JABBERWOCK 106

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

February 2022

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

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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 four guests (one guest only for junior members) on any one visit, each at a reduced entrance fee, currently 30% off 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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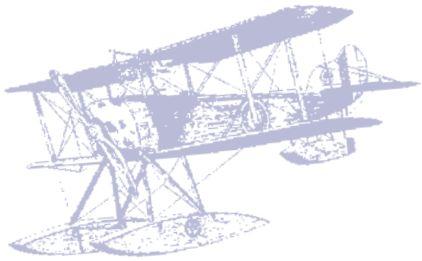

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COVER PHOTO

Royal Navy Wildcat landing on Runway 27 at RNAS Yeovilton on a rather murky day in July 2020.

See the Wildcat article on page 28 of this edition.

Photo by Richard Macauley.

Editorial

The Council of the Society wishes all our members a happy New Year, with the sincere hope that the recent gradual improvements in access to Society events will continue to improve.

In this issue, we carry the second part of Frank Ott's story "A Long Day in May", which illustrates the value of long-range air reconnaissance in the detection of a surface contact, in this case the Japanese heavy cruiser *Haguro*. These episodes of bravery and professionalism, carried out by the British Pacific Fleet (BPF) after the end of the war in Europe, are too often forgotten. We also provide a brief description of that short-lived turbo-propeller aircraft, the Wyvern. The last FAA aircraft to carry anti-ship torpedoes, the Wyvern suffered a long development period and a short service career, during which many were lost to accidents. The serious lack of emphasis on safety in the 1950s and the consequent loss of life and destruction of materiel, led to the formation of the Flight Safety Centre and the gradual emergence of the very high standards, in both flying and maintenance, that the Fleet Air Arm enjoys today.

The Museum's General Manager announced that attendance at the Museum during a difficult year gave him confidence in prospects for the forthcoming season. He had approved the use of the Auditorium by the Society to host talks in October and November. Attendance at these talks had been above expectation, although the Chairman said that the provision of a broadcast via Zoom still needed to be improved. We carry summaries of these talks, both of which were highly enjoyable. Members who live within reach of the Museum are warmly encouraged to attend future events.

In "Snippets from Council Meetings" we give readers a summary of the quarterly meetings held by Council members. Our Constitution (which you can read on our website) specifies that the Council shall consist of 14 members. The Constitution also states that Council members are the Trustees of the Society, responsible for the administration of its affairs and the proper management of its resources. For various reasons over the past year, four Council members have stepped down. We urgently need to replace these members; please contact the Secretary if you are interested in standing.

Malcolm Smith

Council snippets

From the December 2021 Council Meeting

FAAM has seen some levelling off in footfall following the Summer, although an busy October half term has helped inspire further confidence ahead of next year.

The Museum continues to be open on its traditional winter model, from Wednesday through to Sunday, 10am until 4.30pm. FAAM will also open for the entire week 27th, 2nd, between Christmas and New Year, opening from December to January inclusive. Following a rigorous tender process, the Museum has chosen the exciting creative response from StudioMB to help us deliver our Carrier Upgrade, due next Summer.

The Museum hosts Space Odyssey in January. In one of the world's largest mobile planetarium domes, Space Odyssey's giant Galileo dome, is an exciting adventure exploring the Solar System – and beyond! The session, under Concorde, will be open in the evening on Saturday 22 January 2022. Tours of Cobham Hall continue to be popular. The March 2022 session has already sold out.

The General Manager said that there was an opportunity for NMRN to buy a Rolex wristwatch, originally the property of a POW in Stalag Luft 3. The Museum's Curator said the wristwatch had been the property of Midshipman Derek Martin, who was shot down over Trondheim in 1940 and incarcerated in Stalag Luft 3. As well as the watch, the purchase would include various historic papers. The Council agreed in principle to support the purchase of this historic item.

We had cancelled the proposed Members' Day this year. The Chairman planned to reinstate the event in 2022. Restarting the Talks in FAAM for the test dates of October and November has gone very well. The Zoom element was still not completely successful, although he hoped this would improve. The wine and soft drinks at the start of the evening have been welcomed by the attendees.

New membership applications have slowed, averaging less than three per month since we last met. We have also sadly lost more lifetime members. Of the 8 new applications received since the September meeting, 1 was a referral from an existing SoFFAAM member, 4 came from the Lee-on-Solent event, 2 were through museum visits by ex-RN personnel and 1 came from visits to the FAAM website.

Letters to the editor

Dear Mr Smith

It was with pride and sadness that I read the article "Sea Venom in a Crisis" in the August 2021 edition of Jabberwock. Pride in that my father Lt Cdr John Willcox was being commemorated in a painting by Dan Hedger but sad that you were unable to spell his name correctly in the article. The book 'Wings Over Suez' (which features not only my father but also my husband), has the correct spelling of the surname Willcox with a double LL.

Please may I request that if this painting is displayed, or has a blurb attached alongside it, or on the website that the correct spelling is used. Although I see from Dan Hedger's website that he makes no mention of the pilot who managed under extreme circumstances to land the Venom, only referring to the navigator Bob Olding who suffered injury.

My father and Bob Olding kept in touch for the rest of their lives, Dad died on 23 August 2006 and Bob on 19 October 2012.

Gratefully yours
Kind regards
Rita Hoddinott (nee Willcox)

Dear Malcolm

Further to Robert Heath's observation that ATA pilot Jackie Moggridge is seen here sitting in an early Mustang (photo as in Jabberwock 98), my appeal on the Society's Facebook Page has solicited this response from Mike Roberts ....

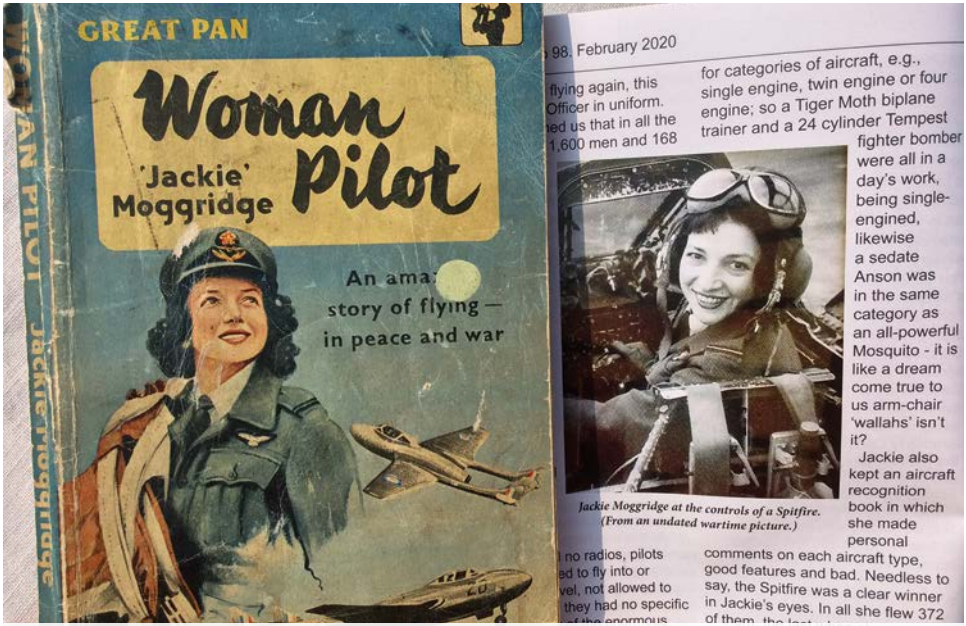
"The aircraft type has annoyed me for weeks. However, no nose visible through the windscreen indicates that it's not a single engined prop plane. No armour on the seat indicates that it's a trainer - as does the angle of the camera. The instruments and control column indicate that it's an early British jet. The side hinged canopy makes it an early Meteor trainer.

One of Jackie Moggridge's achievements was to be the first woman to fly a Meteor. However, that was before there was a two seat Meteor

trainer and the generally battered state of the cockpit, and the missing gunsight (although the cannon trigger is still there) makes me think that this is a posed/staged picture taken much later than that – probably 1960s?"

Robert also now believes this to show a Meteor T.7 cockpit although he says it could be a Meteor NF.11 which also had a side hinged canopy. Incidentally Jackie is photographed wearing RAF rather than ATA uniform as on the book cover. Aircraft type solved!

Regards
Chris Penney, SoFFAAM Facebook Editor



The photo in question as it appeared in Jabberwock 98.

Dear Malcolm

I am writing this time to make some important comments about the heading picture on page 22 of Jabberwock 105 and its caption. I am sure Frank Ott would have had similar comments. The attribution of the photo to Wikipedia is laughable. David Hobbs uses the same photo in his book "The British Pacific Fleet" ("Author's Collection"), on page 258. I have seen this and other photos of the same operation from as long ago as fifty years. The FAA Museum also

has copies.

