JABBERWOCK 103

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

May 2021

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

IN THIS ISSUE

The Forgotten Aircraft Carrier • British Operational Research in wartime • Naval Rail Tales • The Albert Medal • J C S Hendry and his Albert Medal • Night Fright • Sea Change in the Pacific

Plus all the usual features etc.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ROYAL NAVY

The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum

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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!

ADMISSION
Members of SoFFAAM 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.

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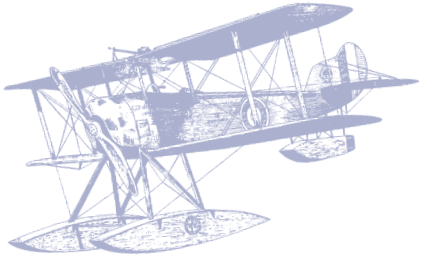

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COVER PHOTO

HMS *Ark Royal* RO9 and Warship Class 41 D601 named in her honour - see article on page 16.

BACK COVER

This has some imagery relating to RO8 and the impending first deployment to the Far East of a UK led Carrier Strike Group in many years.

Editorial

In the February issue of Jabberwock, we expressed the hope that 2021 would see a return to more normal times.

This optimism is being vindicated and the General Manager hopes that the Museum will be allowed to re-open over the late May Bank Holiday weekend. The Society has made a consistent effort to keep the talks programme going and the resulting on-line occasions have been interesting, stimulating and well attended. Demands on space prevent our carrying full summaries of all the talks, but full versions will be found on our newly-designed website, soon to become available.

In this issue, we report that 736 Squadron is to disband. The squadron's Hawk aircraft have provided useful service in support of operational training and workup for UK air and naval forces. It also fulfilled an (un-advertised) function in providing fixed wing flying experience to the cadre of future F35 aircrew during the long years during which the Fleet Air Arm was a helicopter-only force. Your Editor remembers 736 Squadron as the second-line Buccaneer unit at RNAS Lossiemouth in the 1970s, equipped with a motley selection of Mk 2 and clapped-out Mk 1 aircraft. We welcome anecdotes from those days, or indeed any other times.

At the March Council meeting, our membership Secretary reported that most members who pay for annual membership by Standing Order have overlooked the recent modest increase in membership fees. Please save him the trouble of having to remind you!

Finally, we are sad to record the death of the Duke of Edinburgh, who led a promising naval career before his marriage to Her Majesty the Queen. As a young officer in HMS *Valiant* in 1941, he was Mentioned in Dispatches for his actions during the Battle of Matapan in the Mediterranean, when the British Battlefleet including *Warspite* and *Barham*, sank three Italian 8-inch gun cruisers, *Pola*, *Zara* and *Fiume*. *Pola* had been seriously damaged by a torpedo dropped by an Albacore from HMS *Formidable* and the other two cruisers had turned back to assist her.

At the time of writing, shops and pubs are about to re-open, so on this happy note we hope to see more of our members in person in the not-too-distant future.

Malcolm

Council snippets

From the March 2021 Council Meeting

The General Manager said that the 'road map' for our National exit from the lockdown scenario position the Museum to open in the third phase of restriction easing measures, and potentially no sooner than 17 May 2021.

Once the date has been confirmed nationally, we will clarify a re-opening date. I fully expect the Museum will be open for the late May Half Term and late Bank Holiday weekend.

The proposed Members' Day was discussed and a date of 11 September was agreed. Chris Penney had produced a draft programme for the day and after some discussion of catering costs and other matters it was agreed that detailed planning should go ahead.

Richard Macauley said that we now have three Zoom talks under our belt, successfully delivered by good speakers. The 2021 programme is almost full, with just the July 'special' slot to fill. In the short to medium term, we will continue with Zoom talks due to the Covid restrictions. We have an excellent model of talks at the Museum, that we can fall back on when we can 're-install' ourselves at FAAM. This should only be done when the Museum is able to accept us and our audience without any undue pressure.

Simon Websper said that the number of members switching to electronic Jabberwock has slowed right up now. The renewal fee fiasco (more than half renewing at the old rate in error) has proved that members do not read things very thoroughly.

Richard said that the new design of the website is continuing apace. He should be able to show the Council what it will look like in the future.

Rosanne had kindly offered to organise the Grand Draw, which in the past had been held before the AGM. It was agreed that ticket books should be sent out with the August Jabberwock, although there was no discussion of the effect of this on postal costs.

There was a brief discussion of the proposed Falklands Day in April 2022. It was hoped that this would include talks from those who had been personally involved. The Chairman said he had a short list of potential speakers and would contact them in due course.

Letters to the editor

Dear Malcolm,

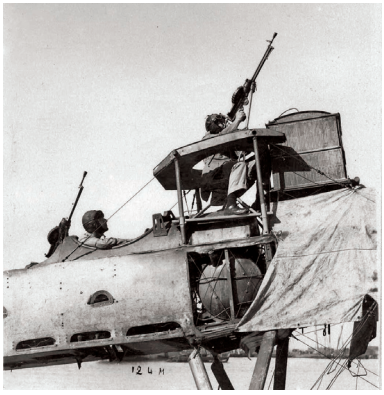
Chris Penney's letter in Jabberwock 102 raises many moral and technical questions. To reiterate, Chris asked, *Was it standard RNAS practice to remove the floats human 'ballast' needed for the craning operation before flight?*

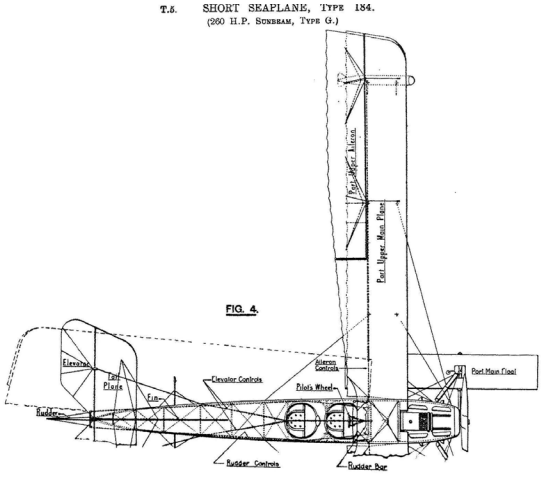
The probable answer, hopefully, is – yes. After all, a trained mechanic was far more valuable than any two-a-penny pilot or observer.

As the old song has it, *Mad dogs and Englishmen / Go out in the midday sun*, so we should not ignore the effect of the Egyptian sun on the poor pilots and observers. The East Indies and Egypt Seaplane Squadron, on its island base in Port Said harbour, noted for *Coal dust, Mosquitos, Fleas, Heat,* did experiment with many unusual methods to increase the fire power of the Short 184, as the accompanying photo illustrates. So, an attempt to install manned forward firing Lewis Guns in the floats should not be completely ruled out.

But, in all seriousness, Chris' question did make me wonder why the human ballast was required in the first place. It comes down to a basic problem of weight distribution.

An empty Short 184 weighed around 3800 lb (5500 lb fully loaded), with the V-12 Sunbeam engine accounted for about 900lb. Of the remainder, a reasonable estimate for the wings would be around 1000 to 1200 lb. The Short's





mainplanes spanned 63 ft 6 in, of this 3 ft 6in was the fixed centre-section, leaving 30 ft per side to be folded back alongside the fuselage.

Without labouring my point, which I'm sure many of you have already clued into, that means some 1000 lb is now located aft of the centre of gravity.

I do not recall having seen any photos of a fully spread Short 184 being hoisted with human ballast on the floats. But every image I have seen with folded wings required the human ballast.

Best regards
Ian Burns

PS: I have dealt with Chris' Grecian affairs separately, and I hope satisfactorily. Also, for anyone wishing to read up on *Glorious*' loss, there are two books worth seeking out : *Adventure Glorious* by Ronald Healiss (Muller, 1955) one of the carrier's survivors, and *Carrier Glorious* by John Winton (Leo Cooper, 1986). Sadly I am not aware of anything more recent.

Dear Malcolm

I am interested in reading about Pacific FAA operations in WW2. I am especially interested in books written by former FAA aircrew as well as any general accounts. I will be grateful for any suggestions you may have.

Thank you and best regards.
Mark Aloisio

Editors Reply

I can warmly recommend "Heaven High, Ocean Deep" by Tim Hillier-Graves, published by Casemate Books. Sub-titled "Naval fighter wing at war" It is available as an e-book as well as in print.

I would be happy to include a copy of your request in the next Jabberwock, as I am sure that some of our members will have other reading suggestions for you.

Dear Editor,

I enjoyed Chris Penney's article on the Taranto raid in Jabberwock 102. He repeated Admiral Cunningham's statement that "...in the Fleet Air Arm, the Navy has a most devastating weapon." It is a pity that "ABC" as Cunningham was often known, did not make a more fulsome acknowledgement of the bravery of the aircrew who flew this extraordinary mission. In his biography of Cunningham, published in 1998, John Winton says: "It was a great pity that such a sweet victory should be soured by the graceless manner in which the honours and awards were given and announced." Williamson and Hale were awarded DSOs, and their observers DSCs. The pilot and observer of one of Eagle's Swordfish also received DSCs. Nobody else was to receive anything. "A full six months later" says

Winton, "DSOs were awarded to the pilot and observer of a third Swordfish and DSCs to 13 other aircrew. None of the maintainers and other non-flying members of *Illustrious*' ships' company received anything." Winton also reminds us that, on the nine o'clock news the following evening, the BBC announced: "The RAF does it again".

I think there was greater recognition of Fleet Air Arm performance after the Falklands war, so perhaps the role of naval aviation is more generally known today.

Sincerely,
Trevor Robert Harris

Dear Editor,

Many, many thanks for enabling us to see Paul Beaver's presentation in March about the few FAA pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain, which I thought was just great. There is one thing that has always puzzled me as to why the Navy are the only service I know of that wear their wings on their sleeve, everywhere else they are wore on the left breast. Just a silly thing and I suppose that they just had to be different.

Roy
(ex RAF and proud of it)

Membership

By Simon Websper

Standing Order payment membership cards for May, June and July will be sent separately, within the relevant month of expiry. (Receipt of a membership card does not confirm receipt of payment).

