrated the fact. You have probably heard of Paul Beaver already and attended his earlier talk to SOFFAAM on the subject of 'Winkle' Brown. Paul is an established aviation historian, writer and broadcaster, specialising in the 1930s and 1940s, and he tells us, a Group Captain in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Generally, when we think of the Battle of Britain we think of the RAF fighter pilots doggedly standing up against German invasion and domination. In truth it was won by the nation, not just by Fighter Command. We must also thank Bomber Command, Coastal Command, the Fleet Air Arm, the GPO (General Post Office) who provided and maintained invaluable land-line communications, farmers, butchers, bakers and grocers who fed everyone, and so it goes on. However, those who were recognised for their part in the Battle of Britain have been a cause of controversy ever since - perhaps more accurately, I should say those not given recognition.

We have been brought up to believe that the RAF was at the forefront of everything that happened in British air defence. However, according to Paul, the first accredited British air 'Ace' in WW2 was not an RAF fighter pilot in his inevitable Spitfire, but a naval pilot, Lt. Bill Lucy, in a Blackburn Skua of all things. Do you know the Skua? Throughout the talk Paul declared that the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) was its own worst enemy. It was a clear indication that the Royal

Navy still looked down upon its own air arm as the poor relative to the gunnery officers and their mighty battleships and cruisers. It is not too apparent that they have made up for it since either and we are indebted to people like Paul Beaver for making known what the FAA really achieved in its past.

For a great part of its early history, aircraft of the Royal Navy were flown and maintained by the RAF. On the 24th May 1939, under the terms of the "Inskip Award", that control was at last relinquished and handed back to the Admiralty.<sup>1</sup> On the 3rd September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany. So, three months after gaining its independence the FAA was at war. In May 1940, France and the Low Countries were overrun by the Germans and shortly after, the Royal Navy lost its second aircraft carrier, HMS *Glorious* - HMS *Courageous* having already been sunk. Meanwhile, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was awaiting evacuation from the Dunkirk beaches, which Paul remarked seemed to be a traditional role for the Royal Navy: to be evacuating our soldiers from a beach somewhere. The vast fleets of modern German bombers and fighters were simply overwhelming RAF Fighter Command, despite our people having judiciously invested in outstanding early warning systems including the High and Low Chain radar networks, Observer Corps and of course the security of land-line communication.

<sup>1</sup> *Thomas (later Lord) Inskip was the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence.*

Hitler was on a roll – he seemed to be planning the invasion of Britain (subject to the world's largest and most powerful naval fleet, the RN, not getting in the way).

Our prospects were daunting. What fighters could we put up in the air against the Germans? The RAF had Blenheim light bomber/fighters and its specialist fighters were Hurricanes, Spitfires and Defiants. The Royal Navy could offer the Sea Gladiator, Skuas, Rocs and the Fulmar - each of which, apart from the Gladiator was a two-seater. How good were they and how effective would these naval aircraft be against the German air force? The Sea Gladiator was lovely to fly, but already an obsolete bi-plane with two .303 machine guns. The Blackburn Skua was designed primarily as a two-seat dive-bomber, but pilots were to discover that they were also regarded as fighters. Its speed was not a great deal better than that of the Gladiator. Meanwhile, the Blackburn Roc was of the same family as the Skua, but instead of a navigator/wireless operator/gunner in the rear seat, it had a four machine gun turret making it a bomber-destroyer, rather like the Defiant. Oh dear, what a failure. It could not even keep up with enemy bombers, let alone overtake them to shoot them down. The Fairey Fulmar was another two seat fighter, this time equipped with a Merlin engine, which gave it a potential 30 knot speed advantage over enemy bombers. Finally, in October 1940

following the capitulation of France to German invasion, the FAA took over the now redundant French order for Grumman Martlets. The first aircraft to be delivered still had their metric instruments, no shoulder straps, non-folding wings and some controls operating in the opposite direction to normal - but they did have much more powerful 0.5" cal machine guns.

No-one had given serious thought to defending the Home Fleet and its location was still not even decided. Wisely Scapa Flow was chosen rather than an established dockyard, because the first German operations against Britain were in search of the Home Fleet and the first German bomb landed on Hoy, Scotland. As a result 804 and 808 squadrons were established in Scotland at RNAS Hatston and RNAS Castletown respectively. In parallel, the RAF did not have enough pilots to man their fighter aircraft, which were in relatively good supply. Winston Churchill made it known that all trained fighter pilots were to be made available to fill the gap. The RAF was delighted to take on 57 RN pilots, all volunteers, of which 23 went straight into Fighter Command squadrons. It did not stop there. Succeeding in putting more aircraft in the air to fight also meant that these aircraft had to be maintained. So, naval riggers and fitters in their dark blue uniforms also joined RAF squadrons to work alongside their opposite numbers wearing light blue. By all accounts they worked together well and in complete

harmony. An aside, apparently as recently as 2005, the RAF has been in denial that sailors served as ground crew in RAF squadrons, despite a photograph showing them clearly scrambling, along with their pilots to RAF marked aircraft. I would love to list all, or many of the RN pilots who participated in the Battle of Britain, but space does not allow. If you want to see that, buy Paul Beaver's book 'Forgotten Few' for £10. In it he lists the pilots and gives as much background on each as is possible, plus the squadrons they flew with and the aircraft. However, one or two are worthy of mention here. Douglas Bader, a prominent RAF fighter leader and ace was known not only because of his two artificial legs, but also as a man hard to please. A little known fact is that at 242 Squadron at RAF Coltishall, he chose as his wingmen two RN pilots, one of whom was Sub-Lt Richard (Dickie) Cork, who Bader described and endorsed in Cork's logbook as 'Exceptional, Courageous, Leadership'. That is saying something, particularly coming from Douglas Bader. The other particularly outstanding pilot was Ronald (Ronnie) Hay, who, unusually, was a Royal Marine and consequently able to claim to be the only Royal Marine fighter ace. His first victory was in Norway, when he was flying the Blackburn Roc. Following this, he was posted to RAF Detling, flying the Blackburn Skua on photo-reconnaissance

sorties, until his evident skills ensured that he was one of the 57 RN pilots loaned to the RAF for the Battle of Britain. In all he fought in the air all the way from the Norwegian campaign right through to the end of the war in Japan.