Regarding the caption, to start with the Avengers are not in SEAC markings which were simple double-blue roundels – illustrated on pages 112 and 121 of Frank's article in his collected reminiscences "Air Power at sea in the Second World War". These markings were still carried for the raids on Pangkalan Brandon and Palembang although the task group had already been named the British Pacific Fleet. During the subsequent voyage from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific the markings were changed to those in the photo. This arrangement of blue and white roundels and bars was the British version of the standard Pacific markings of the US Navy, Marine and Army air forces, in which case the centre was a white star. The markings on Australian and New Zealand aircraft carried a slightly different centre roundel, but in no case was there any red colour used so that there was no confusion with the Japanese red "sun".

Regarding the aircraft themselves, they are not Grumman TBM-3 Avenger Mk II. They are in fact General Motors TBM-2 Avenger II of 848 squadron, carrying the fin code of HMS *Formidable* and the identity numbers of that squadron. The time and place are August 1945 and off the coast of Japan. Even by that time very few of the five Avenger squadrons that had served in the BPF had been issued with the TBM-3 Avenger III. Large numbers of Marks I and II had been shipped out to Australia from the UK and from India and Ceylon where they had been in store or were on delivery from the US. Technically they were new aircraft although many had suffered from being parked outside in the searing heat of southern India and, from the user's point of view, were anything but new. By mid-1945 TBM-3 Avenger III were being delivered direct to Australia, all of which were painted in the standard USN Glossy Sea Blue. When I was at Nowra with 706 Squadron in October 1945 we were parked near the new 828 Squadron which had been formed in August. It had been issued with twelve Avenger III, all brand new.

According to British Purchasing Commission records, JZ466 was one of 142 General Motors TBM-1 Avenger II shipped to the UK and issued to 848 Squadron (some records show this aircraft as a Mark II). The series of General Motors TBM-3 Avenger III started at JZ635. Aircraft numbers between JZ663 and JZ746 (74 in all) were those delivered direct to Australia in 1945. 706 Squadron were issued with JZ704 and JZ708 in September 1945 from the Yard at Archersfield, Brisbane, to replace older aircraft.

It is of some concern to me that inaccurate photo captions and inappropriate selection of photographs do frequently mar articles. Even the inclusion of "facts" that are not facts and "revelations" that have been explored many years before can be seen from time to time. There is no shortage of reference books in which to check real facts. I am lucky to have an active brain (at almost 99), a good memory and a good library of aviation history

books to refer to. I also retain notes that I made when I was involved in active service. I envy you being able to access the various archives and collections in the Museum.

If I can help in any other way, please ask.

Yours sincerely,
Hugh R. Langrishe
Member no. 148

Editors response. Thank you Hugh for your most comprehensive reply. We are not in a position unfortunately to check all the facts as presented to us or corroborate the content of any article or caption. This is not meant to excuse inaccuracies as the editorial team try very hard to achieve a factual document. If inaccuracies are introduced from whatever source, we can only apologise. As you say yourself some records can present differing detail. SoFFAAM and the Jabberwock team do not enjoy any special access privileges to the FAA Museum archives unfortunately. One of the satisfactions of working on Jabberwock is to receive detailed analysis from our membership that can correct our misdemeanours. This ultimately enhances the standing of the Magazine as we can publish these corrections in the Letters pages. Please continue to keep 'an eye on us'.

Dear Editor

As one with some experience of right- hand seat ops in both the Sea Venom Mk21 and 22 but not the 20, I beg to differ with the statement [in Jabberwock 85] that the Mk 20 was fitted with ejector seats from the beginning. I clearly remember looking rather fearfully at the 'O' seat in a Mk 20, which had no such thing. The right seat guy had a small circular pad rear head rest which, I think, was attached to the rear of the cockpit by a long rod. Not sure of the exact date, nor location. It is possible that it belonged to 809, which was an early, if not the first, operator of the Venom.

I picked up some additional information from a Sturtivant book in the volunteer rest room at the Museum. It states that having handed over their Hornets, 809 formed the first Venom Mk 20 squadron on 10 May 1954. That fits with me. He also records that these were replaced with Mk 21s a year later. I also understand that in its development from the RAF NF2, the Mk 20 canopy was made underwater jettisonable because 'it did not have ejector seats'. The Mk 21 was fitted with a Martin Baker 4b Seat which, if my memory services me right, was usable at ground level but 90 knots forward speed.

David Hobson's 1992 book on aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm (Liskeard Books - if this is still going) will almost certainly confirm or deny this.

If I may, sincere congratulations on a great edition.

Kind regards
Phil Phillips

Dear Editor

May I correct an error which somehow crept into my HMS *Formidable* article (J105). As this corporate advertisement circa 1944 shows, the company that built three of the four *Illustrious*-class fleet carriers was Vickers-Armstrongs Ltd. This is all too frequently erroneously shortened to Vickers-Armstrong and I've even seen it published without the dash which also isn't right.

Space precluded *Formidable's* badge being published in J105 but illustrated here. The new Type 31 frigate badge will be circular whereas the WW2 carrier's was pentagonal. Do readers know the heraldic significance of the five tridents?

Another mystery is the carrier's Pennant Number. Why had it no letter prefix and why was she allocated 67 when the first of the class *Illustrious* became 87?

Chris Penney.

Dear Malcolm

Recently, I was searching the web for a good bed-time read and I was attracted to a book entitled." Sea and Sky" by David Howard. Unfortunately, the book was out of stock and other searches have come to nought.

By complete coincidence, it dawned on me as I read the book description, that I had flown with David Howard. It was early 1976. He was Commander (Air) at Yeovilton, and I was a Junior Naval Airman on the airfield buffers party. He was a God-like figure with his huge bearing and authority and all his subjects bowed before him in fear. I had the chance of flying in a FRADU Hunter T7, and I was shocked to learn that Cdr Howard was to be the pilot. Despite his stature, he treated me like a father on an outing with his son. During the flight he gave me some basic flying instruction and I was given plenty of stick time. Later in the flight, we made an approach to RAF St Mawgan for a practice diversion and had a close encounter with a gull. Whether it was a result of this, I can't remember, but the aircraft was only able to achieve two 'greens' out of three. Anyway, we returned to Yeovilton and landed safely. For a 16 year-old, it was an exciting experience and I enjoyed every second. Cdr Howard was an extremely pleasant gentleman and I was given a rare insight to his true character. He was even kind enough to write a note to my Divisional Officer expressing my good conduct!

I would like to ask if any members know where I could obtain a copy of the book?

With regards,
David Marchant
Member 2032

Dear Jabberwock team

I am really impressed by the quality of Jabberwock Issue 105 and so glad that my father's painting entitled 'Finale' of fellow Canadian, Lt Robert Hampton Gray's last action in attacking the *Amakusa* was a part of it.

My Dad really enjoyed the actual copies you sent him, as he was able to read it over and over again. He now jokes that with his memory loss it is similar to reading a magazine for the first time each day. We have just celebrated his 90th birthday on Monday 1 November.

The painting by Don Connolly as depicted in Jabberwock 105. © Don Connolly

Cheers from Mary-Ellen
Quebec, Canada

Albert Medal recipients for the rescue of Edward De Ville

By Graham Mottram

Edward Alexander De Lossy De Ville.

Although this is a slight diversion from the series of Albert Medal awards to the RNAS it would be remiss to overlook an incredibly brave act which resulted in a Gold Award without it being made posthumously, and which was inextricably linked to the RNAS.

Edward Alexander De Lossy De Ville was the first son of the second marriage of Baron De Lossy De Ville, of Hainaut in Belgium, a champagne importer, and his German second wife, Eva. The family was comfortably off and lived in Hampstead. Edward trained to be a chartered accountant and served in the Artists Rifles Territorials from 1907 to 1912, rising to corporal. He joined the RNAS in April 1915 and learned to fly at Hendon, receiving this RAeC ticket, 1281 on May 29 1915. Although not rated as the greatest of pilots he was regarded as a good officer and by September 1917 he was ranked as Acting Flight Commander and instructing on seaplanes at Calshot on the south coast of England.

On September 14 he was detailed to take a Sopwith Baby seaplane east to carry out some exercises over Whale Island at Portsmouth. There was low cloud over Whale Island making flying tricky and as De Ville turned off to the north his aircraft came to a sudden halt and he was knocked unconscious. Horsea Island housed a number of "Poulsen masts", lattice structures some 350 feet tall providing aerials for early wireless communications. De Ville had flown straight into one of them. To his eternal good fortune, De Ville's propeller hub jammed between the cross bracing struts of the mast and held the aeroplane fast.

