

JABBERWOCK 104



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

FLEET AIR ARM
MUSEUM

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

**August
2021**



IN THIS ISSUE

The Forgotten Aircraft Carrier • Michael Sullivan Keogh and his Albert Medal • Charlton Horethorne: (HMS Heron II) • Wyverns in combat at Suez • Members Day • Sea Venom in a Crisis • FAAM and the 'father and son connection' • A life on The Ocean Wave • Talks and Book reviews.

THE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM



The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum



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Rear Admiral A R Rawbone CB, AFC, RN
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shalefan@btinternet.com

VICE CHAIRMAN

Ivan Childs
ivan.childs@tiscali.co.uk

TREASURER

Martin Turner
martinturner111@yahoo.co.uk

VISITS & EVENTS ORGANISER

Rosanne Crowther
T: 01935 822143
rosannecrowther678@btinternet.com

SECRETARY

Malcolm Smith
smalcolm355@outlook.com

TALKS COMMITTEE

Richard Macauley
richard.macauley1@btinternet.com
T: 01278 683300 M: 07768562976

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Simon Websper
22 Kings Yard,
Bishops Lydeard,
Taunton, TA4 3LE.
M: 07527 707204 T: 01823 433448
soffaam.mem@gmail.com

Gil Johnston

flyingflea@live.com.au

Tim Smith

timsmith555@hotmail.co.uk

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.

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

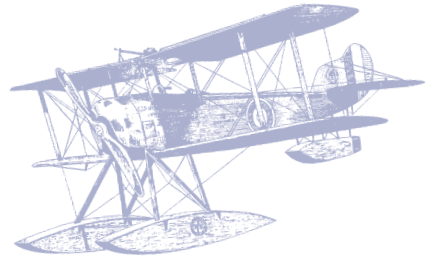
RNAS Yeovilton,
Somerset BA22 8HT
Telephone: 01935 840565

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Short 166



Sea Venom



Westland Wyvern



A life on the ocean wave

CONTACT THE SOCIETY

SOFFAAM email:
soffaam.mem@gmail.com

SOFFAAM website:
www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk



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Visit us on Instagram
 Fleet Air Arm Friends

EDITOR

Malcolm Smith
 T: 01935 478304 M: 07765 950806
smalcolm355@outlook.com

DESIGN AND ARTWORK:

Richard Macauley

PRINTED BY:

Acanthus Press
 21 Ryelands Business Park
 Bagley Road, Wellington
 Somerset, TA21 9PZ

COVER PHOTO

Photo by Ian Kirk

The unmistakable contra-rotating propellers of VR137 Westland Wyvern TF1 pre-production aircraft in the Fleet Air Arm Museum. This R-R Eagle powered aircraft never flew and is the only remaining example of a Wyvern left in the world today. See our article 'Wyverns in combat at Suez' in this edition.

Editorial

For the first time since the lockdown started, your Council was able to meet in person at the Podimore Inn in June.

We shared a convivial lunch and conducted the Council Meeting. Brief notes of the discussions appear in this issue. Although not all Council members could attend, we heard reports from Council officers and the Chairman commented that we had managed to keep Society activities going, even on a reduced basis. This particularly applied to the monthly Zoom talks, which consistently attracted sizeable audiences.

The Museum's General Manager, Marc Farrance, confirmed that the Museum re-opened on 19 May, albeit with restricted opening hours. He received positive feedback from visitors and commented that access to Concorde was by far the main element of feedback received. He added that the SoFFAAM booking portal has now re-opened to allow entry to Friends.

In this issue, we tell of the "forgotten aircraft carrier" - the seaplane-carrying HMS *Ark Royal* of 1915 vintage. If not perhaps entirely forgotten, she represented the early efforts by the RN to find ways of deploying air power, ways that led to the first true fixed-wing carrier, HMS *Argus*, in 1918. Other contributions include two stories of

1950s vintage aircraft, the *Sea Venom* and the *Wyvern*. The latter had a brief accident-prone career, but the *Sea Venom* was more successful. Both types played their part in the inglorious 1956 assault on the Suez Canal.

We also carry a letter from John Fay, a veteran of wartime service in HMS *Victorious*, including time in Arctic convoys and in Operation Pedestal in 1942. It is a great pleasure to hear from members of John's vintage and indeed from any of our members. We often say that it is your contributions that give our magazine its unique appeal.

Readers of *Jabberwock* who have appreciated the many sketches of aircraft and aviation vessels, provided by long-term member Jim Humberstone, will be pleased to hear that we are planning to gather his artwork into a softback publication. We hope that this will become available later in the year, possibly in time to catch the Christmas present-giving season!

Finally, we hope that the relaxation of lockdown restrictions will allow all our members to return to a more settled lifestyle.



Malcolm

Council snippets

From the June 2021 Council Meeting

The Chairman welcomed Council members to the first face-to-face meeting for many months.

The Society had emerged from the Covid crisis in good form, he said, and the talks programme had continued to attract sizeable audiences.

The General Manager confirmed that the Museum had opened on 19 May with revised opening hours. He aimed to maintain public confidence in the ability to provide a relatively safe space for visitors. Visitor numbers have gradually increased, and their feedback comments were generally positive. Feedback showed that they particularly liked access to Concorde. The Museum had recently acquired the *Ark Royal* (1914) bell and this is on display in Hall One, close to a model of the Short 184, an early seaplane that was carried by *Ark Royal*. Early planning is underway for the upgrade of the Carrier Experience in 2022. "It is an exciting time for the Museum," he said, "...an updated Carrier Experience will stand the Museum in good stead." The Museum can now take future bookings, including to additional areas like Cobham Hall.

The Society's monthly talks are continuing on Zoom pending future

decisions, although there are no plans for Society visits this year. The Council has started planning for the Falklands 40 event in April next year. Eminent senior officers from the conflict have provisionally agreed to speak at the event.

The Membership Secretary reported that new membership applications have significantly dried up, although upgrades to Life Membership were proving popular. The number of members switching to electronic Jabberwock has slowed, he said, also a substantial number of members have yet to make a Gift Aid declaration. "This could be worth a significant amount of income for the Society", he commented, adding that we are currently owed £127 from underpaid membership renewals following the fee uplift.

The Council hoped to hold the Grand Draw again this year, although there were several circumstances that made this a difficult event to plan. Another annual event held in previous years was the Christmas lunch. It seemed unlikely that this could be held in the Warneford Room as in previous years, so alternative locations would be investigated.

Letters to the editor



Dear Editor,

I'm hoping that someone may be able to identify the aircraft type above.

My father did his national service in the Fleet Air Arm 1946 to 1949 and we have this picture but no idea what the aircraft is.

I've attached another picture of my dad (Page 5 and ringed in yellow) and his class mates at HMS Gosling in 1946 in the hope you will publish that and see if anyone else in either picture can be recognised by a relative or even themselves.

His name was George Robert (Bob) Everitt from Oulton near Leeds.

Hopefully someone can help with the aircraft identity and it will be interesting to see if anyone is recognised in the group photo? Thank you.

Steve Everitt.

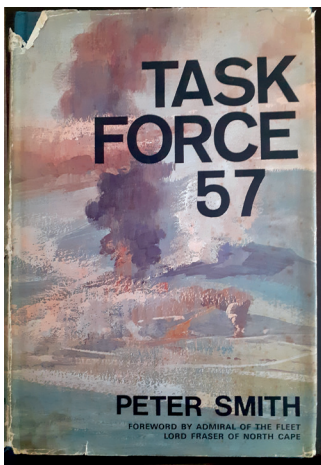
Dear Malcolm

In reply to the request by Mark Aloisio for books on FAA ops in the Pacific theatre in the latest issue of



Jabberwock, I can highly recommend the following. Task Force 57 by Peter Smith. It may be a job to hunt down a copy however as it's a very old book, but gives a vivid account of ops written soon after the events.

Ian A Pickering



Dear Malcolm,

Regarding Mark Aloisio's request in Jabberwock 103.

Books on the RN and FAA during the Pacific War are frankly legion, but *Heaven High, Ocean Deep* is new to me. I'll have to look for it.

From my book shelves I can recommend the following that are FAA specific.

Carrier Pilot by Norman Hanson, DSC (PSL, 1979). This is probably the best personal account available. Hanson was a Corsair pilot in 1831 Sqn of the 15th Naval Fighter Wing operating from HMS *Illustrious*.

A Formidable Hero by Stuart E Soward (CANAV Books, 1987). This is a biography of Lt R H 'Hammy' Gray, VC, DSC, RCNVR. Gray was another Corsair pilot, with 1841 Sqn, HMS *Formidable*. It is a Canadian publication but is well worth the search.

Wings Over The Sea by David R Foster, DSO, DSC* (Harrop Press, 1990), and *Avenger From The Sky* by Donald Judd, DSC (William Kimber, 1985). Both these books cover the careers of TSR pilots leading up to their part in the Pacific operations flying Avengers with 849 Sqn on HMS *Victorious*. They both had very similar experiences before joining 849 so either book would be a good read.

For a general RN history try *The Forgotten Fleet: The Story of the British Pacific Fleet, 1944-45* by John Winton (Michael Joseph, 1970). A very good overall account of the RN in the Pacific.

Best regards
Ian Burns



Dear Malcolm,

Mark Aloiso May be interested in my book: *Golden Wings and Navy Blue*, which is about my time as a pilot from 1940 to 1946. I was in HMS *Victorious* for two years during which time we took part in Arctic Convoys, Operation Pedestal and the first trip of the ship to the Pacific. After our return I joined the first helicopter training unit in Britain.