At the end of World War 2, an Air Ministry Order (AMO) dated 24 May 1945 announced the military award of a 1939-1945 Star with Battle of Britain Clasp to "those people who undertook at least one authorised operational flight with an accredited unit controlled by RAF Fighter Command between 10 July and 31 October 1940". This is further defined as "having flown that sortie in a fighter aircraft, in skies over the United Kingdom and its coastal waters, with the intention of providing defence against the enemy...." No ambiguity there then. So, if you flew in a Blenheim for example, it had to be the fighter version and not the bomber version. Clear cut? Sadly the answer is 'No'. It was not until 1960 that 804 and 808 Naval Air Squadrons were included in the approved list. On top of that, some pilots shot down German aircraft between the magic dates of July to October, but did not belong to one of the accredited units listed. Almost 80 years have passed since the Battle of Britain and in 2020 it is intended that these anomalies will be rectified finally.

Thank you Paul Beaver for a most entertaining evening.



## MONTHLY TALKS PROGRAMME

*Talks are usually held in the FAAM Auditorium on the last Thursday of each month (except August and December) at 19.30. Entry price is £7. You can pay at the door, but note that these events are well-supported and total numbers are limited. To be sure of a place book your tickets on-line in advance at [www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/monthlytalks](http://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/monthlytalks), or buy from the Museum shop. Non members are welcome. The price includes light refreshments, including a glass of wine.*



**Tuesday 3rd September**  
**Visit to Fly Navy Heritage Trust (Navy Wings)**  
**Strictly Members only**



**Thursday 26th September AGM Followed with a talk by**  
**Jack Froelich - KC-35 Operations**



**Thursday 31st October**  
**Candida Atkins talks about her mother**  
**Jackie Moggridge, ATA Pilot**



**Thursday 28th November**  
**David Morris**  
**The Barracuda Restoration Progress**  
**Plus Sale of Navy Wings Christmas cards etc**



*Note that talks start promptly at 19.30. Entry is via the lower (wheelchair) access. Latecomers should ring the bell at the left of the gate to gain admission. Whilst the Society makes every attempt to adhere to the published programme of lectures, there are occasionally factors such as weather or short notice unavailability of speakers which could force a change of programme. We recommend that members check our website and the booking section of the FAAM site*



## MEMBERSHIP

*Standing Order Membership cards enclosed for August, September and October.*

*(Please note that receipt of a card does not confirm receipt of payment.)*

*Welcome to the new Members who have joined us since the last magazine issue:*

3642 Mr C. Checkley	Somerset
3643 Mr P. Mountain	Somerset
3644 Mrs J.M. Clare	Somerset
3645 Mrs S.E. McColl	Somerset
3646 Mr P. Cooper	Somerset
3647 Mr P. Chaplin	Somerset
3648 Mr M. Ware	Leeds

Total members: **1007**

Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: **711**

**PAYMENT** can be made by: standing order; cheque; BACS; or  
PayPal via [soffaam.join@gmail.com](mailto:soffaam.join@gmail.com).

**Annual membership £12**

**Family membership (Up to two adults and three children) £32**

**Life membership £180 (£90 for those over 60)**

**All funds are donated to FAA Museum projects – none is wasted on salaries. Help SOFFAAM to grow by encouraging others to join. It makes an excellent, low cost, but highly appreciated Gift. You will deserve the thanks.**

**Let us know if you would prefer to receive Jabberwock via your e-mail.**

## **BRISTOL AEROSPACE VISIT**

***By our Visits Correspondent***

It was a sunny day in May when 40 or so SOFFAAM members boarded the coach at the FAAM for our trip to the recently-opened home of Concorde Alpha Foxtrot: the final Concorde to be built and the last to fly. There had been a traffic accident on the motorway, so we were treated to a trip through Fishponds (original home of Cosmos Engineering) and the Bristol suburbs before arrival. Aerospace Bristol Museum is housed in two buildings, with many artefacts relating to the Bristol Company in an historic hangar, dating from WW1; and Concorde herself in a purpose-built new structure. The old hangar is a listed building and those with an eye for architecture will have admired the brick piers that support the wide span roof with its wooden "Belfast truss" girders. The exhibition covers over 100 years of aviation history through two world wars, exploring the role of aircraft in these conflicts, through the drama and technological advances of the space race and on to the modern day.

We were divided into groups for our tour and treated to a knowledgeable commentary by our guide. Two superb replicas

of WW1 aircraft caught the eye – the Bristol Fighter and Scout. Other Bristol products in this packed display included details of bombers, including the Blenheim and the Beaufort torpedo bomber, while a notable exhibit was the front fuselage of the Bristol Beaufighter. We were reminded of Bristol Aviation's strength in commercial aircraft design by the front fuselage of the graceful Britannia, powered by Bristol's own turbo-propeller engine - the Proteus. The huge Brabazon airliner is represented here by its wheels and nameplate - all that remains of this white elephant design, which was conceived by a committee headed by Lord Brabazon, hence the name.

The Jupiter engine, designed in 1920 by Roy Fedden of Cosmos Engineering, formed the initial successful product for the Company's engine business. A fine example of this reliable and widely-exported engine is displayed. Other engines on display included the mighty sleeve-valve radial Centaurus (power plant for the Fleet Air Arm's Sea Fury) and the Pegasus, which powered the Swordfish.

Examples of the Company's helicopters included the Sycamore

and the revolutionary twin-rotor Type 192, adopted by the RAF as the Belvedere. Designed by Raoul Hafner, this was used for troop movements during the Malaysian Confrontation in the mid 1960s. Mainstay of the country's defence against high-flying bombers during the Cold War was the Bristol Bloodhound ram-jet powered ground to air missile. This was displayed with a dramatic film,



*HRH Princess Anne inspects the interior of Concorde during the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of its first flight*

showing how the missile itself acquired and attacked the target.

