

JABBERWOCK 112



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

FLEET AIR ARM
MUSEUM

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

**August
2023**



IN THIS ISSUE

RN Carriers off Korea - part 1 • In Memory of Stanley William Norman
The Blackburn Buccaneer • Harrier Special Interest Group • An (Un)
Historic Paint Scheme • Weston-super-Mare Helicopter Museum visit
Talk reviews • Book review • *Plus all the usual features etc.*

THE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM



The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum



PATRON

PRESIDENT

Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham CBE

LIFE VICE PRESIDENTS

Richard Hufton

Bill Reeks

CHAIRMAN

Graham Mottram

shalefan@btinternet.com

VICE CHAIRMAN

Ivan Childs

ivan.childs@tiscali.co.uk

TREASURER

Martin Turner

martinturner111@yahoo.co.uk

SECRETARY

Malcolm Smith

smalcolm355@outlook.com

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

David Merrett

Coombe View,
1 Coombe Villas,
Coombe Orchard,
Chapel Street,
Axmouth, Devon,
EX12 4AU..

T : 07521 723477

soffaam.mem@gmail.com

EVENTS ORGANISER

Rosanne Crowther

T: 01935 822143

rosannecrowther678@btinternet.com

TALKS COMMITTEE

Richard James Macauley

soffaam@btinternet.com

T: 01278 683300 M: 07768 562976

Gil Johnston

flyingflea@live.com.au

Tim Smith

timsmith555@hotmail.co.uk

CONTRIBUTIONS

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

ADMISSION

Members of SoFFAAM are admitted to the Museum free of charge, on production of a valid membership card. Members may be accompanied by up to 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

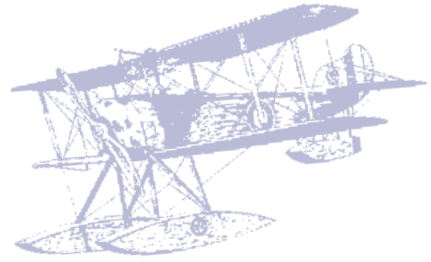
RNAS Yeovilton,
Somerset BA22 8HT
Telephone: 01935 840565

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RN Carriers off Korea - part 1



The Blackburn Buccaneer



Harrier Special Interest Group



An (Un) Historic Paint Scheme

CONTACT THE SOCIETY

SoFFAAM email:
soffaam.mem@gmail.com

SoFFAAM website:
www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk



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 @SOFFAAM



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 Fleet Air Arm Friends

EDITOR

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

DESIGN AND ARTWORK:

Richard James Macauley
soffaam@btinternet.com
 T: 01278 683300 M: 07768 562976

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

COVER ILLUSTRATION

Fairey Swordfish W5856 taxis back to Navy Wings hangar after a practice display on 20 April 2023 at RNAS Yeovilton. The Merlin helicopters of 845 and 846 Naval Air Squadrons in the background pose an interesting juxtaposition of old and new aspects of naval aviation.

© Tim Smith

Editorial

In what passes for summer this year, Society members have enjoyed several stimulating events, some of which are summarised in this issue.

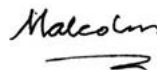
We report brief details of the June Council meeting, at which we welcomed our new Membership Secretary, David Merrett. A small group enjoyed their visit to the Weston-Super-Mare Helicopter Museum, which contains a huge variety of rotary-wing aircraft from every decade since Igor Sikorski's first attempts and from practically every manufacturer. Russian helicopters are well represented, as are a great many UK products from Westland and Fairey. This was a real treat for those who attended.

Also in this issue, our longstanding artist and contributor, Jim Humberstone, provides coverage of RN aircraft carriers during the war in Korea in the 1950s, the era of the Sea Fury and Firefly. A later generation of aircraft includes the Buccaneer and we include a detailed description of this magnificent Cold War warrior. Paul Beaver's comprehensive biography of Eric "Winkle" Brown is reviewed, revealing some surprising details in the life of this renowned naval test pilot.

We often comment that members' letters provide an important element in our magazine and this issue is no

exception. Tony Jupp clarifies some details of the Barracuda photographs in Jabberwock 111, while Tim MacMahon provides information on his visit to the *Musee de l'Aeronatique Navale* in Rochefort. This title "Naval Aviation Museum" has also been approved by the Naval Museums of the Royal Navy (NMRN) to replace the present title of Fleet Air Arm Museum, as it is thought that FAA might not mean much to potential visitors. However, the considerable cost of changing all the occurrences of the current title means that a change is unlikely in the near future.

Please see the notice of Annual General Meeting (AGM) in September. This will be held on Zoom, which gives all members the opportunity to attend, albeit electronically. The AGM is an important event in the Society's calendar, at which the Council members are elected (or re-elected). In last month's magazine, we reminded members of the important role that the Council plays in administering the Society. Volunteers for replacement Council members are always needed.



Malcolm

Council snippets

From the June Council Meeting

The General Manager said that FAAM's general performance through the first ten weeks of the main season has seen very positive visitor numbers, consistently exceeding expectation and budget during April and the Easter holidays.

Dave Morris and others across NMRN recently visited the Maydown Airfield area of Northern Ireland, to visit the Barracuda DP872 crash site and to gather more details and research material connected to the aircraft. As many of you will be aware, Barracuda DP872 is one of our longest running conservation projects and work has continued behind the scenes in the last few months. We will now see the Barracuda move on to the floor of Hall 4 so that visitors can experience the re-build and 'conservation live' principle.

The Chairman reported that he was still considering the choice of a Patron for the Society, following the death of Admiral Ray Rawbone. Regarding Saturday morning talks, he suggested that we should try for two more talks in the autumn, with no change to the booking and entry fee system. Richard

Macauley remarked that volunteers to assist with Zoom would be warmly welcomed. The 2023 talks programme is now full, with a few slots booked for 2024. The numbers of members taking the digital version of Jabberwock is increasing slowly, he said. On the Society's web site, progress is continuing to refine the "links" page, which links to other like-minded societies.

David Merrett, the new Membership Secretary, said that he completed the formal handover on 21 March 2023. Following negotiation with the Museum Manager, we now provide an up-to-date membership list twice monthly. This means that new members need wait a maximum of two weeks before being able to enjoy the benefits of membership. We are currently developing a "live" membership list, to which the museum will have access, meaning that membership will be instantaneous from when joiners are added to the database.

Richard Hufton said that overseas mail is now very expensive and we should probably tell new overseas members that they will only receive Jabberwock in soft copy.

Saturday Series Talks - see 'Future Talks' page in this edition or the SoFFAAM website
[www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk /talks/](http://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/talks/)

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor

I know you are not supposed to start with saying sorry, but I owe a huge apology to Colin Huston. I committed the most heinous crime of spelling his name wrong in the credit for his fine photo of the Shuttleworth Collection Sopwith Pup 9917 that adorned the last Jabberwock front cover. My sincere

apologies for this typo.

If any of our readers have high resolution photos of appropriate aircraft they feel are perfect for Jabberwock covers, do please get in touch.

**Apologetically,
Richard Macauley**

Dear Malcolm

My J108 letter highlighted the role played by Australia's Fleet Air Arm providing royal guard duties to HM Queen Elizabeth II in April 1954. Wikipedia states that on the same royal tour Indian Naval Air Squadron 550 provided six aircraft to escort the hired Royal Yacht SS *Gothic* from Colombo to Aden. At that time the squadron's only combat type was the Fairey Firefly and the Indian Navy had no aircraft carrier so it would be interesting to know how that feat was achieved.

This image of INAS *Hansa* at Goa-Dabolim shows the scale mock-up of an Indian Navy aircraft carrier deck with bow ski-jump. A US Navy Super Hornet is testing its short take-off but arrested recovery (STOBAR) capability. Currently

India's maritime strike role is performed primarily by the Air Force but the Navy is in the process of ordering a new fighter for its two STOBAR-equipped carriers; France's Rafale having been selected ahead of the F/A-18.

**Regards,
Chris Penney**



Malcolm

Some additional comments on two of the three photos of Barracudas on page 9 of Jabberwock 111. The small photo of a Barracuda about to touch down is part of the Imperial War Museum collection reference A12113 and shows an early Barracuda I, serial number unknown, about to land on HMS *Victorious* on or just before 25 September 1942 in Scapa Flow. It was piloted by Lt Cdr Torrens-Spence from the A&AEE Boscombe Down during the second set of Barracuda deck landing trials, the first with the high-set tail plane.

The first Barracuda deck landing trials took place on 18 and 19 May

1941 with the prototype P1767, also on *Victorious* in Scapa Flow, piloted by Lt Cdr Arthur James Tillard of 778B Sqn based at RNAS Arbroath. These trials were with the original low set tailplane and included carriage of a torpedo. The largest photo is Imperial War Museum reference A25585 and depicts a Barracuda II of either 815 or 817 Sqn aboard HMS *Indomitable* in August 1944, not HMS *Illustrious*, around the time of Operation BANQUET.

**Regards,
Tony Jupp**

Dear Mr Smith

My father (Ian Ashley member #3425) passed your details on to me as he thought you may be able to help, I hope that's ok?

I live in Exeter and up until a few years ago, had a neighbour called John Ellsey. John relocated to the Leicester area some time ago, to be looked after in a care home and be close to his family. We have remained in touch since then.

John's daughter Heather wrote to me recently to let me know that he is now very frail and has difficulty using the phone. He had asked her to make contact to see if I could make enquiries about an issue concerning him. I will quote what she wrote so I don't confuse any details;

"I believe one of your relatives was

involved with the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton and has a book called 'Fairey Swordfish & Albacore' by W.A. Harrison (Crowood Aviation series). John is quite concerned that some details from 1944 may not be recorded correctly at the museum. His squadron (819) was seconded to an RAF squadron and he seems to think that the Fleet Air Arm was not recorded separately. His squadron was not Albacores which was the 119 Squadron RAF. Sorry if that's a bit muddled but I promised I'd contact you"

The following few paragraphs are information from my father as some background to John's request.