For those members still renewing by cheque, please note that to keep costs down, we do not send reminders routinely. Please advise if you wish to renew by Standing Order instead. If paying/renewing by cheque, **please always enclose a stamped, addressed envelope**. This saves us money. Thank you.

Do let us know if you would prefer to receive Jabberwock via your e-mail.

A big **WELCOME** to the new members who have joined us since the last Jabberwock was issued:

3708	**Mr I Stevenson**	Somerset
3709	**Lt. Cdr. J Harris**	Chepstow
3710	**Mrs M Robson**	Hampshire
3711	**Mr K Willingale**	Somerset
3712	**Mr S Pitts**	London
3713	**Mr D McLoughlin**	Somerset
3714	**Mr R Clark**	Somerset
3715	**Mr A Harris**	Somerset
3716	**Mr R Hall**	Dorset

Total members as of May 2021: **960**
Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: **687**

Opting to Gift Aid allows us to claim an extra 25% of your subscription from HMRC

If you haven't yet updated your standing order to reflect the new 2021 membership rates below, please do so as soon as possible, to save us the cost of reminders.

Annual Membership rates, effective 1 January 2021 - An excellent gift too:

Individual	**£14**
Family (2 adults, up to 3 children)	**£37**
Life (UK)	**£125**
Life (International)	**£175**
Junior	**£9**

PAYMENT can be made by: Standing Order, BACS/Internet banking, PayPal (to **soffaam.joinup@gmail.com**).
Please send cheques to: Membership Secretary, 22 Kings Yard, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3LE

See inside back cover for Membership Form.

Visit us on Facebook: Society of Friends Fleet Air Arm Museum or **www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk**

All membership queries to: **soffaam.mem@gmail.com** or Tel: **07527 707204 /01823 433448**.

Talks 2021

By Richard Macauley

As we go to print, there have been some loose conversations about meeting back in the FAA Museum amongst the Council members. However, we are not going to second guess how the Covid Pandemic will pan out in 2021 so we will continue with the Zoom format for the foreseeable future.

Zoom is very easy and free to use and we would like to get as many of our members involved with this. If you are unsure if this is for you, email me at soffaam@btinternet.com and I will happily ring to discuss how to get you involved with this technology. For SoFFAAM Zoom Talks this year, see our website **www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/monthly-talks/**

Zoom has allowed other societies and organisations to consider how they continue to present their monthly talks. Those SoFFAAM Members who we are able to communicate with by email, will have seen a few of these other talks advertised with our email notification system.

Unfortunately, some notifications were delayed beyond the date of the proposed talks. For this we can only apologise, but those circumstances were and are out of our control.

We will not be collecting any fees or donations for any other societies presentations, we are just advertising them because we believe our membership would be interested in the subjects on offer. All these other groups now have their own means to collect ticket monies or donations, so please make any payment direct with them.

If you have not received these email notifications, send your email address to me at soffaam@btinternet.com

These other talks are organised by various organisations and here is a list to see if any appeal to you.

RAF Museum
www.rafmuseum.org.uk

British Modern Military History Society
www.bmmhs.org

Museum of Army Flying
www.armyflying.com

National Army Museum
www.nam.ac.uk

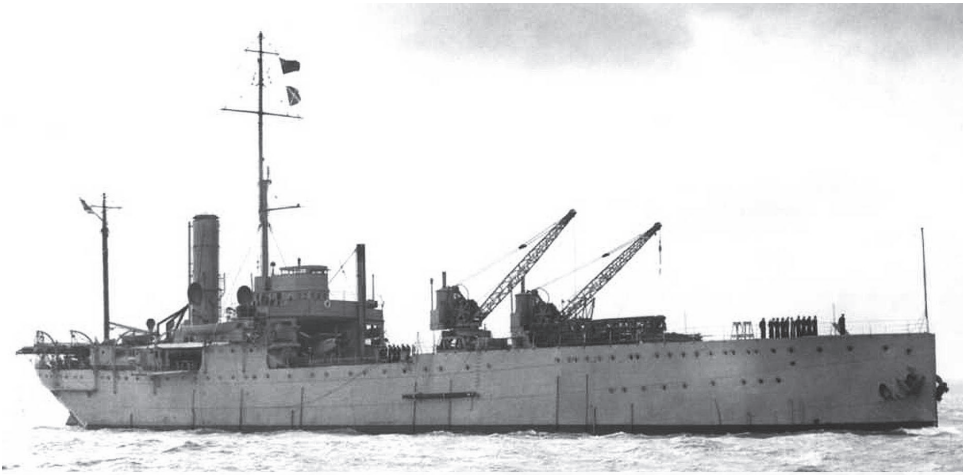
Battle of Britain Memorial Society
www.battleofbritainmemorial.org

The SoFFAAM website does have write ups from our previous monthly talks programme, expertly penned by Council member Robert Heath. These can be read here: www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/monthly-talks

Scroll down the page past the listing of future monthly talks, and you will see and be able to read about these past talks.

The Forgotten Aircraft Carrier

PART ONE: by Peter Cowlan



HMS *Ark Royal* in 1914

Following Chris Howat's excellent HMS *Argus* article in Jabberwock 101, I am hoping the following will also be of interest to our readers.

How does one define the term 'Proper Aircraft Carrier'? 'Proper', as in genuine or true, would seem to suggest that those Royal Navy ships that operated aircraft before HMS *Argus*' completion in September 1918 were, somehow, not aircraft carriers. At this point I can imagine Jabberwock readers muttering — pedant! It is though very easy to overlook the fact that there was indeed a time when the type of vessel we *now* recognise as an aircraft carrier (i.e., flush decked with off-set superstructure) did not exist. So, does the aircraft carrier story really begin with *Argus*, in 1918?

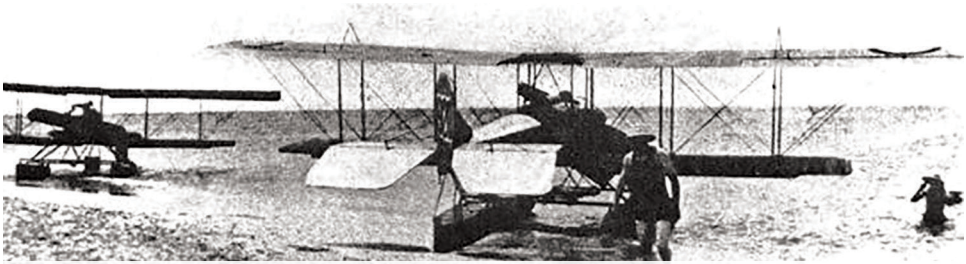
Even though heavier than air flying machines had been associated with Royal Naval vessels before WW1, it seems a suggestion as to the use of the term 'Aircraft Carrier' did not appear until the final year of the war. In an Admiralty Minute recorded by Captain F R Scarlett, Director Air Division, dated 4 May 1918, it is stated: *My Lords have had under consideration the question of the retention of the term 'Seaplane Carrier' in view of the development which has taken*

place by which these vessels now carry both Seaplanes and Aeroplanes. My Lords suggest that a more appropriate term would be that of 'Aircraft Carrier' and if the Air Council see no objection it is proposed that this term should always be used in future to designate these vessels. The details contained within this minute were more than likely influenced by the recommissioning of HMS *Furious* in March 1918.

Note the use of *Seaplanes and Aeroplanes*. I am unaware of any subsequent Admiralty document suggesting the adoption of the term 'aircraft', to encompass all machines embarked upon an 'aircraft carrier'. Curiously, the term 'aeroplane' was employed, not only during the formative years of aviation but seemingly throughout the First World war, to describe machines equipped with wheels. 'Seaplane', a term allegedly coined by Winston Churchill in 1913, would rapidly replace the hitherto employed 'Hydro-aeroplane' when describing aircraft capable of operating from water. One later anomaly though was the employment of Sopwith Pups for the landing trials aboard HMS *Furious* in 1918. Bearing in mind their means of alighting one could argue that they were not aeroplanes at all — but skidplanes!

Two vessels that pre-dated the commissioning of HMS *Argus* were *Vindictive* and *Furious*. Although both these vessels were equipped with 'flying decks' fore and aft (in *Furious*' case her aft 'recovery' deck was a later addition) the only means of transfer of machines between these decks was by gangways either side of her superstructure and funnel. Due to eddies and air currents flowing around these centreline obstructions the landing on of wheeled aircraft was found to be all but impossible, with three out of thirteen attempts proving successful on *Furious* and only one on *Vindictive*.

Therefore, considering her completion date, it seems that *Argus* does indeed qualify as the first aircraft carrier. However, does this then imply that all the other aviation vessels preceding her, including *Engadine*, *Riviera*, *Empress*, *Ark Royal*, *Ben-My-Chree*, *Manxman*, *Vindex*, *Nairana*, *Pegasus* etc. be denied this title retrospectively, simply because the machines they carried were seaplanes? That this is *not* the case is seemingly confirmed by the previously mentioned



Sopwith 807 Seaplanes

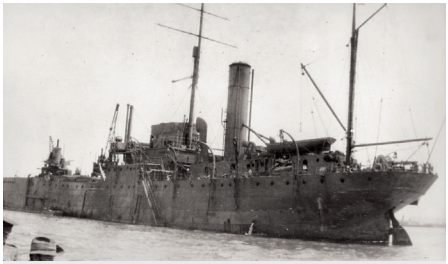
Admiralty document. Of all the ships mentioned above, one in particular stands out as worthy not only of the title but, more importantly, the *first* vessel with a justifiable right to be termed aircraft carrier — HMS *Ark Royal*.

The second vessel to carry what would, become a truly iconic name after WW1, *Ark Royal* had the misfortune to be conceived and commissioned at a time when the type of aircraft she was designed to operate were very much still in the developmental stage. The first successful floatplane flight had only occurred four years previously; the first flight in Britain, only three. Rather than being the prototype of an intended class of vessel, *Ark Royal* can be considered more a progenitor, exhibiting some of the characteristics of the perfected type whilst not actually being representative of it.