Best wishes
John Fay

Dear Malcolm,

I have been a member of the Society since 1986 and used to be a civilian instructor in the Air Cadets, In 1985 I was tasked to take care of Air Experience Flying (AEF) at St Mawgan. The annual ATC camp operated four de Havilland Chipmunks and was led by Lt Colin Caspar RN (retired) but appearing as an RAFVR(T) Flight Lieutenant. The Attacker aircraft at Yeovilton bears his name! Daily flying details usually incurred a bit of down time, so the cadets could look at the Nimrod MR2 aircraft stationed there. A Canberra TT18 was also parked ready to tow targets for a NATO fleet exercise due in September.

On the Monday, a Sea Devon arrived and the civilian aircrew alighted and one of the cadets said, "what language are they talking in?" It was surreal, they were speaking Welsh! They had flown from RAE Llanbedr airfield in Gwynedd. The Canberra pilot was one Owen Tudor, who was to fly the aircraft on the various missions, as required.

The ground crew allowed cadets to help with tasks, such as ensuring control locks were removed and the pitot tube covers. The cadets wanted to know why the pitot head was covered. They were told: to keep nosy insects out! They also witnessed engine start-ups and hand signals, as well as positioning the WW2 portable fire extinguisher. The cadets were fascinated to know how target towing was executed. Owen gave a talk on flying the aircraft, and described the 2000 yard cables to tow the targets. When flying in bad weather, it had been known to have to cut the wire! But a task to be avoided, as it involved an awful lot of paperwork. I believe the aircraft was WJ680, and now exhibited at Tomara Aviation Museum in New Zealand.

Colin Caspar was a very experienced pilot, who flew Seafires from escort carriers in the North Atlantic in WW2. I asked him: "How could you land a Scimitar on *Ark Royal*?" His reply was, "My dear boy, if you could land a Seafire (which was a pig to land in any case) on an escort carrier in gale, you could land

anything anywhere" Like the Spitfire it had a very narrow undercarriage. On the day I first met Colin, I mentioned the badge he wore on the sleeve of his flying overall. He said nobody had ever recognised it and I told him it was the BOAC insignia. He was quite impressed and asked me how I know, but that is another story! He was lucky to have been flying since his first flight 'on' a Grasshopper basic glider until this time. He was a most unforgettable character!

No doubt I have brought back visions to us older members, which I thought worth sharing?

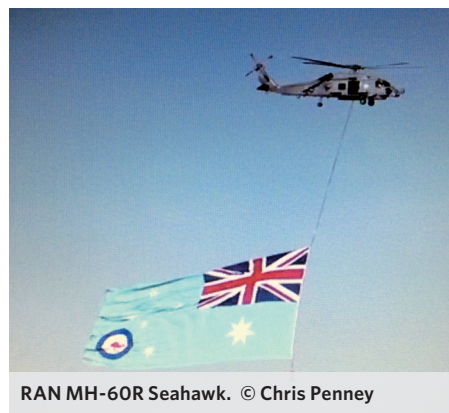
Eddie Ashill.
Membership no. 1120

PS. On Trafalgar Day, 1962 I attended a Waterguard staff meeting of 180 men and women at Heathrow, where it was discovered that there were SIX Swordfish aircrew present. During a lull in proceedings at 11.00 hours, the sun was over the yardarm and it was time for a waxer or two!

Dear Editor,

The Royal Australian Air Force celebrated its Centenary on 31 March, 2021 with a mass aerial parade over Canberra, Australia's capital. This screenshot from my Aussie sister shows the lead aircraft formation of a helicopter flying the RAAF Ensign. The chopper involved is none other than a RAN Fleet Air Arm MH-60R Seahawk!

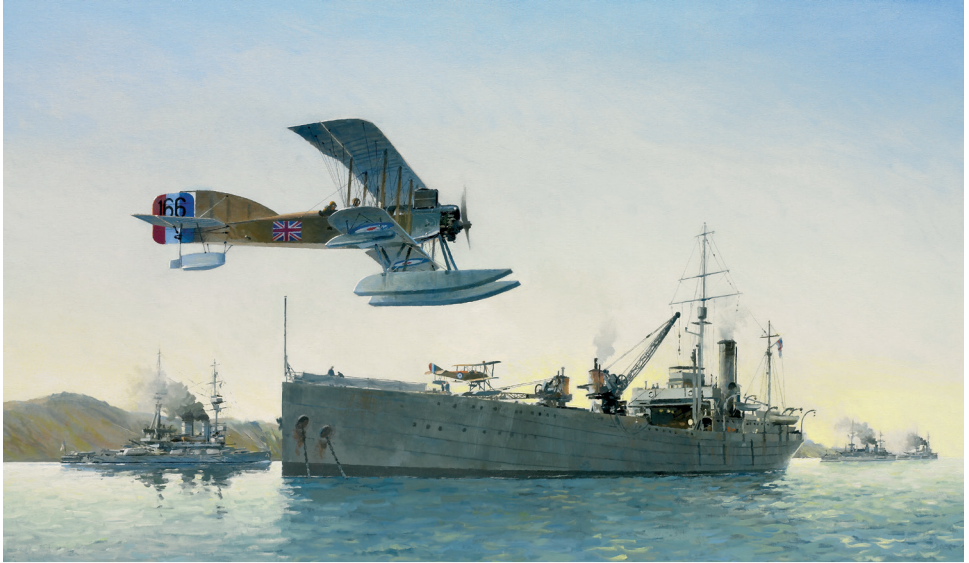
Kind regards,
Chris Penney (3474)



RAN MH-60R Seahawk. © Chris Penney

The Forgotten Aircraft Carrier

PART TWO: by Peter Cowlan



HMS *Ark Royal* Seaplane tender and Short 166 by aviation artist Roger H. Middlebrook GAvA. © Roger H. Middlebrook/Hansen Fine Art

Anchored off Tenedos on 17 February 1915, with an inexperienced crew, one machine still under repair, and another not yet fully assembled, *Ark Royal* began her work.

At 1.30pm Wight 172 was hoisted out for an experimental W/T flight. Ten minutes later Sopwith 807 also got her floats wet but this machine struggled to get off the water. Once airborne, it failed to attain sufficient height to complete any useful reconnaissance and, to add insult to injury, its propeller

burst when taxiing back to the ship; probably because of cumulative damage occasioned during its protracted take off attempts. March did not begin well for *Ark Royal*, with three of her aircrew suffering injuries in three separate incidents. One machine was hit 28 times by enemy fire, while one pilot was wounded by rifle fire. The crew of another Sopwith (808) were injured when the propeller of their machine splintered at 3,000 ft and the aircraft spiralled into the water.

In a communiqué dated 9 March, Robert Hamilton Clark-Hall, *Ark Royal's* Commanding Officer, stated "*The short choppy sea, which is prevalent here during the strong winds of winter, makes it exceedingly difficult for either the Sopwith Seaplanes or the Wights to get off the water*". In another report compiled on 11 April, Clark-Hall made clear the deficiencies of some aircraft. Wight172 "...has done very good work, but will not get off any, except very slight sea. All the Sopwith machines are ..., entirely dependent on a calm sea to enable them to get off."

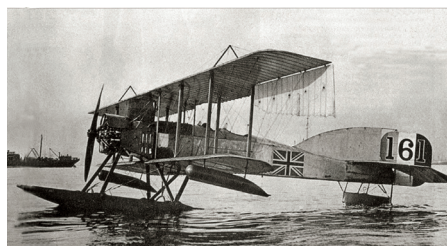
Short 136, employing a similar style of float to that fitted to the Sopwiths, but with a different attachment system, would prove far more capable of dealing with bigger seas and was described by Clark-Hall as the most valuable and the only rough weather machine in the ship. As an indication of the frustrations encountered by *Ark Royal's* pilots, of the 3 hours 13 minutes flown by Wight 173 during February 1915 (only four days were suitable for flying during the whole of February), a total of 1 hour 18 minutes was spent attempting to take off! Being the product of a shipbuilding company (J Samuel White & Co. Ltd)

it might have been believed that the Wight machines, equipped as they were with floats designed and constructed on boatbuilding principles, would have coped better with the conditions. Unfortunately, the machines delivered to *Ark Royal* had gained an extra 1,000lbs of weight over that of the previous model due to additional strengthening and the fitment of White's own design of wing folding mechanism. Compared to the relatively simple Short system, that fitted to the Wights was an over-engineered affair and was removed at the first opportunity.

The most significant modification to the Wight machines saw the twin radiators re-located from their original location close to the engine to a more efficient position forward of the wings, flanking the nacelle. More importantly, the tops of the radiators were raised well above engine level, and an expansion tank positioned on the upper surface of the wing. *Ark Royal's* final piece of misfortune during her employment in the Dardanelles campaign was probably occasioned by a series of reconnaissance flights, during which her observers were tasked with locating enemy mines in the straits. Over the