John was an engineer Petty Officer mainly on the Fairey Swordfish aircraft.

This gave him responsibility for ensuring aircraft were properly maintained and ready to fly. I don't know which aircraft carriers and escort carriers he was assigned to, but the Swordfish was arguably the most effective RN carrier based aircraft of WW2. Maintainers and engineers had a really tough time often working in foul weather, on open decks in freezing conditions particularly on the North Atlantic convoys. He would have been responsible for a group of maintainers whose job it was to ensure the aircraft was fit to fly and ready to launch into action.

John was without doubt Royal Navy through and through - a proud 'Airey Fairey' and definitely not RAF!

When I spoke to John about his time at RNAS Yeovilton, he said one of his responsibilities had been for the aircraft spares store. Before the museum was established, it was just a bit of an attraction to motorists passing on the old A303, and many of the bits and pieces on display, John told me, came from his stores.

A Swordfish aircraft is still maintained in flying condition at RNAS Yeovilton, and a static example is on display in the museum.

The Fairey Barracuda was an aircraft designed for and flown by the Fleet Air Arm and, depending who you believe, was not an easy aircraft to fly and maintain. The museum is currently restoring to static display the only known existing Barracuda airframe.

819 flew both the Swordfish and Barracuda torpedo bombers. The Swordfish (also known as the Stringbag

due to its twin wings held together by wires) was used to protect shipping on the arctic convoys to Russia in often brutal weather. Bearing in mind that the aircraft could only fly with maintenance support, engineers would often have to work in the open on pitching, rolling decks covered in snow and ice.

The aircraft itself was out of date even before the outbreak of WW2 due to the RAF, via the Air Ministry, refusing to fund the development of carrier borne aircraft to protect vital sea lanes. The RAF convinced the powers that be that they could protect the convoys from land bases. This had disastrous consequences for convoys particularly on the North Atlantic routes where they were largely unprotected until more aircraft carriers and escort carriers with barely enough aircraft could be deployed. This caused massive tension between the FAA and RAF who were reluctantly forced to concede the need for carrier borne aircraft. Even today, the RAF can only deploy the F35's quickly on aircraft carriers alongside FAA pilots.

819 Naval Air Squadron Swordfish were also used on the night attack on the Italian fleet based at Taranto. The raid was a complete success sinking and damaging much of the fleet and causing a major rethink by the Italian navy. Incidentally, a Japanese navy contingent was visiting the Italian base at Taranto when the raid took place. They were thought to be so impressed by the tactics used, the engineering support and the bravery of the aircrew that they used it as a blueprint for the attack on Pearl Harbour.

So, the Swordfish is an aircraft much loved and revered by the Fleet Air Arm and the attack on Taranto is celebrated every year to this day.

It would be great if I could let John know that the records are in fact correct

and put his mind at ease so any help would be appreciated.

Kind regards
Mrs Jude Leck

Editors reply: Thank you for contacting me and providing details of your neighbour John Ellsey. I was an aircraft engineer in the Fleet Air Arm for 30 years, although of a more recent vintage than John! I agree with your father's impressions of the awful conditions experienced by aircraft maintainers in those days. A quick scan of information on the internet provides the following details:

819 Naval Air Squadron formed at Ford as a torpedo reconnaissance unit in Jan 1940 with Swordfish, it took part in the Taranto raid on the Italian fleet in Nov 1940. One squadron of Swordfish ... operated with Coastal Command from mid 1944. After a year's excellent service with this Command, operating both from this country and from Belgium, the squadron was withdrawn at the end of February 1945 and disbanded.

I will ask the Fleet Air Arm Museum if they have any more details on the period in question, although the public record seems to confirm that there was no confusion about the identity of the squadron in its last year. Incidentally, 819 re-formed in 1971 as a helicopter squadron and for a long time was based at Prestwick in Scotland.

I hope this is helpful, kind regards,
Malcolm Smith.

To all SoFFAAM members

Jabberwock delivery goes out either as a paper copy by Royal Mail or in digital form as a PDF to Member's email address. As in all things these days, these processes can sometimes be problematical and Jabberwock 'does not arrive'.

The last two quarters have had problems with both delivery methods for a variety of reasons. Therefore, if you do not receive your copy, please contact me in the first instance and I will endeavour to correct the problem. Email soffaam@btinternet.com or ring

07768 562976 or **01278 683300**.

Jabberwock should arrive at the beginning of February, May, August or November. Sometimes the printer is extra efficient and your copy may be despatched slightly earlier. If you wish to change your preference from paper to digital, this is a great cost saving to the Society so, please contact the Membership Secretary.

Regards
Richard Macauley

Dear Malcolm

During my time in HMS *Ark Royal* one of my responsibilities was looking after visiting aircraft.

On 1 April 1965 whilst in the English Channel with our squadrons disembarked, the ship played host to a visit by the 16th CENTO Military Committee, very senior officers from the Central Treaty Organisation. Part of the day was devoted to a flying display with Scimitars, Sea Vixens, Gannets and Wessex performing, flying from shore bases. Two Scimitars had landed the previous day and were part of the hangar display, due to be catapulted off the next day. They were my responsibility, and I mustered a crew of Air Engineering Department men with Scimitar experience to service them overnight.

My earlier briefing from the 803 Naval Air Squadron AEO had included the need to have four small pieces of wood, two per aircraft, for the launch.

Before taxiing into position on the catapult, the hooks on the underside of the fuselage had to be pulled down ready for the "Badgers" to attach the launching strop. The bits of wood were needed to stop the hooks retracting prematurely back into the fuselage. Once the strop was attached and tensioned the bits of wood were no longer needed and were blown away never to be seen again! After that the aircraft were launched successfully.

Regards
Chris Howat



Audacious class aircraft carrier R09 HMS Ark Royal with Sea Vixen and Scimitars forward. © Royal Navy

Dear Editor,

During a recent stay in France, I visited the French Navy's equivalent of the FAA Museum, Musée de l'Aéronautique Navale in Rochefort, Charente Maritime. Manned entirely by volunteers and on a tight budget (sounds familiar?), it contains, in a single hangar, a fine and extensive collection of fixed and rotary wing aircraft including a Neptune (the French Navy still runs maritime patrol), Super Étendard, Crusader and Lynx, or WG13 as they prefer to call it. It was an excellent visit, and I was made very welcome, as will any future FAA visitors, so if any readers are down that way, do make time to visit this excellent museum – you won't regret it.

A particular pleasure was finding a Lynx / WG13 in which I often flew whilst on exchange in Flottille 31F a while back, and to have been shown around by one

of my old co-pilots, Patrick Puchois. A grand day out, so full of nostalgia that a visit to a hostelry became de rigueur.

A final word of advice however – the museum isn't open every day so do check the website <https://www.anaman.fr/> before visiting.

Regards,
Tim MacMahon



Veterans discounts are available across all National Museums Royal Navy sites of 30% and up to 5 visitors.

We are aware that there has been some confusion over the Veterans Discount offers at our sites and we are now looking to extend our Veterans discount across all NMRN sites to encompass veterans who do not hold a Defence Discount Card.

Currently, this offer is for those who hold a Defence Discount card but some Veterans do not hold these cards so this offer is not fully inclusive. We are extending this same discount

offer to Veterans Associations which can display their membership through a variety of methods including pin badges, cards and discharge letters.

This Veterans offer is only available on the 'walk-up' prices and not on pre-purchased tickets from our websites. Please wear your veterans badge and as a backup carry your discharge chit if you intend to visit NMRN sites.

See this website for more info; <https://www.forces.net/military-life/veterans/uk-veteran-id-cards-all-gen-about-them>

RN Carriers off Korea - part 1

By Jim Humberstone



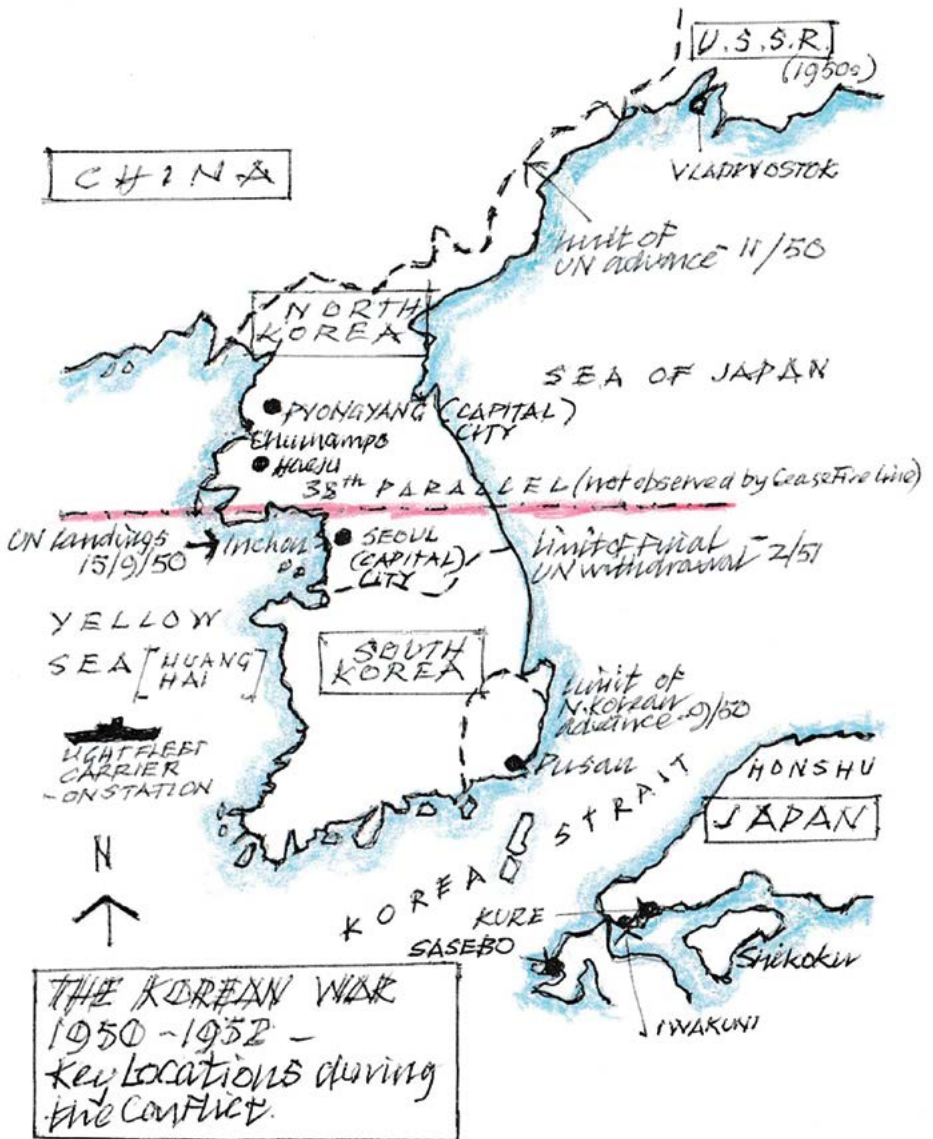
HMS Unicorn entering Kure Harbour, Japan August 1950. © IWM

The nations that had seen WWII to a satisfactory conclusion were caught off guard five years later when, out of the blue, a small country in the Far East attacked its neighbour.