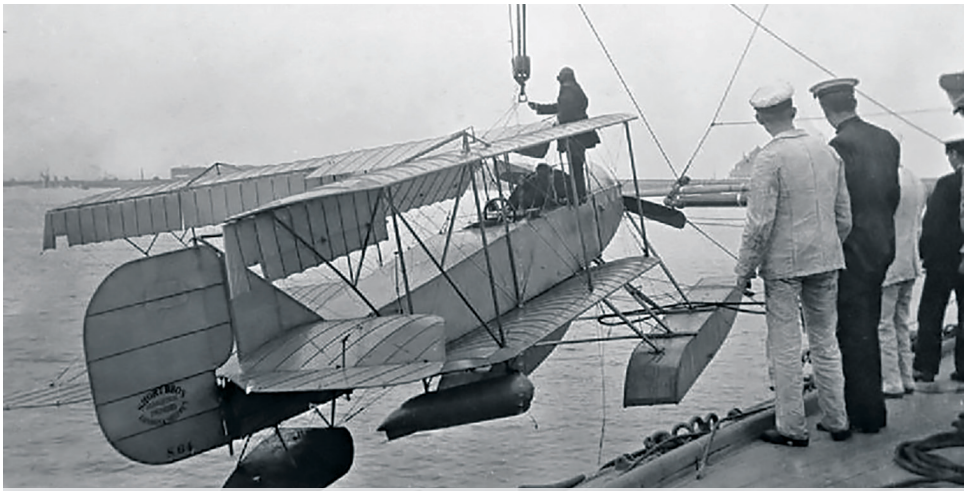
It has been stated many times that *Ark Royal* was converted from a merchant ship. This is misleading as it gives the impression that this 'conversion' was carried out on an existing vessel. Indeed, the author Michael Apps, in his book *The Four Ark Royals*, goes as far as to declare that *... the Admiralty took over an old trampship which was being built ...* though how a ship in the process of construction can also be referred to as old, is beyond me! The unnamed vessel selected to become the Royal Navy's first purpose-built aviation ship was laid down in November 1913, though by the time of the completed purchase by the Admiralty (May 1914) it was still in frame. Originally planned as a coal or grain carrier (the value of high speed to an aviation vessel was obviously not yet fully appreciated) a comprehensive redesign saw her taking on an appearance unlike that of any previous Royal Navy ship.

Her main hold (hangar deck) measured approximately 150ft x 45ft x 15ft, large enough to house seven aircraft. Directly above were fully equipped aero-engine and airframe workshop areas. These featured all the necessary machinery, lathes, drills, forges etc. to enable the repair and manufacture of all manner of items, wood or metal, large or small. A unique feature was the shelter beneath the ship's wheelhouse. Following the refitting of a repaired engine this open-ended area was used for its test running. Stowage for aviation spirit was also catered for, probably contained in the standard two-gallon

Sopwith Schneider onboard HMS *Ark Royal*, c.1915



HMS *Ark Royal* in 1915 off Gallipoli



Short Folder being hoisted aboard.

cans of the period. Dedicated space was provided for weapons; torpedoes being the largest, ten of which were loaded prior to her journey to the Aegean on 1 February 1915.

In a report to the Director Air Department, *Ark Royal's* Commanding Officer, Robert H Clark-Hall, remarking on Ark Royal's passage through the Bay of Biscay stated "*... the ship proved very steady and took very little heavy sea over the forecastle.*" He also declared that "*Work on the machines and the training and drilling of Air Service ratings was, of course, somewhat interfered with, as during this period they were nearly all practically inanimate.*" [!]

The first opportunity to fly her aircraft (apart from their acceptance trials) was when she arrived at Malta to refuel. She anchored in Valletta Harbour on 12 February and although three of her aircraft were brought up on deck, no flights were undertaken. At three o'clock the following day Short 136 (a veteran of the Cuxhaven Raid) was craned out and soon set off on a fifteen-minute demonstration flight for the benefit of the local populace. According to one report her airframe was somewhat 'out of truth' and following the demonstration flight the landing was a particularly heavy one, which further exacerbated the issue. Her fuselage would continue to be warped for the remainder of her service, with many man-hours being expended in trying to keep her serviceable over the coming months.

It was intended that Sopwith 808 would provide the locals with a further demonstration of naval air power the following day. However, during its take-off run, the starboard float was caught by a swell and torn off, resulting in a capsize - a portent of things to come. By

Sopwith Baby in the Fleet Air Arm Museum. This type operated onboard HMS *Ark Royal* during the Dardanelles campaign but without the rocket armament. © Richard Macauley

the afternoon of 14 February *Ark Royal* had slipped her moorings and was on her way eastward.

Sometimes described as a 'Special Service Vessel', and very quickly labelled a 'wonder ship' by the British press, the very fact that *Ark Royal* and her aircraft were tasked with providing a pivotal role in the ultimately disastrous Dardanelles campaign can, in retrospect, be seen as her second piece of misfortune. Upon arrival in theatre, it soon became clear that her aircraft were struggling to perform the tasks assigned to them.

To be continued in Jabberwock 104.

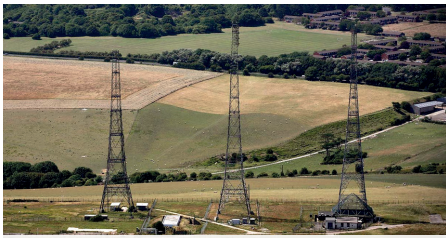
Do you have some spare, early editions of Jabberwock?

Member Roger Chapple is keen to complete his collection of Jabberwock. He would very much like to find copies of Jabberwock Nos 1-8 inclusive and No 10. If anybody has these items and would be prepared to give them to him, please contact him via email at: **chapplerogerchapple@gmail.com**

Roger does have a spare copy of No 38 if any member should require a copy.

British Operational Research in wartime

By Jim Humberstone



Chain Home Radar Station near Dover.

Efforts to identify the effectiveness of aspects of warfare are said to date back to that great polymath Thomas Jefferson

He attempted to quantify the cost effectiveness of his colony's armed resistance during the American Colonies' War of Independence. Skip roughly 140 years to WW1 and the anti-submarine battle. Despite the terrible losses of merchant ships to submarines in the Atlantic, the Admiralty had strenuously opposed the introduction of the convoy system to protect ships. It took a careful analysis of the statistics they used to assess the task and to disprove their assumptions of the ineffectiveness of convoying before the system was finally introduced in 1917. The Admiralty obtained some of the earliest benefits from this new approach of assessing fighting effectiveness through the work of Viscount Tiverton, a major in the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS). In September 1917, he produced the first comprehensive plan for strategic bombing. His ideas were never implemented during WW1, but they were a strong influence on the strategic role allotted to the Royal Air Force from its formation in 1918 until the end of WW2. Elsewhere during this period, the British Ministry of Munitions engaged the work of scientists to examine aspects of anti-aircraft defence.

These early assessments were not recognised as a coherent discipline. Professor Peter (later Lord) Blackett OM, CH, FRS, who is widely regarded as the "father of OR", played a key role in WW2 in applying operational research (OR) to military issues. One of the great pioneers of radar was Robert Watson Watt, who applied operational research in his early work on the use of radio waves to detect aircraft at Bawdsey Manor in the mid-1930s. This work was sponsored by the Committee for Scientific Survey of Air Defence, set up at the Air Ministry in 1935 with Henry Tizard as its Chairman. Watson Watt explicitly stated in later years that OR formed the third sequence in his development of radar systems. This was because, with an invention as revolutionary as radar, monitoring its

performance in use was a prerequisite for its development into a usable system. Concurrently with the building of the giant Chain Home aerial towers by the outbreak of war, the RAF developed a system for quickly relaying the data and intelligence these produced to Operations Rooms with onward control of RAF units at Sector level.

In a classic application of OR, RAF Coastal Command examined the serviceability factors used in assessing aircraft and identified that the criteria employed for ensuring effective maintenance intervals was inhibiting machines' availability for operations., Changes to the maintenance sequence then lead to greater aircraft availability.

Analysis of the effectiveness of tactics and equipment in the anti-U-Boat campaign was of key significance to Coastal Command and Fleet Air Arm operations. Shore-based Coastal Command aircraft were supplemented by FAA units embarked in RN escort carriers on convoy protection duties, on Atlantic, Arctic and Gibraltar routes. Detailed examination of accounts of aerial encounters with U-Boats, identified the extent to which, the parameters of the enemy vessels behaviour, once alerted to its danger and moving to a dive configuration, could usually give a time frame within which weapons could be released, at a specific height, with a reasonable chance of causing damage. It was soon found that, despite this improvement in accuracy, the standard RAF 250 or 500lb anti-submarine bomb used for such attacks, was ineffective. Armed with this conclusion, a modified, 250 lb version of the standard RN Mark VII ship borne depth charge was introduced. When deployed by ASW aircraft such as the Swordfish, the number of successful attacks on U-boats markedly increased. When coupled with the introduction of the Anti-Surface-Vessel (ASV) centimetric radar, the Swordfish Mark III became a formidable weapons platform, exceeded in its effectiveness only when later armed with armour piercing rocket projectiles.

As with other aspects of the British war effort, OR represented the fruitful outcome of close, beneficial collaboration between civilian scientists and senior service personnel. There was at least one instance of the two disciplines meeting in one person. This was when Wing Commander A C G Menzies, a pilot in WWI, but subsequently Professor of Physics at Southampton University, was appointed Secretary of the wartime Operational Research Committee. Surely alongside such distinguished war leaders as Montgomery and Slim, Ramsay and Cunningham, Dowding and Tedder, the authors and pioneers of OR and the application of other critical scientific method and techniques to warfare matters, such men as Tizard, Lindemann and Jones, deserve equal credit for their help in achieving final victory for Britain and its allies.

The development and application of Operational Research is an outstanding example of how the British strength in the sciences can come to our rescue in times of crisis.

Naval Rail Tales

By Chris Penney

GWR-designed 4-6-0 'Castle' 5082 *Swordfish* powers away from Bristol Temple Meads on a summer Saturday Kingswear-Paddington express in the early 1950s. © Great Western Trust Didcot/George Heiron

Our Society's former President, Derek Moxley, had a love for a certain Great Western steam locomotive and since I visited the East Somerset Railway, I can see why the bygone era holds such appeal for transport enthusiasts, many of whom enjoy trains as much as planes.