Wight Type A.1 Improved Navyplane

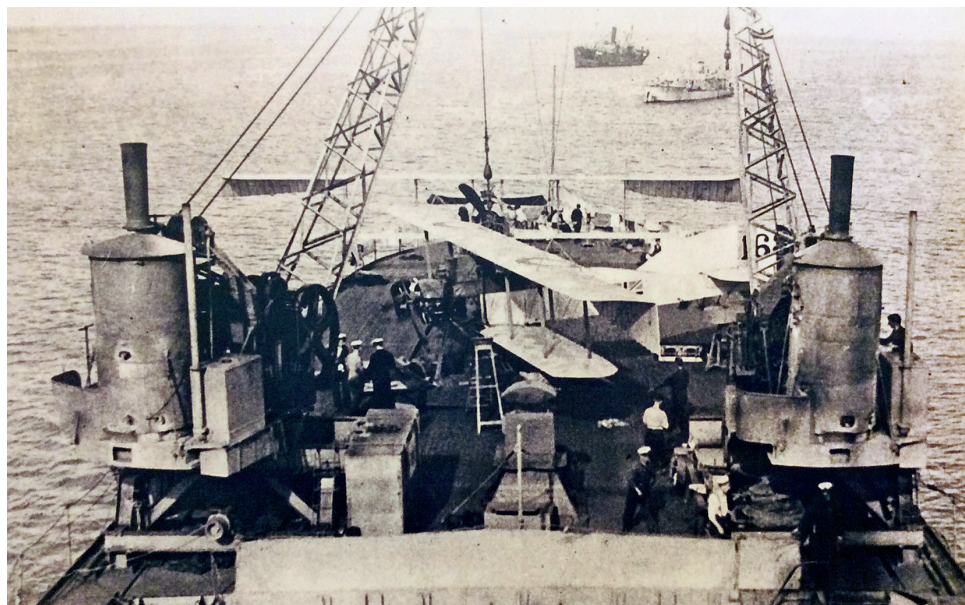


Short Type 166 from the Author's Collection

course of five days, beginning 12 March, many mines were located and their positions duly noted. Trials were also conducted with a mine sunk close to *Ark Royal's* mooring off Tenedos. In the subsequent report of this experiment, it states "*Mine was distinctly seen at 5, 10 and 18 feet depths, at 1,500, 1,000 and 3,000 feet respectively, but conditions of light and sea were very favourable. Appearance similar to objects seen in Dardanelles*". 'Mine' would seem to indicate that just one weapon was employed during these experiments; being deployed in stages to the above-mentioned depths. On the same day, Clark-Hall submitted a letter in which he declared "*It is found by experiments that under favourable circumstances, mines can be seen to a depth of 18*

feet or more". Alas, the weapons that contributed to the sinking of the French pre-dreadnought battleship *Bouvet*, the disabling of *Inflexible*, *Irresistible* and *Ocean*, and the eventual abandonment of the naval assault on the Dardanelles, were not spotted by *Ark Royal's* aircraft. Positioned earlier in the month, and added to on the night of 17/18 March, these mines were placed towards the Asiatic side of the straits, in a line perpendicular to those guarding the narrows, and, what is more, in an area that had been regularly swept up to the time the bombardments commenced.

By submitting details of these ostensibly successful mine locating tests on 15 March, Clark-Hall might have, unwittingly, made a rod not only for his own back, but also *Ark Royal*



HMS *Ark Royal* in Port Mudros harbour, Lemnos during 1915/16. The two steam power cranes were self-powered 3-ton capacity dockside cranes attached to a steel frame work and are working a Short Type 166.

herself. In the final part of his report on the aborted *Cornwallis* spotting flight of 19 February, Flt Cdr Williamson stated, somewhat ambiguously, that "No mines were seen in the entrance [to the Dardanelles] though conditions were almost ideal for this, and it would therefore appear that seaplanes will not be able to perform this duty."

Following the abandonment of the naval attempt at forcing the straits Clark-Hall was tasked with the preparation of a site on Tenedos for the operation of landplanes. A suitable area of ground was located and with local labour working under the supervision of officers from *Ark Royal*, this was levelled and made ready for the arrival of 3 Squadron RNAS, commanded by Charles Rumney Samson. With the Squadron established and their aircraft taking over the role hitherto executed by her seaplanes, *Ark Royal* moved away from Tenedos to undertake diversionary operations in connection with proposed landings on the Gallipoli peninsula. 25 April saw her aircraft supporting the operations at what is now referred to as Anzac Cove. Two days later Short 136 was sent up to spot for HMS *Triumph* against Turkish ship *Turgud Reis* and in the course of this action Turkish gunfire shattered one of her float struts. Upon returning to *Ark Royal* this damage caused the undercarriage to collapse. Repairs were completed but on the next attempt at take-off, the undercarriage buckled once more, this time submerging the engine. Subsequently, this power unit never regained its previous efficiency.

During this period the much-

needed replacement aircraft finally arrived. Regrettably, only one of these (a single Short Type 166) was of the type Clark-Hall had long been asking for. Also delivered were another Wight, two Sopwith 860s and two Sopwith Schneiders. The 860s would soon prove to be totally unacceptable. It is hard to fathom the reasoning behind the decision to send this type as Clark-Hall had specifically requested a reduction in the number of engine types in use in the ship (the Sopwith 860 had a V12 Sunbeam engine) not an increase! The Wight's engine could at least be used as a spare for the long anticipated Short.

In due course a vessel appeared in the Aegean that would put an end to *Ark Royal's* career as a seagoing aircraft carrier; the German submarine U-21. *Ark Royal* was withdrawn to safer waters off the island of Imbros. Here she would stay for the next five months, anchored in Kephalo Bay, functioning as depot ship for the landplanes operating from the island while her seaplanes operated from a shore base on its more sheltered southern coast. The next phase of *Ark Royal's* service would see her spending time anchored off the cosmopolitan city of Salonika; present day Thessaloniki, but that part of her story will have to wait for a future issue.

Editors Note

Peter pointed out that the image on p12 of *Jabberwock* 103 (Short Folder being hoisted aboard) shows it being hoisted onto HMS *Hermes* - not *Ark Royal*. Our apologies for this incorrect caption.

Ark Royal (1914) bell now in museum

By Barbara Gilbert/Fleet Air Arm Museum



HMS Ark Royal (1914) ships bell. © FAAM

The bell from the 1914 HMS Ark Royal could not have arrived at the NMRN's Fleet Air Arm Museum on a better day, Wednesday 19th May.

The Museum had reopened for the first time after Lockdown and everyone on site felt like ringing bells out of sheer joy at having eager visitors on site again.

The NMRN purchased the bell for the collection at auction in March, because, of the five HMS Ark Royals that have served the Royal Navy, we had no objects in the collection with a direct connection to the seaplane carrier of the First World War. We are very selective about purchases, but this small bell is a lovely way of filling a gap

in the collection. If we include the silver bell commissioned by the Second World War Ark Royal Survivors Association, the NMRN has bells for all five of the ships that bore the name HMS Ark Royal, two at the Portsmouth site and three on display at the Fleet Air Arm Museum in Somerset. This is a Royal flush – running from 1587 to 2011.

The 1914 HMS Ark Royal was the first ship specifically built to operate aircraft. She was a seaplane carrier and the three subsequent Ark Royal were aircraft carriers, giving Ark Royal a special place in a Fleet Air Arm heart. The bell is quite small, much smaller than the bells we hold for the later ships of that name. It is cast in bronze, 18 centimetres tall, with a diameter of 20 centimetres. We cannot say where in the ship this bell was used. It seems small for a quarterdeck bell, but who knows? Any suggestions are welcome.

The bell has been put on display in FAAM's Hall 1 in the case with the model of a Short 184, close to the model of HMS Ark Royal (1914) at the entrance to Warnefords café. This makes a link between the use of seaplanes by the Royal Naval Air Service during the First World War and the ships used to take them where they were needed. Come and see it for yourself.

Michael Sullivan Keogh and his Albert Medal

By Graham Mottram



CPO Michael Sullivan Keogh.

It is indicative of the quality of man that was attracted to the RNAS that of only six Albert Medals awarded in 1915 and 1916, three of them went to naval airmen.

All three had begun life in the ranks and all three had become qualified pilots. The third AM award of 1915 and the second to the RNAS was to CPO Michael Sullivan Keogh.

Inevitably known as “Mick” in the navy, due to his Irish antecedents,

Keogh was born into a large family of limited resources in Bere Island, County Cork on 15 May 1889. He worked as a boat builder until he was nearly 21 when he joined the navy at Portsmouth on a 12-year engagement in April 1910. On joining up he was noted as having dark hair and grey eyes, and he was short and stocky. With his background he was Carpenter’s Crew during his training and in his first seagoing draft, HMS *Pathfinder* from January 1911. In July 1912 he went to HMS *Actaeon*, by then the HQ ship for the naval aviation activity at Eastchurch. Whether that was voluntary, aiming to get into aviation, or not, is not obvious but his carpentry skills would be valuable in repairing broken aircraft. By January 1913 he was paid the 4 shillings extra pay for “the Air Service” and he qualified as a Joiner in November 1913. By then he had also learned to fly and was awarded RAeC “ticket” 642 on 4 October 1913. He was not actually classed as a Leading Mechanic until July 1914.

His Service Record does not record his physical location, only his HQ “ship” but since he went to Gallipoli with Samson’s Eastchurch Squadron it is likely that he first went with Samson’s

unit to Belgium and France, and then transferred with them to the Aegean in early 1915, only making CPO III in June, by which time Samson's 3 Wing had settled at Imbros.

On 19 August 1915, Samson and Jopp set off for a reconnaissance of Turkish positions in the Suvla Bay area. The engine of their Henri Farman was hit by shell fire and they force landed on the salt lake bed in that area. After an interesting trip under more shell fire on a pair of borrowed horses, the two men eventually went aboard the Mail Trawler for a ride back to Imbros. Jopp was debilitated by sea sickness during the ride home but Samson was shaken by the news he received once back at the airfield: "... that Collet had been killed in a flying accident. His death was an awful blow to me, as he had been a companion of mine for what seemed ages".

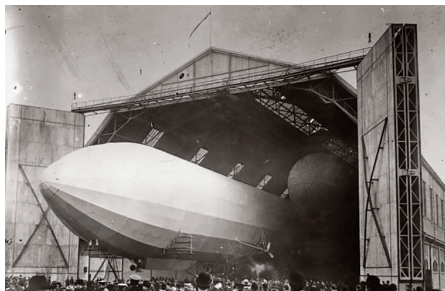
Captain Charles Herbert Collet DSO RMA was born in India in 1888 and educated at Dulwich College. He was commissioned into the Royal Marine Artillery in September 1905 and after several years of normal Corps service learned to fly and was awarded his

pilot's licence 666 at CFS Upavon on 21 October 1913. He was in Samson's squadron at Eastchurch when war broke out and went to Ostend with the unit. After an exhilarating few weeks of flying and expeditions in armoured cars, 3 Wing had settled at St Pol airfield near Dunkirk. On 22 September 1914 Collet led four aircraft from Antwerp on a raid against the Zeppelin sheds at Düsseldorf and Cologne. Three aircraft were thwarted by thick mist, but Collet managed to find his target and dropped three 20lb bombs against the shed at Düsseldorf. Although all three missed their target he was the first British aviator to bomb the German homeland and was awarded the DSO. He then went with 3 Wing to Gallipoli and crashed to his death. It is not surprising that after serving under Samson for about 18 months that his CO was severely affected by Collet's loss.