The peace that had been hard won in that region was disturbed when in June 1950, a powerful North Korean army, backed and equipped by Communist Russia, crossed the 38th Parallel, South Korea's frontier. Sweeping away all before it, the North Koreans advanced right down the country to

leave a tiny remnant of sovereignty in the southeast corner of the peninsula, known as the Pusan perimeter.

The yet young United Nations protested straight away, with the United States acting as a key player from the start in what then unfolded. The US was on the spot already, as American forces had ended the Pacific War some five years before by establishing their presence in Japan. That country adjoins South Korea geographically, separated by the Korea



Strait about 130 miles wide, joining the Sea of Japan with the Yellow Sea. (Huang Hai) situated each side of the Korean peninsula.

Britain condemned the incursion with an unequivocal reaction by

Ernest Bevin, the tough, vehemently anti-communist Foreign Secretary. Unfortunately, the country was in debt to the US through substantial loans, due to its recent exertions. Drained of military resources with the rundown

from the recent hostilities, it was only able to offer limited support to General MacArthur, the UN Forces Supremo. To provide at least some assistance, with the Crown Colony of Hong Kong the nearest source of the British military, it was decided to ship two infantry battalions from there to help the South Korean army and US forces.

At the end of WWII the Royal Navy had adapted aircraft carriers as temporary troopships, using them for the homewards transport of ex-POWs. This experience was now repeated in the other direction, using the repair carrier HMS *Unicorn*. This ship transported 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment and 1st Battalion the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders from Hong Kong to the battle zone. Although down to just three rifle companies each at that time, this contingent was later to form the nucleus of a lightly equipped brigade, which grew eventually into a division when joined by other Commonwealth forces.

The British presence on land was to be complemented by small contributions at sea and in the air. The latter took the form of Sunderland flying boats based at Iwakuni, providing

maritime reconnaissance and transport functions. At sea, the responsibilities of the Royal Navy included the need to maintain a presence at other places in the Far East where Britain retained responsibilities. Nonetheless, within two months a Commonwealth Task Force had been put together. This comprised *Unicorn*, the light fleet carrier HMS *Triumph*, three cruisers, eleven destroyers and eleven frigates. Canada, Australia and New Zealand made modest but significant warship contributions to this large and powerful squadron, when the Task Force took up station off the west coast of the country. The US Navy patrolled the eastern seaboard.

Rotation of Carriers

The principal role of the air arm of the United Nations, which was otherwise an almost wholly US effort, was the support of the ground forces, a role taken up from the outset by the Fleet Air Arm. As the campaign developed, carrier aircraft from the RN and USN flew sorties along the coasts of the peninsula to guard against seaborne incursion, whilst harassing the enemy along the littoral. Supply



Preparing to despatch a Sea Fury from HMS *Unicorn* to HMS *Theseus*. © IWM



Veteran Bu# 97143 F4U-4 Corsair that flew from the USS *Valley Forge* with VF-653 now flies on the 'warbirds' airshow circuit in the USA.

routes for the extended North Korean forces were priority targets.

The Royal Navy presence was in place by the summer of 1950. Aircraft from the Light Fleet Carrier HMS *Triumph* were the first to see action as part of this British contribution, launched from their ship standing off the coast in the Yellow Sea. By the time she was relieved on station by HMS *Theseus* in October 1950, her Fireflies and Seafires had already given good account of themselves. First off was a strike by 20 of her aircraft on Haeju on July 3rd. Here they were joined in action by an air group from an American carrier, the USS *Valley Forge*.

In September 1950, *Triumph's* Carrier Air Group (CAG) earned praise when its aircraft participated in the first major UN success of the war, when General MacArthur, the US Commander, brought off an audacious assault from the sea at Inchon close to the 38th parallel. This action led directly to the recapture of Seoul, the South Korean capital.

HMS *Theseus* replaced *Triumph* in October 1950. Supermarine Seafires of 800 Squadron then gave way to the Hawker Sea Furies of 807 Squadron in *Theseus*, with that carrier able to launch double the number of Fairey Fireflies embarked by her predecessor. By now aircrew, handlers and maintainers had worked up efficient flight deck routines. Fleet Air Arm records were being broken throughout the campaign for the number of sorties that could be mounted in a single day. Pre-dawn take offs took place 'to catch the early

worm'. Sorties were not without their perils; aircraft could arrive back on board with holes from small-arms fire in addition to damage from flak. Despite these risks, carrier aircraft penetrated north beyond the Parallel, even striking at Chinampo close to the capital Pyongyang

By mid-1951 action was regularly joined by aircraft from successive RN carriers stationed to the west of the Korean peninsula. Apart from flying Combat Air Patrols *Theseus's* Fireflies and Sea Furies between them took on reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols, both along the coast and inland. They also gave spotting assistance for ships bombarding enemy positions. This work mirrored to an extent what FAA aircraft had provided some six years before along the Normandy coast.

A notably low rate of deck landing accidents characterised *Theseus'* tour of duty. This reflected the robust deck-landing characteristics of the Sea Fury, perhaps incentivised by a reward of champagne, offered by the Commander (Air) to his Air Group if they achieved 1,000 trouble free landings. Award of the Boyd Trophy, named after the famed wartime captain of HMS *Illustrious*, went to these best performers. With the replacement of *Theseus* by HMS *Glory* in April 1951, 14 CAG took over from 17 CAG, also winning the Boyd Trophy with an enviable record of safe landings.

We will continue Jim's account of this conflict in the next edition of Jabberwock, which will be published in November 2023.

In Memory of Stanley William Norman

By Kevin Tumelty



Stanley William Norman. © Kevin Tumelty

This story of courage and sacrifice was posted in September 2013 on the internet about my uncle, Stanley William Norman, who was killed on the 23rd July, 1944, while serving in the Fleet Air Arm during World War Two.

He had just turned twenty two when he took off on his final mission from RAF Hawkinge, Kent in Avenger JZ550 for an anti-shiping patrol in the English Channel. His fellow airmen were Sub Lt. Roger Kirk Johnson (pilot) and Temp/Sub Lt. James Gleeson, who were both aged twenty one.

As a child, I was aware that I had

lost an uncle during the war but knew nothing about him or the circumstances other than he had been posted "missing presumed dead". I recall raising this subject with my grandmother but, even after many years, she still became quietly upset and nothing more was said. The war was very real to that generation and those sacrifices undoubtedly caused untold heartache for those who were left behind. The best way to deal with an untimely death was to put on a brave face and not to discuss it.

However, many years later, I again raised the subject with my mother and she disappeared only to return with some photographs and documents relating to his war service. One of the documents was a letter dated July, 1946, written by Roger Kirk Johnson and addressed to my grandmother.

Roger Johnson, being Stan's pilot, was sending his condolences on the death of Stanley and his fellow crew mate, James Gleeson, both losing their lives in this incident. Roger spoke of the aircraft being "shot down" and if the pilot had survived then somebody, somewhere, must know the circumstances of the events that led to deaths of Stan and Jim.

Using the photographs and documents, I researched these events, not realising that a number of chance

encounters would not only provide me with a step by step account of the events of the night of 22nd/23rd July 1944, but would also put me in contact with Nick Johnson, the son of the surviving pilot.

I would also discover the profound effect that the deaths of Stanley and Jim had upon Roger Johnson throughout his life, so much so, that he still spoke of his anguish some weeks before his death in 1991.

Events on the night of 22/23rd July, 1944

Sub Lt. Roger Kirk Johnson wrote this account; On the night of 22-23 July I took off from Hawkinge, 15 minutes before midnight for a patrol from Cap Griz Nez to Cap d'Antifer and back. Off Boulogne I let my AG, Leading Airman Stan Norman, have a burst at a passing VI but no result was obtained. A few minutes later I saw two flares in the Dieppe direction. Two-thirds of the first leg of the patrol passed when my observer, Sub-Lieut. Jim Gleeson, had a contact on the ASV which worked badly on this trip as the first contact, which should have been very definite, was weak, and Jim asked me to orbit to starboard. In the middle of these approach proceedings a flare appeared about a mile to the south revealing nine E-boats in three columns heading in an ENE direction. Cloud base was 10/10ths at 1100-1200 feet and visibility was consequently nil.

I had two alternatives: one, to climb through the clouds and risk of losing contact in order to drop my flares from 4000 feet, the height necessary for releasing them. The second was to make

use of the other plane's flare and attack immediately. This last course seemed the better as we had experienced a number of contacts being lost from a previous exercise of radar-bombing on the Goodwin Sands which proved ineffectual. This was the deciding factor that I was in a good position to attack.