From the old hangar to the new – we went to the splendid display hall of Concorde Alpha Foxtrot, Those who know the pre-production model in the FAAM

commented on the extra length of the fuselage of this last production model. It is presented in superb condition – a credit to those who preserved it during the long years when it stood in the open. Boarding through the passenger entrance immediately reveals the compact nature of this supersonic transport – even those of average height have to duck their heads slightly to enter. The narrow

interior is presented in immaculate condition, with discreet notices asking visitors not to sit in the seats or to open the tray tables. Our guide explained how, at Mach 2, the entire fuselage expands, while the need for the “drooping” nose was emphasised by the restricted view forward from the cockpit with the nose in the high speed configuration. The analogue cockpit displays clearly show the age of the design, looking quite antique

when compared with modern flat screen displays.

This was a most enjoyable visit and our thanks are due to Rosanne, who has organised this (and many other) visits so well.



**SOFFAAM VISIT TO BR**  
16 May



Photographs by Ernest Lear



# BRISTOL AEROSPACE Day 2019





**Notice of the Annual General  
Meeting to  
be held at the  
Fleet Air Arm Museum on**

*Thursday 26 September 2019*

**The AGM will commence at 18.00 .**

The September monthly talk will follow the AGM  
The agenda will comprise reports from Council officers.

As stated in our Constitution,  
all positions fall vacant at the AGM. These are:  
President, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary,  
Treasurer, Membership Secretary and nine ordinary  
Council members.

If you would like to apply for one of these positions,  
please notify the Secretary in writing or by e-mail by 12  
September 2019

**GRAND DRAW**

There will be NO Grand Draw this year, but the  
talk will be preceded by an augmented raffle, with  
cash prizes to be announced

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**VISIT FLY NAVY HERITAGE TRUST TUESDAY  
3RD SEPTEMBER  
(SOFFAAM members only)**

I have been able to secure a visit to FLY NAVY HERITAGE TRUST on Tuesday 3rd September. As there is a limit of 20 members to each visit I will only be able to allocate a place to SOFFAAM members and not to guests.

The visit will be divided into two groups, one group departing from the museum at 1045 until 1215 and The second group from 1345 to 1515

This will give individuals time to have a coffee before departing and a “get together” of possibly 40 members for lunch 1230 -1330. Please note, the cost for coffee and lunch are not included in the price. You will be met by your guide Kate Campbell at the Museum café and escorted across to the hanger. Individuals will be asked to “car share” on this occasion. Whilst in the hanger photographs are allowed. The hangar is a working environment so dress accordingly, i.e. sensible shoes and clothes.

There are no disabled toilet facilities but wheel chair access to the hangar is not an issue.

Cheques for £10.00 each should be made payable to the Fly Navy Heritage Trust.

.....  
Please complete your details below and return to me no later than  
Monday 19 August 2019 together with a cheque for £10.00 made  
payable to Fly Navy Heritage Trust.

Name:-----

Address:  
-----

-----Post Code:-----

Telephone number ----- Car Reg no.....

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER-----Choice of visit (please tick) am.....pm

Please enclose a SAE (for confirmation of your place) and return to:

Mrs Rosanne Crowther,

St David's, 5 Church Close, MARTOCK, TA12 6DS

by 19 August 2019.

## **BARRACUDA SALVAGE**

***As reported in the Eastleigh Evening News***

Archaeologists are keen to trace the pilot of a WW2 warplane that crashed into the Solent 75 years ago. Specialist divers have completed an operation to retrieve the wreckage of the 1943 Fairey



Barracuda Torpedo Bomber – part of the 810 Squadron that was based at Lee-On-Solent during the war. Fleet Air Arm pilot Sub Lt D J Williams got into difficulty shortly after taking off for a test flight before crashing 500m from the coast in Portsmouth. Williams survived the crash but the plane sank and its wreckage has only just been found by National Grid engineers during a seabed survey ahead of the construction of new subsea electricity cable between England and France.

The Barracuda wreckage is the only one to have ever been found in one piece and the last remaining aircraft of its kind in the UK. Work to fully retrieve the plane is expected

to take around three weeks as experts from Wessex Archaeology are carefully excavating the area around the aircraft and removing large amounts of silt and clay. So far, one of the wings has successfully been lifted out of the waters and work on the second is currently underway. The remainder of the plane will be recovered by lifting it in sections over the coming days. Once retrieved, the parts will be taken to the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum in Somerset where it



will be studied and used to rebuild a full-size Barracuda in the site's aircraft hangar.

The team at Wessex Archaeology are currently trying to trace Sub Lt Williams and are keen for anyone with information about the pilot and his family to get in touch on 01722 326867.

***With thanks to Stephen Slominski, Eastleigh Evening News***



## IN THE SLIPSTREAM OF DAEDALUS (Part 2)

### The RNAS at Gallipoli, by Graham Mottram

*In the previous episode, which brought the story up to mid June 1915, we learned that Cdr Charles Samson, who commanded the RNAS assets in the theatre, was suffering the typical problems of Gallipoli, with conflicting demands for his services.*

By now, the bloodletting of senior posts at home was under way. Fisher resigned on 15 May, to be replaced as First Sea Lord by Admiral Henry Jackson. Winston Churchill, who as First Lord of the Admiralty had been generally thought responsible for the failed policy to use warships to force the Straits, also resigned. The Director of the Air Department, Commodore Murray Sueter, writing 15 years later, said: "Our wireless was poor. Our observers were inexperienced. Consequently the air help we could give to our warships operating in the Dardanelles was not great. But gradually our air effort improved, and being short of senior air officers in the Eastern Mediterranean I was pleased when Mr Churchill secured the

services of Colonel Sykes. The Military Wing, in the early stages of its development, owed much to Sykes's great abilities."

Frederick Sykes had been an early pioneer of aviation in the Army and thus a leading member of the early Royal Flying Corps. The establishment of an efficient RFC in France was largely down



*The Dardanelles, showing the invasion beaches over which RNAS aircraft spotted the fall of shot from the RN warships. Map prepared by the author*

to his intelligence and hard work, but he was probably too bright for many of his contemporaries. He



*The Aegean theatre of operations. The map shows the scale of RNAS operations, which included dropping leaflets and bombs on Constantinople. Map prepared by the author*

had lost out to Trenchard (who had replaced him as the Commander of the Military Wing of the RFC at the outbreak of war) in a battle of wills and personalities and the fact that he was at a loose end appears to have prompted Churchill to ask for his services. Sykes arrived in theatre on 24 June, with a remit to study air power and report briefly by telegraph on the types of aircraft and organisation, plus any matters of a confidential nature. He spent six days in conferences with Army and Navy commanders and the result of his report was that the RNAS needed to be “reorganised, relocated and strengthened.” Most attractive to his military and political masters was the opinion that: “... the need for aerial reconnaissance was very real and urgent” and that

with proper support the RNAS at Gallipoli could help turn the campaign into a success. He proposed an RNAS HQ which would coordinate the requests of Army and Navy commanders, and the essential need for a much less varied mix of aeroplanes and engines.

