

JABBERWOCK

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

IN THIS EDITION:

*Barracuda Restoration
Overheard in the Museum
Christmas lunch pictures
Wartime Flying Training
Early Days in the RNAS
Rotary Wing Experiences
Extract from the 852 Squadron Linebook
The Fleet Air Arm Memorial*

PLUS

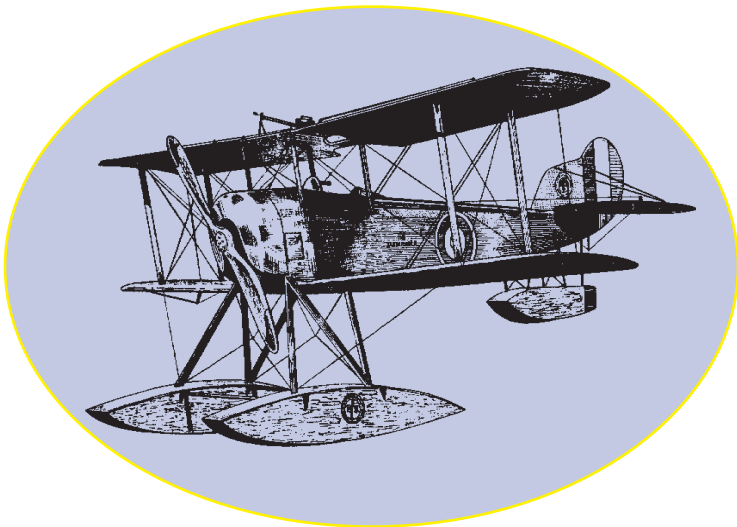
*All the usual features, letters to the Editor,
snippets from Council meetings, monthly
talks programme, latest membership numbers
and the application form for the visit to the
Brooklands Aviation and Motor Museum.*

No. 70

February 2013

Published by The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum

The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum



Patron: Rear Admiral A R Rawbone CB, AFC, RN

President: D S Moxley JP

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

RNAS Yeovilton

Somerset BA22 8HT

Telephone: 01935 840565

SOFFAAM email: sof@fleetairarm.com

Museum website: fleetairarm.com

Registered Charity No. 280725

The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum

Vice Presidents

Captain K A Leppard CBE, RN
Rear Admiral R C Dimmock CB, RN
Rear Admiral A R Rawbone CB, AFC, RN
F C Ott DSC BSc (Econ)
Lt Cdr Philip (Jan) Stuart RN
Squadron Leader Maurice Biggs RAF
Jim Standfield

Chairman

Richard Hufton

Vice Chairman

Mike Strang
strangfiveways@gmail.com

Secretary

Malcolm Smith
smalcolm355@aol.com

Treasurer

Gordon Johnson
gordon.j.johnson@gmail.com

Membership Secretary

Robert Heath
Halden House
New Street
Wells BA5 2LQ
robtheath@gmail.com

Talks and Events Organiser

Rosanne Crowther
rosannecrowther678@btinternet.com

Editor

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

Printed by: Remous Limited, Milborne Port

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	3
EDITORIAL.....	4
FROM THE CHAIRMAN.....	5
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.....	7
MEMBERSHIP.....	12
SNIPPETS FROM COUNCIL MEETINGS.....	13
MONTHLY TALKS PROGRAMME - 2013.....	15
RECENT MONTHLY TALKS.....	16
THE BARRACUDA RESTORATION PROJECT.....	18
NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM.....	20
OVERHEARD IN THE MUSEUM.....	21
FRIENDS' CHRISTMAS LUNCH - 12 DECEMBER.....	22
WARTIME FLYING TRAINING.....	24
EARLY DAYS	26
ROTARY-WING EXPERIENCES.....	30
FROM THE 852 SQUADRON LINEBOOK.....	37
FLEET AIR ARM MEMORIAL	38
CROSSWORD No 2.....	40

Cover pictures include:
Fairey Firefly, Gannet AS1, and
Sea Prince. The main picture shows
a Buccaneer Mk 2 of 801 Squadron
about to catch 3 wire in HMS Hermes
in early 1970.

*All the photographs in this publication, unless
otherwise credited, are Crown Copyright and
reproduced by kind permission of the FAAM.*

EDITORIAL

Another New Year has arrived and already the Christmas festivities seem a long time ago. Many thanks to Ernest Lear for his photographs of the successful Christmas lunch, held in the Warneford Restaurant, see the centre page spread for these.

This year sees the 70th anniversary commemoration of the Battle of the Atlantic. In reality, this long-running conflict to protect the essential Atlantic convoys from German submarines lasted for the majority of the War; but 1943, by common consent, saw the turning of the tide. In May 2013 the nation will be commemorating this anniversary with events in London and Liverpool. The Fly Navy Heritage Trust is helping to support these events by raising money to ensure that Swordfish LS326 and W5856 can fly in tribute to all those who gave their lives in the icy waters of the North Atlantic.

In this issue, we provide preliminary information on the Barracuda restoration project. Always underpowered until the development of the Mk 5, which came too late for wartime service, the Barracuda was built in great numbers, only for many of them to be scrapped before they had even flown at the abrupt end of the war in the Pacific.