The noise of the crash and the impact on the mast really focused the attention of three sailors who had been detailed off to paint the mast. Once they had recovered from the shock, and realised that the mast was not going to collapse

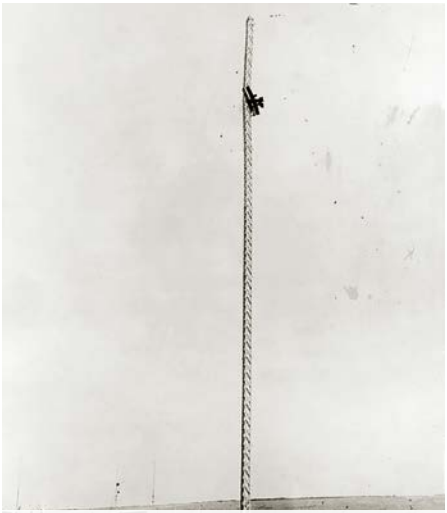
immediately, they set about seeing to the condition of the pilot.

Seaman Nicholas Rath RNR, Ordinary Seaman Richard Knowlton RN and Deckhand George Abbott RNR embarked on an extremely hazardous rescue mission. They climbed up the mast for 100 feet until they reached the boatswain's chair which ran inside the mast. Rath climbed in and was hoisted up by other men on the ground, until he reached the Baby, and found De Ville hanging out of the cockpit, unconscious. Rath climbed out of the chair and held on to De Ville's body whilst the boatswain's chair was used to bring Knowlton and Abbott up to his level. These two men passed another line to Rath, who secured it to De Ville, allowing them to drag him from the aeroplane and carefully lower him to the ground. "The three men were very well aware of the damaged and insecure condition of the mast, which was bent to an angle where the seaplane had become wedged. One of the three supports of the mast was fractured, and, so far as the men knew, the mast or seaplane might at any time have collapsed."

It is also worth noting how fortunate De Ville was to hit the mast full on in the way that he did. A few feet to either side and his wings would have been ripped off by the mast structure or its bracing cables and he would undoubtedly have crashed to his death. And there is no surviving record as to how the wreckage of the Baby was extricated and the mast repaired – that must have been one heck of an evolution for some poor engineering officer.

Nicholas Rath received the Albert Medal in Gold, and Knowlton and Abbott the Bronze Medal.

Edward De Ville was conveyed to Haslar Hospital and was off flying



The 350ft Poulsen high mast. © IWM

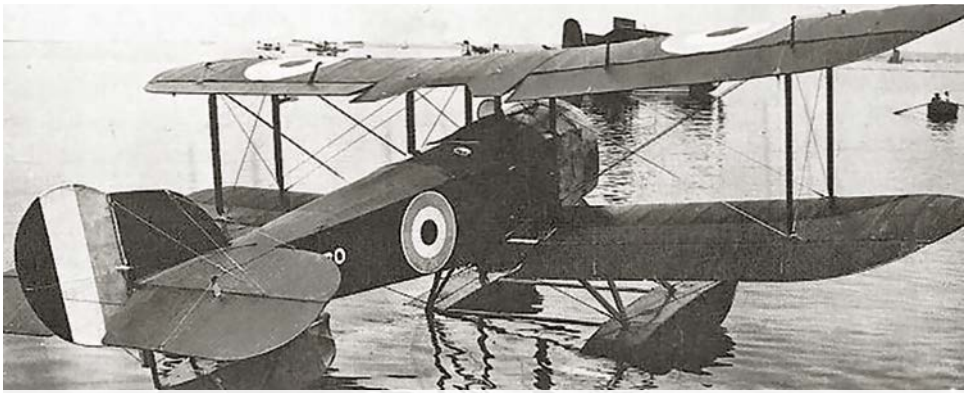
The Sopwith Baby perched precariously. © IWM

Ordinary Seaman Richard Knowlton RN.

Deckhand George Abbott RNR.

for the next two months. He survived the war and remained in the RAF as a Captain, spending much of 1919 with the RAF units supporting the White Russians against the Bolshevik Revolution, variously listed as 221 Sqn, and 62 & 63 Wings at Petrovsk. After being awarded the OBE, De Ville was honourably discharged at the end of 1919. He enjoyed a successful business career and died in 1976.

All of his rescuers also survived the war, Nicholas Rath returning to his home village of Balbriggan in Ireland and living his life out in that area until his death in 1960. Knowlton and Abbott both exchanged their medals for the George Cross, Knowlton dying in 1981.



A Sopwith Baby, the type in which De Ville had his accident.

A Long Day in May

Part two by Frank Ott D.S.C.

IJN *Haguro*. © militaryimages.net

We continue with the second part of Frank's detailed account which started in the last edition of Jabberwock.

Mike Fuller and Eric Lansdell in Duty G also sent out an initial sighting report when they came upon the 26th Destroyer Flotilla but quickly identified them as friendly and cancelled their report. An hour or so later, having jettisoned their bombs to lighten their aircraft and so extend their endurance, they came upon the two small Japanese vessels previously encountered by Bums and Bowden. These were identified as *Kurishoyo* and her escort. While circling them they sighted two larger ships steering north and identified them as a *Nachi* class cruiser and a *Minekazi* class destroyer. They sent their sighting report at 11:51 which was about the time Crompton and I were returning to our carrier. The sighting report was also picked up by the 26th Destroyer Flotilla which had a long way to go, and now everyone knew what we were really after.

Duty G remained for an hour shadowing until he reached his Planned Limit of Endurance -PLE - and set course for base at 12:50. Like others before him when he reached his ETA position there were no ships to be seen. They had to be homed by R/T and eventually landed on at 15:15 with fifteen gallons of fuel in a position eighty miles from their ETA after five hours and ten minutes airborne.

When Crompton and I landed on *Emperor* at 12:15 we went to the operations room to report and to be debriefed. We were told that the Japanese cruiser and destroyer had been found by the C.O. and that as the senior crew we would be leading a strike

by all available aircraft as soon as they could be made ready. 851 Squadron had started the day with nine aircraft of which two had been lost, two more were unserviceable, one with engine trouble and one had hit the barrier when landing on; two more were still airborne. That just left three for the strike.

After a quick lunch we assembled for briefing, Crompton, myself and PO Traverse - Duty P, Rowe Evans, Ashplant, and PO Thomas - Duty Q, and Eedle, Davy and PO Howatson - Duty R. We looked up our recognition charts to find that a *Nachi* class cruiser, which turned out to be *Haguro*, and was 10,000 tons displacement, 656 feet long, 62 feet beam; its armament was ten eight inch guns in twin turrets and eight 4.7 inch secondary armament with three inch armoured protection and a speed of 33 knots. The destroyer *Kamikazi* was 1445 tons 336 feet long with four 4.7 inch guns plus anti aircraft guns and a speed of 34 knots.

Our instructions were "to search for and attack one cruiser escorted by a destroyer" When first sighted the ships were heading north towards the Andamans but apparently decided to head back to Singapore and the last report from Duty G gave their course and speed as 140° at 10 knots. The estimated position by 15:00 was 6°24′ north, 97°08″ east. As before we had to fly eastwards between Great Nicobar and Sumatra at 500 feet to avoid radar and hopefully there would be no enemy aircraft. Before we took off we had a lot of good wishes from everyone including some Hellcat pilots who shook our hands. They seemed to think that we needed a lot of luck, and so did we. They would have loved to join us but the distance was too great and we did not even get a fighter escort to see us past Sabang. Our Twelve 500lb bombs would hardly do much damage and I have always thought that we should have provided continuous shadowing, singly or in pairs until the destroyers could get there with their torpedoes. At the time we were launched the four carriers and their escort were 110 miles almost due west of Sabang the north point of Sumatra and it was difficult to know why they stayed so far away from the search area.

Frank Ott and Co. © Supplied by the Author

Once we were airborne it was my job in the leader to navigate and find the enemy. The other observers would keep their own plots in case they had to return on their own. The wing aircraft would use more fuel in keeping formation on a trip at the Avenger's maximum range. I concluded that the wind had not changed in speed or direction since the morning and decided not to break

formation to check the wind and delay the flight. We set course at 13:47 heading 070° at a speed of 150 knots, Crompton leading with Eedle to starboard and Rowe Evans to port. A direct flight to *Haguro* would have taken us much too close to Sabang airfield. After 90 miles at 14:23 we turned to starboard on to 094°. The aircraft passed just north of the 26th Destroyer Flotilla one hour after we started 150 miles to the east of the carriers. Our ETA at *Haguro's* 15:00 position was 15:16, a trip of 212 miles, but when we got there, no ships were in sight. The standard procedure in such circumstances was to make a "square search" which involved flying in a square and, if necessary another larger one so as to cover an increasing area The cruiser's last reported course was 140° so I turned on to that heading for 20 miles, then flew 090° for another 20 miles and at 15:33 turned again on to 320° for the third leg. At 15:41 we sighted two ships on the starboard bow and identified them as the enemy cruiser and destroyer. I was able to get PO Traverse to send the sighting report''One heavy cruiser and one destroyer bearing 040° range 12 miles course 090°". They were about 30 miles from their expected position. I was glad that we had found them as it would have been a problem to know how long we could have gone on searching before we had to break off, being so far from the carriers.

