

JABBERWOCK 110

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

**February
2023**



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
FLEET AIR ARM
MUSEUM



IN THIS ISSUE

Lt. H.A. Littleton DSO, RNR • Olof Frederick Gollcher • The First VJ Day • Barracuda - Design for Dive-Bombing • HMS *Pegasus* • Hawker Hunters in the Royal Navy • HMS *Cardiff* in Gulf War 1 • Commando Merlin Upgrades • Future Talks • PastTalks • Armed and Dangerous • A Book review • No more Membership Cards! *Plus all the usual features etc.*

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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 20% discount on goods purchased from the shop and cafe.

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

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OF Gollcher



Barracuda



HMS Cardiff



Commando Merlin Upgrades

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COVER PHOTO

An F-35B from 617 Sqn RAF but composed of both RAF and Royal Navy air and ground crew personnel, prepares for night flying training exercises whilst on Operation Achillean at the end of 2022 and deployed onboard HMS *Queen Elizabeth*.
 © AS1 A Adams RN/Crown copyright 2022

Editorial

We have packed a wide variety of articles into the 40 pages of your magazine to start the New Year.

Much of this material has been contributed by members, for which we are, as always, very grateful. Our Chairman provides a stirring story of bravery by an RNVR officer during the Zeebrugge raid in the First World War and we include some interesting views of the Barracuda, together with a brief description of its capabilities as a dive bomber. The role of Hawker Hunters in the RN is described and there is a dramatic description of the activities of HMS *Cardiff* and its embarked aircraft during the First Gulf War.

In "Snippets from the Council", you will see that membership numbers have been revised somewhat sharply downwards after an administrative review. Although the numbers remain at a healthy level, we hope that all members will do their bit towards recruiting newcomers. The Council also noted two substantial and very welcome donations. There is a brief mention of the agreement to increase Council members to 15. The newly-joined

Council members will undoubtedly strengthen the important functions of your Trustees in the direction and management of the Society.

Society members enjoyed the Christmas (or rather) New Year lunch at the Long Sutton Golf Club on 14 January (photo by Ernest Lear below).



Readers of *Jabberwock* have been able to appreciate the charming sketches of aviation subjects by Jim Humberstone for many years. These have now been collected into a print-on-demand publication, as you will see in the advertisement on the back page.

Malcolm

Malcolm

Have you viewed the SoFFAAM website lately?

Council snippets

From the December Council Meeting

The General Manager said the Museum enjoyed a successful October Half Term week, with a significant volume of visitors passing through the site and positive feedback for our Science related children's programming activities.

FAAM has launched a 'Local and Loyal' discounted entry programme for all residents with a local postcode. Advertising via leaflet door-drops and social media will communicate this offer over the shoulder season. The NMRN Collections Portal has gone live and now members of the public can see large parts of our museum catalogue online. This is a major development and has been well received.

Chris Penney announced that the winner of the book prize for completing the membership questionnaire was John Briden of Dorset. This had been a useful exercise and the Council needed to consider how we make use of the findings. Richard Macauley reported that our Zoom offering continues to be refined with the help of the purchase of two Apple Laptops. Thank you to

all who help make these evenings a success. The 2023 talks programme is nearly full, as we have just two speaker slots left to fill for next year. The Saturday Talk idea is still viable though we need to identify speakers. We hope to have a trial session in the new year. The Treasurer discussed the Society's accounts and it was agreed that no change to the Society's investment strategy was required. He commented that we had received a donation of £2000 and an additional donation of £5000 from the estate of Frank Ott.

The Membership Secretary reported that membership numbers have plummeted this quarter (to 916). The current financial situation has resulted in many of the leavers, as has old age and infirmity, but some of this is also due to "clearing out" some members who had changed address and ceased to pay. He thanked David Merrett, who will be taking over as Membership Secretary during March 2023. The Secretary reminded the Council that we had accepted a rise in Trustee numbers from 14 to 15.

Letters to the editor

Dear Malcolm

The latest Jabberwock has just arrived at my parent's home. Thursday I think, and my brother sent me a photo of the inclusion of our father's Barracuda song. As a family that is very much appreciated.

Sadly my father died in the evening of 16th November at home. We were all there together before and afterwards. He was 99, and increasingly fed up with being housebound. He did not like being looked after by carers and described himself as a butterfly pinned to a board!

You won't be surprised that his later years were wrapped up in memories of service in the Fleet Air Arm. He was often singing ditties from the Fleet Air Arm song book!

My brother has taken custody of the book, photos etc., and he would like to continue to receive Jabberwock and I am hoping that will be in order. I will continue to pay the subscription.

**Regards,
Kate Hallet**

Editors note: Kate kindly sent us the details of the 'Barracuda Song' which we were very happy to publish in Jabberwock 109 (page 5). We were very saddened to hear that John Bowden passed away just before he had chance to see this in Jabberwock. Our sincere condolences from us all at SoFFAAM. RIP John.

Dear Editor

Thank you for organising the SoFFAAM Christmas zoom evening. I enjoyed the three presentations and the quiz on the Falklands conflict of 40 years ago.

Given the question regarding the Sea Harrier squadrons deployed South, I'm sure there must be a Sea Harrier aficionado out there who could provide the definitive detail of which Squadrons

were involved, when they deployed and to which ships they were allocated?

Not wishing to leave out our 'light blue' brethren, No. 1 (Fighter) Squadron was aboard HMS *Hermes*, were there any other GR3 squadrons involved?

**Regards,
Member 3181**

Dear Editor

During my 'The People's Mosquito' talk at the SoFFAAM Christmas Zoom meeting about the UK project to re-build a de Havilland Mosquito - unique due to the requirement for Civil Aviation Authority flight certification - a debate arose over wing folding of Sea Mosquitoes and/or Sea Hornets. My talk, a summary of, and supplementary to, all the descriptive information in www.peoplesmosquito.org.uk, does not cover such information. Would any SoFFAAM members have fleet size information on these two aircraft types and, indeed, have design details of the wooden wing folding hinges - eg, what is the metal strengthening, if any? There was also a claim that the disastrous accident in 1996 to the only flying Mosquito in the



Prototype TR.33 Sea Mosquito 'LR387', with folded wings, torpedo and drop tanks load out and an early 'thimble' style radome.
© Dan Shumaker Collection

UK when displaying at Barton Airport, was caused by structural failure, not engines cut out due to their carburettors requiring positive 'G' flight at all times to operate successfully. Information on this issue also would be welcomed.

Regards,
Malcolm Reid

Jabberwock 109

We apologise that some of our members may have suffered a delay and in some cases, no delivery at all of our last edition of Jabberwock.

Unfortunately despatch co-incided with the Royal Mail strikes so was therefore, completely out of our hands.

The image opposite is the cover of Jabberwock 109, featuring SoFFAAM member Roger Wilcox's fine image of the Navy Wings Seafire XVII.

This edition should have been with you at the beginning of November 2022. So if you did not received your copy, please contact **Richard Macauley** at soffaam@btinternet.com or **07768**

562976 and I will arrange for this edition to be sent to you.



Lt. H.A. Littleton DSO. RNR

By Graham Mottram



Lt. H.A. Littleton DSO. RNR RAeS ticket 405

In researching the Air Branch of the Royal Naval Reserve. I discovered the name Littleton.

I had never heard of him as a pioneer pilot in naval aviation, but in the National Archives online, I found the RNAS ledger entries for Hugh Alexander Littleton, also references to a Lt Littleton RNVr, who had skippered a motor launch during the Zeebrugge Raid of April 1918 and been awarded the DSO. The aviator was described in his

records as a member of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), not the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVr). The RNR was created in the mid-19th century to train merchant mariners in Royal Navy skills. In the early 20th-century there were still not sufficient reservists and so the RNVr was created to provide more wartime sailors. Surely my aviator Littleton could not be the same as the seaman officer who behaved so courageously at Zeebrugge? A closer look at his RNAS record surprisingly said that this was the same man

In 1861, one Henry Littleton became sole owner of the music publishing business of J Alfred Novello and his family became immensely wealthy. Henry's son, Alfred Littleton, had eight children, of whom Hugh Littleton was the youngest. He was born on Christmas Day 1888 and joined the RNR on 1 November 1912. He learned to fly at the Bristol School at Larkhill and was awarded RAeC ticket Number 405 on 21 January 1913. He was noted as "RNVr" but the London Gazette clearly lists his appointment to the RNR. The Navy List of autumn 1913 shows him as "Sub Lt. RNR, Hermes addl, as Flying Officer".

At the Central Flying School, Hugh was rated as "Keen and zealous. Good pilot... Practically no experience of naval

service but worth six months trial". After this Littleton returned to the Naval Flying School (NFS) Eastchurch, where he was recorded as "Flight Lieutenant". He was probably instructing at NFS, where the CO, Captain Vivian, reported him as "keen to learn" and "very levelheaded and hardworking". Most of March 1915 was spent at Calshot, after which he was appointed to RNAS Bembridge, for coastal patrols in seaplanes. In May 1915 he was promoted to Flight Commander, RNAS. He went back to CFS in October. Captain Godfrey Paine was the founding CO of CFS and set high standards. Of Littleton, he said: "This officer has neither the knowledge, disciplinary experience nor necessary qualifications as an instructor. He might be of use in flying abroad". On Christmas Eve 1915, Littleton was posted to the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Allies had just evacuated the Gallipoli Peninsula, but 2 Wing, under the tough and experienced Royal Marine, Louis Gerrard, remained on the island of Imbros. It seems it did not take long for him to take against Littleton, reporting:

"I believe ... that Flt. Cdr. Littleton is not in a state in which one can expect very good results from him... He is not temperamentally suited for the work. Recommend that he return to England". That was terminal to Littleton's flying career. He submitted his resignation on 18 March 1916 and one month later, was granted a commission in the RNVR as a Temporary Sub Lt. He was appointed to HMS *Hermione* in Southampton, the depot and training ship for coastal motor boats (CMB) and motor launches (ML). Built by the American Elco Company, MLs were small and fast vessels, 85 feet long, weighing around 35 tons and capable of 19 knots in good conditions.