Some of the links between the Royal Navy and railways can be traced to before the formation of the Royal Naval Air Service. During the Great War, the Navy was still largely powered by Welsh steaming coal and to supply it huge quantities were transported by rail, much of it to Scotland to fuel the fleet at Scapa Flow. Such was their significance, these naval wartime trains became known to railwaymen as "Jellicoe Specials." After the War when the Royal Family visited the far reaches of the British Empire, their journey began by joining the Royal Train at London-Victoria for a steam-hauled ride to Portsmouth Naval Base. Here they could alight at a private station within the base allowing a few short steps to board one of His Majesty's Ships before undertaking the Royal Tour. During the 1920s the oil-fired battlecruiser *Renown* was twice used, presumably because she was one of the fleet's fastest.

The Royal Navy's other main establishment at Plymouth Devonport

was served by the Great Western Railway company (GWR) from London-Paddington. The dockyard's large network of sidings that handled Navy materials were served by dedicated tank engine locos and one can be glimpsed in the classic 1953 war film *The Cruel Sea*, which was shot in Plymouth.

The GWR named their express steam locomotive classes and following the First World War a few locos were renamed after military regiments associated with the area the railway served. During the late summer of 1940, when the Battle of Britain was at its height, the Great Western took this policy a step further. In continuing to highlight their links with the military they decided to rename some of their four-cylinder 4-6-0* *Castle* class locos after aircraft in service at that time. As "Support the local Spitfire Fighter Fund" posters were readily seen at wartime railway stations the initiative served as a good morale booster.

The first of the class to gain 'wings' 5071 *Clifford Castle* was predictably rechristened *Spitfire* in September 1940 and this was quickly followed by 5072 becoming *Hurricane*. Other frontline aircraft names selected were types in use with the RAF's Fighter, Bomber and Coastal Commands and included the Beaufort, Hudson, Gladiator and Lysander. It was a diverse and odd mix chosen by the GWR and it is not clear how they came to decide on the list. It is also not known why, when the war continued for another five years, it was decided to cease the renaming after just 12 'Castles'.

The Fleet Air Arm had to wait until January 1941 for their moment in the wartime railway spotlight. The 12th GWR 'Castle' to be renamed was 5082 *Powis Castle* taking the name *Swordfish*. The only dedicated naval aircraft chosen, it gives the impression of having been an afterthought. By that time in the war though, the Fairey Swordfish had certainly had a moment of glory as a result of the Taranto raid and this may have been why the venerable biplane was selected. The *Castle* class were successful passenger express locos. They were used widely across the Great Western route network until the end of steam and 5082 *Swordfish* was resident at Paddington and Bristol during a career which ended with its scrapping in 1962.

The end of steam during the 1960s ushered in the diesel locomotive era. The former GWR network was run by British Railways Western Region and in embracing new diesels links with the Royal Navy were given greater profile. Just like the GWR the Western Region took a different attitude to railway matters compared to other regions of the UK. In introducing diesel power, they became the sole region to buy express diesel-hydraulic locomotives. Ordered by the British Transport Commission, the first of these to run on the Western appeared in 1958. This initial batch of five, as a trial design, were numbered D600-604 and called the *Warship* class. All were given warship names and D601 became *Ark Royal*. This was ironic as they were powered by two 1,000hp MAN V12 engines. MAN was the German company that had supplied

U-boat engines and whose Augsburg factory RAF Bomber Command tried unsuccessfully to destroy in April 1942. Indeed, HMS *Ark Royal* had been lost to a MAN-powered U-boat! On 16 June 1958 *Ark Royal* undertook the first diesel running of the prestigious Cornish Riviera Express train non-stop from Paddington to Plymouth. All five of these 'Warships' were based at Plymouth and today the nameplate of No. D601 resides in the National Railway Museum at York, such is its significance.

These first Western Region diesels were quickly superseded by production batches of further express hydraulics derived from a German design. Again, these were called *Warship* classes and all but two featured Royal Navy ship names. The first 38 operated between 1958-72 while the second batch of 33 were in operation between 1960-71. 'Warship' number D803 was named *Albion*, D808 *Centaur*, D823 *Hermes* and D860 *Victorious*. This ensured that aircraft carriers amongst the class were in the public eye although there really should have been a *Bulwark* and *Eagle*. During their lives these 'Warship' diesels were variously painted green, maroon and finally blue.

Eventually the Western Region had to fall in line with other regions as diesel-hydraulic power gave way to diesel-electric. Electrification of the Midland Region mainline freed up Class 50 2,700hp diesel-electrics to take over on the Western and the class were gradually introduced from 1972 onwards, with all 50 eventually making the move south.

In 1978 the 50s continued the Western Region's diesel tradition of naval association taking names of First or Second World War warships. The first name chosen, *Ark Royal*, was given No. 50035 in a ceremony performed by HMS *Ark Royal's* Captain Ted Anson at Plymouth station on 17 January 1978. This reflected the esteem with which the famous name was held outside naval circles and followed the Devonport-based carrier's appearance in the popular television series *Sailor*. It proved a useful PR exercise for British Rail (BR) as few passengers would have realised the diesel represented an earlier *Ark*. Others of the class named after carriers included *Courageous*, *Glorious* and *Furious*, although the historic HMS *Argus* was not represented. *Ark Royal* is now preserved and runs on the Severn Valley Railway.

A derivative of the diesel-electric engine used in the Class 50 powered Australia's *Oberon* class diesel submarines. Diesel locomotives still run in to HMNB Devonport on modern-day 'Jellicoe' specials conveying MoD nuclear reactors that power Royal Navy submarines. How times change.

Now here is a quiz question. What links Arthur Longmore, one of the first four RNAS pilots, Lawrence of

The nameplate of pioneering Diesel D601 Ark Royal. © NMRN

Class 50 diesel 50035 Ark Royal. The red nameplate and ship's badge is visible on the side. © Jeff Treece

Arabia and the loco wearing RAF wings pictured? Answer - they all served at Calshot floatplane and flying boat base on the Solent, famous as the location for the 1931 *Schneider Trophy* air race. Located on the spit of land protecting Southampton Water, it was the Navy's experimental seaplane establishment until April 1918.

0-4-0 No 6 Douglas was built in 1918 and served at the former RNAS Calshot, Hampshire. It was painted Air Force blue in 2018 to mark the RAF's Centenary. © Chris Penney

Calshot's Commanding Officer, Arthur Longmore air launched the RNAS' first torpedo on 28 July 1914 from Short Folder S84 Tractor Number 121. This significant event occurred just days before the outbreak of war. After Calshot's transfer to the RAF, a 2ft narrow-gauge railway was built to serve the sprawling site. But the reason for the railway's construction is a mystery. On researching this, a unique military double unfolded as a member of the RNAS won the Albert Medal here in 1917 but also, a RAF serviceman was awarded the George Medal in 1950.

Today Calshot's ex-RAF 2ft3in 0-4-0 loco can be seen at the Talyllyn Railway, North Wales. The naval links between rail and air are perhaps epitomized by Australian-born Arthur Longmore as his father was a railway stationmaster.

*4-6-0 refers to the *Castle* class loco wheel arrangement, having four small leading bogie wheels, six large coupled driving wheels and no trailing wheels (see photo).

The Albert Medal

By Graham Mottram

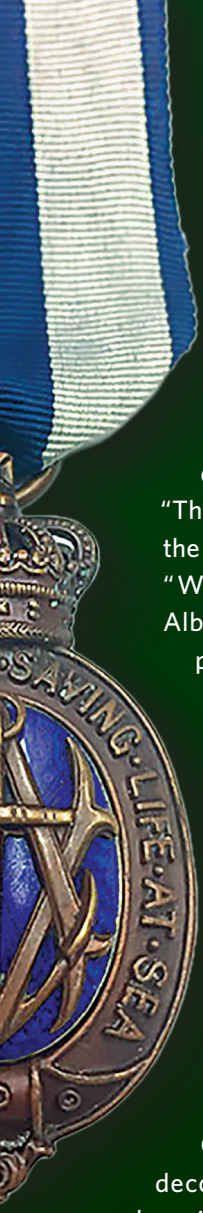
Prince Albert, Prince Consort to Queen Victoria, died in 1861. The Queen was grief stricken and over the next few years was instrumental in creating memorials to her beloved Albert. An Albert Medal of the Royal Society of Arts was established in 1864 for "distinguished merit in promoting Arts, Manufactures and Commerce", and is still awarded today.

Prince Albert had been active in the development of the Victoria Cross in 1856 and a Royal Warrant of 7 March 1866 instituted a new medal for gallantry in saving life at sea, named in his memory. An amendment of 1867 created two classes of medal and 10 years later awards were extended to gallantry for saving life on land.

In 1917 the title of the awards was altered, the First Class becoming the Albert Medal in Gold and the second class merely the Albert Medal. It was last awarded to a living recipient in April 1943, the last posthumous award being in May 1945. The last bronze medal awarded to a living recipient was in January 1949, and posthumous in August 1970. In 1949 the medal in gold was abolished and replaced by the George Cross and henceforward the Albert Medal (second class) was only awarded posthumously.

In 1971 award of the medal ceased and holders were invited to exchange their medals for the George Cross. Of the 64 eligible to exchange, 49 did so. Until the institution of the George Cross in 1940 it was Britain's premier decoration for civilians, sometimes referred to as the "civilian's Victoria Cross", although there were many awards to servicemen in non-combat situations.

In December 1968 Dr. Reginald Bennet, MP for Gosport and Fareham, addressed the Commons with his concerns, shared by others, that the



status of the Albert Medal had been seriously and unfairly downgraded. He stated that, "The originating warrant said, in the language of Queen Victoria: "We are desirous that the Albert Medal should be highly prized and eagerly sought after and are graciously pleased to make, ordain and establish the full Rules and Ordinances for the government of the same, which shall from henceforth be inviolably observed and kept." And also, "In 1923, the Board of Trade Journal said, on 8th February: "As the Victoria Cross is the first of all British decorations for self-forgetting valour in the face of the enemy, so the Albert Medal is the first of all British decorations for self-sacrifice in saving, or attempting to save, life by land or sea. The standard of personal heroism which it recognises is the highest possible, and the measure of the sacrifice of self is the improbability of individual survivance.