Sykes returned to London on 12 July. He reported that Samson was a warrior but had little organisational ability; a report that may have contributed to Samson’s being relieved later in the year. Sykes recommended a major overhaul of the flying services and moved 3 Wing to Imbros to be nearer to the Suvla landings. There is little doubt that he sought to reorganize the aviation activity into something he recognised



as an RFC command and to his own benefit, but he did report truthfully that the RNAS units were undermanned and had too

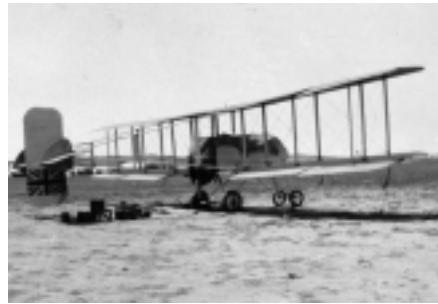


*Sykes as a Major-General in 1918*

few serviceable aircraft. He was appointed to command the RNAS units in Gallipoli on 24 July and given two extra ranks to ensure his seniority, as a Colonel Royal Marines and

Wing Captain RNAS. He landed back on Imbros on 6 August, as 10 and 11 Divisions landed at Suvla, and immediately received complaints that the Army had been totally uninformed about air operations throughout Samson's command. There had been little co-operation between the artillery and air assets, while the landings in support of Anzac had stalled. To some of the senior RNAS officers back home, it was clear that Sykes's appointment, over the head of Samson and with accelerated promotion, could be difficult in the operational command. Sueter wrote to Captain Roger Keyes, Chief of Staff to Admiral Carden: "I am writing to ask you a favour to do your best to make our efforts with the air units under Col. Sykes a success. We are very lucky indeed to obtain his services, as the Navy cannot spare

us any officers with organising powers. Cdr Samson is I think our bravest flyer, but he isn't much good at organising anything big. Therefore may I suggest that you send for Samson and inform him that he has got to make the show run under Col. Sykes. We do not want any rows in the Air Service, all we want is to try and make ourselves useful to the fleet and the Army." Sadly, Keyes seems to have done little to follow Sueter's request. Much of the Navy did not recognise Sykes's naval rank,



*Reginald Marix's big Breguet, with 200 hp engine and armoured nacelle*

and when he left Gallipoli, Keyes complained that air supremacy had slipped to the Germans and that he held Sykes responsible for that.

Operations continued and on 21 June Marix and Samson set out at 1:30 am for Constantinople. Once again their engine started to misfire but they carried on beyond Anzac until forced to give up. They dropped their bombs on every campfire they spotted on their route home. On 22 June, Collet

and Hogg shot down a Turkish aircraft using a rifle, the second air combat claim by 3 Wing. By July all Samson's men were exhausted after three months of operations. Men were being sent home and replacements posted in. Before Sykes's return, his recommendation to move to Imbros, nearer to GHQ in preparation for the August landings, had been implemented, despite Samson's reputation for not getting things done. Bell Davies had been tasked with the move whilst Samson continued to lead operations from Imbros until all his men and equipment could follow.

The move to Imbros seemed to improve living standards. A few months after the move, a visitor described the accommodation as follows: "The officers' cabins are fine. An aeroplane packing case divided into two with green canvas outside and inside. Fly proof window. Two 100lb bomb cases make an excellent wardrobe. Petrol cans suitably biffed make excellent washing utensils. The whole is raised a foot on logs with a step down. Lighting electric. Some luxury." However, Turkish air reconnaissance was becoming a nuisance by the height of summer and the Anzacs were particularly sensitive around the beginning of August when night landings of reinforcements was being planned. Turkish seaplanes

gave early warning of the August landings when they spotted 87 ships massed in Mudros harbour.

On 25 August de Robeck wrote to the new First Sea Lord, Admiral Henry Jackson, that "...Colonel Sykes has taken over command of the RNAS unit out here. I hope he and Samson will work together". Once established at his HQ in Imbros, Sykes organised his tasks into specific areas and missions. Reconnaissance was formally allocated into nominated areas and air operations were divided equally between gun spotting for ships and work for the Army such as mapping and tactical reconnaissance. Sykes had to improve the air defence of his airfield and the fleet; he also needed to develop interdiction operations to disrupt Turkish supplies and weaken their defences against further allied offensives. 3 Wing was working over Anzac providing artillery co-operation on to Turkish gun batteries, while Samson managed to maintain his bombing raids. One post-war German book recorded that: "The enemy airmen now began to take an active part in the fighting by dropping bombs. Terrible was the effect of these missiles on the transport columns and disembarkation places".

In August Samson received two reinforcement pilots. The maximum that he ever had was 11, including himself, and typically

the average was seven. With these scant resources Samson had five different tasks:

- Controlling ships firing at shore targets.
- Army co-operation at Helles, Anzac and Suvla.
- Anti-submarine patrols.
- Anti-aircraft patrols to prevent Turkish reconnaissance.

lack of spare parts and aircraft maintenance relied heavily on cannibalising from aircraft which were beyond reasonable repair. In spite of these shortcomings, anti-shipping operations were planned. Shortly after dawn on 12 August Edmonds was hoisted out from BMC in Short 842 and after flying for a while attacked and hit a



*2 Wing at Imbros. The canvas hangar can be faintly seen in the background and the primitive working conditions are evident*

• General reconnaissance.  
In his opinion these tasks required three squadrons. He could have coped better with more aircraft or more suitable ones. There was an almost complete

Turkish ship off Injeh Burnu with a torpedo - a world first. He repeated the feat on the 17th, hitting one of three tugs off Ak Bashi Liman. Later the same day G B Dacre was struggling to get 184 off the

water with a failing engine when he spotted a large tug and released his torpedo for another hit. His lightened aircraft then took off reasonably comfortably and he flew back to his ship. Dacre kept a diary and recorded what it was like to fly in the area: "in hot air stifling, coupled with very hot castor oil over one's clothes and face. I fly bare footed in white duck trousers and a flannel shirt, with a white cap cover over my head." On August 19 Samson's aircraft was hit by shrapnel over Suvla Bay and he force landed on the Salt Lake. He had an eventful trip getting back to Imbros in a trawler in a gale. On his arrival he was shocked to hear that Collet, one of his originals from Eastchurch, had been killed. Collet had suffered engine failure on takeoff, tried to return but crashed and was burned very severely. The Suvla landings had gone badly and with no breakthrough, the airman were faced with patrolling over another set of trench lines and stalemate.