I set my bomb switches, opened bomb-bay doors, had a double-check from the AG that his switches were set for a stick of four bombs at 60 foot intervals. I went in on the first run at 1000 feet but the flare extinguished itself during the run-in and the wakes were visible as a slight blur only when I was a little too far over to drop. The second run-up was done on ASV but it brought me into a position which required a sharp turn at the last moment on sighting the E-boats. The difficulty here was the inaccuracy of the ASV and the fact that the wakes were not visible until one was right over them.

I decided I could get into a better position in another run-up. No flares were fired on the first run but a fair amount of 40 mm tracer came up. I climbed to attack from astern to pick off the two rear ships in the starboard column on the third run. Not relying on ASV this time but by doing a turn procedure from my last sighting. We met very accurate and extensive 40 mm fire and at the moment of release, a shell exploded in the fuselage behind me. In doing a steep turn away, there was a glow behind me which I took to be a ship on fire but, on feeling the heat, realised it was from the plane itself, but I continued to climb.

The AG confirmed the fire, so I asked if he could put it out but events happened quickly. The fire spread from below and the heat became excessive. The glare made it impossible to continue on instruments so no possibility of safely ditching the aircraft. Realising the plane was about to be consumed by flames, I gave the order to bale out. I slid back the canopy, released my straps and forced myself out into the slipstream. It was a case of doing anything to get out of the unbearable heat. I pulled the rip-cord immediately I was out of the cockpit and was aware of hitting the tail with my leg. I had hardly recovered from the jerk of the parachute opening and doing about 'half a swing' when I hit the water.

Emerging to the surface I released my harness, inflated the Mae West and K-type dinghy, remembering to carry out all the necessary actions correctly or I was a goner. Once in the dinghy, I started to bale it out immediately. It was pitch dark with only the searchlights visible on the Normandy shore. The only noise was the throb of the E boat engines as they receded into the distance. There was no sign of my aircraft or crew. I think I must have been about as low as one can be to expect to get out of an aircraft. The attack started at 1000 feet, bombs dropped at 900 feet and then I climbed again. But after instrument flying became impossible I could have lost a few hundred feet.

Many times since that night I have tried to reconstruct what could have happened. My guess is that the incendiary shells ignited the smoke-flares in the tail section in which case the

AG could have been overcome before he could drop down out of the turret, clip on his chute and exit by the side door. On the other hand flames were coming out of the bomb-bay and over the leading edge of the wing and this suggests the flares in the bomb-bay were set alight or a cannon shell, which I sensed hit behind me came through the ventral petrol tank and ignited it. Possibly it carried on and hit Jim Gleeson. I had received no communication from him during or after the attack. Either the plane exploded or hit the water whilst I was underwater, for I imagine I would have been aware of a burning aircraft when I emerged but it all remains a mystery.

Unfortunately there was no sign of any crippled E-boats. I felt certain that if the four blast-detonated 250 pounders had dropped when I released them, one at least of the last two ships would have been hit. A strong breeze was now blowing from the north and it took me all my time to keep the dinghy bailed out. Any attempt to paddle against the sea was disastrous. I could not find the baler in the dark and used the raft cover.

Feeling weak from immersion and the cold, my face was burning after the heat in the cockpit. My left leg had a gash above the ankle on hitting the tail but I thought then that it was a burn and applied some acroflavin jelly in the morning. My socks and boots had come off and I could never get the dinghy with less than two inches of water in which to sit. I heard what I thought was an Avenger pass over in the night but I had no Very pistol as we had not been equipped with them. All I could do was

feebly flash my squadron letters with my Mae West lamp.

With the coming of dawn I watched the Beaufighter patrol pass over at 8-10,000 feet and return. An hour later two rocket carrying Typhoons came along the coast from the west, one passing overhead at 200 feet. I had released my fluoresceine bag on seeing them approach which coloured the water all around while I waved frantically but they passed leaving me unnoticed.

My next visitor was more sinister. I watched a triangular fin appear ten yards or so from my dinghy and it made three leisurely circuits, then came straight at the dinghy, turning at the last moment. As it swirled by me I saw the ugly snout and barnacle covered back of a six foot shark. I deemed it wiser to stay still than attempt to scare it away and sure enough in another minute it disappeared. I never mentioned this afterwards for fear of being accused of shooting a line.

It was not until noon that the sun roused me up to observe how close the wind had taken me to the French coast. I began paddling without stopping until about 11 pm. I estimated I travelled from about two miles offshore to about six or seven, against the wind and a little sea. Earlier, I had seen one Avenger and two air-sea rescue Spitfires out to sea, so I decided I had more chance of being seen or picked up by heading out. I think I could have lasted a few days although paddling became a great strain and I was becoming numb. However, at 11 pm or so, I spotted a German patrol boat coming. I had no chance of escaping as

his course came directly for me and I was easily seen. So I was picked up and taken into Dieppe. My watch stopped at 20 minutes past midnight and so I had been in the water for 22 hours.

My story after that was like many aircrew prisoners of war. It had a scary start as I was forced to sit on a coffin with guards in the back of a truck. Was the coffin occupied or was it for me? By way of various prisons and interrogations I was taken to Paris and Brussels before finishing up in Stalag Luft III, a few months after the great tunnel escape and shooting of prisoners. After a winter march I was eventually liberated from Luckenwalde, 30 miles from Berlin, by the Russians in April 1945.

Fleet Air Arm Memorial, Lee-on-Solent

The names of Roger's two fellow crewmen are inscribed on the memorial as follows;

Norman, Leading Airman Stanley William FAA/SFX 2228 R.N.H.M.S. *Daedalus* (855 Squadron) JZ550 23rd July, 1944 -Son of William Ernest and Mary Norman of Roath, Cardiff - Panel Reference Bay 5, Panel 3 Aged 22.

Gleeson, Sub Lieutenant (A) James Anthony R.N.V.R H.M.S. *Daedalus* (855 Squadron) JZ550 23rd July, 1944-Son of James and Mabel Gleeson of Liverpool - Panel Reference Bay 5 Panel 5- Aged 21.

From Richard Macauley: While volunteering on CWGC activities, you never know what you will hear from others about their relations and wartime service. So I am indebted to Kevin Tumelty for his approval in repeating this version of events here. The full version can be found here <https://snormanfaa1944.wordpress.com/page/2/>

The Blackburn Buccaneer

By Jozef Newton



Buccaneer S.1 XN957 on display at FAAM in the refurbished carrier exhibition. © Jozef Newton

In the late 1940's, the Soviet Union commissioned the *Sverdlov* class cruiser, a class of 14 ships and the last all gun cruisers built for the Soviet Navy.

Designed as a fast fleet screen to work alongside the never-built *Stalingrad* class battlecruisers and Soviet aircraft carriers, the *Sverdlovs* weighed in at 16,640 tonnes (16,377 Long tons). They served in both the Soviet and Russian navies and were eventually exported to the Indonesian Navy, remaining in service from 1952 until the turn of the millennium. This class of 210m long, 22m wide and 32.5kts cruisers, with

four triple 6in guns, posed a major threat to NATO supply lines, as they had similar commerce raiding capabilities to the German 'pocket battleships' of the Second World War. NATO member nations, especially those with limited all weather day/night carrier surveillance and strike capacities, were most at risk. In June 1952, the Admiralty issued Naval Staff Requirement (NSR) NA.39, to design and build a low-level carrier launched maritime strike and attack aircraft. The tender process was won by Blackburn Aircraft in July 1955 and the design entered service as the Blackburn Buccaneer.

Designed with a purpose - During development the project was named the 'Blackburn Naval Aircraft' and 'Blackburn Advanced Naval Aircraft' in official documents, to keep the project a secret and away from prying eyes. The specification was for a carrier capable, folding wing jet powered strike aircraft with an operational range of 400 nm at speeds exceeding 550 knots at sea level and with a weapons load of 8,000 pounds. It had to be capable of deploying the Red Beard free fall nuclear bomb and the in-development Green Cheese anti-ship missile. At Blackburn, Project B-103 was launched with Barry Laight as the designer. Prototype XK486 first flew from RAE Bedford on 30 April 1958 with Derek Whitehead at the controls. What left the (now Hawker Siddeley) factory was an excellent low level, tandem two seater jet strike aircraft with rotating bomb bay, two wing rooted engines and a sliding canopy. By far its most distinctive feature was its laterally deployed bullet fairing air brake.

Built for the job - When attacking its designed target, a Buccaneer equipped with conventional or nuclear bombs would approach the target at 100ft above the sea at 550kts. When 4 miles from the target, it would pitch up to 30 degrees and climb to 1,200ft before releasing the weapon. A harsh pull away would then be performed with a break to the left or right or a half loop before levelling off and descending back to 100ft and accelerating away at 550kts. The escape would have been performed at greater speeds if nuclear weapons were used. Other weapons

were an option and could be mounted in the bomb bay or on four wing pylons. A combination of rockets, bombs, fuel tanks and reconnaissance equipment could be carried.