Samson went on, "As he took off his engine began to fail. He tried to turn back to the aerodrome, and as so many great aviators have done before and since, lost flying speed and crashed. The aeroplane got on fire and he was burnt to death



Charles Herbert Collet DSO.



Düsseldorf Zeppelin Sheds before the raid.

before the gallant rescuers could drag him clear of the wreckage. Eastchurch could always produce heroes and that day into the raging inferno went Keogh, Jones and Robins. They got Collet out; but, alas, too late. Keogh was dreadfully burnt, and he nobly deserved the Albert Medal which was awarded to him”.

Arthur Beeton witnessed the crash: “There was Collet trapped in this damn machine. In between where he came down and where we were was a ravine about seventy feet deep. We had to go down it and up by the side, a difficult thing to do. And when we got to the top, the other side, we saw it was on fire. Well, we tried to pull it off, get him out, but we couldn’t, we got our hands and faces scarred and this chap..... Mick Keogh, he got the Albert Medal for it. He saw what happened from the other side of the ravine and before he descended he picked up a big black tarpaulin, and he wrapped that round himself and he went in and pulled him out. Collet was so badly burned, if you’d catch hold of him you got handfuls of flesh. But he was still alive, he said to the doctor: ‘Put me out, put me out’, when the doctor injected some pain killer in him.”

Collet passed away from his appalling injuries and was buried by Samson in Imbros, although his remains were later transferred to the Lancashire Landing Cemetery on the Gallipoli mainland. Some sources say that Keogh was in the BE2 with Collet but this is incorrect. Collet’s passenger was CPO George Lacey, who saw the crash coming and managed to jump out, sustaining serious leg injuries but

surviving. (Lacey returned to service in due course and went on to serve as a commissioned officer in the RAF.)

Keogh’s record shows, “17 October 1915: Expression of TL’s (*Their Lordships’s*) appreciation of his gallantry in risking his own life in attempt to save that of Capt. Collet DSO RMA” and also, “12 December 1915: Awarded the Albert Medal of the Second Class.”

The formal citation in the London Gazette of 12 January 1916 reads:

“The King has been pleased to approve of the Albert Medal of the Second Class being conferred upon Michael Sullivan Keogh, Chief Petty Officer, HMS “*Ark Royal*”, in recognition of his gallantry in endeavouring to save life as detailed below:-

On the 19th August 1915, an aeroplane, piloted by the late Captain C. H. Collet, DSO, RMA, was ascending from Imbros Aerodrome, and had reached a height of 150 feet when the engine stopped. The machine was upset by the powerful air currents from the cliffs, and fell vertically to the ground, while the petrol carried burst into flames which immediately enveloped the aeroplane and pilot.

Chief Petty Officer Keogh, upon arriving at the scene of the accident, at once made an attempt to save Captain Collet by dashing into the middle of the wreckage, which was a mass of flames. He had succeeded in dragging the fatally injured officer nearly clear of the flames when he was himself overcome by the burns which he had received from the burning petrol.”

There are no surviving records

of Keogh's hospitalisation but after immediate local treatment he would probably have been taken by hospital ship to Alexandria, and then home. He was unlikely to have been fit for service for some time, and in August 1916, on the books of Crystal Palace, he was promoted to CPO II and "passed for Joiner, Sea Service". Promotion to CPO I in December 1916 was followed by Warrant Officer 2 in May 1917, when he was officially transferred into the RNAS. For much of this time at Crystal Palace he was in charge of Carpenter training and received a glowing report for his work, before being commissioned into the RAF in April 1918 and moving to Tregantle with similar duties.

Keogh received a Permanent Commission in the RAF, serving at

home and abroad until retirement as a Squadron Leader in May 1939, followed immediately by a Short Service Commission in the RNZAF, where he stayed until 1947, retiring as a Group Captain, OBE. He lived in Kent until his death in July 1983, at the age of 94.



Lancashire Landing Cemetery. © CWGC.

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Update from FAAM

By Graham Mottram following a meeting with Marc Farrance, General Manager, Fleet Air Arm Museum.

With Step 4 looming and a catch up meeting long overdue, we had a meeting with Marc Farrance to see how FAAM would be operating after July, and how that would impact on SOFFAAM.

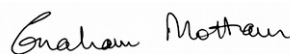
FAAM will continue to be closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, with the wearing of masks preferred. There are still footfall limitations and so prior booking by SOFFAAM members is still advisable, although there will be a little more leeway than previously for walk up visitors (see SoFFAAM website).

We will be able to recommence Talks Nights in house and we will be doing two trial nights in October and November. With the severe financial strains that FAAM is under, there is now a policy of charging for all venue hire, no matter who or what it is. It will now cost us over £200 to hold a talk in the auditorium and we must know if attendances are going to be sufficient to cover that cost, hence the trials. There will be no catering available and attendance will be capped at 75. The talks will still be available by Zoom. To enable us to monitor attendance numbers, members must pay in advance by either Paypal or BACS, and the fee will be £5 for all.

Because NMRN is having to move the telecommunications collection from HMS Collingwood, Cobham Hall is taking some of that important material

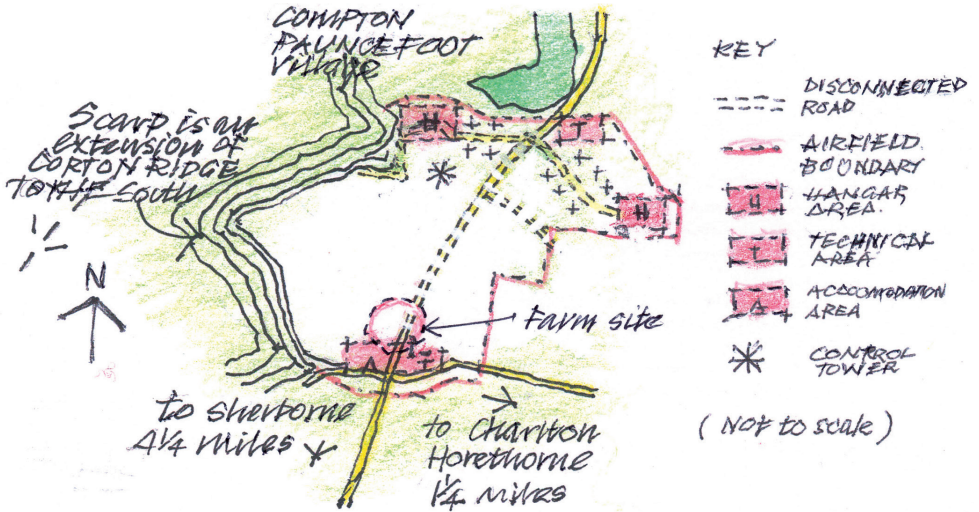
and so is closed to visitors until the spring of 2022. Consequently we cannot visit Cobham Hall on the proposed Members Day in September and so we have decided to cancel the event. There are also major changes in the catering provision which, added to the venue hire charges, make it impossible for us to have an affordable lunch between Christmas and New Year in FAAM. The Talks Nights trials plus Members Day were an attempt to get the social life of the society back on a firmer footing but losing one of those events means that we will definitely be holding the Christmas Lunch but it will not be in FAAM.

I am sorry if this sounds a bit negative but, with another hat on which manages a public building, I fully understand the slow and cautious route back to normality which FAAM is following. The organisational and financial changes, which are direct consequences of the pandemic and the millions of pounds of lost revenue across NMRN, will impact on SOFFAAM, and how we can best provide interesting and socially attractive events to our membership, but we will still be doing our best to achieve that aim and make your membership of SOFFAAM a rewarding pastime.



Charlton Horethorne: (HMS Heron II)

By Jim Humberstone



Site of RNAS Charlton Horethorne airfield circa. 1950. Five miles East of RNAS Yeovilton

Naval aviation requirements in World War Two were expressed in the need for Fleet Air Arm land bases across the length and breadth of the land. Somerset was especially favoured by an RN presence.

Once established, the principal FAA stations tended to spawn satellite establishments. As described in previous Jabberwock articles, RNAS Henstridge was set up to assist the Yeovilton base as a satellite station and RNAS Predannack served the Culdrose base in Cornwall in a like manner.

The growing training programmes of the Fleet Air Arm as the war progressed generated the need for a further outlier for RNAS Yeovilton, HMS Heron. This satellite airfield was eventually located about a mile south-east at Charlton Horethorne, a village characterised by its less conventional spelling of the name of the hedgerow shrub. The airfield was located along the top of a scarp which rises around 500 feet above the adjoining countryside, facing west towards Yeovilton, some five miles distant. The airfield was laid out

in the early 1940s and was originally intended as an RAF satellite for the fighter squadrons based at Exeter. Once opened in June 1942, it proved to be no longer needed by the Royal Air Force and was thus passed to the Royal Navy and named HMS Heron II, with Fleet Air Arm units arriving during that summer.

Charlton Horethorne remained a grass airfield throughout its short life. Some dozen or so Naval Air Squadrons had been stationed there by war's end, all focused on the Fighter Training School. This helped to bring new pilots up to speed on interception techniques.

The station was host to a mixture of Fulmars, Sea Hurricanes, Seafires and Martlets, whilst Harvards, Masters and Oxfords were also used for training purposes, with the latter twin-engined trainer role-playing as an attacking enemy and cross-country flights as part of the training routines. There was also a Wellington presence, though this

lasted for just a short while. The size of the airfield proved a limiting factor for this quite large twin-engined aircraft, having little more than a thousand yards of grass runway available for use in any direction. Naval ship radar calibration was among the miscellaneous duties undertaken during the life of the station, as was target towing for air firing purposes.