A new airfield was planned on the far side of the harbour to accommodate 2 Wing. Samson found that the proposed site was narrow and on the edge of a cliff, so he found a new site and persuaded GHQ to give him 70 Turkish prisoners to clear the ground. 2 Wing arrived at the end of August. This was a botched job, aircraft arriving with the wrong engines, the wrong

propellers for some of the engines which had arrived, and a lack of proper tools and spares. The Wing was commanded by Louis Gerrard, the first flying Marine, who had learned to fly alongside Samson in April 1911. He brought 16 pilots and 200 ground staff. His aircraft was another mixed bag of six Morane parasols, 6 BE2C's, six Caudrons and six Bristol Scouts. Not surprisingly, it took them some time to reach operational readiness and at first they were regarded by 3 Wing as a bunch of amateurs; but the extra capability increased the work rate considerably. Samson commented that Wing was a grandiose title. At the end of October 1915 the two wings had only 25 pilots and forty-four aeroplanes between them. At least eight of those aircraft were useless for war. By that time an SS class airship had arrived and that took over most of the antisubmarine patrols. In his memoirs, Bell Davies recorded, "The reorganization resulted in a division of duties. Gerrard's No 2 Wing was to do the spotting and reconnaissance over Gallipoli while we were to concentrate on long-range bombing." Long range meant tackling the Turkish supply route which ran through Bulgaria, whose southerly border in those days included a stretch of the Aegean coastline.

Docks, roads, railways and bridges would be targeted, and

Sykes may have considered that 3 Wing was the more experienced in such work. BMC's seaplanes, having given up on the difficult task of dropping torpedoes, only filled in over the land on infrequent occasions when gunfire spotting could not be provided by other units. The ship became part of a task force which raided the Bulgarian coastal town of Dede Agatch, which formed part of the logistic supply line to the peninsula. The town was blasted by the guns

Maritza River should be attacked, and a joint venture between 3 Wing and BMC was set up for 7 November. BMC launched two Short 184 seaplanes flown by their leading pilots, Edmonds and Dacre, and Malone put in place an early example of air sea rescue. A third Short, equipped with wireless, would patrol the river mouth. If one of the bombers should be forced down, a motor boat and landing party would be called up from the mouth of the river to attempt a



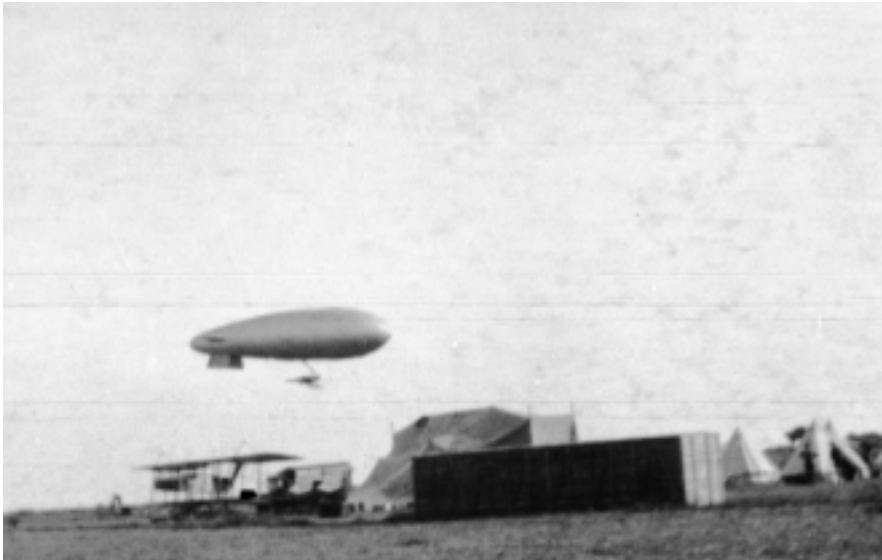
*Nieuport 10, two-seat scout and reconnaissance aircraft.  
Colorised picture, attributed to NiD.29 - Own work*

of at least six ships, controlled by aircraft from BMC, who also dropped a few bombs on targets of opportunity. The Admiralty had urged that the bridge over the

rescue. Fortunately the rescue boat was not needed. Although BMC remained in the general area for a few more weeks, that raid was the effective end of its contribution

to the Gallipoli campaign. The raiding of that area continued with Samson's 3 Wing doing most of the work, mounting 15 of these long range attacks during November. Whenever possible, Turkish camps were also attacked with bombs on shorter missions. Several raids were mounted on

3 Wing suffered a major setback on November 4th. One of the mechanics dropped a small bearing into a large bowl of petrol used for cleaning parts. He struck a match to try and spot it and the whole lot went up in flames. Other mechanics started shovelling sand into the bowl which only



*Submarine Scout (SS) dirigible airship over Imbros. Another view of this 1915 detachment in hot and sandy conditions*

the bridge over the Maritza, and against the vital railhead of Ferejik Junction. The long distance raid of 19 November on this target began just like several others had done, but ended with Richard Bell Davies landing behind enemy lines to pick up Flt Sub Lt George Smylie who had been shot down, and being awarded the VC for his actions.

forced the burning petrol into a wider area and the workshop was gutted. When Dacre visited from BMC a couple of days later he recorded the losses in his diary: "It burnt their workshop, destroyed 14 engines, stores, workshop equipment, cartridge stores, 3 bombs, gas cylinders".