The forthcoming visit to the Brooklands motor and aviation Museum on 16 April is advertised on page 9, complete with application form. The Hurricane pictured on that page appears on their web site. It was ferried to Russia in Arctic convoy PQ16 and flown by a Russian pilot before being shot down in June 1942. If you wish to avoid cutting up your Journal, photocopy the page or simply send your details (and cheque!) to Ian Mackinnon.

Also in this issue, there is a lengthy description of the early days of helicopters in the Fleet Air Arm. This includes an anecdote concerning Lt Cdr John Sproule, inventor of the eponymous Sproule Net. I have been asked if any readers have a photograph of this inventive officer, who was also a keen gliding enthusiast.

Look out for the new book "Voices in Flight - the Fleet Air Arm from 1920 to the Cold War" to be published in association with SOFFAAM by Pen and Sword. This entirely consists of extracts from the Jabberwock archive. Members will be able to buy the book from the Museum shop at the usual discount.

Once again, we are happy to include a variety of readers' letters. Please keep them coming!



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A very Happy New Year to all members of the Society resident here in the UK and overseas. I am delighted to report that 2012 has been another excellent year both financially and operationally, with real benefits for members following the introduction of the re-designed quarterly journal 'Jabberwock' launched in May. As of July, we have dispatched the Journal using our newly acquired postal franking machine and this has sharply reduced distribution costs. During the early autumn, updated colour membership forms went on display at the museum, in local libraries and at the monthly lecture evenings, helping to boost recruitment of new members, which continues to be a focus of attention for your Council. At the AGM in October, Mike Strang was appointed Vice Chairman and the Council welcomed two new members, Bill Ellison and Claude Patten.

The aircraft carrier model was delivered in July

Last year I reported on plans to advance £4500 towards shared funding of a large 1.9m aircraft carrier model for the education department. Constructed from robust composite materials, this

specialised model was delivered in July and has proved very popular with visiting schools and families. A further £4500 was allocated to the curatorial and engineering departments for display cabinets and workshop tooling.

Our monthly talks programme continues to grow in importance ...

Our monthly talks programme continues to grow in importance, achieving an average of 73 attendees over the 10 month season. 2013 promises to be just as popular with a line up of high calibre speakers presenting a varied programme of talks. From February the entry price for members and guests will be raised to £5 to cover increased overheads and ensure a positive return to Society funds. Following a decision to hold the July lecture in the Museum's Swordfish Centre, the Council has offered to fund the installation of an audio loop induction system to ensure all in the audience can enjoy their evening. Quotations for this project are awaited. During the past year many members attended visits to RAF Brize Norton, RN Submarine Museum, RN Historic Flight and the FAAM reserve collection in Cobham Hall.

What lies ahead? More work needs to be done to recruit new members and here you can help by spreading

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

The well produced and interesting quarterly Jabberwock is much enjoyed by this oldie. Re - Issue 69, page 8 here is some more, probably irrelevant speculation. Could it be that the Barracuda wing-root windows are for the recognition lights? (When a number of unlit aircraft were approaching at night one might be asked to identify itself). There was a switch on the bottom right instrument panel but I have no recollection of ever using it. In the black-out such low powered lamps would have been far less intrusive than the landing lamps. However, they seem to be misplaced so this guess probably also is wrong!

For info. Your photo shows a Mk1 with the three blade propeller and the long exhaust cowl. Most squadron aircraft of the 1944 era were Mk.2s (4 blade props). The engines exhausted through the line of short stubs which glowed in the dark and were a great help to night formation in poor visibility when no other illumination was allowed!

Sincerely,

Roy Hawkes.

(P) 820 Sqdn. 1944-5

.....

A letter to Robert Heath in response to the enquiry from Audrey Whitehead on Jabberwock 69:

Dear Robert,

Would you be kind enough to forward this to Audrey:

THE WRENS PRAYER

*Almighty and most merciful God,
the protector of those who go down
to the sea in ships.*

*Bless we beseech thee all the
woman who serve in the Royal
Navy.*

*Bless also, we beseech thee, all
the members of the Association of
Wrens and woman members of the
Royal Naval Reserve.*

*Bind them together in loyalty and
fellowship, in danger protect them,
in doubt and temptation guide and
uphold them, and grant at all times
the help of thy grace, through Jesus
Christ our lord*

Amen.

I hope this will be of some help to her, as I am also a member of the Wrens and FAA Association, so it was nice to see Terry still holding the Banner.

Jenny Simpson Dawson

By the Editor: *Thanks also to the several other people who offered information on this prayer.*

.....

Dear Editor,

Nice Jabberwock again – just gets better. The Sopwith Baby on page 14 is a little unusual for an FAA oriented publication – it's Norwegian! Probably F-108, based on other photos I've seen. The photo may have been taken at Helgeroa (about 80 miles SW of Oslo) in August 1919.

The Norwegian Babys entered service in 1918 and the last were not retired until 1931! F-108 entered service on 26 April 1918 and was 'utrangert' (discarded) on 8 November 1920 to be rebuilt.

Ten were purchased, being supplied from the Blackburn production line. Several airframes (F-104, F-108, F-110, F-114, F-116, F-118) were rebuilt during the early 1920s.