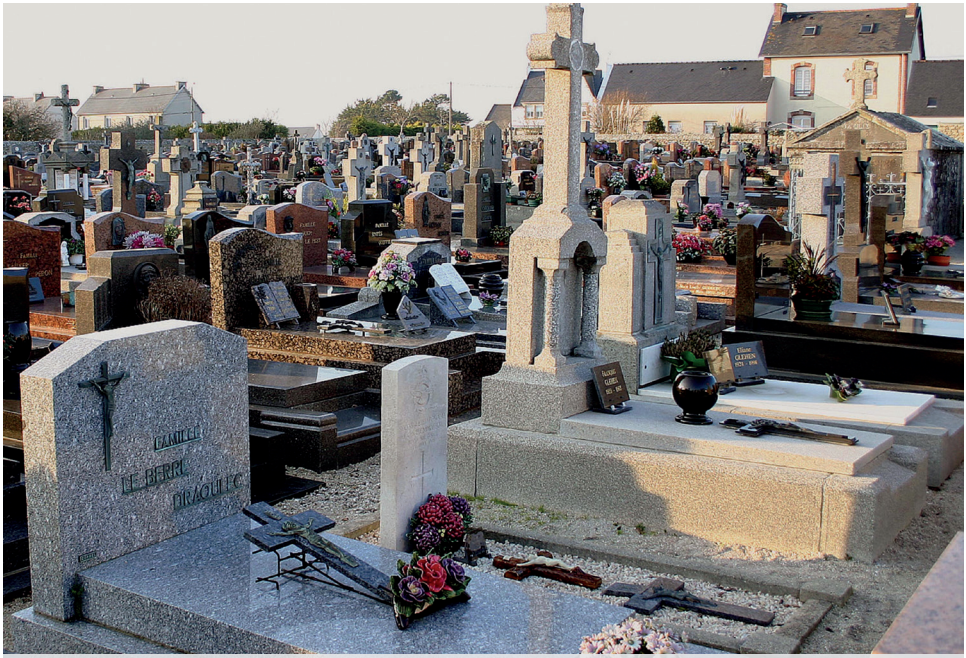
The Albert Medal, following the precedent of the Victoria Cross, is sometimes awarded posthumously, and is then presented by His Majesty personally to the next-of-kin. A man may die in the winning of it, and always before he can win it must have looked very closely into the face of Death." These words make the intention absolutely clear. It ranked with the Victoria Cross at investitures and at Coronations, even at the latest Coronation in 1953, and this is as intended."

Fifty years on, Dr. Bennet's concerns have not really been addressed. The Albert Medal has lost most of its original cachet and, except in the case of medal collectors, is almost totally forgotten.

Several members of the RNAS received the Albert Medal and the article on J C S Hendry is the first in a series where we hope to bring a rare group of exceptional men back from the dark corners of neglect.

J C S Hendry and his Albert Medal

By Graham Mottram



Hendry's grave in Guilvinec Communal Cemetery, Brittany. © Graham Mottram

In his book "Story of a North Sea Air Station", about RNAS *Yarmouth*, C. F. Snowden Gamble wrote,

"On November 19 an act of gallantry was performed at the air station by Petty Officer Telegraphist Hendry, for he saved Flight Lieutenant Lan-Davis from death by drowning. At 8 a.m. while they were coming in to alight opposite the air station, and not wishing to do so with bombs on board (as their detonating gear was so unreliable), the pilot dropped his bombs into the sea so low down that the explosion of one bomb, on hitting the water, blew the tail off the machine (or at any rate wrecked the tail controls). The machine then dived into the sea and Hendry was thrown out. Lieutenant Lan-Davis was rendered unconscious by the impact, but Petty Officer Hendry swam to the wreckage and pulled him out of the seat, and supported and swam with his

unconscious body in his arms until they were both rescued some time later by the drifter Noreen. For this gallant act Petty Officer Hendry was awarded the Albert Medal."

James Claud Scott Hendry was born on 25 September 1887 in Kilmarnock in Ayrshire and joined the Royal Navy at the age of 15 in January 1903. He was educated and trained in HMS *Caledonia*, a training hulk at Queensferry. His formal training was completed towards the end of 1904 and he joined his first proper ship, *Irresistible* in December. In that ship he rose from Boy 1st Class to Able Seaman before several short postings, during which his character assessments were uniformly "very good". They stood him in good stead when he applied to transfer from seaman to telegraphist; his application was granted in May 1908.

After only six months in the new branch, Hendry was advanced to Leading Telegraphist and, just over two more years later, to PO Tel, at the age of 24. From the identities of his next few ships and the dates of his postings to them, it seems probable that Hendry was tasked with bringing the ships' own W/T sets and operators up to speed, in an era when real experts were very sparse. In November 1912 he was posted to HMS *Actaeon* at Sheerness, the accommodation and headquarters of the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps. Much of the Naval Wing's activity was at Eastchurch airfield as the home of the Naval Flying School under the command of Cdr Charles Samson. The first "naval" non-commissioned officer to gain his flying licence with official approval was an RMLI Private, John Edmonds, who took RAeC licence 262 in July 1912. Between then and the end of 1914 around 50 ratings qualified as pilots. Hendry now wanted to fly and volunteered to do so. All his most recent assessments had been "Superior" and that was almost essential for rating pilot candidates.

He took his "ticket" No.601 on 26 August 1913, on a Bristol Biplane. He had been drawing an additional four shillings pay from March 1913 as a result of now being part of the Naval Wing, and that went up to six shillings when he qualified as a pilot but was still officially rated only as a PO Mechanic. He advanced steadily to CPO Mech III, (1 January 1915), CPO Mech II (1 August 1915) and to CPO Mech I on 15 December 1916. He was specifically mentioned in an

James Claud Scott Hendry.

"Aeroplane" report in May 1914,

"Wireless tests were made on new Henri Farman No.142 (100 bhp), M. Fischer piloting with Wireless Operator Hendry as passenger. Later M. Fischer took Lieutenant Bone as passenger. Thereafter, Lieutenant Bone took this machine to Felixstowe with Wireless Operator Hendry as passenger, returning in the dusk at 8 p.m."

James Hendry did a lot of observer flying well before the outbreak of war, much of it to test the W/T equipment in newly delivered aircraft. He had his first recorded crash in Henri Farman No.98 off Felixstowe on 10 March, when an unnamed pilot and Hendry were unhurt. He flew in the Royal Review Flypast of 18 July 1914, in Farman 139 piloted by Yarmouth's CO, Sqn Cdr C L Courtney. Ten days later he was up in a similar aircraft, 141, flying from Calshot to Yarmouth but this suffered engine failure almost within sight of its destination and Flt Lt R J Bone had to put it down hurriedly offshore. The aircraft overturned on landing, with Bone being slightly injured whilst Hendry got away unscathed.

Hendry's headstone.

At the outbreak of war on 4 August 1914, Great Yarmouth was commanded by Sqn Cdr Robert Gregory, one of the first four naval officers to learn to fly. Hendry was one of his Petty Officers. Yarmouth was shelled by German warships on 3 November 1914 and the station was unable to launch any aircraft. One of the reinforcements sent to Yarmouth was a Sopwith HT (Hydro Tractor) No 58. Originally delivered to Calshot in June 1913, the aircraft had moved around a lot, often without a glowing history. It had been converted to a landplane in August 1914 and later been sent back from France by Charles Samson as unsuitable for active service. It arrived at Yarmouth on November 18. It was allocated the role of the dawn patrol the following morning.

The pilot was Flt Lt Cyril F Lan-Davis, acknowledged as one of the country's leading experts on telephoto lenses. They headed out on a dawn anti-submarine patrol with the minimal armament of two 20lb Hales bombs. Bomb racks were not very reliable, so pilots returning from anti-submarine patrols would drop their bombs well before landing. After two hours of patrolling and about eight miles from home at 150 feet Lan-Davis released his bombs. One appears to have exploded almost as soon as it left the rack. The explosion damaged the aircraft and it crashed into the water. Snowden Gamble's account of Hendry's actions is described above and the further

detail comes from an Admiralty medals ledger:

"Gallantry displayed by him on the occasion of an accident to aeroplane 58 on 29.11.14. Saved the life of the pilot of No.58 (which had been damaged by the premature explosion of a bomb) by extricating him from the sinking wreck of the machine after both had fallen some 150 feet into the sea".

His service document also carries the manuscript note,

"Awarded Albert Medal (2nd Class) for saving life of pilot after aeroplane accident".

Hendry was the first member of the RNAS to receive the Albert Medal but the award, along with a few others to naval ratings, was never published in the London Gazette, so he is missing from some published lists of recipients and his heroism and his story have almost been forgotten.

He married Florence Mary Greenacre in Yarmouth in late 1915, remaining there until May 1916 when he was posted to HMS *Daedalus*, RNAS Cranwell. From Cranwell he went to Crystal Palace, and then to RNAS Grain in the spring of 1917. On 7 May 1917 he was promoted to Warrant Officer II before, in September 1917, being posted back to the front line, at RNAS Tresco in the Scilly Isles, part of the anti-submarine patrol station chain which had been much extended since his early days at Yarmouth. When the Royal Air Force was formed in April 1918, James Hendry was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. He flew with either 350 or 351 Flight and it may be that as a very experienced observer, now 31 years old, he was teamed up with less experienced pilots. One of these was 19-year-old Lt Cyril Wentworth Capes, who had joined the RNAS straight from Dulwich College in March 1917.