Throughout this period the Germans had gradually been



reinforcing their joint units in Gallipoli. Towards the end of October they moved some of Fliegerabteilung 6 from the Western Front to Gallipoli. They claimed two victories, one in September by a German crew and one in November when a Turkish crew claimed a French Farman shot down near Gaba Tepe. According to one of the German officers the September incident was the first aircraft shot down on the Dardanelles front. Since the French official history admits the loss of 31 aircraft during the campaign it is possible that one was lost in air combat, although in the conditions prevailing and with very poor performance of nearly every aircraft engaged, the majority of these losses would be due to technical failure or accident. It was the German pilots who presented the greatest threat. Hans Joachim Buddecke had scored three victories in Flanders and would add four more confirmed and seven unconfirmed victories in the Aegean, although many of these were after the invasion had ended. His first fight in the Aegean was an unconfirmed victory against a Farman on 6 December, but he scored a confirmed victory over Flt Cdr Hans Busk on 6 January. It was in this last month of the campaign that the increasing strength of the German unit began to show how difficult things would have been

for the RNAS had the Germans reacted more quickly and earlier. Buddecke and Croneiss began to reap a fatal harvest of 2 Wing's airmen. Busk's loss was the first of four aircraft shot down between the 6 and 12 January 1916 with the loss of 6 airmen killed and one taken prisoner.

Towards the end of November Samson wrote a Summary of Operations, achieved with an average number of pilots of 6 or 7 per day, diminished by illness from his theoretical establishment of 11 men. Between March 28 and November 9, 137,934 miles had been flown. There had been 349 spotting sorties, most of which lasted 2.5 hours. His aircraft had dropped 179 100lb and 507 20lb bombs. There had been many air combats with no losses on his side but two of the enemy were claimed shot down. One Turkish battleship was reported as damaged by bombs on 29 May, her centre turret damaged and 10 men killed. Six aeroplanes had been lost by force landing in the sea. He also left behind some very detailed Standing Orders, shaped by his time in theatre and no doubt aimed to help his old friend Gerrard avoid repeating too many of 3 Wing's earlier mistakes.

The RNAS flew continuous patrols in the days leading up to and during the evacuation nights of 18 and 19 December, and the Turco-German reconnaissance

flights failed to spot preparations for the evacuation. The Bristol Scouts proved to be effective fighters in chasing off the few German aircraft that did appear. The RNAS flew night patrols such that the artillery kept their heads down and the evacuation was effected without great added difficulties. By some means 3 Wing had obtained one 500lb bomb. Samson had it fitted to a Henri Farman and set off on 18 December looking for a worthy target. He scored a direct hit on a long building which he presumed was full of the enemy and shattered the building completely. It was just the kind of activity that the warrior Samson would do at such a time and contributed to deceiving the Turks that the status quo was being maintained. The vindication of Sykes's approach meant that a similar regime applied to the January evacuation of Helles and it is ironic that the only real successes of Gallipoli were the evacuations. At the turn of the year 3 Wing transferred most of its personnel and equipment to 2 Wing and ceased to exist for a while. Bell Davies would become Executive Officer of the new 3 Wing which began strategic bombing on the Western Front in earnest a few months later. After a period of leave Samson took command of HMS *Ben My Chree*. 2 Wing remained in the area for the rest of the war, helping

to maintain the naval blockade of the Dardanelles and Turkey's coastline. As the Royal Air Force's official history notes about Gallipoli, 'For the first time a campaign was conducted on, under and over the sea, and on and over the land.'

How should we assess the contribution of air power to the Gallipoli Campaign? The campaign has been described as "...plagued by ill-defined goals, poor planning, insufficient artillery, inexperienced troops, inaccurate maps, poor intelligence, overconfidence, inadequate equipment, and logistical and tactical deficiencies at all levels". Despite the fact that, in true Gallipoli fashion, the work of the airmen was subject to political pressures and internecine feuding, there is no doubt that the Navy's Air Department tried very hard to provide a substantial quantity of equipment, and a good number of ships and men to pilot and support them. In 1915 terms, 140 aeroplanes was a massive number, equivalent to about 10 squadrons on the Western Front. However, they were all of a performance which was adequate in cool northern Europe but which was sapped by the hot air of Asia Minor. The wood and fabric structures were not robust enough to stand the high levels of heat and sunlight. Finally, the whole operation was at the end of a very long supply chain.



## **MY SERVICE IN HMS BEN-MY-CHREE**

**By Flight Lieutenant George Bentley Dacre**

*These are edited extracts from Dacre's diary, the original of which is held in the FAAM archive. Longer extracts, including a description of the author's experience as a Turkish Prisoner of War, are to be found in "Voices in Flight - the Royal Naval Air Service in the Great War", published by Pen and Sword.*

### **July 1915**

19th: Up at 4am. Prepared to hoist out Edmonds off Turkish coast but propeller went dud. My machine had to be got in readiness to go off, but at 6.30 I got another attack of half vision and had to lie up. We cruised off the coast all day, but Edmonds' engine continually went wrong so we returned to our base at 4.30. Edmonds is hoisted out to go from base to another objective but engine and propeller still dud so he lands after 15 min.

20th: Get up at 4.15 am. Went off with Mid Nichols as observer to Aivali Bay to look for a motor boat, submarines and entrenchments with six bombs. Went around at 4,000 feet but was not fired on this time. Observed an object sunk in the channel entrance to harbour, possibly a sub; so eased off one bomb at it and returned to base. In the afternoon Bank-Price went off in the Schneider with bombs to some place and came back to say the sunken object had

gone, but dropped bombs on an olive factory used as a barracks. Wright tried to do a test flight but had engine trouble during afternoon.

22nd: Went ashore to base a machine in our land air station. When we were returning we received orders to immediately pack up the station, taxi off the machine as we're going to change our base. Strong wind blowing. I taxied one machine off and one float was full of water, also engine gummed up and had to drift and take down pipes before we could proceed, also machine was rapidly sinking and almost unsteerable. However, got all our gear aboard and left Port Tero Mytilene at 7 pm. Arrived at an island about 500 yards long and 5 miles south of the Dardanelles entrance at 4.30 a.m. Guns were booming and we could see our shots hitting the water and some hitting the shore at Kum Kale. A French transport full of troops was alongside us and a tramp was on the rocks. A weird monitor with 14 inch guns came up and anchored alongside. Guns are going off most of the day and land aeroplanes fly directly over us on the way back and forward from Tenedos to Gallipoli peninsula.