The last British bomber goes to sea - The first production Buccaneer entered service with the Fleet Air Arm in January 1962 and immediately, there was an obvious problem; the engines. Originally equipped with a pair of Gyron Junior engines producing 32,000N of thrust, the Buccaneer S.1 proved to be woefully underpowered and new measures had to be taken to get it off the flight deck. The Buccaneers were loaded with full ordnance but with minimal fuel and the aging and unreliable Supermarine Scimitar would take off ahead of the Buccaneer equipped with buddy refuelling systems. Once airborne, the Buccaneers would top up with fuel from the tanker before carrying on with their missions. By 1965 after several near fatal crashes with the Gyron Junior engines carrying the blame, they were deemed unsafe to fly and withdrawn from frontline service. They were replaced with the Buccaneer S.2, equipped with the significantly more powerful yet more fuel-efficient Rolls Royce Spey turbofan engines that provided 40% more thrust than the Gyron Junior. The two aircraft types can easily be told apart by the circular engine intakes on the S.1 and the more oval shaped intakes on the S.2. Serving from HMS *Victorious*, HMS *Eagle*, HMS *Ark Royal* and HMS *Hermes*, in a total of six squadrons (700B/700Z, 736, 800, 801, 803 and 809 Naval Air Squadrons),



The distinctive shape of the Buccaneer S.1 engine intakes are obvious in this photograph. © Jozef Newton

the Buccaneer saw extensive service in the 1960s and the 1970s from show of force flights over British Honduras (modern day Belize), to burning spilt oil off the coast of Cornwall. The latter operation was carried out by Buccaneers from RNAS Lossiemouth when the super tanker *Torrey Canyon* ran aground and spilled its cargo. The intention of the bombers' attacks was to disrupt the tanker and ignite the fuel. During its embarked service, the Buccaneer served alongside Scimitars, Sea Vixens, F-4 Phantoms, Gannets, Wessex and Sea King helicopters. The final RN mark was the S2D, modified to carry the Martel missile. By 1978 the Royal Navy had retired its fleet of fixed wing carriers and the Buccaneer was replaced by the Sea Harrier in the strike role from the new V/STOL carriers that came into service in the early 1980's.

From one branch to the other -

Following the cancellation of the TSR2

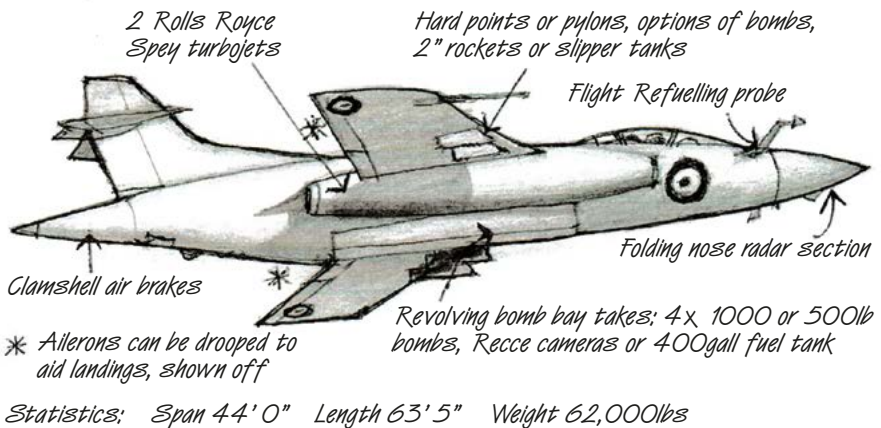
project, the RAF planned to adopt the American F-111 from General Dynamics. This project also fell through, low-level Canberra bombers needed replacement and the RAF was also required to assume the maritime strike capability from the RN. The Buccaneer was selected and adopted to meet all these needs. 46 new aircraft were built and the FAA's aircraft were transferred in to the force. The new built aircraft were designated S.2B. Self-defence measures such as chaff, flare and electronic countermeasures were also retrofitted to most aircraft. The addition of Pave Spike laser designators in 1979 allowed for the fleet to designate for fellow Buccaneers, SEPECAT Jaguars and Panavia Tornado. This was put into practice when the Buccaneers served with distinction over the skies of Iraq and Saudi Arabia during the First Gulf War in 1991, flying 218 missions and dropping 48 laser guided bombs including 2 on to Iraqi cargo planes at the Shayka Mazhar

airfield. Finally, the aircraft of 208 Squadron were fitted with the new Sea Eagle anti-ship missiles. Following de escalation at the end of the cold war the entire Buccaneer fleet was retired from RAF service in March 1994.

Exportation - The only export customer of the Buccaneer was South Africa. Following the Simonstown agreement, South Africa purchased 16 Spey powered S.2's which were renamed the S.50 and modified for the hot and high climate at their home air bases. These were equipped with a Rocket Assisted Take-Off (RATO) system courtesy of two Bristol Siddeley BS.605 rocket engines. In the end the system was deemed unnecessary and was removed from all airframes. Serving from 1965 till 1991 they took part in many patrols of South Africa's vast coastline. They made an integral part of the country's nuclear deterrent, providing one of the two delivery platforms for their six confirmed nuclear

weapons, alongside the Canberra bomber. In the border wars with Angola and Namibia, they carried out ground strikes on armoured targets and covered withdrawing forces.

I believe the Buccaneer was one of the most successful and in-the-moment aircraft used by the British armed forces in the cold war environment. Being born over a decade after final decommissioning, I was unable to see this fantastic aircraft fly during its glory days. However, SoFFAAM was lucky to have had a talk in the summer of 2022 by a Buccaneer veteran Graham Pitchfork. This was an insightful talk about the aircraft and its service life. The Fleet Air Arm Museum has three Buccaneers in its collection; Prototype NA.39 (XK488) which is maintained in the Cobham Hall and Buccaneer S.2B (XV333) which was previously on display aboard the carrier exhibit. Buccaneer S.1 (XN957) is the current Buccaneer on display in the refurbished carrier exhibition.



This Buccaneer illustration is by Jim Humberstone. The Society has collected many of these charming pictures by Jim and published them under the title "Naval Air Perspectives". Each picture is accompanied by descriptive texts on naval aviation matters. To get your copy, just type 'Naval Air Perspectives' on Amazon.

Harrier Special Interest Group

By Nick Greenall



Harrier SIG Display Team - Scale ModelWorld, November 2022. © Nick Greenall

“The Aeroplane won’t amount to a damn until they get a machine that will act like a hummingbird - go straight up, go forward, go backward, come straight down and alight. It isn’t easy but someone is going to do it.” *Thomas Edison (1847-1931)*

In late 1982, the achievements of the Sea Harrier force in the Falklands War inspired me to convert the Airfix 1/24th scale Harrier GR.1A into a Sea Harrier FRS.1. This was twenty years before Airfix released their large scale kit of the FRS.1. Except for the windscreen, the model is wholly scratch-built ahead of the auxiliary intake doors with many details added elsewhere, despite the

minimal references then available. Repainted as XZ455/12 in 2005, it is reputed to be the model which inspired the formation of the International Plastic Modellers Society (IPMS) UK’s Harrier Special Interest Group (SIG) in late 1993 by Phil Cater, which he led until handing me the controls in 2002.

Until the Harrier left UK service in 2010 (we know, way too soon!) we developed close links with those lucky enough to be employed flying or maintaining it, building a network of serving and ex-RAF/RN pilots and ground crew, including David Morgan, Jon Lawler, James Blackmore and Robin Trewinnard-Boyle, as well as Harrier

enthusiasts, authors and modellers. The SIG provides modellers with access to many references and its network, writes and publishes its own reference and modelling guides.

Through varied themed displays - at model shows and supporting talks about the Harrier - we tell the stories of the people who made the Harrier the icon it has become and keep the memories of their achievements alive, something recognised by the late John Farley among others. Farley began work on the development of the Sea Harrier, being the first pilot to undertake a take off with the aid of the 'ski-jump' and demonstrating this to the general public at the 1978 Farnborough Airshow.

The Harrier SIG also works closely with the model trade, such as Kinetic Model kits, Black Dog Models CZ, in order to get more quality Harrier modelling products into the marketplace.

Harrier SIG is open to Harrier enthusiasts and modellers globally and with over 50 members around the world, our only 'rule' is that members should ideally be members of a national IPMS; though this 'rule' is often waived. The Harrier SIG welcomes all levels of modelling skill and Harrier knowledge: from the complete novice to the prize-winner, from the curious and to those whose day jobs included full-sized Harriers, and everyone in between. It is possible that we may develop an affection for the F-35B in time...

If you'd like to join or know more about the Harrier Special Interest Group, you can email Nick Greenall at: ng899@btinternet.com

To view the Harrier SIG stand and the models displayed at the IPMS Scale Model World at Telford in 2019, click on this link or type it into your web browser <https://myalbum.com/album/tAjMChpajW8U/>



1/24th scale BAE Sea Harrier FRS.1 XZ455/12 of 800/899 Naval Air Squadron on HMS *Hermes* April-July 1982, a cockpit close up of the same model showing the very precise detail achieved. © Nick Greenall

An (Un) Historic Paint Scheme

By Tim Brandt



G-SEAK with the HMX-1 style livery for her starring role on television. Photographed at Historic Helicopters Chard night photo shoot. © Roger Wilcox

In July 2022, SoFFAAM had the privilege of a visit to Historic Helicopters near Chard.

During the visit, one of their Sea Kings was seen to be painted in a rather unusual livery. Sea King HAR3 G-SEAK is normally in the yellow colour scheme it wore as XZ588 in RAF Search and Rescue (SAR), but is currently painted dark green and white, representing a Presidential transport VH-3D flown by US Marine Helicopter Squadron 1 – call-sign Marine One when carrying POTUS.

All became clear when the helicopter appeared in the Netflix series “The Diplomat” (not to be confused with the BBC series of the same name which

aired a couple of months earlier).

As often in films, the aviation accuracy was not perfect. The Sikorsky VH-3D and the Westland Sea King HAR3 may share a common heritage of the Sikorsky S-61, but there are a lot of differences. The most visible are the engine air intakes (with the VH-3D lacking the inlet particle separators), the radar on the spine of the HAR3 (not fitted to the VH-3D), and the six-blade tail rotor (five on the VH-3D) – not to mention the rather more extensive communications and self-defence suites fitted to the Presidential aircraft.