The station was given back to the RAF at the end of hostilities and used for the storage of ammunition, as an out-station of their Maintenance Unit at Chilmark at the quarry site. At one point the airfield served as a satellite for Old Sarum, north east of Salisbury, but by 1950 it had reverted completely to agriculture. Some small relic structures remain, but there is little evidence at ground level today to remind passers-by of the flying activity which filled the sky over the village for that brief war time period, some 75 years ago.



RNAS Charlton Horethorne as photographed in 2016 looking towards the farm site. It shows a pillbox and remnants of a wall. © Mike Searle

Sea Venom in a Crisis

By Dan Hedger



Engaged in an attack during the Suez Crisis of 1956. 095 was hit by flak and made a wheels-up landing on the deck of HMS *Eagle*. A painting by Dan Hedger. © Dan Hedger

I expect a lot of SoFFAAM members have found the COVID lockdown, preventing visits to the Fleet Air Arm Museum, both frustrating and depressing.

As an artist with all the extra time confined at home, I set to work painting a series of FAA subjects, one of which is the subject featured here.

In one waiting area of the museum's excellent carrier tour, there are several dramatic photos of carrier deck landing

incidents, and I recalled one of a belly landing by a de Havilland Sea Venom FAW.21. Behind the photo, a larger story unfolds - the action occurred during the Suez crisis of 1956. The aircraft in question, WW281/095 of 893 Squadron, had launched from HMS *Eagle* on 2 November with seven other Sea Venoms to reinforce earlier attacks by Sea Hawks on the Egyptian airfield at Almaza. They made two attack runs, selecting targets from the

many dispersed aircraft on the ground, however on the second run the anti-aircraft fire had intensified. Lt Cdr John Wilcox, piloting WW281/095 with Flying Officer Robert Olding - an RAF navigator on an exchange tour with the Fleet Air Arm - had broken away in a starboard turn at approximately 500ft when their aircraft was hit by the flak.

"...there occurred a rather loud noise and a very large hole appeared in the bottom of the cockpit," remarked Wilcox. The aircraft lost all hydraulic pressure but was still capable of flight. The power-assisted controls had reverted to manual and the crew discovered that the emergency pump had been cleanly severed at the base. More worrying though, was that Olding had been seriously injured.

They made the short return flight to *Eagle*, where Wilcox made a low flypast to have the damage assessed by observers on the deck. They decided to land without flaps for fear of asymmetric operation. Olding, who had self-administered a tourniquet and morphine, was able to call the airspeed as they made a slow approach as to not put too much strain on the arrestor hook. However, the slower approach meant the angle of attack had increased to obscure their forward view, Wilcox closed the throttle and let the nose fall:

"...the hook caught the first wire, a slight bump, an expensive grinding noise, rapid deceleration, and we were down," he recalled.

Olding was rushed away to the sick bay by the rescue crews, and later flown to a British military hospital on

Cyprus. Unfortunately, he later had to have one of his legs amputated above the knee because of the shrapnel injuries. He spent three months having treatment and learning to walk with an artificial leg. He was awarded a DSC and returned to duty, and a year later started flying again, this time as a navigator on the Javelin night fighter. He would later end his career with the rank of Group



The flak damaged Sea Venom on the deck of HMS Eagle following the sortie.

REWARDS
List of Royal Navy Officers, and Captains of the Fleet, of the Fleet Air Arm, and of the Fleet School of Air Operations, who were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Flying Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross (Bar), the Distinguished Flying Medal (Bar), the Distinguished Flying Cross (Bar) and the Distinguished Flying Medal (Bar) during the year 1956.

Navy News

No. 31 DECEMBER, 1956 Published first Thursday of the month Price Threepence

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SKIDDING TO SAFETY

A flak-damaged Sea Venom of 803 Squadron, H.M.S. Eagle, landing on safely without an undercarriage—November, 1956.

POWERSMOUTH
FOR GENERAL SERVICE
... ..

CHATHAM
FOR GENERAL SERVICE
... ..

DEVONPORT
FOR GENERAL SERVICE
... ..

FOR PLYMOUTH SERVICE
... ..

HOME AIR COMMAND
... ..

Order or Renewal Form
... ..

THE ROYAL NAVY AND THE SUEZ CANAL
Full Story of the Operation—See Centre pages

100 and 110 JUNE
... ..

FOR PLYMOUTH SERVICE
... ..

Navy News December 1956 Issue 31

Captain. Refusing to use a stick, he walked unaided throughout his life, and at one point even tried to ride a bicycle, but predictably, came off and broke his arm.

A Sea Venom painting was always on my 'to-do' list for my growing number of FAA subjects, (my late grandfather having been both a de Havilland and a Westland aero engineer) and this historic incident would tick this box. It would also respond to my youngest child's criticism that my paintings need more action in them!

There is admittedly some artistic licence here in the imagining of the drama, which is set against the background of the Suez Canal. The

Sea Venoms and accompanying Hawker Seahawks dive through the (unfortunately for Olding, accurately aimed) flak on their approach to Almaza. My reasoning for the high angle and altitude of the viewpoint above the Sea Venom is that it shows off the unmistakable twin-boom layout with the extended fairing over the arrestor hook.

The example in the carrier exhibit at the Yeovilton Fleet Air Museum provided useful reference for the digital photo mockups and preliminary sketches, and hopefully by the time this is in print we will all have the opportunity to admire that particular airframe in person once more.

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Biography

Dan Hedger - Aviation Artist

Please browse through the site and check out the blog. Also, I am always happy to discuss new commissions - my kids need shoes. (Big discounts for SoFFAAM members.)

Website: <http://www.aviatorartstudio.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/aviatorartstudio>



Fairey Gannet 'Catching a wire'.

Fairey Gannet AEW
Mk3 849 Naval Air
Squadron Royal Navy.

Acrylic on 18"x14"
canvas board - £145
(£100 SoFFAAM
members).

Dan Hedger - Aviation Artist

Website: www.aviatorartstudio.com



Supermarine Scimitar FAA Museum.

The first of my
lockdown paintings
to look back on my
museum visits.

Acrylic on 18"x14"
canvas board - £145
(£100 SoFFAAM
members).

Wyverns in combat at Suez

This article is drawn from two lengthy and well-researched articles by Geoffrey Bussey. Published in *Jabberwock* 36, in Autumn 1995.



Wyverns aboard HMS *Eagle* and prior to the application of the yellow and black identification stripes.

HMS *Eagle*'s refit at Gibraltar was only half completed when the ship was recalled on 20 October 1956 because of the political situation in Egypt.

President Nasser had proclaimed on 26 July that he had nationalised the Suez Canal Company. As negotiations came to a stalemate, the United Kingdom and France, for which the canal was of vital importance, prepared a military operation. At the same time, Israel began to mobilise. The Israelis invaded the Sinai on 29 October 1956 and advanced towards the canal. The next day an Anglo-French ultimatum was sent to Israel and Egypt requesting each

nation to cease fire and to withdraw to ten miles from either side of the canal. Egypt rejected the ultimatum and Operation "Musketeer" began on 31 October 1956. In the meantime, *Eagle* had reached Malta on 25 October where repairs were completed. Four days later, as the ship left harbour, 830 Squadron embarked two additional Wyverns and carried out air to air gun camera sorties. The carrier was left with only one working catapult when the main reaving wire of the starboard catapult broke, sending an 897 Squadron Sea Hawk into the sea. On 30 October, all aircraft were painted with one foot

wide yellow and black identification stripes. The Carrier Group, consisting of HMS *Eagle*, *Bulwark* and *Albion* from the Royal Navy and *Arromanches* and *Lafayette* of the Marine Nationale, was on standby on 31 October. "Musketeer" was planned to begin at 1615 GMT and the first phase of the operation was the neutralisation of the Egyptian Air Force.

On the evening of 31 October RAF Valiants and Canberras based on Malta and Cyprus carried out high level bombing. The Air Group went into action on 1 November. The Wyverns were loaded with a 1,000 lb bomb each and struck Dekheila airfield, an old Royal Naval Air Station near Alexandria. The attack on the runways was repeated twice during the day with some strafing and photographing. The next day 830 Squadron launched three attacks. The first one was a repeat mission to Dekheila to deliver 1,000 lb. bombs on hangars where new crated aircraft were housed. Two other strikes were directed on Huckstep Camp near Cairo where reconnaissance had revealed a large concentration of military armour and transport vehicles. During these first two days, each Wyvern delivered only

one 1,000 lb bomb on each sortie. The attacks on Huckstep Camp were their first inland incursions, as air opposition was non-existent and danger of air combat for the turboprop aircraft was nil. On 3 November, 13 sorties were flown by 830 Squadron on Gamil Bridge, which was a vital link for Port Said to the west coast and Alexandria. In company with Sea Hawks, the Wyverns dive-bombed their target, but only one hit was recorded on the bridge, which was not sufficient to make a breach. British aircraft encountered light flak and Lt D F MacCarthy's Wyvern received impacts during its dive. The pilot managed to release his bombs and escaped to the sea three miles away before ejecting. MacCarthy had then to face hostile shore batteries, which were attacked by Sea Hawks before his rescue by *Eagle's* SAR helicopter 75 minutes later.

The next day, *Eagle* withdrew to refuel and take on ammunition, returning on 5 November to support the airborne assault. British paratroopers were dropped on Gamil airfield to progress towards Port Said whilst French parachutists had dropping zones on Port Fouad and on the interior basin. 830 Squadron's first two strikes were directed on the Coast Guard barracks, a mortar company and on various gun positions that were menacing the British parachute units. The third and last strike of the day was again executed on the Coast Guard barracks, where snipers were still active. Wyverns took part in a combined low-level strafing and dive-bombing attack with 1,000 lb. bombs, 20 mm guns and 60 lb. Rocket



Wyvern on finals.