24th: Test flight during morning for wireless gear. Afternoon, went aboard the monitor HMS *Roberts* to get all details for spotting for them. The

*Roberts*, hidden behind the island, was to fire on concealed battery a few miles south of Kum Kale. At 4.10 went off in 40 mph wind and after circling over batteries at 2,500 feet observed the effect of the shots and wirelessed back. R.N. Snooty Sissmore as observer. We were fired on by machine guns but not hit. The shells made a lot of damage and we could see hundreds of Turks running both ways along the road like hares. The shells ploughed up the earth alright. Wireless broke down so we had to return after one hour 35 min. Bathed in the evening but found it icy cold compared with Mytilene.

25th: Worked all night getting a new engine in my machine, also all day. In afternoon Edmonds spotted for the *Roberts* which bombarded concealed batteries near Kum Kale. Several monitors made a heavy bombardment of the Kum Kale shore. From the masthead of the B-M-C I watched the *Roberts* drop shells on the batteries or rather near them. War is too scientific nowadays. Firing a weight of half a hundredweight on to objects seven miles away which the guns can't see, and being seen by aeroplane which wirelesses back the results. Very interesting, being today at the ship watching the shooting, and yesterday spotting for them.

27th; One of the Huns' aeroplanes dropped 40 bombs during the night so our land machines are out on the strafe. Very busy all day, but thank goodness I am getting to bed at normal time tonight. Hurray, after

three nights following. The *Roberts* eased off the 14 inch in afternoon without warning and gave us a jump. Another comic battleship arrives like a small destroyer with a large 9 2 inch gun in the bow. Now we call the *Roberts* 'Big Willy' and the new comic 'Little Willy' 28th; Busy with my new engine all day. Edmonds spotted for gunboat M19 (Little Willy) with her 9. 2 inch guns. Very good shooting at concealed batteries on the Asiatic shore. I watched the shots from the rigging of the B-M-C.

29th; Went out to test my new engine. It emitted a vast quantity of oil all over me and my passenger, so came back. A Frenchman on a Morane got chased by an Aviatik and he and his passenger both got wounded but returned safely. The flying Huns have got busy again so we must dunt them. Collier alongside giving us water. Got some war trophies in the shape of a Turkish rifle and ammunition. Heavy shelling tonight on the peninsula.

30th: Tested new engine again in 40 mph wind but quite steady up. Vice Admiral came aboard and watched the *Roberts* bombarding. Edmonds was spotting but had to come down between here and Cape Helles with a broken pinion in engine. We watched a very heavy bombardment of Achi Baba in the afternoon and could see shells bursting in great quantities all over the mountain, which was enveloped in a cloud from the bursts

31st: Calm and hot. Flew up and down Dardanelles spotting the shots

of the *Roberts*' 14 inch. A Voisin land machine of our side chased us and when very near discovered who we were and flew off again. We flew down the Asiatic shore to look for gun emplacements and I eased off my revolver and Sissmore his rifle at the village of Yena Shear, afterwards, casting down empties and my empty glass water bottle at them. A real fine hate! Turks were observed on the run below. Discovered gun emplacements and new trenches, thence back to B-M-C. While bathing in the evening, five land machines of allies were flying above. A Hun on a seaplane was sighted and chased in the morning.

### **August 1915**

1st: In afternoon I was suddenly aroused out of my bed of sickness to go aboard the *Roberts* with my gear, machine and stores, also three Air Mechanics. This was done in 10 minutes. I don't know how long I shall be in the *Roberts*, but the B-M-C was ordered away from here and left directly after I cleared out. Of course some things left behind – just my luck being sick on such an occasion – the air bottle for starting the engine was missing, which made the skipper of the *Roberts* furious, so we wirelessed the B-M-C. to stop and send off the necessary. Got the machine fixed up on deck and obtained a cabin in the upper deck between the tripod mast; "very airy". Sissmore also came aboard as observer.

3rd: Vice Admiral De Robeck in command of the Allied ships in the Dardanelles came on board from

the destroyer from Mudros. He looks worried by the heavy responsibilities, but is very pleasant. He took a great interest in the machine and asked me how long I had been flying and if I was still keen.

16th: Busy all day getting machines ready for torpedo run tomorrow.

17th: Got up at 2.30 feeling very sleepy. Hands fell in at 2. 45. Tried our engines and looked around to see everything was correct. I was hoisted out at 4 am in the Gulf of Saros and Edmonds just after me on a new machine, mine being the original No 184. Edmonds got up quickly, but I took a quarter of an hour struggling to get off with my torpedo, the safety pin of which was now out. After 20 min I struggled the machine up to 1,200 feet around the Gulf, thence passing over the narrow neck of the peninsula. It is only 3 miles across here and about 200 to 300 feet high. It however looks mighty wide when you're lowdown over it and have your life hanging on your engine. In the semi-dark several flashes from individual rifles were firing at me, but no goals were scored. Having got across into the sea of Marmara, I glided down to 300 feet and eased my engine a little. At this height it is very hard to be seen with the mountains as a background in the semi light. I passed down the centre of the Straits, past Gallipoli town, several small vessels and a lot of sailing ships. Six or seven miles further down I could see a Hospital ship coming up and in the distance Edmonds alone, returning from his objective, which were several

large ships in the Bay about three miles north of the narrows. Just then my engine started to make terrible noises and die out so I was obliged to land. This I had to do across the wind as my height was not sufficient to turn into the wind. A heavy landing resulted but no damage. The hospital ship was quite near and altered course towards me. I thought this must be the finish, either the numerous batteries would sink me or I should be captured and made a prisoner. I thought this was a proper fix to be in, taxiing slowly in the middle of the Straits and absolutely fed up with the engine failing me the second time.