We now had to gain height for the attack. Each aircraft was carrying four 500lb semi armour piercing bombs. The method of attack was dive bombing starting at 10,000 feet in a 45° dive and releasing the bombs at 3000 feet in a stick with 100 feet interval between them. The cloud level was 20,000 feet with good visibility so there was no possibility of surprise. It took some time to reach 10.000 feet and get into position to attack. Kenneth Crompton started his dive out of the sun at 16:05, weaving to avoid the enemy's anti aircraft flak which was accurate for height but ahead of the aircraft, and medium flak in the dive. The cruiser was slow in opening fire and in taking avoiding action by turning to port as it was attacked from the port quarter. Crompton made his getaway to starboard, jinking and weaving at 3000 feet with full throttle.

Adrian Rowe Evans dived ten to fifteen seconds later and met heavy flak. After dropping his bombs he pulled away to starboard going down to 300 feet and having to avoid splash shells that were being fired by *Haguro*. John Eedle dived simultaneously with the leader, swinging to port on a broader bearing. He pulled out rapidly and flew straight on weaving and jinking at 3000 feet at 290 knots. Afterwards he felt that we got too high and too close before starting the dive which was thus longer and steeper and he had to roll forward his tail trim to keep the nose down on the target. His observer John Davy was sure they had a hit. All agreed that the flak was worst during the breakaway and one shell lifted Eedle's aircraft but caused no damage. Luckily there was only one small hole in one aircraft wing when we got home.

As Crompton broke away I was able to take photographs which suggested

a probable hit and one very near miss. The aircraft reformed and we set off for home at 16:10, course 274°, 220 miles to go and ETA at 17:30. Traverse sent off my report "have attacked enemy cruiser with bombs - result of attack probable hits" and gave the latest course and speed. *Haguro* had changed to 090°. This was picked up by the 26th Destroyer Flotilla which was intent on cutting off the enemy's return to Singapore.

The journey back was uneventful apart from poor visibility and low cloud which we flew below, and there was some anxiety over fuel, particularly in the two formating aircraft. Nevertheless we were all pretty happy at the way things had gone and I had smiling faces either side of me. We found the carriers without too much difficulty and Eedle and Rowe Evans who were lower on fuel, landed first. We landed at 18:25 after a flight of nearly five hours and like Rowe Evans and his crew we had been on two flights totalling over nine and a half hours. 851 Squadron and its Avengers had carried out a successful search and strike at maximum range, about 250 miles from its carrier. This was possibly the longest attacking round trip for Fleet Air Arm carrier-borne aircraft and one of the few dive bombing attacks on a major enemy warship.

Everyone expected that there would be another strike launched or possibly a reconnaissance to shadow the enemy ships until the destroyers could catch them; but there were no sorties, presumably because of the extreme range, which would have increased if *Haguro* had gone further east. And our own carriers did not sail east to reduce the distance. We could only wait as there was no further news. We knew that the 26th Destroyer Flotilla was chasing and could hardly catch *Haguro* before night.

As we learned later, Captain Power was sweeping towards Penang on the Malayan coast to cut off the enemy cruiser. A radar contact was made at extreme range by HMS *Venus* at around 23:00, which was at first disbelieved but this was later confirmed and a sighting report was sent just before midnight. The five destroyers of 26th Destroyer Flotilla had got ahead of the cruiser and its accompanying destroyer which were steering south towards them. Their attack with torpedoes and guns started against their more powerful opponent at 01:00 when the opposing forces were approaching each other at 50 knots. But just as the attack was to start *Haguro* realised what was happening and turned away north west only to find *Venus* ahead of her whilst the other destroyers were chasing after her. *Saumarez* had to turn sharply to avoid *Kamikazi* and *Haguro* who opened fire with both main and secondary guns with very great accuracy deluging *Saumarez* with water, removing the top of her funnel and one five inch shell penetrated one boiler room, where two stokers died and a third died later from scalding steam. Fortunately the shell did not explode and was later removed from the boiler where it had lodged and thrown over the side by Commander (E) Geoffrey Robins and Stoker Petty Officer Enoch Davies who later received the DSC and

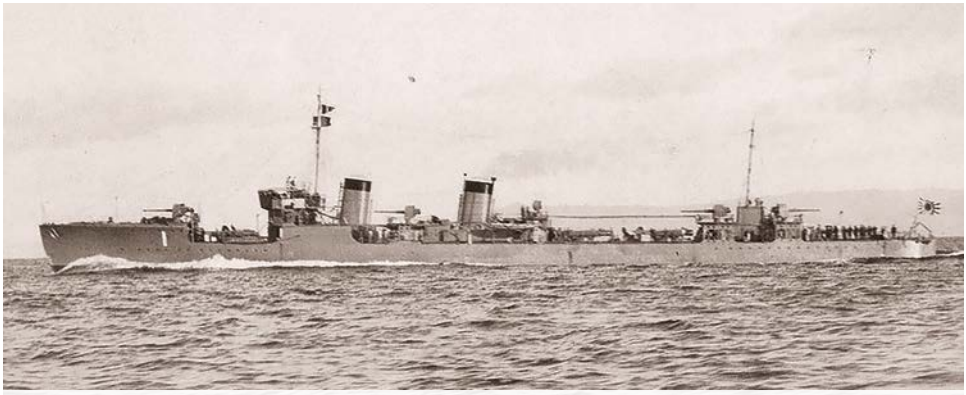
DSM respectively.

Saumarez had fired her torpedoes as did the other destroyers in turn, and they also engaged with their guns. Several torpedo hits were seen and by 01:30 *Haguro* was sinking. The destroyer *Kamikazi* had withdrawn from the fight. *Haguro* sank at 02:10 after a classic destroyer attack which had been pressed home with great skill and courage, The 26th Destroyer Flotilla sailed to rejoin the fleet and *Kamikazi* later picked up survivors.

The whole operation had been completed within 24 hours. The 26th Destroyer Flotilla had steamed over 300 miles at 27 knots in pursuit of the enemy ships, 851 Squadron had flown more sorties and hours in a day that ever before or after and had again proved the importance of ship borne aircraft. Together they had achieved the objective of sinking *Haguro*.

Later that day a sea and air search was made for Bums and his crew but unfortunately was not successful, although Bums saw the aircraft. After nine days they drifted on to the coast and were taken prisoner. After VJ Day 851 Squadron was able to pick them up and bring them back to the United Kingdom in *Shah*.

I am indebted to the Fleet Air Arm Museum for access to 851 Squadron's records which were donated by Lieutenant Commander (A) M. T. Fuller, DSC, RNVR. and for the use of photographs from its collection; also to the researches of Mr. W. B. Black who told me the cruiser was *Haguro* and who has made a detailed investigation and study of what he called "this classic co-ordinated operation, in which the submarines reported the initial sighting and later movements, the aircraft harried the enemy forcing him eastwards which allowed the destroyers to cut off his retreat and sink the cruiser in a classic night attack." I have also referred to "Sink The *Haguro*." by John Winton which is a detailed researched account of the whole operation including the background and decisions affecting it.



IJN *Kamikazi*. © IWM

Wyvern packs a wallop

By Malcolm Smith

A fine picture of Wyvern VW867 in flight, the first of 20 pre-production aircraft and showing the contra-rotating propellers and the jet pipe of the Python engine. © Peter de Jong Collection

"Wyvern packs a wallop" was the title to a Westland publicity photograph of the Wyvern TF (Tactical Fighter) Mk 4, the definitive version of the aircraft (later re-named as the S4) and the result of a complex development programme.

The publicity material goes on to say "Special honours went to this aircraft for its startling performance with its military load of one torpedo and 16 rockets. The aircraft is powered by an Armstrong Siddeley Python turbo-prop engine: the high-frequency buzz-plus-whine of this engine is a recognition feature."

The origin of the Wyvern's design lies in a wartime specification, N117/44, for a long-range naval fighter, powered by the 24-cylinder Rolls Royce Eagle piston engine. Nominated the W34 by Westland, the prototype first flew in December 1945. In a foretaste of a troubled future, this aircraft was lost

in October 1947 when the propeller bearings failed, killing the test pilot, Sqn Ldr Peter Gamer. The second prototype crashed in October 1949; its test pilot, Sqn Ldr Mike Graves, also lost his life.