Projectiles (RP). Unfortunately, 830's Senior Pilot, Lt Cdr W H Cowling, felt a distinct thump, probably due to the entry of shrapnel in the air intake. The Python engine began to run rough but Cowling managed to maintain height and ejected within 20 miles of the carriers. He was safely picked up by a helicopter that was evacuating army wounded from Gamil.

On 6 November strikes on the beaches targeted for invasion were launched, followed by an intensive ship bombardment in preparation of sea landings. 830 Squadron flew "cab rank" sorties to support the Royal Marines as they met considerable resistance in Port Said. The Wyverns were directed by HMS *Meon* to various air control teams in the town. Nevertheless, not enough targets were available for all aircraft and only the second squadron detail was requested for strafing and rocketing on the Police Club. The last mission was flown on El Kantara to provide air cover for an 897 Squadron pilot who had ejected after being hit by flak during

an attack on an army camp. Although Port Said was taken and the British and French troops began to move down the Suez Canal, the two governments had to accept a cease-fire ordered by the United Nations.

As combat had ceased, *Eagle* left for Malta on 7 November to repair the port catapult, which had been launching all the aircraft during the operation. A survey of hits on the Wyverns revealed one spinner hit, two nicked propellers, a .303 bullet hole in a tailplane and shrapnel lodged in one air intake. The two aircraft lost during combat were replaced by two new Wyverns when the ship arrived at Malta on 9 November 1956.

During five days of operations over Egypt, 830 Squadron performed 79 sorties during which the Wyverns delivered seventy eight 1,000 lb bombs and eight 500 lb. bombs and fired three hundred and thirty-eight 60 lb RPs and three thousand eight hundred and seventy 20 mm rounds.



Westland Wyvern at SBAC Farnborough 1952 which demonstrates the sheer size of the aircraft.

FAAM and the 'father and son connection'.

By Dave and Mike Burrow.



F4K Phantoms of 767 Naval Air Squadron on the Yeovilton flightline.

It seems such a long time ago, I was a 6-year-old climbing into a Whirlwind helicopter, pretending to be a pilot!

It was around 1970, my father Mick Burrow had just started researching FAA history for a book he and a colleague were co-writing. Then the museum had just the one hangar and a hut outside where the Hall 1 is now. If I was lucky enough to join him, a lovely man by the name of Lt Cdr Les 'Harpy' Cox would greet me and give me access to the Whirlwind parked outside on the grass, keeping a close eye on me through his office window. If the weather was bad, I would spend hours walking through the display hangar, gazing in awe at

the aircraft and displays, especially the plastic models, as my father made most of them! If outside, I watched the Phantoms, Hunters and Canberras flying around, great days and memories!

That was my first visit to the museum that I can remember. Since then, my father continued to use the archive facilities for the series of Air Britain books about the FAA he has co-written and I assisted with over the years. During this period, I joined the local Air Cadets. On some Saturdays, a group of us went to the museum to clean the aircraft on display. Most of us tried to be pilots, before getting told off and reminded we were there to clean

the exhibits, not break them!

I left school in 1980 only wanting to work with aircraft. So naturally, I applied to join the RAF!! I carried out and passed the interview's but told I may have to wait 18 months before enrolling but not fancying joining the unemployed, I managed to get a job (with Fathers help), in the new Concorde display (the Hall 4 display was owned by the Science Museum then) as a cleaner. Well it got me in the museum!! It was OK, emptying bins, sweeping the floor, but I could not resist popping into the main building only to get told off by my manager for disappearing! By this time Halls 1 and 2 had been built. I was soon invited to join the engineering team with Pete Chisolm in charge. He taught me how to use tools, health and safety and a lot more! I even re-built part of a Double Mamba from a Gannet aircraft, which we got operating so the public could see how an aircraft engine worked! I also re-painted the markings on the Handley Page 115 on display, amongst other tasks.

My time came to join the RAF as a safety equipment fitter in early 1982. I did 12 years' service, visiting the museum whilst on leave and seeing the collection grow. I left the RAF in 1994, got a job at RNAS Yeovilton in the SE section as a Stores person. Later, I took up the job of a Safety Equipment fitter again as a civilian on the new FRADU Hawks. When the unit moved to RNAS Culdrose I was made redundant! But the company offered me a job at RAF Shawbury, so moved there for the next 13 years, ending up on the University Air Squadron at RAF Cosford.

By now, my father had retired from Westland Helicopters, but continued carrying out his research at the museum. I returned to Somerset late 2006, working at RNAS Yeovilton again, this time for the Navy in their Safety Equipment section (familiar ground!), assisting the sailors and instructing them at times. Sadly, for me, this did not last long, I was made redundant yet again! After doing odd jobs in Yeovil I was pining to get back with aircraft. Things were about to change. I had met a lovely lady, and we were making plans to get married. I was a regular visitor to the museum and made good friends with Bob Turner, who offered me a job on the security team. How could I refuse? I put my notice in straight away where I was working but explained to Bob, about getting married the week after I was due to start, no problem Bob said! I started work back at my favourite workplace, after a week's holiday to get 'hitched' and spent the next six years working with lots of great, friendly staff and the general public.

I'm still at Yeovilton, working with the Army Wildcats. My father still occasionally pops into the archives and I meet him there for a chat and cuppa. The FAA museum has given me so much over the years. I made lots of friends, some of whom are now sadly missed. Plenty of good memories and learnt so much knowledge about the FAA old and new. I still hope to visit as much as I can to this valuable asset in our community.

The Museum officially opened on 28 May 1964, my birthday was on 5 May 1964, which makes me 23 days older!

A life on The Ocean Wave

By Malcolm Smith



When the Falklands war broke out in April 1982, I was minding my own business as a newly-promoted Commander on the staff of Flag Officer Naval Air Command (FONAC) at Yeovilton.

The war instigated numerous rapid manpower re-deployments, one of which was that my friend John Shea, the Staff Air Engineer Officer (SAEO) at Flag Officer Third Flotilla (FOF3) at Fort Southwick was given one of many “pierhead jumps”, in other words a short notice order to move to another appointment. In his case, he joined the deploying staff of FOF1 (Rear Admiral “Sandy” Woodward) in HMS *Hermes*,

the flagship of the Task Force on its way to war. This left a gap at Fort Southwick; a gap that I was quickly told to fill. FOF3 at the time was Vice Admiral Derek Reffell, who in his own mind (and that of many others) believed that it was he, rather than Sandy Woodward, who should have been commanding the Task Force.

In early June, after the successful amphibious landings on the Islands, it became known that Admiral Reffell would relieve Admiral Woodward in the South Atlantic as soon as hostilities were over. With this in mind, he ordered me and my colleague Geoff Cavalier, the Staff Aviation Officer, to go south to

join HMS *Hermes* as an advance party of his staff. We travelled by RAF VC10 from Brize Norton on a lengthy flight to Wideawake Airfield on Ascension Island. The field was a dramatic sight, with VC10s, C130 Hercules and a Nimrod (all hastily modified with In Flight Refuelling probes) lined up on the dispersal. Also beside the dispersal was a mountain of boxed spares and equipment, optimistically addressed to the Naval Party there, to be picked up by deploying ships as they passed. Another old AEO friend of mine, Tony Woods, who had been sent there at the outbreak of war, pointed out to me in robust naval language that he had no way of knowing who the intended recipients of all this material were, while being bombarded with exasperated signals from home demanding to know why ships' demands were not being satisfied. He showed me one enormous package, which had split open and contained nothing but filing cabinets. Another smaller box was full of boots.

We had no time to sort out logistic problems because we were told to join HMS *Dumbarton Castle*, a smallish vessel normally used for fishery protection in the North Sea. She had a good-sized flight deck, on which was stored a huge quantity of equipment, spares and ammunition. There were thousands of rounds of ammunition, two crated Sea Skua missiles and a full Liquid Oxygen (LOX) bowser, intended for HMS *Invincible*, whose LOX plant was playing up. (LOX is used to provide breathing oxygen for Sea Harrier pilots.) Somewhat overcrowded and

overloaded, *Dumbarton Castle* sailed south, occasionally exercising her main armament (a single Oerlikon on the foc'sle) on the way and breasting the enormous swells of the South Atlantic as easily as if she were off the Dogger Bank.

Eventually we sighted the grey silhouette of *Hermes* and a Sea King came to hover over *Dumbarton Castle's* flight deck and send down a strop to uplift Geoff and me one by one for a short trip to the carrier. Here we met the Admiral's staff, who, after months of high intensity effort in directing the naval war, looked tired and withdrawn. We were received politely but without warmth. I had a particular responsibility for engineering standards in the Wasp and Lynx flights in the accompanying frigates and destroyers, so started to find out how they had fared in the conflict. Over the following weeks, I was able to visit most of the deployed ships and discuss the recent conflict with their Flight Commanders and small maintenance teams, who were led in almost every case by experienced Chief Petty Officer Technicians. They had worked long hours in difficult wartime conditions and throughout the conflict had kept their aircraft at a high state



HMS Dunbarton Castle, Mare Harbour.

of readiness and in commendable condition.

Meanwhile, back in *Hermes*, we learned that the old vessel was returning home almost immediately for a long overdue refit. Our Admiral would establish his staff in the Type 81 destroyer, HMS *Bristol*. Before *Hermes* departed, I spent some time watching aircraft operations from the Admiral's bridge, standing discreetly at the back, as Admiral Woodward was also present. We watched as a Sea Harrier made a decelerating approach to the port side of the flight deck, coming to the hover alongside. The pilot edged across to align with the landing spot, hovered briefly, then reduced thrust to land vertically with a thump. He taxied forward, obeying the signals from the



Sea Harrier FRS1 landing on. © MoD

aircraft handler. Admiral Woodward turned to me and said:

“Do you know anything about these aircraft?”

“Yes, sir, quite a bit,” I replied.