Capes was taught to fly at the RNAS Training School at Vendôme in France before completing his basic training at Cranwell. He did the seaplane course at Lee on Solent and the "Large America" course at Felixstowe. On completion of his extended training, Capes was sent to RNAS Cattewater in Plymouth, the HQ station for the far south west. From here he was allocated to Tresco in January 1918. On the formation of the RAF, he became Lieutenant Capes. On 6 July 1918 Capes and Hendry took off from Tresco in Short 184 N2963 on a routine anti-submarine patrol. They never returned. In an ironic and tragic mirroring of the crash which brought about Hendry's Albert Medal, it seems that the aircraft crash landed after either an engine failure or running out of fuel, and the pilot went down with the aircraft. Hendry was thrown out but was either injured or drowned. Capes is listed as No Known Grave and is remembered on the Hollybrook Memorial in Southampton. Hendry's body was washed ashore at Audierne on the coast of Brittany two weeks later, and he was buried in Guilvinec Communal Cemetery, about 50 km south of Brest. His is the only CWGC-tended grave in that cemetery and so it is not regularly visited by WW1 tourists. That has undoubtedly contributed to Hendry's anonymity.

Night Fright

By Colin Haigh

The author piloting his Wasp. © Colin Haigh

Towards the end 1969 I was the Flight Commander of a Wasp Flight based in an Anti-submarine frigate, HMS *Yarmouth*.

We were attached to the Far East Fleet and exercising in the South China Sea, east of Malaysia. The standing requirement was to fly at least 15 hours a month, five of which to be at night. The ship's programme sometimes made this difficult to achieve so I planned an hour's flight practising radar controlled weapon drops from the ship. This was the Wasp's primary role, dropping a homing torpedo on a submarine detected by another source, so we practised a lot. The ship's radar was controlled by the Helicopter Control Officer (HCO) via UHF radio link, which was obviously vital. Not least for getting back to the ship, and radar controlled approaches in bad weather. The radio link was so vital the Wasp had two radios, one main, and one emergency with only two frequencies, one of which was the international distress frequency 243.0. We always checked this with the ship before takeoff.

On this particular night the weather was rather challenging, solid cloud cover at 1000 feet, absolutely flat calm with the sea like a black mirror. There was no horizon, it was absolutely impossible to tell up from down, flight solidly on instruments from take off to landing.

The standard operating height for the Wasp was 400 feet, which we accepted at the time, but in retrospect fills me with horror. It had a small highly loaded rotor, so the rate of descent in autorotation was very fast. In the event of engine failure one had to very rapidly enter autorotation, with only a few seconds before you hit the sea, in which time you had to flare and turn into wind, at night of course all on instruments! Engine failure was a distinct possibility; of the 96 Wasps built, 24 were lost, many of them with engine failure.

So having checked the radios with the HCO (a particular friend of mine) I launched off into the darkness, all by myself. I was used to flying at night but this absolute blackness was quite disorientating. I was directed towards the first target, some miles away. I

overflew the target, a small native fishing vessel, and then another. After a while I had had no further directions, when I called there was no reply. With islands in the area with mountains up to 3400 feet, and my not see anything at all, I was starting to get worried. One of them, Pulau Tioman, is now an exotic holiday resort but at the time was a near deserted tropical island which had been used in the film South Pacific. As the ship's radar was my only way of knowing where these were I was rather poorly placed at 400 feet.

If in doubt climb to safe altitude, so I shot up through the cloud to 4000 feet. This should also have increased my chances of contacting the ship, but still no reply to my increasingly frantic calls. I changed to the standby radio in case the problem was at my end, but still no joy. The possibility now emerged of the ship having a radio failure, which should never happen as it had several UHF radios. The contingency procedure for dealing with it was the HCO had to leg it from the Ops room to the Bridge roof carrying a portable battery powered radio, preset to the Guard frequency. Still I had no contact even on Guard. By this time I was getting a bit short of fuel. The Wasp had a limited endurance of about 1 hour 20 minutes, and I had been airborne for about 40 minutes. I turned back towards where I thought the ship might be. Like most Wasp pilots I had been trying to keep a mental plot of my and the ship's position, but by now it had become hopelessly confused.

By now I was beginning to get really worried. I had no land diversion, there was no national emergency frequencies to help, as in the UK, and I had absolutely no idea where the ship was. However, by a fortunate coincidence, another RN frigate, HMS *Galatea*, had also been exercising with its Wasp, some miles to the south of us and had heard my calls on Guard, just before they finished their own flying. At last, a friendly voice! I explained the problem, and started to home towards them, using the very basic UHF homing device on the Wasp. Meanwhile they were attempting to contact my ship and were rapidly stowing their Wasp so I could land and refuel. They eventually saw my transponder and cleared me back down to 400 feet. After a radar approach I landed on *Galatea* and refuelled. I was never so grateful to see those few little deck lights in the pitch black! After some words of encouragement from my fellow Flight Commander on *Galatea* (another good mate) and the confirmation of my ship's position, I took off and made my way back, about 30 miles to meet my ship thundering towards me.

So what had happened? Shortly after I got airborne the ship had suffered a total electrical failure, another of these occurrences which should never happen, and took quite a while to get things back on line, including the radios and radar. Meanwhile I had cheerfully disappeared over the horizon. And the standby portable? Of course it only had a short range. When we had previously used it I had been close to the ship.

One good thing came out of it, the Weapons Electrical officer bought me a beer once I got back !

Sea Change in the Pacific

By Chris Penney

Pacific power projection. A joint US Australian naval exercise as F/A-18 Super Hornets an EC-2 Hawkeyes and C-2 fly overhead. © RAN

In 2017 the Royal Navy shadowed foreign warships transiting the English Channel as they headed for a Russian port on the Baltic.

A routine task, you might think, except the foreign warships were Chinese. Communist China's Navy is now officially the world's largest, having overtaken the US Navy by number of hulls. The US Navy remains the foremost naval power, at least for the moment, but the global expansion of China's navy will drive a decade of change for navies of the UK/USA security alliance, sometimes known as "Five Eyes", comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and USA. China's increasing blue-water naval footprint means the Pacific will feature heavily in future Royal Navy (RN) plans. In showing the white ensign east of Suez with HMS *Queen Elizabeth* in 2021, the RN re-visits familiar territory. The birth of the communist nation in 1949 involved a civil war in which the sloop HMS *Amethyst* was held hostage, while the UK retained a large naval presence based on Singapore until the mid1970s.

Chinese power projection means that Australia must give the wider Indo-Pacific region increasing attention. Several Royal Australian Navy (RAN) procurement programmes aim to transform the force. Chief amongst them is the purchase of the UK-designed Type 26 anti-submarine frigate, which along with the type's introduction by the Royal Navy will significantly increase alliance interoperability. Since the Second World War, four of the alliance navies have operated aircraft carriers, although currently only the US Navy and RN can operate true fixed wing types. The RAN has recently introduced two *Canberra* class 27,000-ton flat-top amphibious assault ships (LHD) which feature bow ski-jumps. Both could operate the V-22 Osprey VTOL tiltrotor if required and with conversion could take the F-35B STOVL fighter, although the RAAF has procured the F35A conventional take-off version of the aircraft. The RAN is increasing co-operation with the US Marine Corps, who already have a base at Darwin, Northern Territory and who operate both aircraft types.

Naval cooperation between UK and Australia has always been strong and ties between the two Commonwealth partners will only strengthen with the deployment of our aircraft carriers. The Royal Canadian Navy is buying the Type 26 as well, meaning it becomes the first naval platform shared by all three countries since the *Colossus* class light fleet carrier. If history is a guide New Zealand will look to acquire the Type 26 as well, thereby ensuring continued hull commonality with the RAN.

Anti-submarine warfare (ASW) will play an ever-increasing role for the alliance navies in the coming years, as regional powers react to China's growing fleet of over 60 submarines. Australia's Fleet Air Arm remains orientated towards acquiring and operating US-designed helicopter types already in US service. The principal type used is the anti-submarine (ASW) MH-60 Seahawk. Also supporting Australia's developing fleet is the RAAF's modern P-8 Poseidon ASW jet. This brings ASW commonality with US Navy and RAF P-8 fleets and in future the RNZAF who have it on order. Canada is sure to become a future P-8 operator, thereby making the aircraft the first maritime patrol platform shared by all five nations since the Catalina flying boat.

The US Navy still deploys the world's largest naval air force, comprising nine air wings operating from ten *Nimitz* class nuclear-powered CVN super-carriers. Last year saw the introduction of the first of five planned 100,000-ton *Ford* class carriers, which will begin

A Chinese Jiangkai II frigate and embarked Haitun helicopter. Fifty of the class are planned. © RAN

replacing the *Nimitz* class. Technological advances make the new class more self-sufficient, requiring fewer crew. They can also accommodate 15 more aircraft compared to the *Nimitz* design, which dates from the 1960s. Each CVN is home to over 60 aircraft with the F/A-18 Super Hornet being the attack aircraft of choice since 1999. That will begin to change as the naval F-35C carrier version of the stealth fighter bomber is introduced across the fleet. Each carrier air wing is expected to comprise the F-35C as a third of its future strike force and the new type will make its operational debut in a Pacific-based carrier this year.

The US Navy's forward deployed Pacific 7th Fleet carrier base is Yokosuka near Tokyo, Japan. From here the assigned CVN and her embarked air wing cover a vast 48 million square mile sea patrol area that stretches from the International Date Line across to western India. Due to the changing geopolitical situation the US Navy also plans to stand up the 1st Fleet, which last sailed in 1973, specifically to cover the Indian Ocean. This reflects the Chinese Navy's ascendancy in the area, which accesses support facilities in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and at Djibouti. While the US Navy utilises Singapore, the nearest suitable Five Eyes dockyard for the new US fleet will be Fremantle, Western Australia. Here the RAN has its west fleet HQ although the nearest runway for stateside resupply – always a US requirement – is Perth Airport. This would be a throwback to the Second World War when US, British and Dutch submarines used Fremantle as a depot.