The Wyvern was the last in a long line of RN torpedo-carrying aircraft, dating back to the early days of naval aviation. The Fairey Swordfish had demonstrated the effectiveness of the air-launched torpedo against surface ships early in the Second World War, but by the time the Wyvern entered service, naval warfare had changed and the aircraft was never used operationally in the torpedo-carrying role. The post war years were a time of rapid technological change, and the complex piston-engine Eagle was cancelled in 1947, to be replaced in operational Wyverns by the Python. With this engine, and equipped with an ejection seat, the Mark TF2 first flew in March 1949. The TF2 evolved in the TF4, later re-named the S4, which became the definitive operational type. Its lengthy and troubled development period meant that it was outdated almost as soon as it came into service, being much slower than contemporary jet-powered aircraft, such as the Seahawk.

The TF4 entered front line service with three squadrons, 813, 827, 830 and 831, commencing in September 1954. First operating from HMS *Albion*, 813 Squadron suffered several total losses from engine flameout on catapult launch. The problem was not solved for several months. The aircraft was used operationally in the brief Suez operation in autumn 1956, when aircraft of 830 Squadron, operating from HMS *Eagle*, flew ground attack sorties over a week before the operation was ignominiously terminated. Two aircraft were lost to Egyptian ground fire, both pilots ejecting and surviving. The aircraft was withdrawn from service in spring 1958.

Wyvern VW867 again in flight, showing a potential weapon load. © Westland Aircraft

"Bombing on the splash" Operation Shop Window, November 1955, A flight deck of turbo prop aircraft, Wyverns in the foreground with AS1 Gannets astern. © J Perring private collection

Wyvern of 827, crashed on HMS *Eagle* May 1955. © J Perring private collection

1. © J Perring private collection

2. © J Perring private collection

3. © J Perring private collection

4. © J Perring private collection

5. A fortunate escape from a potentially fatal landing incident. This final photograph shows the damage to the propeller blades from contact with the deck. © J Perring private collection

The one that got away

By Mike Groth, abridged by Richard Macauley

Hawker Hunter WV381 in happier times at RNAS Yeovilton on 30/08/1972, just a few months before she crashed at RNAS Lee-on-Solent. © Chris England

Rather like fishing, photography is full of stories of 'the one that got away'.

I was with 781 Naval Air Squadron at Lee-on-Solent in the early 1970s as a civilian electrical airframe fitter. Much of my spare time was photographing everything that moved. Jet movements in particular caught my interest. As a consequence the sound of a jet running would have me scurrying down to the south side of No.l Bellman (now housing the gliding club aircraft) with my camera tucked discreetly out of sight inside my overalls as photography, of course, being 'forbidden'.

The old gun butts were an ideal vantage point, being nearest to the perimeter track to the main runway at roughly two thirds the way along its 4,294 ft length. There was also the additional advantage of being out of view of everyone.

Most of Lee's jet movements were generated by NATIU (Naval Trials Installation Unit) situated in the 'T2' hangar (Overlord) adjacent to the Main Camp. At that time NATIU were modifying Hunter GA.11s for FRADU at Yeovilton. Essentially involving an improved radio fit and installing a 'Harley' light in the nose, displacing the gun-ranging radar. No test flying was required by this work, therefore flights were confined to arrival and despatch. Such flights were easily predicted as a couple of hours prior to an arrival or departure the CHAG (Chain Arrester Gear) was rigged. Consisting of two arrester wires, this was strung across the runway, raised off the surface by

crescents of old tyres, and attached to many tons of heavy chain link looped in such a way as to play out progressively when pulled. Simple but very effective.

On 1 November 1972 the chains were rigged and, parked outside NATIU's hangar, was Hunter WV381 ready to return to Yeovilton with the Station Flight's handsome green Sea Devon XJ324 having arrived with the ferry pilot, Lt. Michael Sharp, RN.

At about 15:00 the Hunter started up. I collected my camera, hidden of course from view, and made my way to the gun butts. The Hunter taxied around the eastern perimeter track and reached the threshold of runway 23/05 as I approached my vantage point, camera at the ready. The Hunter wound up to take off power and promptly wound down again. After idling at the end of the runway for a couple of minutes it returned to NATIU. Disappointed, I returned the camera to the crew-room as I was going off duty at 16:15 and resigned to the fact if the aircraft was to leave later I would miss it.

As I left for the day, the Hunter started up again and began to taxi to the runway. If I got the timing right I could be at the 05 runway lights as it took off - now that would be a good picture.

I sat in the car awaiting the right moment to set off down the perimeter track. As the Hunter was turning onto the 23/05 threshold, two Wasp helicopters departed and were returning to their base Portland. They air taxied from the 781 apron and settled onto the perimeter track in front of me to await the Hunter to clear. Damn! This means I was going to miss the Hunter again! I couldn't drive around them so I had to wait. Despite the din from the Wasps ahead of me I could hear the Hunter wind up to take-off power, nose leg compressed brakes off... nose nodding up as the aircraft accelerated down the runway... puffs of smoke from the wheels as the CHAG wires were trampled... and then passing from view behind the Wasps and No.I Bellman hangar.

"A bit late getting off", I thought. The Wasps sprang into the air, southwards and I started off behind them around the peri track. As I rounded the bend by No.I Bellman I scanned the sky expecting to see the Hunter disappearing across the Solent, but nothing! Continuing down the peri-track, trying to work out what had happened, I became increasingly conscious of a difference in the scenery ahead of me. Usually the view from this position consisted of the land, the sky and a black demarcation line between the two in the form of the boundary fence. After several seconds it struck me. 'Bloody hell, the fence's missing!'.

Sure enough, there was the Isle of Wight as seen through a large gaping hole where the fence should have been. Suddenly, from the corner of my left eye, I saw something plummet to the ground just yards from my car. Looking around I could see a mass of billowing silk on the ground. At last things began to dawn on me. Pulling the car over to the edge of the peri-track, I was ready to run over to where the injured pilot now lay and help. But two naval officers had beaten me to it, having sprinted from the control tower - quite a distance to run!

The smashed fence at the end of the runway. © The News

Meanwhile one of the Wasps had dipped down low over the submerged Hunter which had come to rest 250 yards from the shore, whilst the other maintained a safe distance. Apart from the fin jutting out of the water and the bubbles caused by the heat from the engine, there was little to see of the aircraft.

Having also made his way from the tower Lt Cdr Day, the Air Engineering Officer of 781 Sqn was surveying the smashed wicker work in a very relaxed manner. As I walked over to him he nonchalantly mused, "Made a big hole, didn't it!". As we stood discussing the whole incident a local woman came rushing up. She had seen the whole thing and was convinced that the pilot was still in the aircraft. She became quite irritated at the thought of us worrying about the damage that had been caused to the airfield rather than about the poor stricken pilot still strapped in the aircraft. No matter how much we tried to explain, the woman would not listen to reason and went away thoroughly shocked and disgusted with our apparent negligence. During all of this, Lt Sharp had been picked up by ambulance and taken to Haslar hospital suffering from what were described as 'multiple bruises'.

Investigations later revealed that the aircraft had suffered a malfunction of the Air Speed Indicator system. Having released the brakes and applied full power the aircraft had accelerated down the runway. However the Indicated Air Speed showed that, at the point at which the aircraft should have been airborne, it was only doing 80 kts. It should have been more than double that figure. Realising that he was rapidly running out of runway on which to stop, Lt Sharp chopped the throttles, selected full flap and dropped the arrester hook. The latter, on a Hunter, is not fully navalised and is meant purely as a last ditch attempt to stop that aircraft at relatively slow speeds. Consequently it was ripped from its mountings as it engaged the CHAG wires. The brakes were heavily applied, producing the puffs of white smoke that I had seen as the aircraft went over the wires. Finally, there only remained the Martin-Baker option. I must have just missed the ejection and, as I rounded the corner by No.I Bellman, the pilot was already on his way down. Unfortunately the roof of the car prevented me from witnessing

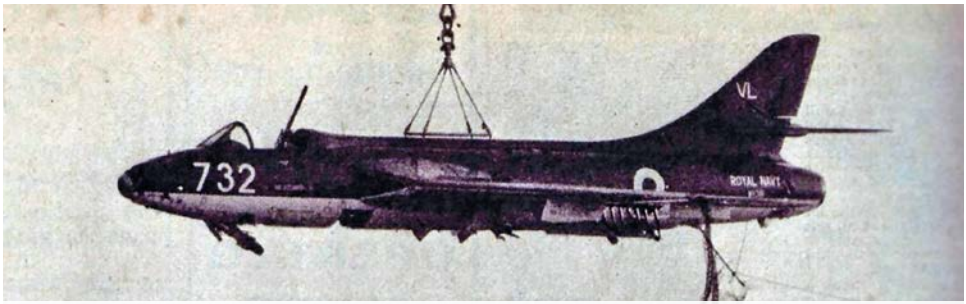
this spectacle.