XZ588 was one of sixteen Sea King HAR3s ordered by the RAF in the mid-

1970s, and delivered in January 1978. The RAF Sea Kings replaced the Westland Whirlwind HAR10s of the RAF's SAR Wing, and had a relocated rear cabin bulkhead giving greater cabin length, extra fuel and additional observation windows compared to the HAS1. Four RAF SAR flights of 202 Squadron (ex-RNAS 2 Squadron) were equipped with the Sea King: Lossiemouth, Boulmer, Coltishall and Brawdy, each with two aircraft. The RAF's Sea King Training Unit (SKTU) was based at RNAS Culdrose. The SAR cover was shared with the Wessex HC2s of 22 Squadron at Leuchars, Leconfield, Manston, Chivenor and Valley. The Wing and both its squadrons were headquartered with their second-line engineering at RAF Finningley, and the aircraft were finished in the characteristic golden yellow RAF SAR finish. Taking into account the SAR capability provided by RN units at Lee on Solent, Culdrose and Prestwick, together with Mountain Rescue Teams, the RAF and RN provided a strong SAR capability for the UK.

After the Falklands War, the RAF deployed two Sea Kings to the Falkland Islands, initially with 1310 Flt and from 1988 with 78 Squadron at RAF Mount Pleasant. Three additional Sea King HAR3s were bought to cover this new commitment. This resulted in two RAF Sea King sub-fleets - those used for rotation to the Falklands were painted grey and had defensive aids suites and were termed the "grey whales", while the non-Falklands aircraft remained yellow. ZA588 was one of the former.

The RAF SAR Wessex were replaced

with a buy of six Sea King HAR3As in 1996, adding a third sub-fleet. Subsequently, the RAF Sea King fleet was pooled between 22 and 202 Sqns. HQ SAR Wg moved to RAF St Mawgan in 1993, and was joined by SKTU, which was renamed 203 (Reserve) Sqn in 1996. 202 Sqn HQ initially moved to Boulmer. In 2008, the Wing HQ, two squadron HQs and 203(R) Sqn collocated to Valley. ZA588 served on both SKTU and 202 Sqn, including time based at Boulmer and Lossiemouth, but does not appear to have served on 22 Sqn. In 2011, XZ588 was marked with "RAF SAR 70" markings, to celebrate the formation of RAF SAR in 1941.

In 2015, Bristow Helicopters, managed by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency was contracted for SAR duties and RAF SAR helicopter ops ceased by September 2015.

After thirty-seven years of SAR service, XZ588 was flown to Fleetlands in April 2015 for storage. It was sold to Lift West (Helicopters) Ltd in August 2020 with the new civil registration G-SEAK. It was restored to flight by August 2021, as part of Historic Helicopters Fleet. May the old girl fly safely for many years to come - in whatever livery!



XZ588 still operational in SAR yellow at Leuchars Air Show in 2013. © Tim Brandt

Visit to Navy Wings Hangar Thursday 5 October 2023

SoFFAAM Members ONLY on this occasion

By Rosanne Crowther



View the Swordfish 'up-close' on this visit. © Richard Macauley

Rosanne has secured a visit to Navy Wings hangar on base at RNAS Yeovilton for SoFFAAM Members only - no guests on this occasion.

There will be two groups. The morning group departs at **10:30** until **12:15** and the afternoon group leaves at **13:30** to **15:15**.

This will give individuals time to have a coffee before departing and a "get together" of possibly 40 members for lunch **12:30** to **13:30** in Warnefords Restaurant. **NB** the cost for coffee and lunch are not included in the price.

You will be met by your guide Kate

Campbell in Warnefords and escorted across to the hangar. Individuals will be asked to "car share" to reduce the number of cars in the convoy. Whilst in the hangar photographs are allowed. The hangar is a working environment so dress accordingly, i.e. sensible shoes and clothes.

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

The cost for each member is **£10.00** and cheques should be made payable to **NAVY WINGS**.

Navy Wings visit Thursday 5 October 2023

First group of 20 in the morning is **10:30am to 12:15am**.

Second group of 20 in the afternoon is **13:30 am to 15:15 pm**

Along with your personal details, please indicate on the form below which group you would like to attend.

When you have completed the form, please return to me, Rosanne Crowther as below no later than **Wednesday 6 September 2023**, together with your cheque for **£10.00** made payable to **NAVY WINGS**. Also enclose a SAE so we can write back to you to confirm your place.

Post this form to **Rosanne Crowther, SoFFAAM Visits Co-Ordinator, St David's, 5 Church Close, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6DS.**

To arrive no later than **Wednesday 6 September 2023**.

Name	Address	Tel No.	Membership No.	Car Reg
First Group (AM), please tick		Second Group (PM), please tick		

For those who are eligible to Gift Aid their payment, we will have Navy Wings Charity Gift Aid Declaration forms on the day that you can sign for anyone who wishes to increase the value of their payment to Navy Wings.

If you have any questions, please contact me below;

Tel: 01935 822143 **Email:** rosannecrowther678@btinternet.com

This form is available to download from the SoFFAAM website home page if you do not wish to deface this copy of Jabberwock

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

Visit To The Weston-super-Mare Helicopter Museum

By Malcolm Smith



Society members pose in front of an immaculate Wessex of the Queen's Flight. © Tim Brandt

On a sunny June day, Society members gathered in the Museum car park and set off by coach for their trip to the Helicopter Museum at Weston-super-Mare.

Billed as the largest rotorcraft museum in the world, it certainly lives up to its reputation. The hangars are absolutely crammed with rotorcraft of every generation from almost every manufacturer who has tried their hand at rotary-winged aircraft. We were split into small parties and guided by well-informed volunteers. Our party was given a clear explanation of the basics of rotor head design and shown examples of articulated heads as well as

teetering heads and rigid rotors, as in the Westland Lynx.

Westland products were well in evidence, with several versions of Whirlwind and Wessex designs. Lynx and WG 30 designs are also present. It was good to see another famous Westland product, G-LYNX ZB500, the current holder of the Helicopter World Speed Record at 400.87Km/h (249.09mph). The highly successful Anglo-Italian EH 101 Merlin was also well displayed. A few components of the only prototype of the large and innovative Fairey Rotodyne appear and, for those interested in the complexities of the main rotor, driven by ducted compressed air from the engine,

there was the massive rotor head, showing the ducts through which this motive power was supplied. Fairey also produced the diminutive Ultra-light, with its rotors driven by tip-mounted jets. The Museum has one of only six built.

Bristol aircraft produced some successful rotorcraft and the Museum holds several of their products, including the Type 192 twin-rotor Belvedere and the Type 171 Sycamore.

UK designs are only a small part of the exhibits. Soviet designs are much in evidence, with the Mil Mi 4, NATO designation "Hound" showing the disparity in size between it and its western contemporary, the Wessex. Sheer size seems a peculiarity of Soviet rotorcraft, with the massive heavily-armed attack helicopter, the Mi 24 "Hind" providing seating for up to eight soldiers in a cabin behind the armoured cockpit. Other Soviet designs included the Mi 1 "Hare" and the rugged Mi 8PS "Hip" still in production with more than 12,000 built to date.

Italian influenced designs on display include the A109, operated by the Guardia di Finanza Italian Law enforcement agency; the Augusta-Bell 47G, widely adopted as a basic trainer by European Air Forces; and the Augusta-Bell 206C Jet Ranger, one of the world's first turbine commercial helicopters with over 7700 built.

Military rotorcraft are by no means the only aircraft on display. We saw a fine example of the piston-engined Robinson R22, probably the most successful light helicopter ever produced for private use. Other purely civilian helicopters

included a couple of the quirky lightweight Brantly designs. There is an example of an early autogiro, the forerunners of true rotorcraft. Autogiros were not capable of vertical take-off, although some later models employed a motor to spin up the rotor to give a short take-off run. The example on display is the remains of a Cierva C30A, one of the oldest autogiros in existence, which was found in a garage near Tewkesbury and displayed in un-restored condition.

However, it cannot be denied that military designs, or those that were initiated by military requirements, dominate the Museum, as they do in the real world. The US manufacturer, Bell, is represented by several examples, including the UH-1H Iroquois. The one on display served with the US Army between 1967-1975 in the Vietnam War. The aircraft was originally designated the HU-1, hence its universal nickname 'Huey' and derivatives of it were manufactured in their thousands.

The Museum also displays a wide variety of lightweight experimental designs, mostly single-seaters of sometimes doubtful airworthiness. Finally, there are several helicopter engines on display, including widely-used turboshaft engines and an unusual Volkswagen 75hp piston engine, used in autogiros. This brief review can only give a flavour of the enormous variety of rotorcraft on display. Thank you to Rosanne for organising this splendid trip and to those of our readers who have not yet visited the Weston-Super-Mare Helicopter Museum, we can only say: go as soon as you can!

HMHS *Uganda* in the Falklands War

By Nicci Pugh. April Talk summarised by Malcolm Smith



Nicci proudly holding her Life Vice President certificate from SAMA82. © Nicci Pugh

This was a fascinating talk by Nicci Pugh of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS).

She was called at short notice in 1982 as one of a specialist medical team to join the hospital ship *Uganda*, newly requisitioned from P&O. The ship had been in Naples during an educational cruise, with 940 schoolchildren on board. The team comprised RN doctors, 37 female nurses, paramedics and Royal Marine Bandsmen in their role as stretcher bearers, called to embark for an uncertain period in the South Atlantic. Nicci remarked that the female nurses of the QARNNS had been assured that at that time RN female personnel did not serve at sea! The

ship was equipped in Gibraltar with an operating theatre and emergency rooms to a similar standard as military and civilian hospitals. In accordance with the Geneva Convention, the ship was painted white with red crosses on her sides and funnel. We saw a photograph of the huge rectangular steel plate that was to form the crucial helicopter landing platform being lowered into place on the stern. A high-dependency surgical ward, immediately beneath the flight deck, had to be fitted with steel stanchions to support the additional weight of the deck and its visiting helicopters. These stanchions came in handy as securing points for wheeled medical equipment not designed for use in a seaway. The RN survey vessels *HMS Hecla*, *Hydra* and *Herald*, were converted to ambulance ships to work with *Uganda*.