The other element of US naval power projection in the Pacific is the US Marine Corps, which operates the world's second most powerful

Japan-based Landing Helicopter Assault USS *America*/LHA-6 with USMC MV-22 Ospreys and F-35Bs aboard. © US Navy

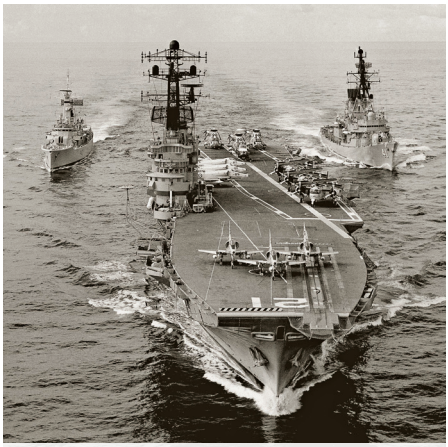
sea-based aviation force after the US Navy. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing on Japan's Okinawa Island controls USMC Pacific air operations. From Sasebo, Japan, a 40,000-ton LHD or 44,000-ton LHA amphibious assault carrier sails as the flagship of a 7th Fleet expeditionary strike group. It is home to 30 predominately USMC transport aircraft that support US marines getting and staying ashore. The *America* class LHAs being introduced operate the Marine Corps new STOVL F-35B, while the legacy LHDs are being converted to accommodate it. The supersonic F-35B replaces the close air support AV-8B Harrier in USMC service, with six assigned per assault carrier.

A recent fire aboard one of the USN's eight LHDs while under refit means it is uneconomic to repair. The accidental loss of such an important flattop hull comes at the worst possible time for the US as it looks to surge carrier operations in the Indo-Pacific as part of a more assertive force posture. Here the Royal Navy could come to the rescue. The First Sea Lord has already indicated that one of the two *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers may be forward deployed to the Pacific.

Port facilities for these ships are already being developed in Oman on the shores of the Indian Ocean, while Australia would readily host a RN carrier. The composition of the carrier's air group will influence its distant basing. As HMS *Queen Elizabeth* sets course for the Pacific in late May, she will have a joint UK US F-35B Lightning force aboard, comprising RAF/FAA and US Marine Corps jets. This would make Yokosuka, Japan the port of choice.

The current naval situation in the Indo-Pacific region is not unlike the 1930s. That decade saw the rise of the Japan's Navy to challenge the US. For the navies of the Five Eyes alliance the next decade will be about ensuring there is no repeat of December 1941 scenarios with China.

Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon aircraft flies above Landing Helicopter Dock HMAS *Canberra* off the Western Australia coast during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2019. © RAN



The former *Majestic* class light fleet carrier HMAS *Melbourne* was sold to China for scrap. She was studied for development of a future Chinese carrier force.

‘Nihil Obstat’

Summarised by Robert Heath

An observer standing in the cockpit of his Fairey Swordfish aircraft passes a piece of equipment to another Fleet Air Arm flyer. © IWM

Nihil Obstat **is the motto of 825 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), which our speaker, Tudor Rees, quoted as ‘Nothing Stops Us’, or as the Catholic Church might put it ‘Nothing Hinders’ or ‘Nothing Stands in the Way’.**

Whichever slant you put on it, the message is clear. Bearing in mind that 825 Squadron was throwing itself against a well-equipped and ruthless enemy, and of course nature itself in the raw Atlantic, its open cockpit Fairey Swordfish biplanes conjure an astonishing picture. But they were most successful and very rightly celebrated. Courage and a rather decent sheepskin suit and helmet were paramount. No room for pampered ‘snowflakes’ in that scenario.

This talk was the second presented to members via Zoom on our home computers or ‘phones, and I am much impressed with just how good and absorbing they are. We were treated to the full graphic slide show and an excellent video while Tudor Rees occupied a corner of the screen to give us a ‘voice over’ of the story behind it.

The story today concerned Lt David Rees RNVR, the father of Tudor Rees, our speaker. In the 1940s Tudor informed us that there was no direct recruitment for Fleet Air Arm aircrew, so David Rees completed his School Certificate, and this enabled him to apply for a commission in the RN as an Observer - his first choice. Tudor pointed out that this role was always reserved for commissioned officers, apart from a couple of rare exceptions. Having passed all the initial tests David soon found himself, late in 1941, striding through the gates of HMS *St Vincent* in Gosport to learn basic seamanship and how to behave like a sailor. Training started on day 1 and once the basics were over the pace quickened and became intense when the actual Observer's Courses started. Subjects included weapons, navigation, wireless and signals and finally, many months later, flying. At this later stage, part of the day was spent in ground work doing theoretical study on all the numerous elements including the stars, wind, how to find a moving ship, etc. The other part of the day was spent in applying everything learnt in real airborne situations.

An Observer needed to be well equipped with the tools of his trade and these were numerous, cumbersome, but most definitely essential. They would include: a Bigsworth Board for plotting; a lamp for night work; an astro-compass for star readings; a magnetic compass; navigation computers (rather like circular slide rules, not electronic); and several other bits and pieces. On-board the Swordfish itself, the Observer also handled the Air-to-Surface Vessel (ASV) radar, which was not too effective in its early days, but improved significantly later in the war. Sitting in the back of an open cockpit with all this kit it required something of a miracle to get the job done. Remember also that everything in those days was done manually, with achingly numb hands from the cold wind.

Eventually, in late 1942, David Rees was posted to HMS *Landrail* at Macrihanish to join 766 NAS for Naval Operational Training. It was here that crews 'crewed-up' with a pilot and Telegraphist Air Gunner (TAG). Once crewed-up, they always trained and worked together as a team on all aspects, resulting in very strong bonds being formed. By January 1943, David and the crew received their posting to 825 NAS aboard HMS *Furious* where training continued at a high tempo, including dropping torpedoes at between 100 and 150 feet, more practice on the ASV radar and more practice in using binoculars with some degree of success - very difficult as you can imagine. The Air Wing of *Furious* comprised nine Swordfish from 825 squadron, nine Fairey Albacores from 822 and nine Seafires from 801 Squadron. By March 1943, HMS *Furious* formed part of the Home Fleet and by then had a well-seasoned crew. Furious was involved in numerous prominent sorties including the Norwegian campaign and later Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily. Throughout these operations, 825's Swordfish carried out anti-submarine sweeps in pairs, searching

for the tell-tale wake of a periscope, small as it was, or at the very least keeping the U-boats submerged and out of range. At a depth of 20 ft a submarine is generally invisible, hence non-stop training and practice attacks to keep the crews at a high state of readiness. At one point, storms off Iceland caused three aircraft to break loose in the hangar and to wreck themselves before being secured. Not long after, David Rees was on an anti-submarine patrol with another Swordfish when at the end of the patrol, the two aircraft returned to intercept 'mother' (*Furious*) at the pre-briefed location. To their great dismay, it was apparent that they had both been given 'duff' information at their briefing. *Furious* was nowhere to be seen. Both aircraft continued to search and just when the fuel was about to expire, success, they found the ship, but the weary pilot mis-judged the landing and the aircraft tipped over the side of the deck into the sea. The crew managed to scramble aboard the dinghy and then had to wait a few hours before they were picked up by the destroyer HMS *Troubridge*. The other Swordfish suffered a similar fate and also crashed, with the crew being rescued in due course. Following a rest David was soon back on operations, this time with a new pilot, because his previous pilot was still recovering from injuries sustained in the crash.

Intense training continued, including a spell at HMS *Nightjar* at Inskip, Lancashire, to familiarise themselves with new weapons, including rocket projectiles. U-boats had become very heavily armed with batteries of 37mm and 20mm cannon to enable them to remain on the surface and fight off attacking aircraft. This was a formidable retaliation and called for an equally formidable response. The Swordfish were now equipped with four rails under each wing to carry 25lb armour piercing rockets. The rockets were fired in pairs at an angle of around 20°, which allowed the pilot to follow their trajectory, then adjust his aim for the following pair. The effect was said to be like receiving a warship's broadside and was truly destructive. By 1943 most aircraft were also equipped with ASV radar, which transformed the effectiveness of anti-submarine patrols. Around this time, 825 Squadron pioneered flying night sorties in their Swordfish. At this point we were shown a very lively video showing a Dutch Swordfish three-aircraft flight taking off from and then landing back on a Dutch operated escort carrier. Very gripping stuff putting you right in the driving seat. It was only three minutes long, but packed with action, I loved it.

In August 1943, six Sea Hurricanes joined 825 Squadron, indicating that operations from an Escort Carrier were imminent. Escort Carriers were generally built in the USA and arrived complete with luxuries previously unknown to British sailors. Hopes were high and sure enough the ship, HMS *Vindex*, was brand-new as an aircraft carrier. That was good news. Not quite such good news was that it had been converted from a merchant hull in Swan Hunter's yard on Tyneside and had

none of the luxuries! A 'shake down' period followed, allowing the ship and air crews to familiarise themselves before becoming operational again. Do remember that the average age of aircrew at this time was in the region of 19 to 20 years and they carried so much responsibility.

On 14 January 1944, Lt David Rees experienced his second ditching, once again over the side of the ship. This time he was quickly picked up, returned to the ship and back on operations. Even for these fit young men immersion in the cold sea quickly sapped their strength and they had to be assisted in the rescue. On top of this there was a great deal of tension and frustration due to faulty switches causing weapons failures. It was most galling to risk your neck in an attack and then to have the weapon fail.

As if that was not frustrating enough, David then suffered his third crash into the sea. On this occasion his Swordfish and the one following it off the deck both had engine failure, later established as fuel contaminated with water. Both aircraft crews were picked up promptly by a MSL motor launch and subsequently transported to hospital. For David it was considered that three ditchings were enough and he was posted to 783 RNAS as an instructor. 783 Squadron operated a variety of aircraft including Lockheed Hudson, Avro Anson and Fairey Barracuda in the air signals roles. As you might have noticed, Lt David Rees had become a full-fledged member of the Goldfish Club with three awards in total. He was lucky to survive not only the crash on each occasion, but also the immersion in cold seas where body temperature soon drops below the critical 35° where losing your faculties is just the start of your problems.

In recognition of his father and the other warrior crews of Swordfish aircraft generally, Tudor Rees commissioned a vivid painting by renowned aviation artist Gareth Hector, showing a Swordfish on approach to its carrier - as shown in Jabberwock issue 102. It is a fitting and graphic tribute to these modest heroes who helped to conquer a powerful and unrelenting enemy. Thank you Tudor Rees for a very enjoyable and profusely illustrated talk. I like to think that *Nihil Obstat* can also be applied to the determination of the SOFFAAM backroom boys for facilitating these splendid talks via Zoom, despite the obstacles presented by the curse of Covid-19. Thank you all.