The following day, having been for a local flight in Sea Devon XJ348 as a passenger and viewing the Hunter still in its watery grave, I was sitting in the 781 Squadron crew room waiting for something interesting to happen when Freddie Wills popped his head around the corner. "Mike, the CO has been on the phone from the tower.", he said. "AIU are interested in any pictures you might have got of the Hunter last night." So much for my secret photograph taking. It seems as though everyone knew about it!

On 2 November the substantially complete WV381 was lifted from the sea and placed onto a barge for recovery back to HMS *Daedalus*. Later that day a large floating crane was brought around from Portsmouth and lifted the aircraft from the water. No sooner had it done so than a thick bank of fog rolled in and everything disappeared. The plan to bring the aircraft ashore via the slipway had to be abandoned and instead was taken further out to sea before heading for the harbour. Having been winched on to the jetty at Fleetlands the Hunter was brought back to the AIU at Lee-on-Solent via road.

A large floating crane was brought in from Portsmouth Dockyard to recover WV381, taken from the Echo newspaper.

Not only had I missed all of the high drama; I had also missed a wonderful photo opportunity. Perhaps this was the ultimate 'one that got away' story!



On 2 November the substantially complete WV381 was lifted from the sea and placed onto a barge for recovery back to HMS *Daedalus*. © The News

A VIP Experience

By Edward Ashill

The Queen's Flight BAe 146 ZA700 and the group that flew to France and back. © Edward Ashill

In 2004, Bristol and Gloucestershire ATC Wing's summer camp was at RAF Uxbridge.

Nobody had arranged any air experience flying for cadets so far, which was the ultimate challenge for me. As usual the group photograph was taken in the first day or two of camp, to allow ample time to produce photos for each cadet. The spot chosen was in front of the plastic replica of a Spitfire, beside the main gate. On the next day the camp adjutant was tasked to pick-up the photos at RAF Northolt. I managed to convince the adjutant that I might be able to scrounge some air charts, for training purposes, from the Aeronautical Information Documents Unit (AIDU).

Having collected the photos and made a quick successful visit to the mapping section, we returned to exit the airfield. In the distance was the 32 Squadron hangar. There we met the Officer Commanding 32 Squadron, chatting to the chief pilot. After the niceties were dealt with I asked the big question ... "Might we be flown in one of their aircraft?" The Wing Commander without a blink, said, "Yes, if you can get a signed NATO movement order giving ten cadets and two staff clearance to fly on a Prover flight to Dole in Eastern

France." The trip was to check the route and low-level and approach to the Drop Zone (DZ), for a visit by the Duke of Edinburgh celebrating a Para drop at Chalon-sur-Saone some sixty years previously. We couldn't believe it was possible. My oppo nearly fainted and I gulped. The only other provision was that we had to pitch-up for an 07:00 start. He added "That is the aeroplane you are flying in over there." He pointed to the Queen's BAe146 ZA700. "No problem, sir!" was my almost inaudible reply. I was amazed. This was the first time air cadets had been offered a flight in an aircraft of the Queen's Flight.

At precisely 08:00 local time, we did a rolling take-off on Runway 25, turning left on to a southerly track to France. In the climb-out we could see the new Terminal 5 at Heathrow. We flew west of Paris towards a small airfield at Chalon-sur-Saone. One of the cadets had a bird's eye view because he was sitting in the right hand seat on the flight deck during the time we passed Paris. We landed at Dole airport, which had been known as Tavaux, in WWII, when it was a Luftwaffe base for German fighter aircraft. Dole is situated in one of the best wine-growing areas of France.

During the time it took the crew to check out the facilities at Chalon, we took the cadets to a nearby supermarket for refreshments. When we arrived back at the aeroplane, the cadets were amazed to see how many locals had amassed to see the unique visit of an RAF VVIP transport.

We were soon back in the air on a northward track, passing Paris at FL300 to the west. As we let down into London TMA, we could see Hampton Court beside the River Thames. The landing at Northolt was the smoothest I had ever experienced, but that was to be expected wasn't it, having been flown by the best crew in the RAF? That was something the cadets could tell their grandchildren for sure!

Wildcats Update

By Chris Penney

Deployed within Carrier Strike Group 21, 815 Squadron Wildcats HMA2's prowl the Bay of Bengal. One has the new Martlet weapon fit. © MoD

As Rod Dean highlighted during his SoFFAAM lecture about the North American Sabre's family tree recently, a military aircraft can evolve throughout its life, be it from airframe and engine redesign or by the introduction of an improved weapons fit.

Such modifications need trial and testing before release to service. Yeovilton's maturing Fleet Air Arm and Army Air Corps Wildcat helicopter force has recently undergone a series of such tests to increase frontline capabilities. Three FAA squadrons, 815, 825 and 847, operate the Wildcat, with 847 dedicated to supporting 3 Commando Brigade, Royal Marines.

Jabberwock 102 covered the naval Wildcat HMA2's adaptation to carry the new Martlet air-to-surface missile on stub wing pods mounted just behind the cockpit. Following test-firing in the Cardigan Bay ranges off Wales, the weapon system, which has a 3kg (6.6lb) warhead, was declared operational in late 2020. It was deployed by ships' flights of the two Type 23 frigates and two Type 45 destroyers of the HMS *Queen Elizabeth*-led Carrier Strike Group 21 (CSG) that headed east of

Suez in May 2021. Before these warships exited the Indian Ocean for the Arabian Sea last October HMS *Defender's* 219 Flight Wildcat of 815 Squadron fired a Martlet at a red inflatable target; a tomato in 'Jack Speak'. It marked the first time the Fleet Air Arm have used it on active service.

The new weapon adds to the layered defence around the Royal Navy's *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers, the outer protection of which is a stealthy *Astute* class SSN nuclear-powered hunter killer submarine. Wildcat HMA2's can carry 20 missiles in racks of five, which are guided by the observer sitting beside the pilot. On launching, Martlet rides a laser beam, accelerating to one and half times the speed of sound in just 0.3 seconds and can be used against stationary or fast-manoeuvring seaborne targets. It complements surface ship-equipped Martlet systems and can also be used against UAVs and even helicopters. CSG21 Air Wing Commander Captain James Blackmore remarked: "Martlet is a lightweight multi-role missile [LMM] recently introduced for the Wildcat and provides an offensive and defensive capability against small boats and [other such] maritime targets that may pose a threat to the Carrier Strike Group."

Such threats can be seen on an almost daily basis by Her Majesty's Ships' patrolling the Arabian Gulf from HMS *Jufair*, the Naval Support Facility at Bahrain, in what remains a highly dynamic operating environment for the RN and Royal Fleet Auxiliary. The region's volatile nature will be countered with a new airborne deterrent in 2022. The Fleet Air Arm's Sea Venom anti-ship missile weapon system is being fully integrated into ships' flight Wildcat strike force this year. It replaces Sea Skua, first used in combat during the

A pair of AAC Wildcat AH1s loaded aboard JADTEU's C-17 cargo hold airframe mock-up at Brize.

1982 Falklands War. With a 30kg (66lb) warhead, the drop-launched infra-red subsonic missile's introduction is making good a capability gap that has existed since the Wildcat replaced the Westland Lynx in Fleet Air Arm service. Sea Venom's specific purpose is to destroy littoral patrol vessels as well as seriously damage open water warships of the corvette design.

Helicopters are agile and do not need a runway from which to operate, but getting a Wildcat from Yeovilton to, say, the UK Joint Logistics Support Base at Al Duqm, in the Sultanate of Oman, can mean a trek by sea. The aircraft needs first to be prepared for seaborne transport by the Royal Logistics Corps from Marchwood military port on Southampton Water. Alternatively, if rapid deployment is the name of the game, it is far better to whistle up a 99 Squadron C-17 Globemaster strategic airlifter from RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire. However, this still involves a part-dismantling and after arrival the other end, reassembly and then an air test, before being ready for frontline operation.

When the Wildcat fleet first entered service, it underwent air portability assessment for transport by air within the cavernous hold of the RAF's Globemaster fleet. This was performed by the UK Joint Air Delivery Test and Evaluation Unit (JADTEU) based at Brize Norton, who gave the Society such an informative presentation in October 2021. Such trials involve a full-scale C-17 cargo hold mock-up which JADTEU use, thereby ensuring a partially dismantled Wildcat can be freely manoeuvred

HMS *Kent's* 206 Flight/815 Naval Air Squadron Wildcat HMA2 showed the flag throughout the UK Carrier Strike Group 21 Indo-Pacific cruise. Note the Sting Ray torpedo. © MoD

within the confined space. This airframe simulator reduces risk and means the Unit does not have to request a C-17 to be taken out of service for what can be a time consuming and costly process.