“Humph”, said the Admiral, “I think they’re bloody useless” and he turned on his heel and left.

He was a submariner of course.



HMS Bristol. © MoD

The Wooden Wonder - Development of the de Havilland Mosquito

April 2021 Zoom Talk by Sqn Ldr (Retd) Rod Dean
Summarised by Robert Heath



Rod's talk on this occasion was about the development and construction of the de Havilland Mosquito.

The key personalities involved were Sir Geoffrey de Havilland, who originally proposed a "minimalist" fighter/bomber; R E Bishop, the Chief Designer and Air Chief Marshall (ACM) Sir Wilfrid Freeman (Air Member for Development and Production) who authorised de Havilland to carry the proposal forward into production.

Lord Beaverbrook, Minister for Aircraft Production (MAP) in 1940, wanted to concentrate production on a small range of aircraft types, and Rod showed us a memo from him, cancelling any further development of the Mosquito. Fortunately, the memo specified the bomber variant, so Freeman countered this by ordering the fighter version. Once the prototype

had been built and tested, its potential could not be overlooked. Production commenced in July 1940 and throughout its life 7,781 were built. Production was moved to nearby Salisbury Hall; where the prototype can still be seen today.

To illustrate earlier de Havilland lightweight designs, Rod showed the DH88 Comet racer from 1934 and the attractive DH 91 Albatross airliner of 1937, also of wooden construction. Rod Dean's knowledge of the many Marks and modifications of Mosquito is truly impressive. It filled the roles of: Bomber; Fighter Bomber; Fighter; Night Fighter; Photo Reconnaissance; Trainer; Sea Mosquito, Target Tower; and various specialist variants, modified to carry weapons like the Highball bomb and the 57 mm Molins canon.

The aircraft was constructed predominantly of plywood and the two sides of the fuselage were built separately. Each side was formed around a concrete mould, which contained slots for formers and internal strengthening. After the inner skin of plywood was laid down on the mould, voids were then created and overlaid, into which balsa wood was inserted before the outer plywood skin was laid on. All of this was

glued before being pulled down with straps and turnbuckles to shape and tighten the whole structure. This novel method created lightweight shells that two people could easily lift and move to the next phase of construction. Each half shell was wired and fitted out before being glued and screwed together to form a near complete fuselage. This was set up in a jig to retain rigidity and the whole was covered in doped woven cotton fabric to give an exceptionally smooth finish, which contributed greatly to the high speed performance.

Wing construction used similar materials and methods as the fuselage. The wing was made in one piece and was the same design for all marks of the aircraft. In addition to gluing the

component parts together, thousands of brass screws were also used. Only four bolts held the fuselage on to the wings, but once in place complete integrity was restored. The engine radiators were mounted in the wing roots between each engine and the fuselage.

Many thanks to Rod for this well-illustrated and fascinating talk.



Wheeled Molins 6-pdr gun to demonstrate the size of the weapon against the airframe.

RAF Marham and the F35B

May 2021 Zoom Talk by WO M Howard MBE FlinstLM MCGI.
Summarised by Robert Heath



HMS Queen Elizabeth recently deployed with fixed-wing aircraft embarked, the first time for many years for an RN carrier.

The aircraft is the formidable, multi-role Lockheed Martin F-35B Lightning II, the subject of this Zoom talk by Warrant Officer Mo Howard. The F-35 is at the forefront of technical innovation and a single UK base has been established to operate and maintain it - RAF Marham. To operate the Lightning II, the station has had to be completely re-developed at a cost of £550 million; 1930s vintage hangars have been knocked down and replaced with hardened aircraft shelters, while a new Maintenance and

Finish Facility has been built. The finish facility applies the 'low-observable' paint used on the F-35 as a part of its stealth capabilities. The main runway is being refurbished and taxiways and hard standings upgraded. The training centre is a significant part of the facilities upgrade. Pilots do at least 50% of their flying on a simulator and almost everything else is learnt, practised and assessed on simulators using virtual reality. This process is not limited to aircrew: all engineers and technicians are trained in the same facility in the same way.

The F-35B can conduct air to surface, electronic warfare, intelligence gathering and air-to-air missions simultaneously. The cockpit displays consist of two touch screens but most information is projected on to the pilot's helmet visor. This enables the pilot to use one eye to fly the aircraft while the other is focused on weapon designation and target acquisition inside the helmet.

The F-35B is the Short Take-Off and Vertical Landing (STOVL) variant, other marks are the conventional land-based A version, while the USN operates the carrier-borne C variant. All marks use

the 40,000lb thrust P&W turbofan with afterburner, which in the F35B drives a horizontal fan (designed by Rolls Royce) to provide the cold gas stream for vertical thrust. The jet pipe of the engine in the F35B incorporates a swivelling nozzle to direct the hot gas stream downwards in STOVL operations. For weapons, the F-35B can carry Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile (ASRAAM), Meteor (radar guided beyond visual range missile), Paveway 4 (laser guided bomb), SPEAR 3 (Select-Precision-Effects-At-Range missile) and as an option a 25mm gun pod. The UK has ordered 138 F-35Bs at about £100 million each.

RAF Marham operates a unique mix of front line, support and industrial cultures. The complement of 617 Squadron comprises 52% RAF and 48% RN and all the F-35B aircraft are jointly owned. In addition to the servicemen, the team comprises personnel from Lockheed Martin, Pratt & Whitney, Rolls Royce and BAe Systems. Storage, preparation and delivery of F35B armaments are handled by 93 Expeditionary Armament Squadron.

Thank you to Warrant Officer Mo Howard for a very enlightening evening.



Her Majesty The Queen opening one of the new facility buildings at RAF Marham. © MoD



The new F35 hanger bays. © MoD

The Goldfish Club

June 2021 Zoom Talk by Cmdr. Jason Phillips OBE (Retd). Summarised by Robert Heath



The Goldfish Club could be the most exclusive club in the world - a club that no one wishes to join. Its purpose is “to keep alive the spirit of comradeship of members surviving ‘coming down in the drink’”.

During the War, rubber dinghies and other aircrew rescue items were manufactured by the P B Cow company and many of the aircrew who had to ‘ditch’ visited the factory to thank them for saving their life. The company’s Chief Draughtsman, C A Robertson (Robbie), was struck by the spirit of those rescued and formed an official club for them, naming it the ‘Goldfish Club’ - Gold for the value of life, and Fish for the sea element.

Each member received a badge in black showing a white-winged goldfish above two blue waves. By the end of WW2 there were over 9,000 members. When the war was over, application forms continued to arrive showing that the spirit of the Club was still alive. In

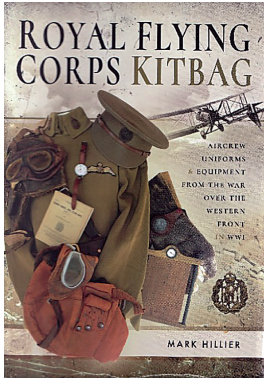
1953 the Club was formally resurrected and it is still the only one of its kind in the world. Goldfish Club reunions are held annually and today there are around 500 members, although the increasing safety of air travel means that numbers of qualifying members are in the decline.

Jason presented us with some graphic film excerpts and explained that ditching training is now highly realistic. He described the “Underwater Escape Unit”, based at RNAS Yeovilton, in which trainees are required to escape under water from an inverted model fuselage. Jason has experienced all this first-hand - the dreaded dunking training sessions, plus a real-life ditching. In September 1998, he was the navigator of a Sea King which ditched in the North Sea after a serious on-board fire. Jason followed his rear seat colleague by swimming out through a side window - except that the emergency seat pack snagged in the window frame. His training kicked in automatically and made him work back to investigate why he was not surfacing. Thankfully all four aircrew surfaced and were rescued.

Jason now actively promotes the Club, to which his membership was earned by first-hand experience. Thank you, Cdr Phillips for a most enjoyable and vividly illustrated talk.

Royal Flying Corps Kitbag

A book review by Malcolm Smith



The subtitle to this book - "Aircrew uniforms and equipment from the war over the Western Front in WW1" hardly does justice to its contents.

Profusely illustrated, it certainly shows in great detail the clothing and equipment used by the aviators of the Royal Flying Corps throughout the conflict. However, it is much more than a dry catalogue, with the illustrations including items such as cockpit watches, leather flying coats, map boards, aircrew badges, webbing and facsimiles of logbooks and training manuals. We are used these days to seeing aircrew of the UK armed forces clothed and equipped in a standardised way and the book shows that many items of standard issue clothing were introduced by the RFC at an early stage. These could be supplemented by an

extraordinary range of commercially-produced items for private purchase. Many of the items shown were designed to help aircrew survive the ferocious cold in open cockpits at high altitudes. The book includes copious examples of contemporary advertisements for such items as the Burberry's trench coat, Harrods Leather Clothing for Aviators, the Boddy single-breasted life preserver and Triplex safety flying goggles.

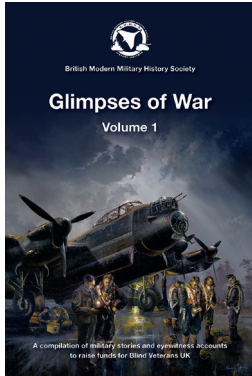
The author provides an entire chapter on badges, insignia and buttons, with another on paperwork and documents. Uniforms are given extensive coverage and the text is enlivened with anecdotes on different subjects, such as the use of "message streamers" - ribbons with a weighted bag attached to drop messages to troops, also early flight computers, used to aid flight planning. The book concludes with a chapter entitled "RFC to RAF Transitional Arrangements", illustrating the evolution of the pale blue RAF uniform so well-known today.

Packed with fascinating detail, this volume gives a penetrating insight into aviation conditions 100 years ago. It is essential reading for anybody who is interested in the background to aviation in the First World War.