Most of these survived until 1930 or 1931 when the type was retired from service.

Best regards,

Ian Burns (Memb #46)

.....

Dear Editor,

Page 24 article by Peter Dallosso gave comfort that he is still upright and kicking! I very much enjoyed his article, as we once flew in same squadron during WW2. Members of 1849 Squadron at Brunswick, Maine will recall an incident in 1945.

The Atlantic Charter contained Lend-Lease provisions whereby Commonwealth Aviation cadets (Navy) could be trained in US at Pensacola. After wings were awarded British cadets went to Jacksonville and Brunswick to form squadrons and learn the RN way for combat duty. On a day of low flying exercises over Maine, four Corsairs, led by Lt Jack Grogan RCNVR had been "Flat Hatting" in the part of Maine dedicated to that purpose. Low flying calls for step-up formation. S/Lt Derek Lynch was Grogan's Wingman. Peter George was on his right, and I was Peter's wingman.

At high speed we approached the coast of Maine at Belfast or Rockland and had to pull up to clear the buildings and chimney tops. The sea was dead calm with nary a ripple as we headed towards Deer Islanda few inches above water.

**Peter George's propeller
hit the water ...**

So low were we that Peter George's propeller hit the water and folded back immediately. Lt Grogan told him to pull up to 5,000 feet and bail out over the water. Peter pulled up OK but changed his mind about bailing out. He decided to do a water landing instead. Remaining Corsairs circled the area while he put the nose down and with wheels and flaps up, gently touched down

VISIT TO BROOKLANDS MOTOR AND AVIATION MUSEUM - TUESDAY 16 APRIL 2013

*Hawker
Hurricane
IIA Z2389,
on display in
the Aviation
Museum*



0745 - Meet in the FAAM car park
0800 - Coach departs Yeovilton
1045 - Coach arrives at Brooklands*

Free time to explore this historic motor and aviation museum
Lunch or snacks available to purchase in the Sunbeam Cafe
The London Bus Museum is also included in your admission

1530 - Coach departs Brooklands*
1815 - Coach arrives at Yeovilton*

* Note: All times are approximate

1. Coach and admission £ 25.00 per person, lunch not included - open to non-members
2. Advance bookings only - please make all cheques (no cash) payable to SOFFAAM
3. Applications must be received by post no later than 31 March 2013
4. Confirmation will be posted to successful applicants on receipt of SAE and payment

Return this form to: Ian Mackinnon, Rowan, Fore Street, West Camel,
Yeovil, BA22 7QW
Contact Tel : 01935 850163

MEMBER NAME

VISITOR NAME

TELEPHONE

Please enclose : Stamped addressed envelope for your booking
confirmation

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is still £12!

Bankers Standing Order membership cards enclosed for February, March and April 2013-2014.

Welcome to the new members who have recently joined us:

3245 – Mr L. Gaylard	Yeovil, Somerset
3246 – Mr D.R. Taylor	South Molton, Devon
3247 – Mr A. Usher	Wookey, Somerset
3248 – Mr G.N. Barfoot	Chirton, Wiltshire
3249 – Mr R. Cavill	Weston-super-Mare
3250 – Mr S.M. Robson	Bournemouth
3251 – The Hon. G. Denman	Stony Stratton
3252 – Mr D. Stickland	Lovington, Somerset
3253 – Mr R.F. Bowditch	North Wootton
3254 – Mr N. Bailey	Chelmsford, Essex
3255 – Mr A. Gallagher	New Malden, Surrey
3256 – Mr S. O'Shea	Corsham, Wiltshire
3257 – Mr P. Ludlow	Longwell Green, Bristol
3258 – Mr J. Annegarn	Weston-super-Mare

Total Members: **1017**, Life Members: **235**, Pay by Standing Order: **556**, Members who have made a Gift Aid Declaration: **639**

ADMISSION

Members are admitted to the Museum free of charge, on production of a valid membership card. Members may be accompanied by up to three guests (one guest only for junior members) on any one visit, each at a reduced entrance fee, currently £6.50 per head. Members are also allowed a 10% discount on goods purchased from the shop.

***Note:** These concessions are provided at the discretion of the Museum Director and could be removed at any time. They also do not apply to any other of the Museum's features, such as the Restaurants and Simulator.*

COBHAM HALL

COBHAM HALL IS THE HOME OF THE MUSEUM'S RESERVE COLLECTION, WHICH INCLUDES MANY HISTORIC AIRCRAFT, ENGINES AND NUMEROUS OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST, BOTH TO AMATEUR HISTORIANS AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL. THE FAAM OPENS COBHAM HALL TO THE PUBLIC ON CERTAIN DAYS. THESE "OPEN DAYS" DO NOT COME UNDER THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT MEMBERS HAVE FOR ENTRY TO THE MUSEUM AND, THEREFORE, MUST BE PAID FOR ACCORDING TO THE TARIFF SET BY THE MUSEUM.

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●

MONTHLY TALKS PROGRAMME - 2013

Talks are held in the FAAM auditorium on the last Thursday of each month at 19.30. As agreed at the November Council meeting, ***the entry price has risen to £5.*** Pay at the door. Non members are welcome. The price includes light refreshments, including a glass of wine.