As Wildcat's capabilities have increased, so has usage and the helicopter has become a more in demand asset, particularly with the Royal Marines. Speed of deployment is important, causing engineers at Yeovilton to look again at how quickly a Wildcat could be loaded for air transportation. Typically, it has taken a six-strong engineering team one and a half days in the UK to disassemble the Wildcat, and two days post flight to get it back airworthy. The established 'tie-down scheme' required the rotors to be removed from the helicopter to make the load safe for travel. The rescue hoist also had to be removed – a time consuming job, made more demanding by having to remove explosive cartridges. The tie-down procedure was drawn up seven years ago and 847's engineers reckoned they could knock some extra hours off the process, based on their worldwide deployment experience. They took two helicopters to JADTEU to practise. FAA Air Engineer Petty Officer Richard Plummer said: "Having done multiple [Wildcat] C-17 moves over the years it was easy to see areas where the approved tie-down scheme could be improved upon." By leaving all four rotor blades on the Wildcat (previously two were removed) and ensuring the rescue hoist remains fitted, 847 carved half a day off each end of the Wildcat's disassembly/re-assembly process.

Lt Colonel Sam Allinson REME, Commanding Officer of JADTEU observed: "The [end] user came up with a better way to prepare the load and we then re-trialled the double helicopter load in the C-17. A lot of original air portability data could be used again, but the role fit changes meant it still needed a full physical loading rather than simply a paperwork review." Once the loading was completed, safety Tie-Down Schemes for the aircraft were defined, tested and adjusted, to ensure the helicopters were secure and could not damage the C-17 or the aircraft themselves while in transit. The newly approved procedures meet all the various complex Military Aviation Authority (MAA) regulations, as well as the load limits for the RAF's C-17, much to the delight of 847's technicians. The revised process has reduced the maintenance burden on RNAS Yeovilton's engineers and the operational users, ensuring the joint Wildcat force is available for tasking worldwide as speedily as possible.

JADTEU and RNAS Yeovilton staff assessing a Wildcat for future transportation as an under-slung load. © Richard Macauley

Royals and Junglies in Guam

From Navy News (*by kind permission of the editor*)

42 Commando Royal Marines 'fast rope' out of an 845 Naval Air Squadron Merlin. © MoD

THOSE charged with rescuing downed pilots or those stranded behind enemy lines undertook night training raids on the Pacific Island of Guam during the UK Carrier Strike Group deployment.

845 Naval Air Squadron and Royal Marines of 42 Commando on RFA *Fort Victoria* launched from the support ship on a training mission to 'rescue two British diplomats' from an abandoned golf course, which now provides the perfect location for military exercises.

These missions are known as Joint Personnel Recovery and, while rarely carried out, those responsible for them must train hard in case they are needed.

The dense jungle that surrounds the area provided the first great challenge to 845's Commando Merlin helicopters with a no-go despite the best efforts of the pilots. It meant that the commandos were ultimately dropped further from their objectives than expected. But they rescued the two diplomats, also played by 845 personnel, and also captured two enemy troops with a Commando Merlin extracting those on the ground in three waves back to *Fort Victoria* - another job well done.

Falklands War participants - were you involved in any way at all?

One of our Associate Societies is looking for stories from those who were involved in the Falklands War.

Irrespective of uniform or a civilian, the British Modern Military History Society is looking for any accounts to include in their book, *Glimpses of War - Falkland Islands Conflict* which they are publishing this year with the proceeds going to charity. If you would like to contribute your story, they would like to hear from you, please contact Andy Cockram at: **andy.cockeram@bmmhs.org** or visit their website: **www.bmmhs.org/glimpses-of-war-falklands-conflict/**

Talks 2022

By Richard Macauley

All 2022 Talks will take place in the Fleet Air Arm Museum and also available on Zoom as a live online stream.

We have been working hard behind the scenes to correct the bugs in our Zoom broadcast system and we believe you will now have a good experience if you choose this method to view the Talks programme. We continue to welcome old and new members plus guests to the museum and hope you will consider joining us in person at FAAM.

We have to apply the caveat that our Talks could be subject to any future governmental Covid restrictions.

We have a good variety of speakers booked for 2022 and check out our website for the later months of this year.

307 Squadron Project
with Michael Parrott
Thursday 24 February 2022 at 19.30

After TSR2, the Birth of Tornado
with Grp Capt (Rtd) Jock Heron
Thursday 31 March 2022 at 19.30

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/talks/

Joint Air Delivery Test and Evaluation Unit (JADTEU)

by Lt. Col. Sam Allinson.
October 2021 Talk summarised by Robert Heath

Typical photographic depictions of the working environments of JADTEU. © MoD

This was the first live talk in the FAAM auditorium for 20 months and it was pleasing to see a good turnout of familiar faces again.

Describing the JADTEU, Sam said its role is "To conduct operational trials and evaluation [into] the delivery by air of personnel, machines and materiel ..." The unit's tasks involve aerial delivery, air portability and parachute testing.

Sam's service experience included the Apache Helicopter Delivery Team before he was appointed to command the Unit. He showed a film from 2013 of a fully fuelled US military Boeing 747 freighter taking off from Bagram Airport, Afghanistan. After lifting off, it tilted nose high before stalling straight into the ground, killing all seven crew members. The cause? Improperly secured cargo, which broke free, crashed through the rear pressure bulkhead and disabled the flight control systems. JADTEU exists to prevent catastrophes of this nature.

The Unit has been based since the mid-1970s in two large hangars on the south side of RAF Brize Norton. It has its own workshop and small manufacturing

facility. Its 110 personnel comprise a mix of Army, RAF, RN and Royal Marines, plus workshop personnel, technical illustrators and photographers. Testing and trials are designed to determine operational risks and to prove that equipment and processes are fit for purpose. The UK is known to operate to very high standards and JADTEU carries out trials in all current service aircraft, including the Airbus A400, the C-17 Globemaster III and the C130 Hercules, although the latter are being phased out of service rapidly.

We have all seen films of aircraft in flight and troops or equipment pouring off the ramp and parachuting to the ground. All the equipment used must be tested to ensure that loads are delivered safely and consistently. Turbulent airflows around each aircraft type are identified, to establish their effect on paratroops exiting the aircraft. The wide fuselage of the A400 causes a very distinctive slipstream, so exit points have had to be modified. Dropping vehicles from an aircraft is a complex activity, aimed to deliver the vehicle on target and in a drivable condition. Vehicles are dropped from the Hercules in a specially constructed cage, which was designed and constructed by JADTEU. The A400 can deliver large boats for the Special Boat Squadron (SBS) simultaneously with paratroops. Troops are not dropped while sitting inside the boat, said Sam, although the Russians have apparently done so.

Static drop trials are carried out inside the hangars and filmed with high-speed cameras, so that the process can be seen in slow-motion. The military port at Marchwood, near Southampton, is used for sea borne and diving trials. The Brize Norton hangars contain full-size sections of fuselage of in-service transport aircraft, to enable functional, realistic trials of payloads. Tactical helicopters are often deployed to distant locations and Sam showed us examples of how helicopters are stowed and lashed down in cargo aircraft. Wind tunnels are also used for trials, while exercises are regularly held in California to test equipment and techniques in high temperature environments. Sam showed examples of where JADTEU examined existing equipment and improved the anchoring process, minimising risk while enhancing safety.

The A400 is being used in Exercise Delta Drop, which investigates high altitude drops. Drops have been made at 12,000ft and drops from 25,000ft are planned. Another aspect of parachuting is load-carrying. It is hard to believe just how much kit and baggage already goes out strapped to the 'para' and how much more is being tested to add to it. JADTEU employs its own specialist paratroops, who regularly make several jumps in a day and report on the outcomes.

This was a splendid well-illustrated talk. Thank you to Lt Col Sam Allinson for a very informative and enjoyable evening.

JADTEU unit badge.

RAF Presentation Team

November 2021 Talk summarised by Malcolm Smith

617 Squadron F35 Lightning IIs landing aboard HMS *Queen Elizabeth*. 617 Squadron is crewed jointly by RAF and FAA pilots and ground crew. © MoD

The Royal Air Force Presentation Team consisted of Warrant Officer Tommy Doherty, of the RAF Regiment, and Senior Aircraftman Catherine Brady. (Women are still called Aircraftman in the RAF.)

Catherine told us that she had joined the service at a slightly older age than most. She has been selected to study for a degree in computing, with the aim of being promoted to Engineer Officer. Tommy opened with a lively film of types of RAF aircraft. You needed to be quick to identify all the different aircraft, as Typhoon, C17, Puma, unmanned air vehicles, C130 and so on were pictured in quick succession, mixed with shots of fire fighting, RAF Regiment activities and the Red Arrows in formation.