Royal Flying Corps Kitbag, By Mark Hillier. Published by Frontline Books. ISBN 978-1-52675-299-4

Glimpses of War

A book review by Richard Macauley



“What an inspired idea”, to ask supporters of this project to send their own or family memoirs of warfare and conflicts from around the globe.

The inspiration for this book came from the first lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. The British Modern Military History Society were curtailed in their activities in presenting a monthly talks programme that had gained swift momentum over the past year.

Monthly contributions were made to charities connected to the speakers. So how best to re-instate these charitable donations that are such a core part of BMMHS when lockdown stopped the monthly meetings (though they soon embraced the ‘Zoom alternative’).

The request went out for wartime stories of recollections and memories which would form the basis of Glimpses

of War. Such was the response, it was quickly realised this would be at least, Volume One.

Essentially a captivating collection of short stories which invoke many emotions from the ‘lightly’ edited texts. These cover a huge variety of campaigns from the Boer War to the present day.

There are touches of humour such as the comments from one aircrew to another after a particularly hairy landing aboard *HMS Ark Royal*. Other stories are more harrowing such as Auschwitz but they are fascinating and compelling insights into each contributors’ personal war or active service. All of which reflect many incredible stories of conflict and life on the home front. This also brings home the need for books such as this to exist and help preserve the memories of combatants and civilians alike.

Personal stories *must* be preserved and with all the proceeds going to the Blind Veterans UK, which is such a worthy charity, this book encapsulates the ethos of BMMHS that ‘History Matters’.

Available on Amazon and BMMHS is to be commended in creating this tome and for the future volumes in the pipeline.

Glimpses of War, published by the British Modern Military History Society. ISBN 979-87-37745-93-6

British FAA pilot helps pave the way for Italian F-35B carrier ops

From Navy News (by kind permission of the Editor)



Fleet Air Arm aviator Barry 'Baz' Pilkington became only the second person to land the world's most advanced naval fighter on the deck of Italian carrier *Cavour*.

Lieutenant Commander Pilkington is flying F-35s on and off the Italian flagship, helping to lay the foundations for our NATO ally to join the elite club of navies operating the stealth strike fighter from aircraft carriers.

The ITS *Cavour*, which has been in service with the Marina Militare for more than a decade, is swapping veteran Harrier jets for the Lightning, the same short take-off/vertical landing variant, the 'B' model as used by the US Marine Corps, Fleet Air Arm and RAF.

The Italian carrier used to fly AV-8Bs

and underwent extensive conversion to operate the fifth-generation F-35 jets. Ultimately she'll be able to host ten of the jets in her hangar and six on the flight deck.

Like HMS *Queen Elizabeth* before her, the *Cavour* has sailed to the Eastern Seaboard of the USA for her initial trials with two F-35s from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron VX-23, one flown by USMC Major Brad Leeman, the second by Lt Cdr Pilkington.

After completing his F-35 training with the US Marine Corps a couple of years ago, Barry Pilkington remained Stateside, joining VX-23, based at US Naval Air Station Patuxent River in Maryland.

There he was assigned to the F-35 Integrated Test Force – the world's most experienced unit when it comes to operating the F-35B.

As with *Queen Elizabeth's* first visit to the same waters in the autumn of 2018, the debut of the jets aboard ITS *Cavour* helps write the Italians' 'operator's manual' for using the state-of-the-art Lightnings: deck handling, refuelling, launch and recovery by day and night and safe movement of the aircraft around the deck.

STOP PRESS: Talks to resume at the FAA Museum

By Richard Macauley

With the update from our Chairman (page 17), we want to know if Talks at the Museum are a practical proposition.

As a trial, we would like to host the October and November Talks in person at the Museum. We want to give the Membership the opportunity to tell the Council if this is the right move? Please email or phone to say that you would attend a Talk night at the Museum in October and/or November, please email or ring,

Email: soffaam@btinternet.com

Tel: 07768 562976

The results will be posted on the SoFFAAM website Saturday 4 September or ring/email as above.

The ongoing pandemic means we have to operate under Museum rules. There will be no Cheese and Wine. We will also broadcast these talks, on the night via Zoom. This enables members and visitors to attend whichever format they are comfortable with.

All tickets will be £5 and **must be pre-paid** as we cannot take cash on the door. Please pay by either PayPal, BACS or Cheque.

PayPal: Please use the links on the website or in the email that we send advertising the talks.

BACS: Lloyds Bank plc.

Sort Code: 30-99-98

Account No: 00857987

Reference any payment with your Surname/Month. The 'Month' or Months should be those you are paying for.

Cheques: Payable to SoFFAAM:

Send to: Membership Secretary,
22 Kings Yard, Bishops Lydeard,
Taunton, Somerset TA4 3LE.

Please state which Talk(s) months you are paying for and include your email address if you want to receive your Zoom email invite. Any payment will be re-funded if we cannot present at the Museum.

Please buy your tickets early and Email or telephone if you and would like help with the payment methods or need further information.

**Flying the SR-71 Blackbird
operationally by Col. Rich
Graham USAF (Retd)**

Thursday 30 September 2021 at 19:30

**Joint Air Delivery Test and Evaluation
Unit by Lt. Col. Sam Allinson**

Thursday 28 October 2021 at 19:30

RAF Presentation Team

Thursday 25 November 2021 at 19:30

**[www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/
monthly-talks/](http://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/monthly-talks/)**

Membership

By Simon Websper

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

For those members not paying by Standing Order, please note that to keep costs down, we do not send reminders routinely. If renewing by cheque, please always enclose a stamped, addressed envelope.

Please advise if you wish to switch to Standing Order. This would be very much appreciated.

A big WELCOME to the new members who have joined us since the last journal issue:

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 3708 | Mr I Stevenson | Somerset |
| 3717 | Mr C Clark | Devon |
| 3718 | Mr S Willingale | Essex |
| 3719 | The Bernard Family | Somerset |
| 3720 | Mr F Hooley | London |
| 3721 | Mr R Gardner | Berkshire |

Total number of members as of August 2021: 951.

Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: 684*

*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 as on the facing page, please do so as soon as possible, to save us the cost of reminders.

Please let us have your email address to keep updated on monthly talks and to save us postage charges on other communications.

Please remember - SoFFAAM membership makes a great and inexpensive gift!



Visit us on Facebook:
Society of Friends Fleet Air
Arm Museum

or on our website at

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

All membership queries by email to:
soffaam.mem@gmail.com

Or Tel: 07527 707204/01823 433448

For postal correspondence use the address on the join form on the facing page.

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

Membership Application

I hereby apply for membership of SoFFAAM (the Society) and will pay via:

- Bank Standing Order
- BACS transfer, bank details on standing order form, payment ref. "(your surname) MEMBS"
- PayPal using soffaam.joinup@gmail.com
- Cheque, made payable to SoFFAAM

Individual Adult Membership (age 16+) **at £14.00**

Individual Adult International (age 16+) **at £19.00**

Junior Membership (age 5-15) **at £9.00**
(must be accompanied by an adult)

Family Membership at £37.00

Life Membership UK (single payment) **at £125.00**

Life Membership International (single payment) **at £175.00**

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP (Please also complete Address below)

Name

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP (Two adults and up to 3 children)

Adult 1

Adult 2

Child 1 Age

Child 2 Age

Child 3 Age

Address

.....

..... Post Code

Telephone No

Email address

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We have a robust data protection policy. GDPR compliance can be viewed on the Society's Website.

Please complete and return this form to the Membership Secretary:

Simon Websper,
22 Kings Yard,
Bishops Lydeard,
Taunton,
Somerset TA4 3LE.

Tel: 01823 433448
Mob: 07527 707204
Email: [soffaam.
mem@gmail.com](mailto:soffaam.mem@gmail.com)

Carrier Strike Group 21

Since the CSG21 sailed in May for her first operational deployment, her embarked aircraft, 617 Squadron RAF, manned jointly by RAF and FAA personnel and USMC VMFA-211 have participated in the following;

EXERCISE STEADFAST DEFENDER

617 Sqn and VMFA-211 flying from HMS *Queen Elizabeth* in the Bay of Biscay, participated in one of the largest NATO exercises in Europe. Their individual actions were centred over southern France. Other assets included USAF F15 aircraft flying from the UK to the exercise area and USAF F35As operating alongside the Armée de l'Air from Mont-de-Marsan Air Base.

EXERCISE GALLIC STRIKE

This Anglo-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force saw the UK CSG meet with the French *Charles De Gaulle* CSG. UK and USMC F-35s and Aéronavale Rafale jets practised attacks against the two carrier groups and conducted simulated strikes against objectives in Corsica.

EXERCISE FALCON STRIKE

617 Sqn and VMFA-211 were participants flying from HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and from Amendola Air Base in Italy. Italian Air Force F35A and F35B plus F35I from the Israeli Air Force also took part alongside USAF F35A and F16 aircraft.

ANTI DAESH AND ISIS OPERATIONS OVER SYRIA AND IRAQ

The HMS *Queen Elizabeth* Air Group

flew combined combat operations in support of the UK's Operation Shader and the US Operation Inherent Resolve. This historic moment marks the first aerial combat operations from a UK carrier since 2010.

TRI LIGHTNING EXERCISE

Demonstrating the interoperability of fifth generation aircraft of three nations using the F-35B Lightning II of the USMC VMFA-211 and RAF 617sq and F-35I Adir of the Israeli Air Force. This took place in the southern region of Israel and focused on offensive operations, attacking high-value targets

EXERCISE SEA BREEZES

While HMS *Defender* and HNLMS *Evertsen* were detached and operating in the Black Sea, they were harassed by Russian Navy Su-24 and Su-33 aircraft. This was while transiting close to Crimea en-route to the Georgia port of Batumi.

HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH TRANSITED THE SUEZ CANAL ON JULY 6

HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and her escorts have passed through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. They sailed on into the Gulf of Aden and met with the US Carrier Strike Group led by the USS *Ronald Reagan* and the Amphibious Ready Group led by the USS *Iwo Jima*.