.....

28 February
'Society Film Night'
Curatorial Dept present a selection of
rare footage from the FAAM archive
28 March

.....

Cdr. Colin Hague OBE RN Retd.
'Test flying the EH101
Merlin Helicopter'
25 April

.....

Phil Nelson
'A half-century of pilot training Part 1'
Military instructing at UAS & CFS

.....

30 May
Rear Admiral Chris Parry CBE RN Retd.
'Humphrey's Falklands War'
The FAAM's famous Wessex Helicopter

.....

Programme correct at the time of printing

RECENT MONTHLY TALKS

Summarised by Robert Heath

OCTOBER TALK – ‘Racing Ace, the biography of Sam Kinkead, RNAS fighter ace and Schneider Trophy pilot’

By Dr. Julian Lewis MP

As a prospective MP for New Forest East in Hampshire, Dr. Julian Lewis decided he needed to ensure that his knowledge of the area was pretty comprehensive. His travels took him to a church near Calshott, in the cemetery of which he found several war graves for airmen. One very distinctive grave caught his attention. It was for Flt Lt Samuel Marcus Kinkead, DSO, DSC +Bar, DFC +Bar b.1897- d.1928. Dr. Lewis's imagination was fired. Who was this highly decorated man? The result was the recent publication by Dr. Lewis of the biography of Sam Kinkead.

In 1915, at the age of 18 Sam left his home in South Africa to join the RNAS. Initially he was posted to the Dardanelles and later to the Mediterranean, primarily on ground attack ‘skirmishing’. By the time he was eventually posted to the Western Front, he was an experienced Sopwith Camel pilot eventually bringing down over 30 enemy aircraft. At the end of the WW1, he was one of a large group

of RAF pilots who found themselves ‘posted’ to Russia to support the Tsar in the Civil War. Shortly afterwards, he found himself in Kurdistan, still fighting. Never a dull moment.

Sam was chosen as a member of the team

When the RAF then became involved in the Schneider Trophy competition, Sam was chosen as a member of the team. In 1928, immediately after the Supermarine S5 won the competition, Sam was selected to attempt to break the World Air Speed record at 300 mph in the spare aircraft. After six days of postponements due to poor weather, Sam decided conditions were good enough to make the attempt on the 6th March 1928.

During the high speed run, the aircraft suddenly plunged into the water, killing him. The reason has never been convincingly established, but despite various opinions, including the inevitable formal enquiry declaring ‘pilot error’, it is believed the aircraft became overstressed, leading to structural failure.

Sam Kinkead was a very modest man and most of what is known about him had to be gleaned from letters and publications written by those that worked closely with him. It was a gripping tale, well worthy of the

years of research by Dr. Lewis, to revive the achievements of a remarkable man. A most enjoyable and profusely illustrated talk for us all. Thank you.

.....

NOVEMBER TALK – ‘Preserving the Nation’s Naval Aviation Heritage’

By Cdr Sue Eagles, Campaign Director, Fly Navy Heritage Trust

One of the delights of going to a good air display is watching the Swordfish and Sea Fury come to life before our eyes – and ears. 2013 is going to be a special year for the RN Historic Flight, because it is the 70th Anniversary of the turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943. Up until then Germany had been very successful in sinking our ships on the Atlantic Convoys and starvation was a very real prospect in the short term. The introduction of the MAC ships (Merchant Aircraft Carriers) and the FAA Swordfish and Martlet aircraft they carried, played a significant part in reducing and spoiling enemy attacks.

On behalf of the RNHF, the Fly Navy Heritage Trust is involved with several commemorative events in London and Liverpool next year, at which the Swordfish fly past will be a prominent feature. In fact, every effort is being made to have the two Swordfishes flying.

As a graphic introduction to her presentation, Sue Eagles showed a documentary film entitled ‘Arctic Convoy’. It followed the experiences of RN and Merchant Navy crews in some of the worst battles against the enemy, plus equally deadly storms, snow and ice, to take their cargoes to Murmansk and Archangel.

These people were true heroes ... among them were later members of SOFFAAM

These people were true heroes and amongst them were later SoFFAAM members. One of these, Morley Wheeler, an Avenger pilot, featured strongly in the film, (but sadly died in October 2012), plus Bill Reeks (also Avenger), the man who collects your raffle ticket money at the Talk Evenings. Along with the others Bill was awarded a medal as a token of gratitude by Russia, but recognition of the demands and sacrifice are still, 70 years later, on the ‘to-do’ list of British Governments.

The role played by the RNHF keeps alive memories and the sight and sound of the aircraft that helped us to overcome formidable odds. This was a thought- provoking evening, once again enjoyed by a near full-house. Thank you Cdr Sue Eagles and of course talks organizer, Rosanne Crowther and the backroom boys.

.....