Tommy explained that he had served for 33 years. Before joining the RAF, he had been an enthusiastic member of the Air Training Corps (ATC). The main purpose of the RAF Regiment

is to protect air Stations at home and abroad and he had served in Northern Ireland, the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. As an example of an unusual activity, Tommy showed a photograph of a crashed RAF Dakota KN630 of Malaya Emergency vintage. The crash had occurred in peninsula Malaysia and Tommy went as a member of a team to research the crash site. The site was in a very remote area and the team were helped by Malaysian aboriginals, who had remembered the crash and kept its history alive. The remains of the crew that were found, were subsequently repatriated and buried in Cheras Road CWGC Cemetery, Kuala Lumpur*. The team procured a goat, to be butchered to provide a feast for all the villagers, but regrettably the goat was eaten by a tiger before the feast could be arranged.

The RAF is equipped with the full spectrum of air and space resources, providing the Government with the flexibility to project British power wherever needed. In a fast-moving film, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, described recent operations around the world. Typhoon aircraft are currently deployed to Romania in Operation Biloxi; 750 people had been deployed in Covid relief activities; Operation Shader (operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria) is still ongoing; the service has made air-drops of humanitarian relief to the Yazidi people and the RAF has been involved in hurricane relief in the Caribbean.

The RAF is enacting the Astra strategy, based on three principles: to focus on people, succeed in operations and build the next generation of people and equipment. The front line is growing in capability, but it faces a state of constant competition and threat. To meet these threats, the RAF relies on the quality and talent of its people. There can be no higher priority he said. The film showed examples of aircrew training on Hawk aircraft before moving on to the Typhoon or F35. The service relies on widespread support teams, who as well as uniformed people, include contractors and civil servants. There is a high-class Apprenticeship scheme and RAF people have won Apprentice of the Year awards several times.

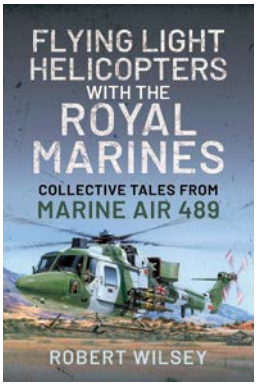
The RAF is at the forefront of military space operations, and we watched a film of their space operations centre. The service will soon have its own dedicated satellite array. We saw pictures of the Protector Unmanned Air Vehicle, developed from the Reaper and planned to enter service in 2024. The F35 Lightning is operational and recently conducted missions in the Near and Far East, launched from HMS *Queen Elizabeth*. There are now eight Poseidon submarine hunter aircraft in service, soon to be nine. Cyber attacks on communications are now a real threat and the RAF is investing significantly in cyber warfare techniques.

This was a spirited presentation to an appreciative live audience, also shared by viewers on Zoom. Many thanks to the presentation team for their enthusiastic delivery.

***The expedition to recover the bodies from KN630 is told in an RAF Video available on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spUVt3bp4v8**

Flying Light Helicopters with the Royal Marines

By Robert Wilsey and reviewed by Richard K Parkhurst



The author served with the Royal Marines from 1969 to 2000 and had the unique privilege of being both a Royal Marine Commando and a pilot.

Very little has been written about Royal Marines aviation, so this book goes a long way to filling that gap in aviation history. Some RM pilots were trained by the Royal Navy, but the majority undertook their training with the Army Air Corps at Middle Wallop, which is where Robert Wilsey fulfilled a long held ambition to fly.

Basic training was completed on the DH Chipmunk T10 and further courses were undertaken to fly helicopters. Once qualified as a pilot, he served through much of the period in which the Royal Marines Air squadron has existed, in every rank from junior pilot to its commanding officer. He describes the evolution and technological advances from the very basic, early helicopters, such as the Westland Sioux and Scout, to the more advanced Westland/Aérospatiale Gazelle and eventually the Westland Lynx AH1.

He undertook rigorous training during his career, gaining qualifications as an instructor, over-sea operations, in the arctic, mountains, jungle, desert flying and anywhere else a rotary wing pilot might be required. Several chapters are devoted to operations in diverse places such as Malta, Brunei, Northern Ireland, and Iraq (Operation Haven). Other chapters deal with instructing on the Gazelle and the Lynx, display flying and his command of 3 Commando Brigade Air Squadron.

He provides numerous stories of incidents and accidents, some amusing, some hair raising, and some tragic. The last couple of chapters deal with his work after retiring from the Royal Marines. There are seven pages of photographs and some maps within the text.

Throughout the book, the author provides a fascinating journey through 31 years as a Royal Marine aviator, which will appeal to all who are interested in aviation and I can say, without hesitation, this is one of the best books I have read in recent years.

Published by Pen and Sword, ISBN 978 1 39900 250 9

Wings Over the Waves

By Graham Roy Drucker and reviewed by Chris Penney

In May 1944 HM the King was briefed at Scapa Flow by a tall Canadian-born Fleet Air Arm pilot Roy Baker-Falkner RN on Operation Brawn, a D-Day diversionary carrier action.

Following a demonstration of 8 TBR Wing's Barracuda fire power at sea aboard *Victorious*, Baker-Falkner later introduced His Majesty to the aircrew under his command. This was the pinnacle of this distinguished officer's career, who had flown 100 combat missions: he and his crew of LS556 were posted missing two months later.

With a Foreword by Eric Brown, this biography of Barracuda Wing leader Lt Cdr Baker-Falkner DSO, DSC is a gripping and intense tale of the FAA at war. From his early flying career torpedo floatplane training at Gosport through Dunkirk, it encompasses the changeover period to RN control and the early loss of two carriers. Written by the son of Baker-Falkner's sister, over 400 individuals are acknowledged in what is clearly a labour of love that I found a tearjerker. Letters and diaries quoted portray daily 812 NAS and family life ashore at RAF North Coates in between hazardous Swordfish minelaying sorties off NW Europe as crew losses mount.

Baker-Falkner commanded and led Operation Tungsten – the Navy's first carrier strike against *Tirpitz*. Launched on 3 April 1944 involving two fleet and four escort carriers and 42 Barracudas, it is recognised as the FAA's most successful attack on the battleship. The chapter recounts tactics honed over Scotland to successfully assault *Tirpitz's* Norwegian lair. At least 14 bombs hit their target and he was awarded the DSO for his leadership.

Marked as an outstanding airman, a chapter details his time flying at Boscombe Down where he was set to return as a senior test pilot when killed. This biography is told by those who served alongside and with Baker-Falkner, bringing the narrative vividly alive. I couldn't put it down.

Published by Pen & Sword ISBN 978 1 84884 305 9. Available from the FAA Museum shop

Membership

By Simon Websper

Standing Order payment membership cards for February, March and April will be sent separately, within the relevant month of expiry. (Receipt of a membership card does not confirm receipt of payment). Other cards are sent on receipt of payment only.

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

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3749	**Mrs A Sheppard**	Brecon
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3751	**Mr D Hardie**	Dorset
3752	**Ms A Gallaher**	Dorset
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3755	**Mr J Hayes**	Somerset

Total members as of 12 January 2022: 964 Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: 713*

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

IMPORTANT JABBERWOCK MESSAGE.

To ensure continued provision of Jabberwock magazine, please update your standing order to reflect the current membership fees shown opposite. There are currently some 70 members who remain underpaid over the past twelve months, despite reminders being sent. Please check your standing order now. The May issue will be withheld if in arrears.

Please let us have your email address to save us postage charges on other communications. It now costs us 66 pence per letter sent.

"Going green" and opting to receiving Jabberwock via your e-mail as a PDF saves the Society money. Thank you to those who switched recently! This is much appreciated.

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Carrier Strike Group 2021

The aircraft assets returned to their home bases after this historic global deployment came to an end in December 2021.

USMC F35Bs of VMFA 211 left HMS *Queen Elizabeth* on 24 November for Naval Station Rota, Spain. They departed Rota on 5 December, via Lajes, Azores, MCAS Cherry Point NC and arriving at their home base of MCAS Yuma AZ on 8 December.

617 Sqn RAF F35Bs departed the ship and flew direct to RAF Marham in two waves of 3, also arriving on 8 December. A single aircraft left for Marham a few days earlier for initial assessment for the maintenance programme.

Merlins of 845 and a Wildcat of 847 Naval Air Squadrons also returned to RNAS Yeovilton on 8 December.

The Small Ship's Flight Wildcats of 815 Naval Air Squadron returned to RNAS Yeovilton on 9 December. They operated from HMS *Defender*, HMS *Diamond*, HMS *Richmond* and HMS *Kent*, the UK 'guardian' warships of the Carrier Strike Group.

USMC F-35B of VMFA-211, arrives at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma AZ. © 3rd Marine Air Wing

617 Sqn RAF F35B arriving at RAF Marham. © MoD

845 Naval Air Squadron Merlins having departed HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and photographed while returning to RNAS Yeovilton. An 847 Naval Air Squadron Wildcat is at the rear of the formation. © MoD