In early 1917, Littleton was granted his own command, ML526, attached to Dover Command. It is likely that they patrolled the Straits from time to time, also transported men and equipment to ports on the French coast. Littleton was engaged in these humdrum duties until March 1918, when the Germans launched their major Western Front offensive, Operation Michael. Ever since Jutland, Germany had shifted its naval



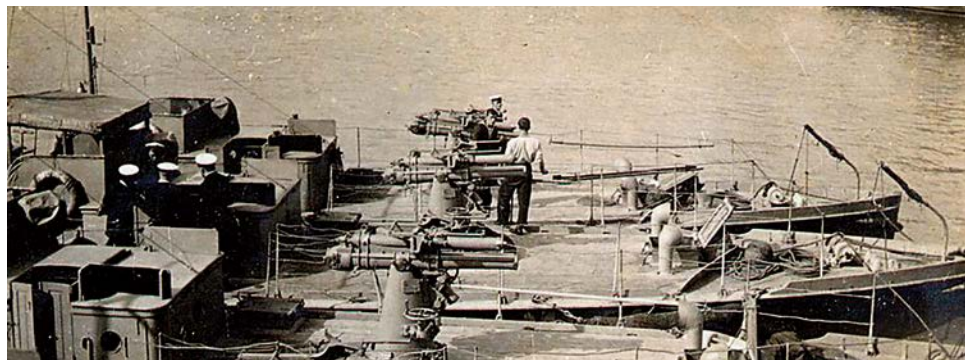
ML 482, typical of the last batch delivered, at anchor.

strategy to one based on U Boats and the strangulation of maritime trade. Vice Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon was relieved of command of the Dover Patrol and replaced by Vice Admiral Roger Keyes, who was directed to carry out his scheme to blockade the U boat bases of Zeebrugge and Ostend.

In the early evening of 22 April 1918, a substantial armada headed east from Dover, comprising a mix of assault ships and block ships, escorted by CMBs and MLs. The attack started with a bombardment and some of the CMBs and MLs began laying a smoke screen. (The pyrotechnics were the work of Wing Commander Brock RNAS, a member of the famous fireworks manufacturers.) Littleton's duty in ML526 was to rescue crews from the ships intended to be sunk to block the waterway out of Zeebrugge. The Germans were prepared for the attack and the ships were cruelly exposed to artillery and machine gun fire. HMS *Thetis*, an old cruiser, led *Iphigenia* and *Intrepid* into the harbour. *Thetis* came under heavy fire and was so damaged

that she could not make it to her planned position. The scuttling charges were blown, the smoke canisters turned on and the order given to abandon ship. The surviving crew managed to pull over to ML526, which Littleton had held as close to *Thetis* as he possibly could.

Intrepid followed the leader, but the ship foundered short of an ideal position. *Iphigenia* collided with *Intrepid's* port bow and pushed her off the mud. Her crew abandoned ship and were added to Littleton's load in ML526. Only one other launch had survived, ML282 under Lt. Percy Dean. The launches had been expected to carry 50 men at most, but both now carried many more and they were still in the harbour and under fire. Dean was on his way out when he saw more men in the water and went back to pick them up. He managed to veer into the darkness beyond the searchlights and limp out to the open sea. Dean was awarded the VC: "Lieutenant Percy Thompson Dean, RNVR (Motor Launch 282). For most conspicuous gallantry. Lieutenant Dean handled his boat in a most magnificent and heroic manner



Three MLs tied up alongside, possibly at Dover.

when embarking the officers and men from the blockships at Zeebrugge. It was solely due to this officer's courage and daring that ML 282 succeeded in saving so many valuable lives." (Percy Dean was 40 years old at the time of his deed).

Littleton was awarded the DSO. "Lieut. Hugh Alexander Littleton, RNVR. Handled his motor-launch in a magnificent manner. Embarked over sixty officers and men from *Thetis* under heavy machine-gun fire at close range. Due to his courage and daring, his boat succeeded in making good her escape with the survivors." These two medals were amongst the large number of decorations gazetted on 23 July 1918 and the two ML heroes were personally invested with their medals by King George V at Buckingham Palace on 31 July. Littleton was demobilised in 1919. He married in Castletown, Ireland on 10 October 1918 Mary E H Becher, whose father was a senior clergyman, the Venerable J R H Becher, who conducted the wedding ceremony. They had three daughters, Diana, Clodagh and Mary.

There is no record of a divorce, but it seems that they later separated and lived apart.

In the autumn of 1939 Hugh was living in a hostel in West Thurrock, Essex, with his occupation still noted as "Lieutenant RNVR", and an addendum of "Ambulance Driver ARP". On 4 March 1942, at the relatively young age of 54, Hugh Littleton died in Chalfont St Peter, Buckinghamshire and left £1175, about £50,000 pounds today. When his three medals (DSO, BWM and VM) were sold in recent times, it was obvious that he had not often worn them and certainly not had them court mounted.

Despite his ignominious dismissal from the RNAS, there can be no doubt that Hugh Littleton possessed courage, as well as a high sense of duty. In the maelstrom of death and destruction that was the harbour of Zeebrugge on St George's Day 1918, Hugh Littleton behaved magnificently and many other sailors owed their lives to his bravery. His end was premature, probably lonely and sad. He is forgotten today but he was a true hero of his time.



Motor Launch 531 at speed, essentially identical to Littleton's ML526

Olof Frederick Gollcher

By Hanneke Jansen, abridged by Richard Macauley



2nd Lt. OF Gollcher.

As a volunteer at Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum in Mdina, Malta, I help out in matters concerning photography.

In November 2019 I was asked to scan and digitise photos believed to have been made by Olof Frederick Gollcher in the period of World War I. One of those photographs is shown opposite (top).

The photographer we know was Olof Frederick Gollcher and he took this picture in December 1915 but why was he travelling on that ship? What is the ship's name? Who is the soldier in the foreground and is that an aircraft

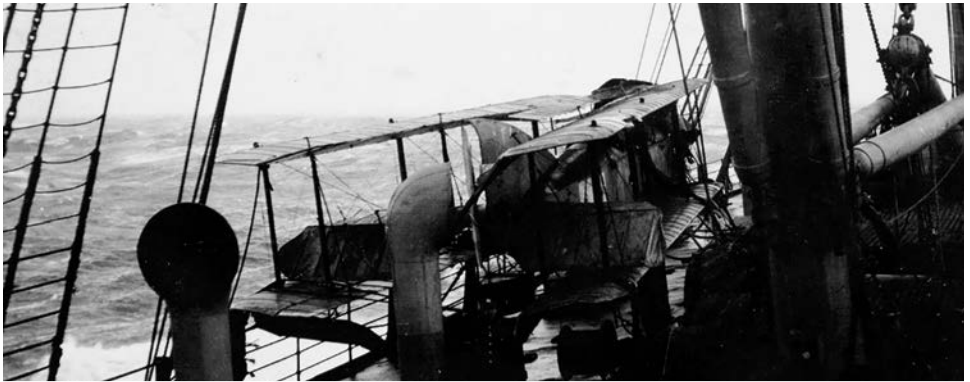
on the deck? My aim was to link the facts we knew with the evidence in the photograph. This would establish the voyage of the aircraft on board to facts that could be traced and verified.

Palazzo Falson archives produced letters between the Gollcher family to show that Olof was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, in World War I and was the OC of a group of soldiers travelling back to Liverpool, England. They were to leave Malta on 23 December 1915 on a ship called HT *Indian*. I was able to prove Gollcher was on board the HT *Indian* from a service record through the website of "Forces of War" archive.

The National Archives of Malta referred me to the Customs Records for ships arriving in the harbour of Valletta where I found the licence

Record Details for O F Gollcher (Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment))	
First Name:	O F
Surname:	Gollcher
Incident Date:	22/12/1915
Information:	Embarked upon the ship HT Indian at Malta on 22/12/1915, sailed on 23/12/1915 for England.
More Information:	Travelled 1st Class.
Further Information:	Officer Commanding all the troops on board the ship.
Rank:	2nd Lieutenant
Service:	British Army
Primary Unit:	Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regiment)
Archive Reference:	WO25/3543

Service Record of OF Gollcher



The original photo before scanning and post processing. © PA archive



The same image, re-scanned from the negative after post processing to reveal more detail. © PA archive

called "Pratique Deposition" for 'Indian transport no. 6012' arriving Valletta, 22 December 1915. The document stated that she had been ordered by the Admiralty and had sailed from Mudros, Lemnos in the Aegean Sea, across from the Gallipoli peninsula. The cargo listed were 2 horses and the passenger list mentions a groom but nothing of an aircraft. Unfortunately the Customs Records for ships leaving the harbour in 1915 were destroyed during the World War II bombing raids.

So what about the aircraft aboard the ship, especially given its departure

point close to Gallipoli.

Ray Polidano at the Malta Aviation Museum at Ta' Qali, helped me identify the aircraft. He informed me this was a Shorts Admiralty Type 184 Seaplane. With the large white square on the fuselage, this would imply that the aircraft was an early built one. In the beginning of the Great War the Union Flag was used as identification on the fuselage. The roundels came in use in December 1915. Following the French identification mark the British roundel had the colours reversed, blue for the outer ring and red for the centre circle.

Much more historical background came to light about Shorts and the 184 Seaplane as in this photograph.

Many of the Short seaplanes built in 1915 came from Eastchurch or Grain, England. Operating from seaplane carriers with one being HMS *Ben-my-Chree*. (In the language of the Isle of Man it means “Woman of my Heart”). Built in 1907 as a packet steamer by Vickers for the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company for use on the Isle of Man route. The Royal Navy requisitioned her as a seaplane carrier during the Great War. *Ben-my-Chree* saw combat action throughout WWI, serving as a mobile raiding platform, artillery spotter, rescue ship and a direct strike carrier.