THE BARRACUDA RESTORATION PROJECT



"... As if a gigantic crime scene was being investigated." The remains of the Barracuda as displayed at the Museum Open Day in November 2012

A deal has been signed between the Kiltech Vehicle Protection Ltd (KVPL) Bluebird Project Team to handle the restoration of what will become the world's only complete Barracuda torpedo bomber. With over 2500 aircraft built, the Fairey Barracuda was the Royal Navy's most prolific aircraft during WW2 yet unlike other aircraft of its era, none were retained for posterity. Says Dave Morris Curator of Aircraft: "We have been collecting sections of Barracuda since the

early 1970s. We were able to rebuild the nose section a few years ago, but now, through the revolutionary restoration methods developed by the Bluebird Project Team, the process of identification and restoration of the rest of the aircraft has become feasible"

Parts will be transferred to KVPL's workshop in Newcastle where they will undergo a unique process involving softening, straightening, stretching and reforming of each crumpled piece. The process was



Not a beautiful aircraft - Barracuda Mk 2 in flight. The high-set tailplane and distinctive Fairey Youngman flaps-cum-dive brakes can be clearly seen

developed for the restoration of Donald Campbell's Bluebird K7, which was retrieved from the depths of Coniston Water in 2001 following the tragic accident in 1967 when he lost his life in a water speed record attempt. Interestingly for aviation enthusiasts, this model of Bluebird was powered by a Bristol Orpheus jet engine from the Folland Gnat.

The Bluebird Project Team relies on a workforce of highly skilled volunteers. However additional funding of some £60,000 is required to complete the main task of rebuilding the fuselage of the aircraft.

The contract agreement was announced on 27 October by the Museum's Director Graham Mottram and KVPL's Technical Director Bill Smith. Extensive work on the

Barracuda will begin when Bluebird is completed, which is hoped to be some time next year. It is estimated that the Barracuda project will take some five years to complete and once restored the aircraft will form part of the National Collection.

The announcement was made at the Museum's Reserve Collection Open Day, where the crumpled pieces of Barracuda taken from as many as six wartime crash sites can be seen positioned as if a gigantic crime scene was being investigated. Those who attended the January talk will have heard more from David about this, and other restoration projects and there will be more updates on the progress of the Barracuda restoration in future issues.



NEWS FROM THE MUSEUM

A model of HMS *Hermes*, which has taken model maker Rex Hunt three years to plan and over five years to build, is one of the amazing models to be displayed at the Fleet Air Arm Museum's Model Show on 9 February. The model represents the aircraft carrier as she travelled from Ascension Island to the south Atlantic on 19 May 1982 during the Falklands conflict. Using a commercial fibreglass hull, plastic card, brass and timber, the

Harriers and Sea King helicopters, which rise from the flight deck accompanied by a recording of their engines warming up.

The featured models on deck include:

- Harriers from No1 Sqn RAF.
- Sea Harriers of 800 and 809 Squadron
- Sea King helicopters from 826 and 846 Squadron
- Lynx helicopter of 815 Squadron
- Wessex of 845 Squadron



project was completed in time to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the conflict in June 2012.

The model is complete with Sea

- Wasps of 829 Squadron from HMS *Hecla* and *Endurance*.

Many working features are used in the production of this challenging

project, including operational lifts, navigation, action and normal lighting, rotating radar aerials, lighting and sound effects, operating anchor, signalling lamps, smoke unit. Landing craft have also been incorporated.

This radio controlled model was built as a tribute in memory of those of all Arms who didn't return, or returned injured from Operation Corporate fighting for the freedom of others.

The Bloodhound SSC (Supersonic car) is a jet and rocket powered car designed to go at 1,000mph (just over 1,600kph). It has a slender body of approximately 14m length with two front wheels within the

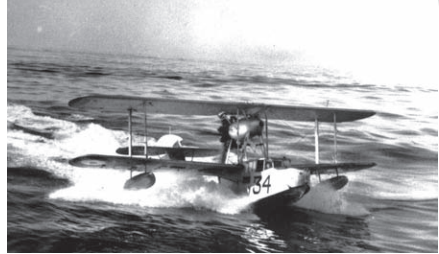


body and two rear wheels mounted externally within wheel fairings. It weighs over 7 tonnes and the engines produce more than 135,000 horsepower - more than 6 times the power of all the Formula 1 cars on a starting grid put together!

From Wednesday 20th - Sunday 24th February, see the Bloodhound SSC Show Car together with its power unit of an EJ200 Eurofighter jet engine and a 6ft Hybrid rocket, displayed in Hall Four. This is the

same Hall where the Fairey Delta Two, the first aircraft to travel at more than 1,000 mph, is also on display.

OVERHEARD IN THE MUSEUM



At a recent talks evening, as the attendees strolled back to the Auditorium, the following conversation was overheard:

Member A (looking across at the Walrus): “Not a beautiful aircraft! What engine did it have?”

Member B: “I think it was a Bristol Mercury.”

Member C: “No it was the Pegasus, same as in the Swordfish.”

Member B: It's hard to think that aircraft could be looped."

Member C: “Nonsense! I flew its successor, the Sea Otter. Neither of them was capable of being looped.”

Member C sounded knowledgeable, but there are numerous accounts of the Walrus looping. It does look improbable, were these stories all an elaborate hoax? Perhaps someone can give us a definitive answer!

FRIENDS' CHRISTMAS LUNCH - 12 DECEMBER
Photographs by Ernest Lear





WARTIME FLYING TRAINING.