Now, if I dropped my torpedo it would hit the bank and wake up everything, so I thought a ruse might work. The Hospital ship was only 300 yards off now, so I came close up to it and waved my hand; all the wounded on-board waved back at me and the ship passed on up the Straits. Everyone must have taken me for a friendly craft as boats were dodging around taking very little notice. I let the Hospital ship pass up and half a mile up I could see two ships in a little bay. One a large old wooden sailing ship and the other a large tug alongside a new wooden pier. I taxied up to within 500 yards of it and let go my torpedo, turning round directly after up the Straits. A terrific explosion followed and as I looked over my shoulder I could see spray descending and the target giving a huge lurch. Then all of a sudden rifle shots pattered in the water beside me, and my first

idea was to get out of it, being in a desperate funk. By a miracle nothing hit me and I coaxed the engine up slightly and after taxiing two or three miles got off again, then again in touch and off again to my great joy. I was then only able to make a long glide, passing very low over the last part of land and finally with great relief reached the ship. Here I hoisted my little skull and crossbones flag but it unfortunately blew off with a propeller draught.

Col Sykes, Aeronautical Commander at the Dardanelles, together with a reporter to the Admiralty, were aboard B. M. C. at the time and were fearfully pleased with the effort. Banks Price went up immediately afterwards and successfully set two large ships on fire with bombs on the narrow peninsula. So altogether we've won the war today all right. Vice Admiral de Robeck sent a signal congratulating us.

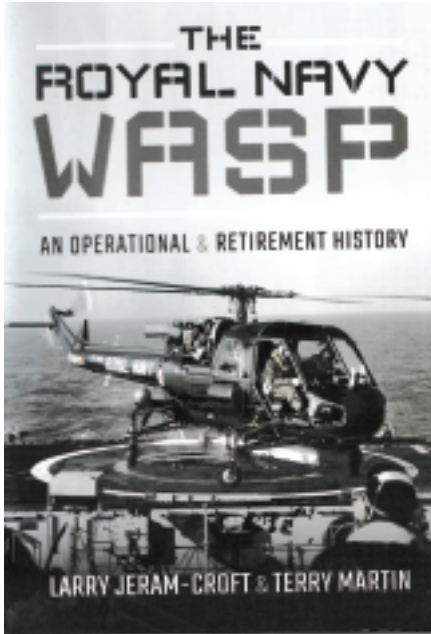
We returned to Imbros and in the evening the Vice Admiral sent for the skipper, Edmonds and myself. He congratulated us and said "A very fine piece of work". We related our stories to him and he was altogether very pleased indeed and said we now have a new weapon which must be seriously reckoned with. Everybody aboard was also pleased, and the ship's company of B. M. C. showed they were pleased by holding a noisy concert in the evening.





## BOOK REVIEW

By Malcolm Smith



Larry Jerram-Croft and his co-author, Terry Martin, have achieved the remarkable feat of compressing the entire operational life of this unique and versatile ship-launched weapon system into a most readable book. The authors provide a potted history of post-war rotary wing developments that culminated in the Wasp, together with a brief description of the development of Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) strategies. They define the Military Need, explaining that ships had very effective sonar systems in the 1950s, but that submarines could hear the sound before the ship could receive

a viable echo. A small helicopter could carry anti-submarine weapons a long way beyond the range of ship-launched systems and could be directed by the parent vessel to the submarine's location. This concept was entitled Manned Anti-submarine Torpedo Carrying Helicopter (MATCH).

The Wasp story starts with the Saunders-Roe P531, which first flew in July 1958. The authors describe the deck-landing trials in HMS *Undaunted*, which proved the viability of the concept. Development of the P531 into the Wasp included trials with rubber suction pads in place of wheels (they did not work very well) and the development of procedures to enable the Royal Navy to operate this little aircraft, with very limited flying aids, in challenging conditions in peace and war.

The book provides descriptions of the wide variety of weapons that the aircraft could carry, up to and including the Nuclear Depth Bomb, but for this reader (and I suspect many Society members) the heart of the book lies in the many anecdotes from Ships' Flight operators, aircrewmen and maintainers.

Conditions in different ships are well described and the importance of good relations with non-aircrew warfare officers and captains are emphasised. The peculiar arrangement of the ship's

hangar in the Tribal class ships, in which the roof of the hangar was also the retractable flight deck, are explained. The memorable accident in HMS *Zulu*, when the flight deck rose un-commanded and crushed the Wasp against the removeable roof panels, led to the reaction of the young sailor who rang the bridge from the quarterdeck with the following dramatic message:

*"The bells are ringing, the budgie is trying to escape and the hangar's on fire!"*

You will have to read the book to discover how a bowl of custard contributed to this accident, in which both safety switches were inoperable.

These and many other anecdotes provide the core of the book in a chapter titled "Personal Accounts", which covers almost all elements of the Wasp's service life, from June 1963 to its retirement in 1988. There is a substantial section on the Falklands conflict; in which HMS *Endurance's* Wasp contributed to the disabling of the Argentine submarine *Santa Fe*. The Cod Wars make their appearance; and deployment with survey vessels in the hot and sandy conditions in the Persian Gulf are also described.

Larry Jerram-Croft trained as an Aircraft Engineering Officer in the Royal Navy and subsequently as a helicopter pilot. Society members who were fortunate to attend his lively talk on Lynx operations will particularly welcome this volume.

Terry Martin studied medicine at University College London and initially learned to fly at the University Air Squadron. As a qualified doctor and pilot, he spent 10 years on active service with the RAF. He has owned and flown several Wasps and still flies as a display pilot in the UK.

Larry provides his personal experiences, including a memorable flight in Terry's cherished Wasp, long after it had retired from active service. He describes the Nimbus engine's tendency to "surge" and the need for pilots to practise engine-off landings. "You literally have to fly the Wasp for every minute", he says, "... there are no systems to help you keep heading or height."

Section two of the book is entitled "Wasps in service overseas and in retirement". The Wasp proved to be a most successful export, with the navies of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brazil and South Africa all operating new or reconditioned examples. At the end of this chapter, the authors describe Gentle Retirement, listing those aircraft still flying or with the potential to return to flight and the (many) surviving Wasps on display or in storage.

The book lacks an index, which is a disappointment, and proof-reading is a bit erratic. However, these are minor criticisms of this outstanding history of an innovative, versatile and much-loved little aircraft.