The forward upper part of the forecastle was fitted with a fly-off ramp for launching the seaplanes. A total of six aircraft could be carried aboard, though four was usual configuration for the available space. The Short 184s brought about the advent of the torpedo bomber capability to naval aviation.

The wings could be folded alongside the fuselage and would be hoisted out onto the water surface, with wings folded out to their flight-position so the seaplane could take-off. Upon return

the seaplane’s wings would be folded back and hoisted in. The aircraft was outfitted with radio equipment (and a message pigeon basket as a fallback communications method)¹.

Returning to the seaplane in the Photograph, would it be possible to identify which Type 184 this particular aircraft was? The Air-Britain Publication ‘Royal Navy Aircraft Serials and Units 1911-1919’ is a massive collection of data on aircraft built during WWI, It is truly stunning how much information the authors have assembled². With the timing of the photograph being taken in December 1915, I turned to the relevant pages with this information, searching for seaplanes known to have been operating in the Eastern Mediterranean. The six Short Admiralty Type 184 seaplanes of interest are:

- **No. 184** was a prototype. It left the scene before 23 December. Therefore not a contender.
- **No. 841** went with **184** on the SS *Tringa* and was also shipped back to England before 23 December so also not a contender.
- **No. 846** and **850** were still in operation and they went to Port Said, Egypt in March 1916.

Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum in Mdina, Malta is the former home of Capt. Olof Frederick Gollcher OBE (1889-1962), the son of a prosperous shipping merchant of Swedish descent. Gollcher was an artist, a soldier, a philanthropist, and also a discerning collector of objets d’art and historical objects.

The original palazzo is from the 13th Century and is located in the medieval ‘Silent City’ Mdina, Malta. Olof Gollcher made a number of structural changes and re-named the palazzo “The Norman House”. He died in 1962 and left the property to the: Captain Olof Frederick Gollcher OBE Art and Archaeological Foundation – together with his extensive and varied heritage collection, with the wish they be made accessible to the public. The restoration by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti (Maltese Heritage Foundation) began in 2002, and the historic house museum opened as Palazzo Falson, in May 2007.

10 SHORT ADMIRALTY 184 TYPE TRACTOR BIFLANE SEAPLANES ordered under Cont No C.P.27405/14, numbered 141 to 150 at Hull, Eastborough, 1254 No. Seaboard, originally to be 200-8p. Custom (Unit) (Class) (Type) records shown correct (A to B) 279 to 5 (18)

841 Embarked from Felixstowe to HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 28.5.15; HMS *Rhodes* 11.8.15; HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 2.8.16; To SS *Plover* for transport to UK 5.8.15 and later deleted

842 Total Grain 14.7.15; Transit to HMS *Mercham Prince* 8.15; HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 10.8.15; Made world's first successful torpedo attack 12.8.15; (PVRD) (C.H.K. Edmonds); Made second successful torpedo attack 17.8.15; HMS *Euryalus* 3.10.15; HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 10.10.15; Lark ship at Kephalo 7.11.15; Shipped to UK; PVRD by 22.3.16; Deleted 29.3.16

843 Didst Grain 24.6.15 (Receipt); HMS *Rhodes* 22.8.15; Underway 12.10.15; HMS *Rhodes* 1.8.8.15; Destroyer 3.10.15; HMS *Rhodes* 27.10.15; Adverse and varying damaged during through hole 22.12.15; Underway for transport to 28.12.15; HMS *Rhodes* 1.1.16; Destroyer 28.1.16; HMS *Rhodes* 25.1.16; Destroyer 16.1.16 (report); HMS *Rhodes* 1.3.16; Dover 20.2.16; Patrol 17.3.16; (report) (report) (report) (report) 28.11.16; South Shields 13.12.16; Deleted 8.2.17

844 Didst Grain 13.7.15 (Receipt); Total 14.7.15; AZP 10.8.15 (P.L. BS Funder); HMS *Rhodes* 17.9.15; Destroyer 18.12.15; HMS *Rhodes* 1.2.16; Destroyer 2.10.16; HMS *Rhodes* 27.10.15; Grain 18.1.16; HMS *Rhodes* 25.1.16; Cleared for sea (Hull) 22.2.16; Damaged taking aboard; in transport to; Destroyer

The entry for 842 in 'Royal Navy Aircraft Serials and Units 1911-1919' with transcript (right).

842 Tested Grain 14.7.15; Transit in HMS *Merchant Prince* 3.15; HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 10.8.15; Made world's first successful torpedo attack 12.8.15; Made second successful torpedo attack 17.8.15; HMS *Euryalus* 3.10.15; HMS *Ben-my-Chree* 10.10.15; Left ship at Kephalo 7.11.15; Shipped to UK; PVRD by 22.3.16; Deleted 29.3.16

Therefore not contenders.

- **No. 842** was in operation until an accident on January 20, 1916. So not a contender either.
- This leaves **No. 842**. The famous aircraft, flown by Fl Cmd C.H.K. Edmonds (RNAS) who on 12th of August 1915, became the first pilot in history to sink a ship with an air dropped torpedo, a Turkish steamer off Bulsar.

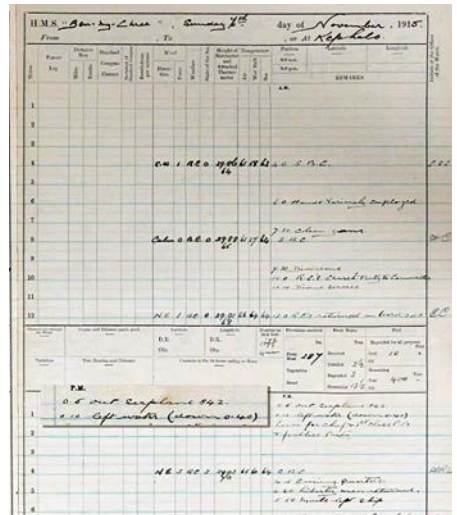
842's last days are a bit of a mystery, though in November 1915, she was on the *Ben-my-Chree*. This is as noted in the log entry of the *Ben-my-Chree* on the 7 November 1915. The seaplane was hoisted out just after 12 noon and 5 minutes later reported 'left water' (meaning airborne) and 30 minutes later reported 'down'. As this last comment is noted between apostrophes, this may mean the aircraft came to grief in some way. After that log recording there is no further mention of 842 so adding weight to the 'damaged' theory, further enhanced because of the Sturtivant & Page records of it "arrived in PVRD, Port Victoria Repair Depot on the Isle of Grain, where it was declared "deleted 29.3.1916".

With all this evidence on Short 184s in use in the last months of 1915 in the Mediterranean, it points very strongly that the aircraft in the original photograph is No. 842: "Shipped to UK".

Footnotes

1. Source: https://www.militaryfactory.com/aircraft/detail.php?aircraft_id=803.
2. Air-Britain Publication 'Royal Navy Aircraft Serials and Units 1911-1919' by Ray Sturtivant & Gordon Page.

N.B. Hanneke's original paper will be available in full on the SoFFAAM website as this edition of Jaberwock is published.

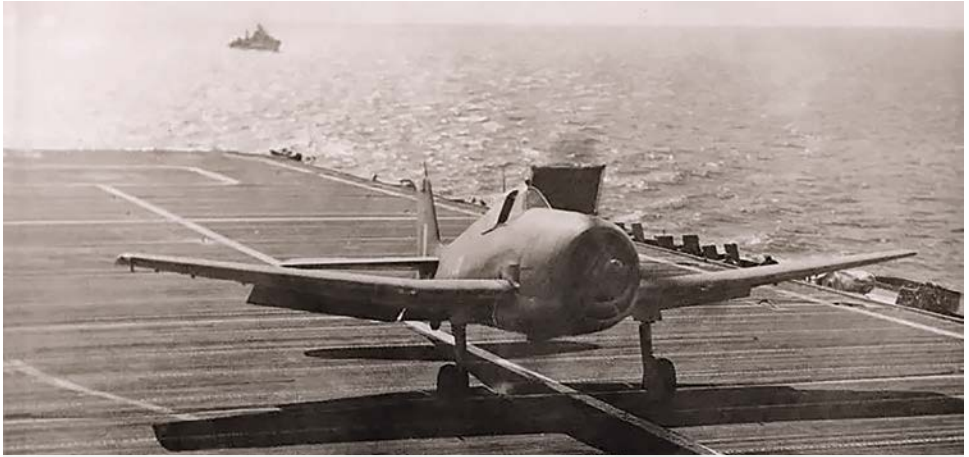


Ben-my-Chree log of Sunday 7 November 1915

The First VJ Day

By Lt Cdr Michael Fuller. OBE. DSC. RNVR, Commanding Officer
851 Naval Air Squadron.

This article was first published in Jabberwock 34



A Hellcat taking off from HMS Shah without the aid of the ships accelerator. © RN Research Archive

851 Naval Air Squadron was a composite squadron of Avengers and Hellcats which saw service in the East Indies Fleet and was embarked on HMS Shah from January 1944 until September 1945.