By Eric S Rickman Lieut (A) RNVR

Early in 1940 my art school in Clapham was bombed, so such students as were left were evacuated to Northampton. By the end of March I was eighteen, and my call-up papers duly arrived. I reported to the local drill-hall, outside of which stood an army sergeant.

"Ullo, son", he said, "Got yer call-up papers, 'ave yer?"

"Yes, sarge." I held them out. He glanced at them.

"Right then, come along-o'-me." We went inside.

"Now listen," he said, "Take all yer clothes off, and put them on one of those chairs. Then, see that line of doctors? Take your papers and report to each one in turn, and when ye're finished, come back and see me."

"Right, sarge." Naked, papers in hand, I approached the first doctor, who peered into my eyes with a special torch, and said:

"O.K., fine, next doctor."

No.2 examined my ears, nose and throat, No.3 followed, then I stood facing No.4. "Right," he said, "About turn." I did so.

"Feet astride - touch your toes." I touched my toes. "Now, open your cheeks." Puzzled, I put my hands to my face.

"No, no," he said wearily, "The

cheeks of your arse!"

I grasped my buttocks, and pulled, thinking he might have said what he was looking for. I didn't know what piles were anyway.

"All right," said No.4, "Next doctor."

After seeing No.5, I dressed, and reported back to the sergeant.

"Everything all right, son?"

"I think so, sarge." I handed him my papers.

"Now then, lad," he said, "What d'you want to join? Army, Navy, or Air Force?"

"Well, actually, sarge, I wanted to volunteer for Fleet Air Arm - aircrew." I looked at him anxiously.

"Ooh, sorry, son," he said, "Yer can't do that - you've been called-up, see? If yer wanted to volunteer, yer should have done it before yer was called up."

I felt stunned, confused and crestfallen. "Aw, sarge," I said, "I didn't know that - nobody told me - how was I to know?"

He paused. "Tell yer what, son," - a long pause, then emphatically, "You go outside, and walk about for ten minutes. Then yew come back and volunteer, right?"

Ten minutes later I volunteered.

"Right then," said the sergeant, "Now listen, take all yer clothes off, and put them on one of them

chairs...”

"But, sarge," I interrupted, "I've already seen the doctors."

"Ah, yeah," he replied, "But that was when yer was called up, wasn't it? Now - ye're volunteering, see? That's different!"

"All right, sarge," I said, "If you say so."

When I reached doctor No.4, I knew what to do. I about turned, feet astride, touched my toes, and opened my buttocks.

No.4 peered, paused, and then said, "Haven't I seen you before somewhere?"

I have been grateful to that army sergeant ever since; but for him, my life might well have been very different.

By the Editor: This anecdote by Eric Rickman, a prolific contributor to Jabberwock, originally appeared in Issue 42, of Autumn 1999. It is also one of the many stories to appear in the forthcoming book "Voices in Flight - the Fleet Air Arm from 1920 to the Cold War".



An unusual view of the new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, in build, dated December 2012

EARLY DAYS

By P R Masson

Yesterday, motoring from Newark to Boston, I remembered a promise made to myself, to write up my flying days. The roads are straight and bleak in that district and great banks of snow still bordered the road. A cold wet wind blew across the

his engine. He just managed to touch down inside the aerodrome wall; the engine stopped and the propeller stood up and down. He looked pleased enough to make the aerodrome at all. Usually the mechanics came out to start-up the engine, which meant waiting, and



Cranwell in 1916. D Hangar is on the extreme right

country with nothing but low stone walls to break the force. From the road I could look across the huge open space of the landing ground to the hangars of Cranwell. They used to be marked A, B, C, and D Flights but I could not see if they were still marked as they were. It was 40 years ago.

A Bristol "Bullet" was coming in to land ...

A scene came back to me very vividly and, although I was the principal actor, it seemed as though it was someone else. A small Bristol "Bullet" was coming in to land from the east and in difficulties with

the pilot was not too popular who stalled his engine a quarter of a mile away on the aerodrome. This pilot climbed out of the cockpit dressed in a long well-worn leather

coat over his navy blue uniform, walked round to the back of the little machine, seized the tail skid, hoisted the tail on to his shoulder and walked across the aerodrome trailing the machine behind him tail first. As he approached the tarmac, slithering through the mud, a score of his comrades gave an ironical but resounding cheer which brought the Flight Commander out of his office. No doubt the Flight Commander thought things were getting out of hand so he called for the attention of the returned prodigal "on the mat" where a stern lecture was delivered on the importance of putting the propeller across instead of "up and down" when it was liable to be

damaged when the tail was lifted.

As I must have broken all the rules by starting in the middle of a story, I had better complete that episode before making a real start. We have to go back two days or rather three. I had been inoculated in the morning and in the afternoon had walked to Sleaford and back feeling as though I had been kicked all over by a horse. We were excused flying duties for 48 hours but next day was a beautiful flying day and I was keen to get my flying time in quickly and qualify as soon as I could. I had never flown a Bristol "Bullet" (nickname given to the Bristol Scout Bs) or, for that matter, a single seater machine before and you will appreciate that you cannot have a "dual" flight in a single seater. The Bullet must be one of the smallest machines ever made and it seemed miles too tight as I wedged myself into the cockpit and wagged the dainty little joystick and saw the ailerons flap. The Flight Commander gave me a few words of advice and went over the various controls and levers.