Her Majesty's Hospital Ship *Uganda* sailed for the South Atlantic on 19 April and it became apparent that traditional nurses' uniforms were not suited to seagoing conditions, especially in the South Atlantic. The nurses adopted the Number 8 Action Working Dress of naval ratings but experienced problems finding correct sized footwear. The "once-only" suits, donned for helicopter flights over the sea, were also over-

sized for the female form. Nicci showed pictures of the various helicopters used to transfer patients, including an Argentinian Puma and the Chinook that was the sole survivor of aircraft in the Atlantic Conveyor. We also saw photos of *Uganda* refuelling at sea in the South Atlantic from a Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel – an unusual procedure for a P&O cruise ship and her crew.

Before the land battles commenced, *Uganda* took on casualties from HMS *Sheffield*. On 28 May she moved to anchor in Grantham Sound, 11 miles northwest of Goose Green, where she became the first British hospital ship to embark casualties direct from the battlefield. The nominated role of the nursing staff was the treatment of the most severely injured patients, including many badly burned casualties. With a preliminary warning of their graphic nature, we were shown pictures of such casualties. They were treated with an antiseptic and soothing substance known as Flamazine and included the (subsequently well-known) Welsh Guardsman Simon Weston. Other types of injury included “trench foot”, caused by the arduous conditions of cold and damp suffered by the combatants.

Uganda's staff co-ordinated treatment activities in other ships, including Argentinian hospital vessels, treating both UK and Argentinian casualties. Once British patients were fit to travel, they were repatriated by the ambulance ships to Montevideo and were then flown home by RAF VC 10s. By 14 July *Uganda's* life-saving role was over – she was de-registered from

the hospital role, the red crosses were painted out and P&O staff repainted the funnel in the familiar colour of their line. She became a troop carrier, embarking the 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles and 16 Field Ambulance personnel, sailing for home on 18 July. She arrived at Southampton on 9 August 1982.

On the fifteenth anniversary of the invasion of the Falklands Islands, veterans of the conflict formed the South Atlantic Medal Association (SAMA82) with the aim of maintaining and promoting a sense of pride and comradeship among all involved in the campaign. SAMA82 organises return trips to the Islands for veterans and Nicci showed photographs of several such trips on which she travelled to accompany and support former patients and others. Particularly striking were the recent pictures of albatrosses and penguins, birds which in their natural domain have little fear of human contact. Holders of the South Atlantic medal who wish to make a visit can obtain discounted flights, courtesy of the RAF. Details are available on the SAMA82 website.

Nicci Pugh is the author of a book entitled “White Ship - Red Crosses”, which contains numerous contributions from those who served or were treated on board HMHS *Uganda* and several SAMA82 and British Limbless Veterans Association (BLESMA, now BVUK) members. The book, now in its sixth edition, is available from Amazon. A proportion of the sale price is donated to SAMA82. Thank you Nicci, for a most inspiring talk.

The RAF Germany Harrier Force

By Group Captain Tim Brandt (Rtd).
May Talk summarised by Malcolm Smith



4 Sqn Harriers over Germany. © MoD

Tim joined the RAF in 1978 as a University Cadet, and his first real job was as a Junior Engineering Officer on Harriers with 4 Sqn at Gutersloh an RAF Germany (RAFG) base in 1983.

The Cold War was a demanding environment, and the Harrier's concept of operations was unique. RAFG had four main bases, three "clutch" bases up against the Dutch border and Gutersloh to the north-east.

The Harrier was a typical British aircraft of the 1950s and 60s, with innovative capability and design balanced by horrendous cockpit ergonomics and poor maintainability. The Hawker P1127 first flew in 1960 and was developed into the Kestrel.

When the supersonic P1154 was cancelled in 1966, Hawkers fitted an updated Pegasus into the Kestrel and shoe-horned in some weapons and avionics. The resulting Harrier was small, but complex. It was equipped with the Ferranti Inertial Nav and Attack System (INAS) and Smiths Head Up Display. It had two 30mm Aden guns mounted in pods on the underside, and five weapons pylons. A recce pod could be carried under the fuselage. In the hover, and below 120 kts, it required constant undivided attention.

The RAF's early experience with the Harrier was mixed. The fast-jet force was used to operating from concrete on a Main Operating Base, and field operations came as a shock. Equipment did not work well in muddy fields, and off-base communications were poor to non-existent in an age before mobile phones. Accidents were frequent but the Harrier Force learned. In 1977, the RAFG Harrier Force moved to Gutersloh, its home for the next 15 years. The operational hub of the squadron was the Pilot Briefing Facility, with filtered air and massive air locks, built to enable operations to continue

under chemical warfare conditions. It contained the Ops Room, Planning Rooms, Int Room and Eng Ops. Three and 4 Sqns each had three flights of aircrew. About 120 engineers provided first line support.

The Harrier force was primarily tasked with Close Air Support, Battlefield Air Interdiction and Recce, reflecting its planned role of finding and delaying initial Soviet attacks. It was normally tasked direct by the Army Corps HQ rather than by the NATO Air Operations Centre. Line and area searches were the order of the day, with pilots expected to use the Mark 1 eyeball to acquire and assess targets as well as using the cameras. At 250 metres per second, at low level, that meant a very high workload. Pilots had to learn to recognise most of the vehicles and equipment used by the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and recognition tests were as highly competitive as bombing scores on range sorties. On-base operations were like any other light attack aircraft, but the Harrier became amazing when it deployed to the field. Three or four major field exercises were held each year, of two weeks duration each. Deploying the 36 aircraft of the Harrier Force required a ground force of over 750 vehicles to move groundcrew, ops staff, comms, spares, ground support equipment, tents, catering equipment, and all the other paraphernalia. The real challenges were fuel and bombs. Fuel could be obtained from Gutersloh or NATO pipelines, but even this short-range shuttle needed a fleet of tankers.

Bombs were stored in the Clutch at Bracht, next-door to Bruggen, and were moved forward by rail or road. At war rates, each of the six flying sites needed seven tanker loads of fuel daily, and 70 bombs, not to mention 30mm rounds and (later) Sidewinders, chaff and flares. For most of the Cold War, the Harrier's weapon of choice was the BL755 cluster bomb. This was tested successfully against the Soviet T72 tank and was effective against personnel and soft-skinned targets. Its great advantage to the pilot was that it scattered 147 bomblets over an area about the size of a football field, so aiming was not too onerous.

It is interesting to compare the Harrier Force with the Hawker Typhoons of WWII, the RAF's mainstay for close air support. The RAF fielded four Wings of Typhoons, each of about 40 aircraft. The Wings were mobile and largely self-contained. The Typhoon was robust and very effective. It was removed from service as soon as possible after the War ended due to its support costs and its high accident rate: almost all due to its engine. Sound familiar?

Given the increasingly powerful short-range SAM and AAA capabilities of the Soviets, the Harrier Force would probably have had a short operational life had war broken out between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. It was part of an overall NATO strategy of deterrence that was successful, but we cannot tell what the margin was. Many thanks to Tim Brandt for a fascinating and well-illustrated talk.

Supermarine and turbojet fighters

By Grp Capt Jock Heron (Rtd), OBE.
June Talk summarised by Robert Heath



Scimitar about to launch from HMS Eagle.

Jock Heron told us that Noel Pemberton-Billing founded his company in 1913 in Woolston, Southampton, and in 1916 it was renamed the Supermarine Aviation Works Ltd.

In 1928 Vickers-Armstrong took over Supermarine and merged it into Vickers-Armstrong (Aircraft) Ltd. Sadly, the Supermarine Chief Designer, R J Mitchell, died in 1936, having created the Spitfire but not living long enough to see how successful it was. The Spitfire first flew in 1936 and continued in production until 1948 with over 20,000 being built. Refinements to the Spitfire to improve the critical Mach number and safer high-speed operations included a laminar flow wing and a wider undercarriage for safer landing characteristics. These

aircraft were named the Spiteful for the RAF and the Seafang for the RN variant. In parallel, Hawker had introduced the Centaurus radial-engined Sea Fury. However, technology was moving quickly and several jet powered projects were in service by the war's end, such as the Me262, He162, Gloster Meteor and de Havilland Vampire, which entered service as the war ended.

Several nations considered converting existing piston engine airframes to accept a jet engine. Two examples that succeeded included the Swedish Saab J-21, which became the J-21R with its DH Goblin jet engine; and the Russian Yak 3 which morphed into the Yak 15. In response to the Air Ministry Specification E10/44 in 1944, Supermarine proposed a jet-powered Spiteful. This used the laminar flow wings and wide undercarriage of the Spiteful with a new fuselage incorporating the RR Nene engine and, incredibly, a tailwheel. The performance was little different from the Meteor, so the RAF rejected it, but the RN adopted it as the Attacker in 1951. The newer Hawker Sea Hawk was demonstrably better and the Attacker was taken out of front-line service in 1954, although it lingered on in reserve until 1957.

In 1946, Air Ministry Specification E41/46 required an experimental swept-wing jet aircraft, for which Supermarine took an Attacker fuselage and installed swept wings and tail assembly to create the Type 510, still with its tailwheel. In 1948 it became the world's first swept wing aircraft to land on an aircraft carrier. In the 1950s, Hawker developed the Hunter, while Supermarine revised the Type 510, to become the Type 535, sporting a lengthened nose, a tricycle undercarriage, but still retaining the RR Nene engine. The Type 535 was a prototype for the Type 541 Swift, which replaced the RR Nene engine with the more powerful RR Avon engine.

In 1953, Mike Lithgow broke the world speed record in a Swift F4 by achieving 737.7mph. The development period for the Swift was lengthy, and it did not enter service until 1954. Problems were not overcome easily and the intended orders were significantly cut. Its high-altitude performance was poor, greatly limiting its potential. In consequence, between 1955-60 just two ground attack squadrons operated out of Germany.

In the late 1940s, the RN examined ideas for extending the range and payload of carrier aircraft. One of these concepts was the use of a rubber landing pad. By landing on its belly, with the assistance of an arrester hook, an aircraft needed no undercarriage, thereby saving weight. In 1948, 'Winkle' Brown successfully landed a Sea Vampire on a rubber deck, followed by more successful trials. The concept had shortcomings, among which was the need to crane the

aircraft on to a trolley for handling, also the aircraft were confined to specially adapted runways and decks.