Its main task was to search for submarines ahead of the fleet and “keep their heads down”. At intervals of three hours a patrol of three or four aircraft were flown off from an hour before dawn each day and usually finished at sunset. There had been a story of two Japanese submarines operating west of Bombay in 1944. A troopship *Khedive Ismail*

had been torpedoed and sank within two minutes with Wrens and Nurses on board. I have not personally found any reference to this incident in subsequent histories, but at the time it charged up our motivation to sink the beggars. The records doubt whether in 1945 there were any Japanese submarines operating in the Indian Ocean or the Bay of Bengal - so it is not surprising that the squadron did not find one then. The job was frankly rather boring so that our lives lit up when we heard that we were to take part in Operation “Dracula”, the taking of Rangoon. This was more like

a proper naval operation. On 30 April 1945 the Squadron bombarded the island of Car Nicobar, and on the 4th May we carried out a reconnaissance of the Kra Peninsula, damaging the control tower of Mergui aerodrome. On 6th May we "beat up" shipping in Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. The Fleet then returned to Trincomalee, but we hardly had time to settle in and refuel before we were ordered to sea in Operation "Dukedom" the purpose of which was to locate and destroy a *Nachi* class cruiser which had been sent to evacuate the last Japanese from the Andaman Islands. My crew located the *Haguro*, while searching for a dinghy in which another crew were drifting having been "holed" when carrying out a courageous attack on two smaller Japanese craft. A strike of three Avengers bombed *Haguro* in the afternoon and while not damaging it were instrumental in directing it back into the trap set by the 26th Destroyer Flotilla in the Malacca Straits, where it was duly sunk by the destroyers during the night. All this was heady stuff and we

came back to Trincomalee, as we would now say "on a high", particularly when later some of us were invited on board the *Queen Elizabeth* to drink pink gins with the CinC, Admiral "Hooky" Walker, and Casper John, the unlikely son of rogue Augustus. Before "Dukedom" *Shah's* accelerator had broken down, - so the Avengers had to be quickly transferred to HMS *Emperor* (Captain Charles Madden RN). Three of the Avengers were lost or damaged beyond repair, one shot down, one ditched and one hit a barrier on landing on. On arrival back at Trincomalee the *Shah* no longer needing us, we flew ashore and were given the unfashionable side of the aerodrome in Kajan huts near the RAF Liberator base. On enquiry I ascertained that there were only three new Avengers due to arrive in Colombo. We needed all three to replace our casualties. Commander Flying at Trincomalee considered he should hold them in a pool for later and fairer distribution, but I had a friend in RANASIO. I flew down to Colombo, and secured them urgently



HMS *Shah* on her way from San Francisco to join the Eastern Fleet in Ceylon. The deck cargo is of Hellcats and P-40 Warhawks, the Avengers of 851 squadron are stowed in the hanger. © RN Research Archive

for 851 for Operation "Zipper", I am afraid to the distaste of Commander (F) and another squadron CO, but by then for them it was too late. Most of the fleet, including *Shah*, had now disappeared over the eastern horizon to carry out photographic reconnaissance of the main Malaysian landing beaches and "make maps". I remember thinking this seemed rather late in the day, seeing Zipper was meant to be imminent. "Ship's buzz" had it that the role which had been allocated by Kandy for 851 was to fly up and down the beaches all night to keep the enemy awake, so that their trigger fingers would be less accurate when the landings took place. This did not please us very much. As it was, we had been left to "make and mend" in our Kajan huts, swim and enjoy shore leave and our weekly ration of beer. We did some flying; and I flew a General up to Madras, and the other members of the Squadron were used for various non-operational tasks, but it was all rather lonely and anti-climactic after the recent excitement. The election forms arrived, and we had to instruct the ratings not on how to vote, but to avoid

spoiling the ballot papers. Churchill was on the Forces broadcast, saying he would provide free milk for pregnant mothers, and comparing Attlee and his team with Nazis. It all seemed unreal. And then on 15 August we heard that a new bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war was over. Somehow it was not as we had anticipated it, pathetic, "not with a bang, but with a whimper". This was how it seemed to us in our Kajan huts, a very inappropriate quote for Japan. I cannot remember any celebrations, but my wife, a Wren Officer, was in Trinco and says there were fireworks, probably to coincide with the main surrender in Tokyo Bay. The *Shah* was one of the first carriers to leave for Blighty; she was not "fit" and had been dogged by maintenance problems throughout her career, but before leaving we were able to be reunited with the ditched crew and take them home in the ship with us. They had reached the coast of Thailand and made their way under close and sympathetic escort by the Thai army first to Bangkok and then to Rangoon. On the way home a signal was received that our Avengers were on "Lease Lend", and the loan was over; we were ordered to throw them into the sea. It was particularly heart rending for the fitters and riggers who had kept them airworthy and lovingly maintained them. I managed to salvage the clock from "A" for Apple and after 50 years it is still ticking away in my study, hours and minutes, but no longer the date. 851 Squadron was disbanded at "Tail o' the Bank" on 7 October 1945.



The Grumman Avenger was known as the Tarpon in FAA service but was usually referred to as an Avenger.



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Barracuda - Design for Dive-Bombing

By David Marchant



Catching a wire aboard HMS *Vengeance* with full 'Down' flaps deployed. Note the Radar aerials on the wing upper surfaces. This aircraft appears to be carrying a 1640lb mine.

The November 2022 edition of Jabberwock book review featured, 'The Fleet Air Arm and the War in Europe 1939-45'.

The book cover displays an excellent interpretation of Barracudas attacking the *Tirpitz*. The cover serves its appealing and attractive purpose, although there are some historical errors. Designed as a multi-role combat aircraft, there are myths and controversies over the performance of this aircraft, but most of its crews found it to be a reliable machine which achieved some notable success. It was the most produced aircraft used by the Royal Navy, with 2602 airframes of all marks being built.

The Fairey-Youngman flaps are externally fitted, high lift devices

with an aerofoil section increasing, or decreasing the lift of the wing. The flap position selector lever was situated on the left side of the cockpit next to the undercarriage lever, close to the throttle and propeller speed lever. The flaps were hydraulically operated and fed from the aircraft's main hydraulic services, charged by two accumulators. For normal flight the flaps were set at the central position marked NORMAL. For landing and take-off, the NEUTRAL position was selected. This position locked the flaps at any required intermediate setting between the NORMAL and LANDING position. When the lever was moved to the LANDING position the flaps were at their full positive incidence. The

selector lever could also be moved up to the DIVE position, putting the flaps at a negative incidence, providing a high amount of drag and acting as a brake. This enabled the Barracuda's designed role as a dive bomber - the preferred method of bomb delivery before the advent of precision guided weapons. The advantage of dive-bombing is that the pilot can keep the target in sight, and on release the bomb follows a straight-line trajectory with increasing speed. This was a much more accurate method in attacking small targets such as ships and eliminated the need for complex calculations of horizontal bombing. Dive-bombing aircraft had to be able to withstand the loads placed on the airframe when pulling out of the dive, hence the dive brake effect of the Barracuda's negative incidence flaps.

In general, the dive-bombing run commenced at 10,000ft and up to a 70-degree dive, which was entered smoothly to avoid the carburettor cutting out under negative G. The max Indicated Air Speed (IAS) with the flaps

in the DIVE position was 260 knots, and the throttle eased off to avoid gaining excessive speed. Trimming was adjusted during the dive. The pilot took aim through the ring and bead sight and normally released the bomb(s) before 2000ft to remain outside the lethal zone of anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft was pulled out of the dive and the flaps wound back from DIVE to NORMAL when the speed had fallen below 190 knots. More trimming followed to compensate for the nose heavy change, and if required, an increase in throttle setting and the desired speed resumed. Strict attention had to be followed with trimming and use of the rudder during the dive procedure, otherwise the aircraft could bite back resulting in loss of control. This did indeed result in the loss of several Barracudas and their crews through mis-handling.

Originally designed with a low set tailplane, it was found during trials that the dive brakes turbulent effect caused severe buffeting, also moderate buffeting when in the DOWN position. The tailplane was therefore raised to the high set position, giving the aircraft its distinctive appearance.



Underside view of Barracuda from 814 Squadron. Note the flaps at the Normal - neutral position.

Footnote: Much has been written about Operations Tungsten, Mascot and Goodwood, but it was no coincidence that the *Tirpitz* was anchored in Kaafjord, making it a difficult target. Successive carrier-borne attacks were hampered by enhanced defences in particular radar, observation posts and smokescreen generators. Nevertheless, 10 bombs hit the ship, inflicting casualties and considerable damage. The *Tirpitz* was later finished off with a surprise attack by 32 Lancasters dropping the massive 12,000lb 'Tallboy' bombs. Two hits were made with another bomb achieving a glancing blow, and shortly after the battleship capsized.

HMS Pegasus

By Chris Penney



Showing her Great War dazzle camouflage, the seaplane carrier HMS Pegasus operated in the Black Sea during 1920. © IWM

The first commissioning of a Royal Navy ship under a King since 1948, albeit a 'stone frigate', took place at HMS Heron (RN Air Station Yeovilton) on 13 October 2022, when the Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch became His Majesty's Ship Pegasus.

It formally aligns the Air Branch with 18 non-aviation Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) Units nationwide. *Heron* is home to over 300 volunteers; members having either served as regulars in the Naval Service or gained significant maritime aviation experience. Reservists at Yeovilton and RNAS Culdrose have been providing operational support to

the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) in times of war, tension, crisis and 'stretch' for more than 40 years.

The roots of the RNR Air Branch date from July 1937 when the Minister for the Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, awarded control of the RAF's Fleet Air Arm to the Admiralty (the Navy had lost control of aviation to the RAF in 1918). Admiralty Fleet Order (AFO) 2885 established the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) Air Branch in 1938. Entry requirements were for unmarried university educated British subjects of European descent aged 17-22. Qualifying pilots required

an initial 18 months full-time training. Subsequently they had to maintain flying currency and attend two weeks annual training for ten years. Observers trained for one month per year. There was also provision for RNVR Executive Branch officers to transfer to the Air branch. Air Branch officers were distinguishable from their RNVR colleagues by having a 'wavy' gold rank braid and rings interwoven with a capital letter 'A' on the uniform sleeve. This distinguishing braid gave rise to the affectionately named Wavy Navy and while pre-war this may have caused regular RN officers to regard these 'civilians' as a lesser breed, action soon changed that perception.

In May 1939, Fleet Air Arm administration was transferred to Admiralty control. The RAF handed

over three Hampshire airfields, Gosport, Lee-on-Solent and Worthy Down near Winchester, together with Donnisbristle near Edinburgh. Naval aircraft numbered around 180; comprising Fairey Swordfish, Gloster Sea Gladiator biplanes and Blackburn's Skua and Roc. Land-based maritime role aircraft, including long-range reconnaissance flying boats, remained RAF responsibility. The Air Ministry also retained responsibility for naval aircraft design and production to RN specifications.