I was soon feeling as sick as a dog ...

Someone came up to speak to me so that I could hardly remember what all the gadgets did but off I went and was soon several thousand feet up and above the haze.

I think it was a combination of things but I was soon feeling as sick as a dog and completely lost

my bearings. The effects of the inoculation may have been worrying me. The little machine seemed to dance about in a lively fashion compared to the more sedate two-seaters I had been flying up till then. Also the Bullet had no floor. I believe the idea was that the pilot could look down and get a good view beneath but the Gnome engine was lubricated with castor oil and exhausted during the bottom half of the revolution so that castor oil fumes came up through the hole good and strong.

The castor oil fumes came up through the hole good and strong

The engine gave trouble almost from the start and began to take all my attention. I found it would go strongly and then begin to fade out so that I could not hold my height. By shutting off and gliding to cool the engine it would go strongly for a few minutes before beginning to fade out again. This was not good enough so I began to search for landmarks but keeping all the height I could. Cranwell is a huge place and the hangars make a great dark landmark but I could not see them anywhere and I could not see Lincoln Cathedral or Boston Stump, those two good old standbys in that area.

It was too hazy to expect to recognise less familiar objects. The obvious thing I wanted now was a promising looking farmhouse

where the chances of good fare and hospitality would be consoling. As I came down, the field I had chosen did not look nearly so good. It was on a slope and dark patches appeared as gorse bushes about six feet high but there was nothing else for it. The engine would not get me up again and I wanted to get down somewhere. A runway between gorse bushes was just made for landing but just as I was coming in two large, fat cart horses appeared from nowhere and set off at full gallop up my runway. At first I overhauled them rapidly and the massive after ends of two cart-horses at full gallop is an impressive sight.

***The after ends of two
cart horses at full gallop
is an impressive sight***

As I gradually overhauled them I watched the faint undulations of their hindquarters with the greatest of interest and noted how they could cock their heads slightly and squint back over their backs to see how I was coming on. The distance grew less and less until I seemed to be looking into the dark hollows inside the polished shoes only a few feet away. But I was losing speed and gradually the distance began to increase even though the horses were taking it easier and spending more time squinting back.

A dozen men soon appeared and some lads. One of the men was a

big bearded farmer full of vigour and enterprise. I found I was near Belton Park and a few miles from Newark. We made some attempts to start the engine which were entertaining. Probably none of them had seen an aeroplane close up before and they certainly had no idea of swinging a propeller although they were all willing to try. When I had drilled them all through "Switch is Off", "Petrol on", "Suck in" we advanced in the drill to "Switch is on", "Petrol On" and they all had a go in turn. However, I did not switch on, but studied their form while they had two or three attempts each and I tried to pick out those who seemed less likely to wind themselves into the propeller, if it should happen to start. The big bearded and vigorous farmer was an artist and I could have watched him starting up all evening.

***I could have watched
him starting up all
evening***

He would stand in a noble poise with one hand grasping a blade and his eye fixed on a point three fields away. When the magic words "Switch On" were said he came into action and would run like a scalded cat for the point on which his eye was fixed. It took most of the slope down the field before he could pull up and the propeller may have made half a turn.

The promising looking farm I

That engine was still far from enthusiastic

A week or so later I “passed out” which means I qualified, put up one ring and became Flight Sub Lieutenant. I got a first class flying certificate, although they were notoriously sparing from that flight. They always believed that no one ever got a first if he was just an ordinary good pilot but if you went off, got lost and caused a bit of bother and anxiety and then came home with your tail wagging after all, then a “first” became possible. So you see how it was done?

By the Editor:

This entertaining story is part of a much longer series of articles, first published in Jabberwock 51 of Spring 2004. The content of these articles cover a great deal of RNAS experience and they appear to have originally been written in the mid 1950s, as he says "It was 40 years ago". It has the feeling of an "off-told tale" and it is quite possible that it was published elsewhere (although not previously in Jabberwock).