Graham Mottram said that the *Warrior* trial deck was made up from inflated fire hoses and the problems of manoeuvring aircraft on the rubber deck led indirectly to the concept of the angled deck. As a result of these trials, Supermarine designed the Type 505 without an undercarriage, but the Admiralty abandoned the rubber-deck concept, so the Type 505 flew in 1951 as the Type 508 with a tricycle undercarriage, straight thin wings and a 'V' tail. In 1957 the Scimitar entered RN service as a fighter/bomber, with two RR Avon engines and four cannon. British aircraft carriers of the day were still quite small and of 76 Scimitars delivered, over 50% were lost in accidents. In 1963, the Blackburn Buccaneer entered service and replaced the Scimitar in most tasks, but Mk 1 Buccaneers were underpowered and relied on Scimitar tankers to give them a top-up of fuel after launch. More powerful engines in the Mk 2 Buccaneer resolved that problem and ended the career of the Scimitar.

Jock commented that out of various Supermarine design concepts, none was an outstanding success. He suggested Hawker allowed Sydney Camm design freedom that Vickers Armstrong did not allow its own team. He concluded by describing the reduction in size of UK's aircraft industry under Government policy, in which only the English Electric Lightning was funded.

This was an excellent evening of entertainment, thank you Jock.

Future Talks

By Richard Macauley

We are pleased to announce that our Saturday Series of Talks are returning this Autumn at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton.

On Saturday 14 October at 11:00am we are privileged to welcome the renowned writer and historian Paul Beaver, who will talk on possibly the most famous Fleet Air Arm pilot, Capt Eric 'Winkle' Brown CBE, DSC, AFC, Hon FRAeS.

Paul has recently published his book entitled 'Winkle' and it is reviewed in this Jabberwock by Malcolm Smith, so you can gain an insight to Paul's talk which promises to be most interesting, plus you will have the opportunity to purchase the book and have Paul sign your own personal copy.

We will have another speaker for Saturday 11 November and this will be shown on the website once confirmed.

**Paul Beaver - 'Winkle',
The Extraordinary Life of
Britain's Greatest Pilot**

Saturday 14 October 2023 at 11:00am

Speaker TBC

Saturday 11 November 2023 at 11:00am

To keep things simple for the organisers, there is no Zoom option for Saturday Talks.

We have these following speakers booked for our usual Thursday evenings in September, October and November.

Please remember there is no talk in August 2023

**Flying the Hunter and other things
with Sqn Ldr (Rtd) Rod Dean**

28 September 2023 at 19:30

**Chris Taylor - Naval
Aviator and Test Pilot**

26 October 2023 at 19:30

Graham Mottram - early Aero Engines

30 November 2023 at 19:30

See www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/talks/ for updates

We already have a number of speakers lined up for our Talks programme in 2024. But if anyone has a subject or a particular person they would like to see in 2024, do please get in touch with us. Our details are on the inside front cover.

We are keen to continue the Saturday Series of Talks in 2024 but this is subject to further members being recruited to the Talks Team to organise the speakers and to run the event on the day. If you would like to assist in this enjoyable and rewarding task, please get in touch with us.

Notice of our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's 44th AGM will be held at **19.00** on **Tuesday 26 September 2023** and will take place on Zoom only. All Society of Friends Fleet Air Arm Museum members are invited to attend.

Please email soffaam.joinup@gmail.com to request a Zoom invite. The meeting will include reviews of Society activities over the past year. The meeting concludes with the election (or re-election) of the President, Executive and Council members. If you do not have Zoom on your computer or require some help with the Zoom programme please ring Richard on **07768 562976** or email soffaam@btinternet.com



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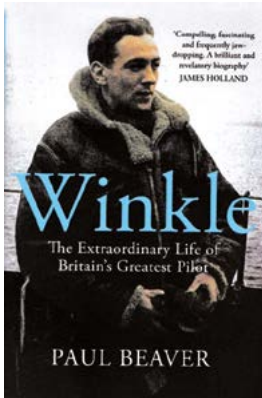
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WINKLE - The Extraordinary Life of Britain's Greatest Pilot

By Paul Beaver. Reviewed by Malcolm Smith



The well-known writer and television war reporter, Paul Beaver, knew Eric "Winkle" Brown for many years and on the occasion of the eminent aviator's 90th birthday, offered to write his biography.

Eric agreed but stipulated that it could not be written until after his death. Beaver was subsequently given access to Eric's archive and this book is the result. He makes the surprising revelation that his subject, Captain Eric Melrose Brown, CBE, DSC, AFC, Hon FRAeS, usually listed as born in Edinburgh, the son of a former balloon observer and pilot in the Royal Flying Corps, was actually born to a single mother in London. He was adopted as a

founding but never revealed this, even to his wife and his only son.

The young Eric visited Germany in 1935 and 1936, on the second occasion meeting Hanna Reitsch, the famed German aviator and Ernst Udet, a fighter ace from WW1. In 1938, after commencing the study of modern languages at Edinburgh University, Eric enrolled in the Civil Air Guard Scheme, formed to provide potential pilots for the Royal Air Force. After another escapade in Germany at the outbreak of War, where he was arrested and expelled, Eric found that the waiting lists for the RAF were full, so he applied to join the RN as a pilot. After initial training, he soon progressed to advanced fighter training. He qualified on the Grumman Martlet and moved to 802 Squadron at Arbroath, which was earmarked to embark in the merchant aircraft carrier HMS *Audacity*. This was a ship of extremely limited operational capacity and Eric's time in her only lasted for two return convoys to Gibraltar. In his embarked time, he experienced a near-critical heavy landing, earned a reprimand for reckless flying, shot down a Focke-Wulf Condor and was lucky to survive when *Audacity* was torpedoed

and sunk. His outstanding performance led to the award of the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC).

Eric was next appointed to the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) at Farnborough, where he was tasked to test converted Hurricanes. Although not an ideal naval aircraft, Eric was able to show that the Sea Hurricane was capable of operational deployment. He next tested another converted RAF fighter, the Seafire, to prove it in carrier operations. He confirmed that the Seafire could meet the requirements for a naval fighter, but he had many misgivings and indeed the aircraft was not robust enough for the job. He continued testing different aircraft types with almost excessive zeal and in 1943 was promoted to Lieutenant with a report that he was an exceptional pilot with plenty of experience.

Eric was next tasked to carry out deck landings and free take-offs in a twin-engined Mosquito in HMS *Indefatigable*. He completed this task with success but the operational requirement for embarked Mosquitoes was cancelled. After the Mosquito trials Eric progressed to test flying jet aircraft and soon became involved in proving the de Havilland Vampire in the naval role. In December 1944, he carried out the first landing of a jet at sea on HMS *Ocean*. He completed many more trials with the Vampire, but reported that landing it at sea "... would not be in the competence of the average squadron pilot". Immediately after the German surrender, Eric was sent to test fly as many captured enemy

aircraft as possible. Beaver describes his experiences well, including testing the Me 262 and an (unpowered) flight on the Me 163 rocket plane. He also describes Eric's conversation in German with Reich Marschall Herman Goering, who thought the result of the Battle of Britain was a "draw".

After the War, Eric was involved in investigations into supersonic flight before being posted to the US Naval Test Establishment at Patuxent River, where he was in his element. He discussed the RN's novel angled-deck proposals with the USN, who promptly adopted the principle. He flew numerous US naval designs but his time there was brought to an early close by allegations of his use of US-sensitive information. Eric returned to FAA service as the CO of 804 Seahawk Squadron in the rank of Commander. This was not an entirely successful posting, as he displayed an abrasive manner to others who were not as dedicated to aviation as he.

His later career included time in the MoD and as Naval Attaché to Germany, a job in which he excelled. His final appointment was as the Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval Air Station at Lossiemouth, HMS *Fulmar*. Here again, his manner did not endear him to his subordinates. Paul Beaver has summed up his complex subject extremely well, paying fulsome regard to his test piloting skills and experience but not glossing over Eric's difficult personality.

"Winkle" by Paul Beaver. Published by Michael Joseph. ISBN 978 0 718 19670 8

Membership Update

By David Merrett

I thought members might like to share this picture of the displaying Navy Wings aircraft I took at the English Riviera Airshow in early June.

It shows Swordfish Mk1 W5856 in formation with Wasp HAS Mk1 HT420. I managed to get this shot whilst on the "Pride of Exmouth" operated by Stuart Line Cruises, pictured with Torquay in the background. A lovely way to view the air display and no traffic, no crowds and no parking issues. An alternative way to enjoy one of the few aircraft events in the South West of the UK.

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

- | | | |
|------|------------------------|----------------|
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| 3825 | Mr R Everett | Essex |
| 3826 | Dr L Childs | Wiltshire |
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| 3829 | Mr W Lynes | UK |
| 3830 | Mr I Montgomery | East Yorkshire |
| 3831 | Mr D Bertin | Somerset |
| 3832 | Mr G Chidzey | Somerset |
| 3833 | Mr R Simonite | Somerset |

Total members as of 10/07/23: **922**

Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: **693***

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



Please let us have your email address to save us postage charges on other communications. It now costs us 75 pence per letter sent.

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Visit us at

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

Membership Application

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

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- Cheque, made payable to SoFFAAM

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Please complete and return this form to the Membership Secretary:

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SoFFAAM NEEDS YOU

We have vacancies for Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer

SoFFAAM depends upon a team of trustees and volunteers to ensure its continuing operations. Several have served many years as council members and the time has come to retire. We need replacements for Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer in time for the September AGM. These replacements need to be identified in advance so a smooth induction can be given. No prior experience in a similar role is required. Enthusiasm is more important. Contact the Chairman at shalefan@btinternet.com or Secretary at smalcolm355@outlook.com

**It is imperative we fill these positions to
maintain a healthy and viable Society.**