As the Second World War progressed the RNVR became the mainstay of the senior service and RNVR officers served in every operational theatre. Three of the top five FAA aces (five or more aircraft kills) were RNVR: Stanley Orr*; Alfred



Wartime RNR Officer rank insignia was chain-like while the RNVR's was wave-like; a letter A designating the Air Branch. © IWM

Sewell; and Richard Gardner. Gardner commanded Yeovilton's 736 Squadron 'School of Air Combat' in May 1943. Fallen RNVR airmen with no known grave are commemorated on the national Fleet Air Arm Memorial at Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire.

After the War, Europe was divided by the "Iron Curtain", as the communist threat grew from an expanded Soviet Union. The RAF reacted by resurrecting its pre-war Auxiliary Squadrons and the Admiralty issued AFO 1370/47 to initiate four RNVR squadrons of volunteer ex-wartime aircrew. The first of these, 1831 Squadron, formed in June 1947 at Stretton, Cheshire. 1832 Squadron at Culham, Oxfordshire, and 1833 Squadron at Bramcote, Warwickshire, followed. All flew Seafires, while at Abbotsinch in Scotland 1830 Squadron operated

Seafires and the anti-submarine (ASW) Firefly. RNVR Squadrons subsequently undertook carrier embarkation for their annual fortnight training and were reorganised into geographic Air Divisions eventually comprising 1830, 1843 Scottish; 1831, 1841 Northern; 1833, 1844 Midland; 1832, 1834, 1835, 1836 Southern. 1840 and 1842 Channel Division operated solely in the ASW role.

On 15 June 1953 RNVR squadron aircraft took part in the Coronation Fleet Review at Spithead and in June 1954 96 Air Division aircraft overflew Windsor Castle as part of the RNVR's Golden Jubilee. In 1955 1831 became the RNVR's first jet fighter squadron, equipped with the Supermarine Attacker following its withdrawal from frontline service. Aircrew were also on parade when HM Queen Elizabeth



Firefly AS6: the anti-submarine aircraft flew with 1830, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843 and 1844 Reserve Squadrons. © Royal Navy Research Archive

Il presented her Colour to the FAA at RNAS Lee-on-Solent HQ the following year. However, sweeping aviation cuts implemented by Duncan Sandys in 1957 saw numerous Naval Air Stations including Ford in Sussex, shut. UK reserve flying units incorporating the RNVR Air Branch were disbanded.

The RNR Air Branch was re-established 3 April 1980. It provided additional pilots and observers to the Royal Navy, but its remit was subsequently expanded to include all Fleet Air Arm trades. As part of this, 1831 Squadron re-formed (although without aircraft of its own) providing RNR aircrew continuation training at RNAS Lee-on-Solent. 1832 Squadron followed, but ironically both reserve squadrons were disbanded before the 1982 Falklands War erupted. Today, HMS *Pegasus* reservists are attached to Squadrons, Air Stations and Units across the UK to conduct training and remain current in their specialisation.

HMS *Pegasus*' ship name dates from 1585 and has strong naval aviation lineage. In 1786 the 28-gun frigate *Pegasus* under (then) Captain Horatio Nelson was on the West Indies station, where she won three Battle Honours. The seventh *Pegasus*, commissioned in August 1917, was the fifth conversion of railway passenger ferries to Royal Naval Air Service seaplane carriers. She carried four Short Type 184 folding-wing torpedo floatplanes and four Beardmore WB.III (Sopwith Pup derivative) fighters. In late 1918 she re-equipped with Fairey Campania floatplanes and Sopwith Camel 2F.1

fighters and in 1919 Fairey III spotter-reconnaissance floatplanes. Summer 1919 saw *Pegasus* resident at Russia's Arctic port of Archangel providing RN support to White Russian forces fighting a civil war against communists. Transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet in 1920, *Pegasus* operated in the Black Sea and Kerch Strait, Crimea and aided the White Russian's calamitous evacuation of Novorossiysk. She undertook survey work in the Far East with RAF-operated floatplanes during 1924/5 before being eventually scrapped in 1931.

The last *Pegasus*, also a seaplane carrier, commissioned in 1914 as HMS *Ark Royal* (famous for its role in Churchill's Gallipoli campaign). Releasing her name for a purpose-built fleet carrier, she was re-christened *Pegasus* in December 1934. One of her first duties was HM King George V's Silver Jubilee RN Fleet Review on 16 July 1935. Assigned to the Home Fleet when the Second World War began, *Pegasus* was converted to the prototype fighter catapult ship in November 1940. Equipped with the FAA's main Fairey Fulmar fighter she tackled Focke-Wulf long-range Condor maritime bombers harassing Atlantic trade convoys.

FOOTNOTES

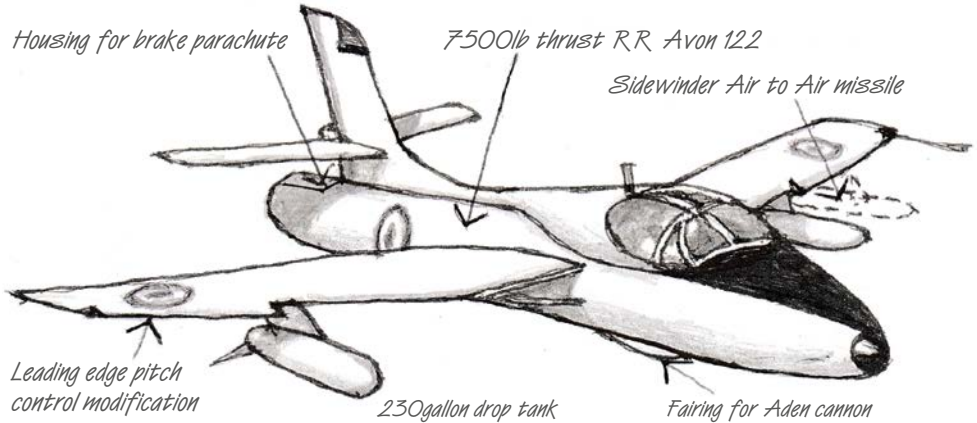
HMS *Pegasus* Battle Honours: St. Vincent 1780, First of June 1794, Egypt 1801, Atlantic 1940-41.

***The Orr RNVR Medal Collection, including a DSC with Two Bars, was acquired by FAAM in 2022 as result of a substantial Society donation - see Jabberwock 107.**

With thanks to HMS *Pegasus*' Facebook Page archive.

Hawker Hunters in the Royal Navy

By Jim Humberstone.



Arguably one of the most elegant of all aircraft, Hawker's Hunter jet fighter represented a quantum leap forward in design when it entered service with the RAF in the mid-1950s.

Like many other machines that it operated over the years, the Fleet Air Arm's RR Avon powered Hawker Hunters had strong RAF origins, since several score of the single seater F4 version were purchased from them in the late 1950s. These subsequently gave sterling service for the Navy's fast jet experience and Fleet Requirement purposes over many years. The advent of the two-seater, side by side, dedicated trainer version opened up further possibilities. 10 new T7 Hunters

were modified during manufacture to meet naval requirements, creating the T Mark 8 with a first flight by the prototype taking place in early 1958. An early use of T7s by the RN was at RNAS Lossiemouth in the early 1960s to familiarise aircrew with the Buccaneer flight instruments. FAA Hunters including some Mark 4s, were fitted with airfield arrestor hooks

Inevitably perhaps, the FAA's Hunter Trainers received more substantial modifications. A small number provided training for pilots converting to the Sea Harrier, being fitted with Blue Fox radar and Head Up Display (HUD) facilities. These Hunters were given the designation T8M and when

specifically employed in the weapons training role were re-designated GA11. Weapons fit included one 30mm Aden cannon, 1000lb bombs, 2 inch rockets or practice bombs and in the case of the T8M, the Sidewinder air to air missile.

Hunter Trainers equipped three squadrons in RN service as well as being employed on Fleet Requirement duties and Station Flights, operating out of RNAS Yeovilton and Brawdy. Early recognition of the aerobatic capabilities of the machine led to the formation and display of FAA Hunters in the 1970s, by a team called the Blue Herons.

The Hawker Hunter can be seen to be one of Britain's plane-makers' all-time success stories. The evolution of its design from its ancestor, the original straight winged P 1040, a model which eventually morphed into the Sea Hawk, closely mirrored that of the rival Vickers Armstrong Supermarine Swift, which evolved from that firm's equally straight winged Attacker. Tentative substitution of swept flying surfaces in each case, installed in early experimental prototypes, moved both firms' original



GA Mk.11, WT804 of FRADU at IAT Greenham Common in 1976. © Peter Fothergill

designs closer to service requirements for an agile fighter with high sub-sonic capability. Unlike Hawker's fighter however, Supermarine's venture had a less than successful service career with the RAF. Only just under 100 were eventually built with the design never living up to service expectations. In contrast, Hunter production reached almost 2,000, with many overseas orders for both single and two seat versions. These included some that were licence-built. In the end the machine entered service with over a dozen air forces distributed worldwide, from Sweden to Peru.

One notable story about a particular FAA Hunter is WV381 and as featured in Jaberwock 106 and 107.



This image of XL580 about to launch from RNAS Yeovilton clearly shows the re-designed nose to accommodate the Blue Fox radar. ©Mick Freer/Mark Russell

HMS Cardiff in Gulf War 1

Part one - abridged by Richard Macauley



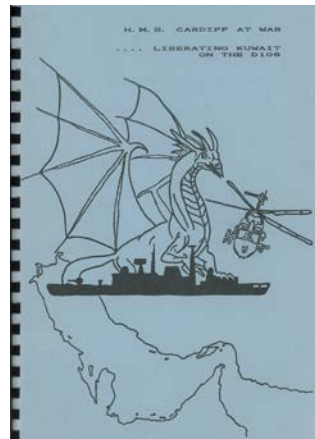
HMS Cardiff steaming off Kuwait with her 815 Naval Air Squadron Lynx, coded '335'. © Dan Hedger

The evocative painting above is by SoFFAAM member Dan Hedger and triggered an opportunity for this magazine.