Lt David Rees RNVR. © Tudor Rees

Draken Europe UK

By Bill Preece, Head of Electronic Warfare Operations
February 2021 Zoom Talk summarised by Robert Heath

Dassault Falcon 20. © Draken Europe

Alan (later Sir Alan) Cobham was a significant figure in promoting air transport as a practical concept.

He founded Flight Refuelling Limited in 1934 and after the war his company grew into Cobham Ltd, based in Wimborne, a well-known supplier providing a wide range of aviation and defence related activities world-wide. As a result of Cobham's early work, probe and drogue refuelling is now a routine event for military aircraft.

Our speaker, Bill Preece, had a career of many years in the RAF as a fast-jet Electronics Warfare Operator; followed by career development with Leonardo; before joining Cobham five years ago. In 2019, Cobham was sold to a Private Venture company who split it into five viable operations, one of which was Aviation Services. The operation was acquired by Draken Inc. based in the USA and renamed Draken Europe. It is based mainly at Hurn Airport, Bournemouth and in Teesside, County Durham. Draken provides operational readiness training, aircraft engineering and maintenance, search and rescue and surveillance operations to military and government customers world-wide. In Europe, Draken operates 15 Falcon 20 small jets, equipped with the latest electronic warfare systems designed to replicate the radars and other emitters carried by enemy forces. Its primary task is to provide electronic warfare training to UK armed forces, but the company also provides training to SHAPE and NATO forces, deploying their aircraft to bases in Europe as required.

As an example of naval tasking, Bill described how the Falcon aircraft simulates a missile attack on a warship equipped with sophisticated electronic systems for the detection and repulse of enemy activity. The Falcon targets the warship using its equipment to jam the ship's radars as if to attack. A Hawk trainer aircraft flies in formation with the Falcon and at the appropriate time when the Falcon "fires" its missile at the ship, the Hawk streaks ahead to represent a missile. In the warship,

the operators are trying to see through the 'fog' of jamming devices. These exercises are typically undertaken in the seas around the south of England, whereas from Teesside the exercises are generally held in conjunction with the RAF in their Typhoon, Tornado and now F35 fighters. These conduct various simulated aerial situations, including Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) against Russian aircraft, although lately the Russians are providing an increasing number of live alerts themselves close to our airspace borders.

It is sobering to be told that the Falcons are up to 50 years old, but still doing a sterling job. Draken also operates a single piston-engined DA42 aircraft, which carries the MX15 camera used on drones. Drones are simulated because military drones are banned from flights over the UK. Draken is working closely with the MoD on planning beyond 2030 for the Next Generation Operational Training. It is possible to follow some of these training exercises, if you are aware, by downloading free apps such as 'freedar.uk' or Flightradar 24. There you can watch military aircraft on their sorties and, if you know how to spot them, the Falcons and the DA42.

Thank you, Bill Preece, for an enlightening evening enjoyed again by another well attended audience.

Sextant to SatNav

Or 45 years in aviation - with a fear of heights by Peter Griffiths March 2021 Zoom Talk summarised by Robert Heath

Peter up-side-down in a Spitfire.

For Peter, the prospect of routine working in an office did not sparkle, so he replied to a newspaper advertisement for applicants to be trained as commercial pilots.

He was invited to visit the College of Air Training at Hamble in Hampshire. The College trained pilots for the state-owned airlines, BEA and BOAC. At Hamble, Peter was tested and given a familiarisation flight in a Chipmunk. While awaiting the result, he also applied to join the RAF and attended

a selection board at Biggin Hill. After more testing, Peter was offered an RAF commission. It was not a guarantee that he would spend his life flying though, so before answering, he contacted an astonished Hamble to ask if he was going to be accepted, to which they quickly answered 'Yes'. Training started at Scone in Scotland, flying Cessna 150 trainers, before advancing to the twin-engine Cessna 310.

18 months later and Peter successfully completed the training and obtained his Commercial Pilot's Licence (CPL) and Instrument Rating, with 230 hours flying time under his belt.

He joined BOAC as a second Pilot in their Boeing 707-436 airliner fleet. Life in the commercial cockpit in the 1960s was not that enjoyable. Most aircraft captains joined BOAC as a Captain straight from the RAF. They rarely spoke to any crew member and even more rarely allowed the second pilots to take-off or land the aircraft. The flights could be anything from a one-day return flight to the USA to a 16-day return journey to Australia via the Middle East and India. After a couple of years in the 707, Peter transferred to the VC10, which he liked immensely. As a Second Officer, he spent most of his flying hours taking sights through the 'Periscope Sextant', which popped out of the roof, shooting stars and taking three plots every hour.

After seven years with BOAC, Peter was still second from bottom of the seniority list. He moved to Cathay Pacific, based in Hong Kong, where he remained for the next 29 years, rising to fleet management and similar senior roles. The airline had started with two second-hand DC3 Dakotas but growth was rapid and by the time Peter joined the fleet included the Boeing 707 and the Lockheed L1011 TriStar. He was soon promoted to captain and flew the 400-seat Boeing 747-400 series.

Peter treated us to incredible yarns and film of the landing approach at Kai Tak. You fly very low straight towards the mountain with the city spread out at its base aiming for the giant checkerboard painted on the side of the mountain. At what appears to be almost too late, you turn very sharp right and line up on final approach to the runway. You have to trust that the pilot knows what he is doing and has a desire to walk away from the aircraft at the end of the day. The aircraft then has a narrow single track runway ahead of it, extending for most of its length out into the open sea.

The Far East is prone to short notice typhoons and Peter assured us that white knuckles and fingers locked rigid onto the control column were to be expected. If you have not experienced it, hard luck. They have built a new airport, Chek Lap Kok, on a nearby man-made island, which is incredible in itself. It took only six years to build. Including the island, it came in under budget (£14bn) and ahead of time.

For those of you not at the Zoom talk you missed a very humorous treat. Do not be shy, if you have a computer or an internet accessible mobile 'phone, do join the next talk. Thank you, Peter Griffiths, for an interesting and fun talk. We look forward to part two in due course.

RFA *Argus* in the Caribbean

From Navy News

845 Naval Air Squadron Merlin HC4. © RN

It's been an epic but it's now mission accomplished for RFA *Argus* in the Caribbean.

Argus has been in the Caribbean since April 2020 for hurricane season and towards the end of her deployment arrived off the coast of Honduras in the wake of Hurricane Eta.

It wasn't sure how long the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship would hang around Central America for, but in the end *Argus*, after pausing while Hurricane Iota raged and swept through the region, stayed on in Honduras.

Her Commando Merlin helicopters from 845 Naval Air Squadron flew in aid to isolated communities in the north east of the country. In all, 101 different bags of aid, weighing a collective 24 tonnes – were dropped to aid stations during a 48-hour mission to the remote region, which has extensive pine savannas, swamps, and rainforest, making it very difficult to access by road.

The aid drops carried tonnes of food, fresh water and shelters to displaced Hondurans, who had been left with out homes and the basics to survive after devastating flooding and landslides leaving a fractured infrastructure.

Lieutenant George Day, a pilot of a Royal Navy Commando Merlin HC4 helicopter from 845 Naval Air Squadron, said: "UK aid and relief stores are held on *Argus* and we have been flying them from ship to shore.

"The stores are loaded into 500kg bags which are carried in pairs beneath the aircraft. We hover over the deck and our load team hook them on for us to carry away. Moving stores in this way is the Commando Merlin's bread and butter and it is fantastic to use our skills to help those in need."

Once her Honduras mission was complete, *Argus* began her journey home, via Antigua and Barbuda to drop off unused aid stores.

As well as working with patrol ship HMS *Medway*, *Argus* worked with French, American and Dutch allies, in a jam-packed deployment, which saw her fly the flag with pride.

This article first appeared in Navy News, January 2021 and is reproduced here by kind permission of the editor.

736 Naval Air Squadron to disband

By Richard Macauley

As the Royal Navy's maritime aggressor squadron, the pilots of 736 Naval Air Squadron provide airborne threat simulations that allow for realistic training at sea.

So says the RN website about this fast jet squadron based at RNAS Culdrose. Council Member Chris Adams confirmed what was rumoured that the Royal Navy announced the Squadron will disband on 30 September 2021.

In our February talk, Bill Preece told us of the close association Draken Europe (formally Cobham) has with 736, as together, as well as separately, they are a formidable force.

The RN website goes on to describe the squadrons role: Equipped with Hawk T1 twin-seat fast jet aircraft, 736 Naval Air Squadron's primary role is to provide simulated ship attacks for Royal Navy and NATO units in the run-up to deployment. The maritime specialists use their jets to replicate the threats from enemy fighter aircraft and high-speed sea-skimming missiles.

736 also fly missions for students at the Royal Navy School of Fighter Control. Aerial battles between friendly and enemy jets are set up for the students to contend with, providing the live element of their training syllabus.

As we are preparing this edition to go to print, a 736 Squadron aircraft crashed close to Helston on 25 March. Fortunately the crew survived their ejection and were taken to hospital for obligatory tests. Thankfully, no serious injuries were reported by the press.

100 Squadron RAF, based at RAF Leeming will take up the adversary role immediately on 736's disbandment. Their squadron badge is appropriately a Skull and Crossbones and their radio call sign is 'Pirate', so hopefully bodes well for RN aggressor training in the future.

736 Naval Air Squadron Hawk T1. © MoD

100 Sqn RAF Hawk T1. © Richard Macauley

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United Kingdom
Carrier Strike Group
Far East deployment Spring 2021

HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH

HMS DIAMOND

HMS DEFENDER

HMS KENT

HMS RICHMOND

RFA TIDESPRING

RFA FORT VICTORIA

USS THE SULLIVANS

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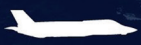
42 CDO RM

815 NAS

845 NAS

820 NAS



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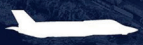

VMFA-211

The top panel shows the intended constituent ships, aircraft and units of the CSG, as posted in March 2021.

Other images show aircraft types of her Air Wing while the photo directly above is of her alongside the Glen Douglas Defence Munitions Depot jetty at Glen Mallan on Loch Long.

Other nations are expected to contribute ships to the CSG for exercise purposes as she travels to the Far East and while working in the South China and other seas later in 2021.