On a visit to Dan regarding a completely different subject, he showed me a then half finished painting he had been commissioned to paint by the wife of a then 18 year old Radio Operator (RO) seaman who had served aboard HMS Cardiff during the first Gulf War. The ship's Captain at the time, Cdr Adrian Nance, thought that the traditional 'Deployment Book' should be revived to unofficially record Cardiff's war.

RO (T) Wallis agreed that we could plunder his copy of this document which was made up from articles submitted by

the ship's company, to give us a flavour of this Type 42's involvement in Gulf War 1.



The 'Deployment Book' cover.

Deployment Book Foreword.

With many memories in our minds over what we actually did on the last Gulf patrol, there was a thought that the traditional Deployment Book should be revived. The support for this record has been superb, with much undiscovered talent and even a printable piece from the press! This Book makes delightful reading and definitely reflects the sense

of fun, and several other things that we shared. I am as proud of what we did as I am of you all, and I hope this helps us to appreciate the immense achievements of *Cardiff* in the Gulf.

Happy homecomings and God bless.

Commander Adrian Nance, RN.

Commanding Officer

HMS *Cardiff* diary of events

October

- 01 Departure from Portsmouth.
- 02-04 Pre-deployment work-up Portland Exercise Areas.
- 06 High-Seas firing of Seadart.
- 08-11 Alongside Gibraltar.
- 11-15 Fleet NBCD team embarked (training).
- 15 Fuelling stop NATO fuelling facility Souda Bay.
- 16 Replenishment (Stores) by Vertrep Akrotiri, Cyprus.
- 17 Moored Port Said (inner waiting area)
- 18 Suez Canal transit (southbound), entered Operational Theatre.
- 18-26 Passage
- 24 Handover HMS *York*/HMS *Cardiff*.
- 26 Inbound transit Straits Of Hormuz.
- 27-31 Alongside Jebal Ali.

November

- 01 Sailed Jebal Ali.
- 01-18 Gulf familiarization/ Central Gulf Patrol.
- 18-21 Alongside Dubai.
- 21-28 Central Gulf Patrol.
- 28-30 Alongside Bahrain (Duty Ship - 4 Hours notice for sea).

December

- 01 Sailed Bahrain.
- 01-07 Central Gulf Patrol.
- 07-11 Alongside Abu Dhabi (Duty Ship - 4 Hours notice for sea).
- 11-18 Central Gulf Patrol.
- 18-20 Alongside Jebal Ali (Duty Ship - 4 Hours notice for sea).
- 20-24 Alongside Jebal Ali (Stand-off).
- 24-29 Central Gulf Patrol.
- 29-31 Alongside Jebal Ali (AMP).

January

- 01-03 Alongside Jebal Ali (AMP).
- 03-08 Fleet NBCD team embarked/Exercise Deep Heat.
- 09-11 Alongside Doha (Duty Ship - 4 Hours notice for sea).
- 11-15 Central Gulf Patrol.
- 16 Joined Northern Gulf MW barrier.
- 17 Commencement of Hostilities.
- 24 Identification by HMS *Cardiff* Lynx (335) of Iraqi Mine-layer in vicinity of Querah island - an event which led to allied forces recapture of Querah.
- 28 ID of floating Mine (destroyed by EOD Team).

- 29 Sinking of Iraqi patrol craft by Lynx (335) - First Royal Navy Surface Kill of the war.
- 30 Sinking of further two Iraqi vessels by Lynx (335).

February

- 08 Sinking of Iraqi Zhuk class patrol boat by Lynx (335).
- 10 Handover HMS *Cardiff*/HMS *Manchester*.
- 11 Sinking of Iraqi Zhuk class patrol boat by Lynx (335).
- 13 Handover HMS *Cardiff*/HMS *Exeter*.
- 14 Back-Ras (Ammunition/Enhancements) with RFA *Fort Grange*.
- 14-16 Alongside Jebal Ali.
- 16 Transit Straits of Hormuz (outbound).
- 20 Fuelling stop Djibouti.
- 23 At anchor Port Suez.
- 24 Suez Canal transit (northbound).
- 25 At Anchor Akrotiri Bay (disembark AMP).
- 27-28 Alongside Piraeus.

March

- 01-04 Alongside Piraeus.
- 08-10 Alongside Gibraltar.
- 14 Alongside Portsmouth.

The night it all started - 16/17 January 1991

Six days after our untimely departure from Doha, (our visit only half complete) and 24 hours after the expiry of the United Nations deadline at Midnight on 15 January, I think all of us must have had the same questions in our minds "When will we do it"? "When will they do it and if they do it, what will they do?"

The latest buzzes flew round the ship in seconds, listened to by all, even those who professed not to listen to buzzes. Then the evidence started to come in that today was indeed to be the day. First we received notification that all Allied helicopters were to be on deck as from 2200. Then came the instructions to move further north in company with the other ships of the AAW barrier. The ship was alive with speculation. In the Junior Rates' dining hall all the tables were crowded with groups playing cards, in between listening to the news broadcasts on World Service.

Just before midnight the voice of the On Watch PWO came over the Main Broadcast "Assume Air Threat Yellow, Assume Air Threat Yellow". Shortly

afterwards the Captain addressed the ship's company, informing us that we had assumed Air Threat Yellow as there was an increased risk of an Iraqi pre-emptive attack in the hours preceding an Allied air strike, a strike that was expected to be made by coalition forces in the early hours of the morning.

Few people aboard slept that night, off watch teams showered and changed into action coveralls before relaxing. All around the ship small groups gathered, passing the small hours of the morning in speculative conversation and slightly forced light-hearted banter. It was a time for mixed emotions, excitement, fear and uncertainty, a cocktail of feelings combining to produce an almost surrealistic state. Finally, at about 03:30 the first salvoes of the war were fired, the fiery tails of the Tomahawk missiles streaking into the night from our neighbours USS *Bunker Hill* and USS *Leftwich*. Operation Desert Shield had become Operation Desert Storm.

The narrative above was written anonymously by a rating of the ship's company.

Westland Lynx '335'

Following the ship's arrival in theatre most of the time was spent in the northern Persian Gulf, consequently the aircraft tasking concentrated on surface search (SUSCH) looking for entitled merchant ships and sanction breakers, although always keeping an eye beyond 28°N (limit of allied operations) for the possible fast moving contact heading south. With considerable press interest

being shown the Flight also participated in demonstrations to show the Lynx capabilities and versatility. It was during this period that Naval Gunfire Support (NGS) off the Kuwait coast was thought to be a definite possibility and consequently NGS drills were practised. Inevitably, serious consideration was being given to potential Lynx employment during any hostilities and

to facilitate USN/RN coordination, joint briefings and exercises were conducted.

Once hostilities had broken out the tasking continued in the SUSCH role although now the aircraft was armed with Sea Skua. Throughout subsequent operations the standard aircraft fit was either one or two Sea Skua on the starboard side with Sandpiper on the port, with the option to load Yellow Veil if required. After initial restrictions to 28.30°N and then 29°N the clearance was given to fly anywhere in the NPG clear of Iranian Territorial Waters. During the first excursions further north the aircraft remained approximately 15 nautical miles (nms) clear of the Kuwait and Iraq coast but as intelligence sources indicated less of a threat the aircraft closed to within 5nms.

First contact with Iraq forces was made January 18 when '335' was tasked in company with a USN SH60 Seahawk helicopter to search for two Iraqi Zhuk class patrol boats. The Fast Patrol Boats remained unlocated but during the ensuing search of the Dorra oilfield some of the smaller well heads

were found to be inhabited by what was later established as Iraq Special Forces. Subsequent boarding operation by the USN revealed the presence of anti-aircraft guns and shoulder launched SAMS, much to the surprise of the aircrew who had conducted two passes from 20 yards.

Abbreviations and definitions

Sea Dart: The Type 42's principal anti-aircraft weapon, a missile system that entered service in 1973
NB CD: Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence
Vertrep: Vertical Replenishment, i.e., stores transferred as underslung load by helicopter
AMP: Alongside Maintenance Period (also Maintenance Party)
ID: Identification
RAS: Replenishment at Sea
RFA: Royal Fleet Auxiliary
Buzz: Rumour
AAW: Anti-Aircraft Warfare
PWO: Principal Warfare Officer
SAM: Surface to Air Missile

I am very grateful to Jason Wallis, Dan Hedger and contributory members of the ship's company for access to the material supplied to enable me to represent some of the activities of HMS Cardiff's involvement in Gulf War 1. Part 2 will be in Jabberwock 111.



Westland Lynx '335' of 815 Naval Air Squadron on the flight deck of HMS Cardiff.

Commando Merlin Upgrades

By Chris Penney.



845 NAS aboard Dutch assault ship HNLMS *Johan de Witt* during Ex Cold Response. © CHF

Yeovilton's fleet of Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) Merlins have been upgraded to Mk4/4a standard by Leonardo Helicopters to make them all compatible with embarked operations and to extend their life to 2030.

Given folding main rotor heads and folding tails, two aircraft can fit on one of the *Queen Elizabeth* class aircraft carriers' aircraft lifts. A new defensive aid suite, warning against and locating enemy laser guided weapons, was part of the upgrade programme and other modifications include improved avionics for operations in the maritime environment and compatibility with the anti-submarine warfare (ASW) Merlin fleet.

All CHF Merlins now have strengthened landing gear, deck lashing mounting points, fast-roping points and rescue winches. They are also air-to-air

refuelling capable. They can operate in all-weather day and night and lift over 4 tonnes of freight, ranging from bulky cargo carried internally or underslung, including artillery or light-strike vehicles. Merlins can operate from the two RN amphibious assault ships, *Albion* and *Bulwark*, ASW Type 23 frigates (and its Type 26 replacement) and Type 45 guided-missile destroyer, as well as various RFA vessels.

Nineteen Mk3 and six Mk3a CHF Merlins have been upgraded, ensuring a greater tactical air capability for 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines. The Mk3 were RAF utility aircraft, while the Mk3a variants are former Royal Danish Air Force aircraft. Two pilot simulators have also been delivered. Collocated with CHF at RNAS Yeovilton, these will significantly enhance aircrew and mission training.



Merlin at sea. © Royal Navy

Future Talks

By Richard Macauley



STOP PRESS: we have secured Col. Rich Graham USAF (Retd) to speak to us on Thursday 22 June 2023 about flying the SR71 Blackbird operationally.

You may remember that he was booked before but had pull out due to his wife becoming ill so we are very pleased to be able to invite Rich on his next visit to the UK to speak to us at the museum. Please note the date is one week earlier than the usual 'last Thursday of the month'. Rich flew the Blackbird from all operational locations around the world including RAF Mildenhall here in the UK. Make sure you keep this date free in your diary.

In the meantime we still have some excellent speakers to hear from in our Talks programme.

AEW Sea Kings

Thursday 23 February

The AnyFace Association will be speaking to us about this recently retired capability which was unavailable in the Falklands campaign and spawned its birth.

Tim Prince - Royal International Air Tattoo Desert Island Discs Anecdotes

Thursday 30 March

Tim is a hugely entertaining speaker who will tell his favourite tales of IAT/RIAT when he was the CEO.

Nicci Pugh - White Ship, Red Crosses. A British Hospital Ship at War

Thursday 27 April

Nicci, a QARNNS Trauma Operating Theatre Sister was instrumental in setting up the medical facilities aboard the commandeered SS *Uganda* and with her team of highly skilled nurses. This inspiring, informative and fascinating presentation illustrates the role of the *Uganda* working 8,000 miles from home in the South Atlantic Ocean during The Falklands War.

We hope to see you at the Museum for these talks or on Zoom.

The de Havilland Company

By Alistair Hodgson

October 2022 Talk summarised by Malcolm Smith



In a return visit to the SoFFAAM talks evenings, Alistair first said he was sorry if he did not cover your favourite DH aircraft.

Geoffrey de Havilland was born in 1882 in Oxfordshire. He was an early flying enthusiast and taught himself to fly, gaining Private Pilot's Licence no. 50. He built his own aircraft in 1909, which climbed to 100 feet before crashing. He was employed as an aircraft designer at Airco, but after the War there was very little demand for aircraft and Airco was taken over by the motorcycle company BSA. de Havilland left to form the eponymous Aircraft

Company in September 1920 at Stag Lane aerodrome, Edgware. The newly formed company quickly produced its first design, the DH60 Moth, the name bestowed by Geoffrey, who was a keen lepidopterist. de Havilland's friend and partner, Frank Halford, was a gifted engine designer and his first engine, the Gipsy, powered the Moth. The aircraft proved hugely successful and the Moth sold in large numbers.

The site at Edgware soon became too crowded and de Havilland established a new factory at Hatfield, next to the Great North Road, famous for its art deco Headquarters building.

The Moth was developed into the hugely successful Tiger Moth, procured by UK and other air forces as a basic trainer. In 1933, an air race from London to Melbourne was announced, for which the prize was £15,000. de Havilland contributed three purpose-built aircraft to the race. These were twin-engined, two seat aircraft, known as the DH88 Comet, and were constructed almost entirely of wood. All three were bought by private owners and one, named "Grosvenor House", won the race. de Havilland followed up the design with the graceful DH91 Albatross airliner of similar wooden construction.

By 1936, rearmament in the UK was belatedly underway. de Havilland offered a fast twin-engined aircraft, to meet RAF specification P13/36. This used the proven wooden construction to make a relatively light, fast medium bomber design. The Air Ministry showed little interest, but de Havilland persisted and in 1939 commenced detail design of the DH 98. Championed by Air Marshall Wilfrid Freeman, this design was accepted, to become the legendary multi-role Mosquito. Eventually, 7000 were delivered, manufactured by a mostly female work force in furniture factories. The Mosquito was followed by a lighter version, the Hornet, with the same Merlin engines as the Mosquito. This was adopted by the FAA as the Sea Hornet, but military piston-engined aircraft were being superseded by jet-powered machines. Frank Halford re-engineered Whittle's turbojet design to produce de Havilland's first jet engine, the Goblin, used to power the

DH Vampire. This design was quickly followed by the Ghost-engined Venom.

The Sea Venom served as a stopgap for the RN while DH overcame serious design problems in the DH110, which eventually entered service as the Sea Vixen. DH also designed the graceful Comet airliner, with the potential to transform air travel. Test flown by John Cunningham in 1949, the Comet appeared to be hugely successful. Sadly, two fatal crashes in 1954, caused by little-understood metal fatigue, resulted in the aircraft being grounded. A pioneering investigation at Farnborough revealed the causes of the crashes and de Havilland insisted that the findings be made public. The Comet was re-designed, but Britain's lead in air travel was overtaken by American designs. In the 1960s consolidation of the aircraft industry, DH was absorbed into the Hawker Siddeley Group. After a complex history of delays, the DH146 small airliner eventually sold well, while the Trident medium airliner, produced to BEA's specification, proved too small to compete with the Boeing 727, so that the Trident only sold in limited numbers.

Geoffrey de Havilland was knighted in 1944. He died in 1965, the factory named after him closing in 1994. The Administration block still stands, while the restaurant building is now the Hatfield Police Station. Alistair was instrumental in the conversion of a cellar under the Administration block into a Museum of de Havilland History, aimed at school children to encourage interest in Science. He is now the Curator of the museum and says that children love it.

Tornado Combat Operations

By Michael Napier

November 2022 Talk summarised by Robert Heath



Michael spent most of his RAF career flying the Tornado and supported his talk with some superb films.

He reminded us that the cancellation of TSR2 in 1965 led to the formation by Britain, Germany and Italy of the Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA) group to design an aircraft to meet their diverse requirements. The result was the Tornado. The first flight was in 1974 and manufacture continued until 1998, by which time 990 had been built for various customers.

Tornado operations at RAF Brüggen ranged from training for nuclear strike to ground attack on enemy airfields and similar installations. Training was primarily over Germany, but also

included time at the live Armament Practice Range at Decimomannu in Sardinia. RAF Tornados participated in Red Flag warfare exercises at the Nellis Ranges in the USA. This provided realistic scenarios, including a full-size replica enemy airfield. 'Enemy' aircraft were flown by American crews, copying precisely the tactics used behind the Iron Curtain. In a film taken during a Red Flag exercise, we were shown the route from the Nellis Range to the target airfield, flown at 150ft and 440kts.

The Cold War ended in 1989 and the Soviet threat diminished, but the invasion of Kuwait redirected the West's interests to the Middle East.

For the RAF, this involved three Wings of Tornados. New techniques and tactics were required, including air to air refuelling. The Tornados used Air-Launched Anti-Radar Missiles (ALARM) which were dropped on a parachute to enable the missile time to home in and destroy radars.

Runways on desert airfields were extremely long and numerous, making attacking them with bombs ineffective. The answer? Bomb the short taxiways from the hard aircraft shelters, to box the enemy aircraft in on the ground. At first, Tornados deployed JP233 in low-level attacks, which deployed minelets to crater the runways, resulting in four Tornados being lost to ground fire. Buccaneers were then employed to illuminate the target for laser-guided bombs. The introduction of the Thermal Imaging Acquisition and Laser Designation (TIALD) pod to the Tornado enabled autonomous attacks.

In 1992, Tornados were being used to monitor the 'no fly zone' to curtail Iraqi activities against the Kurds. The transit times from their base to the Iraq border necessitated Tornados carrying two 250 gallon drop tanks, supplemented by air-to-air refuelling. The Tornado's RB199 engines, equipped with reverse thrust, were powerful and when afterburners were used, could double the power available, but they also drank fuel prodigiously. Another of Michael's splendid 'home movies' took us through a typical operation, including air to air refuelling from Victor tankers, to landing and watching the clam shell thrust reversers in operation. In 1993

Iraq tried to take back its airfields and specific Iraqi targets were identified. A short film showed the effects of precision laser-guided bombing on a small HQ building surrounded by other buildings.

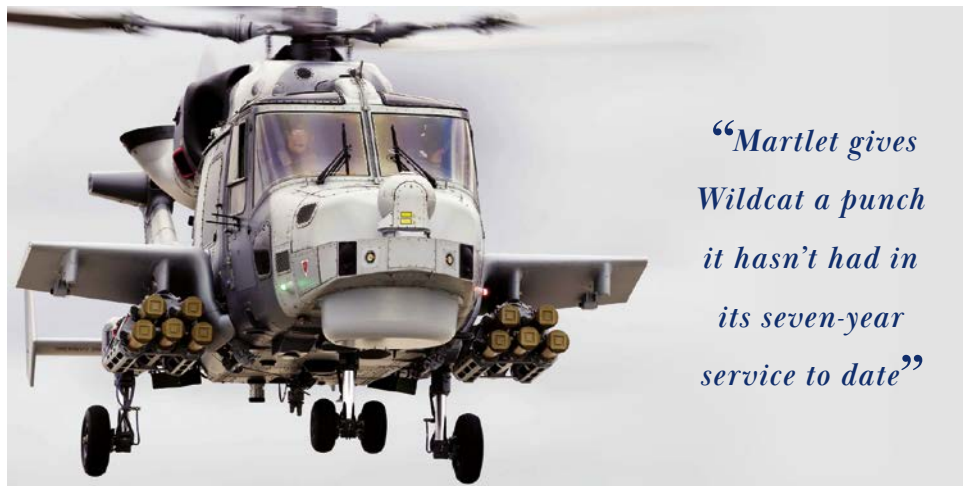
The Balkan war broke out in 1999 and Tornados operated from their UK bases, flying 1,200 miles out to Serbia. TIALD and some laser-guided weapons were not designed for such long sorties at high altitudes and often failed to work over the target as advertised. Tornados were upgraded from GR1 to GR4 and among the many enhancements were GPS guided bombs. Storm Shadow stand-off missiles were introduced, with a range of up to 30 miles. Tornados finally left Iraq in 2009, having been there since 1992.

In 2003, Tornados provided ground support for the Army in Afghanistan. The Brimstone missile was introduced here, where its active radar homing signal provided great accuracy even against moving targets. Laser guidance made Brimstone dual mode and capable of accurately hitting high priority targets. In Libya in 2011 Tornados flew direct from their home base at RAF Marham, although for support operations in Syria, the Tornados operated out of Cyprus. The new Typhoon aircraft often operated as a pair with a Tornado until the Typhoons had been upgraded to full capability. RAF Tornados were all retired by 2014, although they are still operated by other air forces.

We thank Michael for a fascinating talk. Do join us for future talks, either in person or via Zoom.

Armed and Dangerous

From Navy News (by kind permission of the editor)



“Martlet gives Wildcat a punch it hasn’t had in its seven-year service to date”

Wildcat HMA Mk 2 helicopter conducting a sortie with her Martlet wings attached © MoD

This is a Wildcat HMA2 loaded up with Martlet missiles to put the ‘attack’ back into Helicopter Maritime Attack.

Each of the distinct ‘weapons wings’ can carry ten Martlet missiles, and in a couple of years’ time we should have the Sea Venom, over-the-horizon anti-ship weapon system.

The Navy is introducing a missile fit for combat in the 21st century, along with Sting Ray torpedoes, one per wing are also available for an enemy below.

It takes two weeks instruction to learn how to fully load out a Wildcat and that operation is made considerably more authentic with the addition of a

new aid at the Wildcat Training Facility at RNAS Yeovilton: the Weapons Loading System Trainer.

It’s been introduced specifically to prepare personnel for working with the Fleet Air Arm’s next-generation missiles. Martlet itself has been fired on several occasions – most recently against a target hulk during the Anglo-US Atlantic Thunder test of combined naval firepower (see box). To date, the loading training has been conducted on an outdated rig which only met some of the needs and isn’t really suited to instructing engineers to handle and prepare the next generation missiles.

As a result, the trainer is set up exactly like the real thing. Attach a weapon system incorrectly and it will inform you - or else the instructors can set various gremlins running to test the team. The now in service Martlet and the Sea Venom (available in a couple of years time) are considerably less complicated to fit to a helicopter than Sea Skua, the Fleet Air Arm's last air-to-surface missile which required a lot of preparations.

That said, the weapons wings which carry the missiles/torpedoes takes four sailors to lift as they are packed with cabling, wires, hydraulics etc., all the technical apparatus to feed data to the weapons and their release mechanisms. A well-honed team should be able to prep a Wildcat for a combat mission in under four hours. The wings are fitted in the hangar and the weapons installed on the flight deck for safety.

The team undergoes a nine-day course of theory and safety to practical training of loading, unloading, arming, fault-finding of Martlet, Sea Venom and Sting Ray. This also focuses on the defensive aids suite, both chaff and

flares plus the 50cal heavy machine gun.

"I reckon once we have got through the training, we'll have something which is really quite slick," said Chief Petty Officer Kristoffer Martin, Senior Maintenance Rating (SMR) and a mechanical engineer, but as SMR, he oversees the weapons load out and needs to know the fundamentals. It's the fourth time he's been through the weapons loading training but the first with the new training set up which is fantastic he says.

Two flights a month are undergoing the new simulator course. "It's a great training aid and enhances our tutelage," said instructor Ryan Jackson, a former member of the Army Air Corps who worked on Apaches and demonstrates the inter-service element.

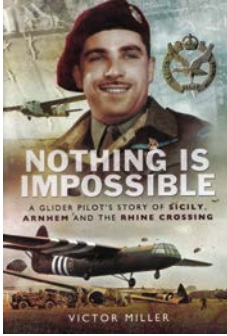
Lieutenant Commander Joe Keane, the Senior Naval Instructor at the Wildcat Training Centre, is delighted with the new addition to training. "It's a great asset and greatly enhances our training. When Flights move on to work on a live aircraft, they are filled with confidence due to the instruction they have received at the WTC."

The training aid wasn't available to the aircrew and engineers of Vengeance 2 Flight, who blooded Martlet against the hulk of American frigate USS *Boone* in the North Atlantic in September 2022.

"Martlet will not destroy a frigate - but it can knock out its command and control structure with a strike to the bridge," explains Lieutenant Commander Ross Gallagher, in charge of Vengeance 2 Flight, who 'steered' two missiles into the bridge of the USS *Boone*, amid a panoply of firepower unleashed by US/UK air and sea assets on the decommissioned frigate. Martlet is intended to take out RIBs, jetskis, small craft. Used cleverly it can wreak havoc against a very specific target. The warhead is packed with ball bearings which are expended at high velocity when it detonates, tearing through anything in the way.

Nothing is Impossible, a Glider Pilot's Story

By Victor Miller. A book review by Malcolm Smith



Victor Miller was an early volunteer for the newly formed Glider Regiment in 1941.

He underwent RAF flying training, qualifying as a pilot on powered aircraft before training on the Horsa, “the finest glider ever built”. With a wingspan of 88 ft, the Horsa could carry two pilots and a platoon of 29 soldiers.

In February 1943 Miller’s unit travelled by troopship to Algeria and then by road and air to Sousse in Tunisia. Here they prepared for Operation Ladbroke, the July 1943 glider landings in Sicily, part of Operation Husky. Miller was co-pilot in a US built Waco glider, loaded with a jeep towing a six-pounder gun. A three-hour night flight took the glider force to Sicily,

where Miller’s Waco suffered a heavy landing. Miller was injured and briefly captured by Italian forces. Freed by the advancing Eighth Army, after many escapades he returned to England.

His next operation was Market Garden, the airborne attack on Arnhem in September 1944. Training included hair-raising massed landings, in which many gliders were damaged. At Arnhem Victor landed safely, but the airborne forces were soon surrounded by German troops, so that he was fortunate to escape.

His final operation was Varsity, the airborne crossing of the Rhine in March 1945. Airborne forces were again engaged by German forces, but the glider pilots were extricated with some difficulty from the confused fighting.

The author tells a fascinating tale, describing long glider flights by day and night, supplemented by stories of bitter land battles and lengthy journeys through foreign lands. His book is a fine memorial to massed airborne warfare, a style of battle that, thankfully, is no longer needed.

Nothing is Impossible, by Victor Miller. Published by Pen & Sword ISBN 978 1 47384 366 0

No more Membership Cards!

An important change regarding your membership by Simon Websper



Please note that the provision of membership cards to new and existing members is being discontinued, with effect from 1 February 2023.

Do not worry, provided your renewal payment has been received by us, your membership will continue, unaffected.

Instead, we are providing a list of all current, paid-up members to the museum, on a monthly basis. On arrival at the museum, simply tell the reception staff that you are a SoFFAAM member and give your name. You will be given a till receipt, with which you will be able to claim your discount (currently a very generous 20%), in the museum shop and catering outlet.

This will save the Society a great deal of money in postage and stationery costs and will greatly reduce the administration time. This will

provide more funds for us to donate to projects within the museum. It will also be much easier to control the list of valid memberships directly with the museum.

Previously, renewal cards have been sent out automatically to those members paying by bank standing order, in advance of the payment being received by us. This has led to cards being sent out, where a standing order has been cancelled or has encountered a problem. The new system will prevent this happening. It will also avoid the problem of members losing cards and the burden on us to replace them.

For those members who do not pay us by standing order, please be sure to diarize your renewal date and let us have the appropriate payment before the expiry of your membership. You should not rely on us sending you a reminder, especially if you do not have an email address.

Finally, many members who pay by standing order are still paying the wrong amount. Please check your standing order, to ensure we receive £14 for an individual membership and £37 for a family.

Many thanks
Simon Websper

Membership

By Simon Websper

Just a short note from me, to thank you for putting up with me as Membership Secretary for the past three and a half years or so.

Things within the Society have certainly changed somewhat in that time, including the tricky Covid period. I will be handing the reins over to David Merrett mid-March. Please be kind to him! I will remain a member of the Society and hope to be able to help out from afar from time to time, and of course visit the museum. I wish you all a very happy 2023 and hope that the Society continues to prosper.

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

3797	Mr S Buckley	Devon
3798	Ms V Wells	Dorset
3799	Mr A Wells	Dorset
3800	Mr N Mitchell	Somerset
3801	Mr D Parkinson	Somerset
3802	Mrs M Parkinson	Somerset
3803	Mr N Kirk	Hampshire
3804	Mr M Tweed	West Midlands
3805	Mr C Brown	Lancashire
3806	Mr K Walley	Wiltshire
3807	Ms H Spens-Black	Somerset
3808	Mr P Spens-Black	Somerset
3809	Mr B Edwards	Somerset
3810	Mr P Murry	Somerset

3811	Mr G Ponting	Dorset
3812	Mr J Newton	Somerset

Total members at 12 January 2023: **918**
Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: **685***

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

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“Going green” and receiving a PDF Jabberwock via your e-mail saves us around £9 per member, per annum. Thank you to those who switched recently! Much appreciated.

Gifting a SoFFAAM membership to a friend or relative is a nice, inexpensive way of increasing our numbers, which have somewhat declined of late!

Visit us at:

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

All membership queries to:

soffaam.mem@gmail.com

Our postal address is on the join form on facing page.

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**
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Please complete and return this form to the Membership Secretary:

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Naval Air Perspectives

By Jim Humberstone

A unique glimpse into Britain's naval aviation heritage through Jim's individual style of illustrations and descriptive texts. He has been a long-standing member of the Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and contributed many articles to *Jabberwock*. So members will not be a stranger to Jim's unique style and talent.



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