ROTARY-WING EXPERIENCES

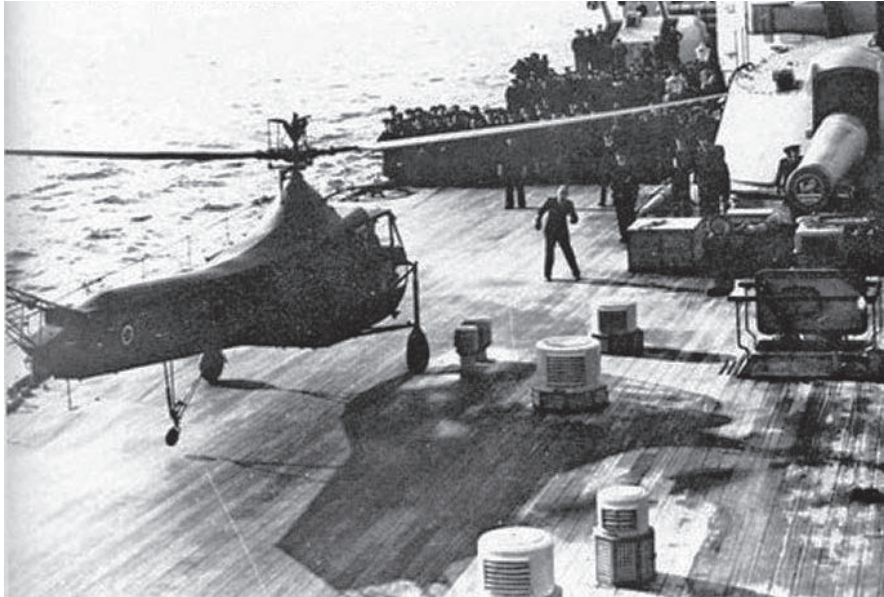
By Ken W

Towards the end of WW2, small numbers of Sikorsky helicopters were delivered to Britain. These machines, produced from 1942 in the USA, were the first practical helicopters to be used by Allied Forces. Sikorsky YR4 and later R4B machines were supplied under Lend Lease by the USA, to be evaluated by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force; this included ship landings on MV *Daghestan*. Lt Alan Bristow, attached to a Naval evaluation unit, claims to have landed an Sikorsky YR4 on a KGV class battleship, at

Scapa Flow in 1945. Also, it has been claimed that he landed a YR4 on a frigate at sea off Portland Bill between VE and VJ days in 1945.

The first official helicopter landing on a ship

The first official helicopter deck landing on a RN ship was on 1 February 1947. This was carried out by Lieutenant Ken Reed, flying a Sikorsky R4B Hoverfly, landing on HMS *Vanguard* off Portland with important dispatches for HM the



R4B Hoverfly touching down on HMS Vanguard in 1947. Not exactly an ideal flight deck!

King. *Vanguard*, carrying the Royal Party, had sailed from Portsmouth that morning in a heavy snowstorm, for South Africa. Lt Reed was a member of a flight evaluating helicopters for the Admiralty.

In May 1947, 705 Squadron was re-commissioned at RNAS Gosport (HMS Siskin) with Lt Reed as the acting CO. The squadron was equipped with the Sikorsky R4B 'Hoverfly'.

The historic airport of Gosport was well known from WW1 ...

The historic airfield at Gosport was well known from WW1; the first cockpit intercom was the 'Gosport Tube'. The small airfield was squeezed between two old forts, built to repel French invasion in 1850. The squadron became responsible for the evaluation of helicopters; basic flying training of RN helicopter pilots; Air/Sea rescue evaluation; retrieving torpedoes at the Torpedo Trials Unit at Portland and various duties including transport and radar calibration.

In 1949 squadron equipment was nine R4Bs and two Sikorsky R-6s. The earlier R4B was powered by a US Warner radial engine and had one seat behind the pilot; its payload was limited by the low powered engine. In spite of its limitations, the Sikorsky R4B was the pioneer of a long and successful design of single rotor helicopters. The later

R-6 had a higher power Franklin engine and a metal monocoque fuselage. It carried two pilots side by side, viewing through a large plastic bubble, and was largely used for pilot training.

... thrusting me into a brand new branch of aviation ...

In Jan 1949 I came ashore from HMS *Implacable* to join 705 Squadron at *Siskin*, thrusting me into a brand-new branch of aviation. At that time there were just a few helicopters in Britain, generally regarded as primitive mechanical devices, capable of weird and wonderful tricks. They were a hot favourite of the media; photographers would appear from the press to shoot our aircraft performing odd things. One typical stunt was hovering alongside the Naafi wagon, with the pilot taking a cup of tea handed to him from it. Just after I arrived, the CO of the squadron, Lt Reed, decided an Instructor was needed to teach mechanics and engineers about the complicated mechanisms of these monsters. The Chief of the squadron, Geoff Curtis, who'd been on *Implacable* with me, asked if I wanted the job, saying, 'Can you instruct?' I thought back to when I'd taught others, usually much older than myself, to overhaul aircraft engines; so I replied, 'I should hope so'.

After a two week course, I became the Navy's first Helicopter Ground Instructor. A classroom was established in one of the casemates of old Fort Rowner, entered via a dungeon like passage. Cannon ports were now windows, while the low ceiling was a vaulted roof of white washed bricks. With an old engine from one of our R4B's and other scrap bits from the transmission and rotor head, we were now in business. Classes were usually small, two or three mechanics that had joined the squadron were usual; but after the first course I was hooked - I liked doing the job and the fellows seemed to do well enough.

Courses followed traditional style ...

Courses followed traditional style, talk and chalk on the blackboard, then wander out to the hangar to look at our primitive R4Bs, with their steel tube and canvas structure. Important parts were engine and fuel system, the transmission, then rotor head and its important controls.

One day the CO came by saying we were getting new pilots. He asked me, as an experiment, if I could start a course for them on the 'Theory of Rotary-Wing Flight'. It was difficult to dodge since there were no other courses on. So after a frantic rush to read the 'gen' books, such as they were, then make a

schedule out, the course started. A few hiccups, but I found instructing the pilots, who were all officers, seemed no problem. Later Reed complimented me saying that this had eased pilots training; so the course would now become standard for new pilots.

I managed to get a friendly typist ...

Realizing that a lot of time was taken by pilots copying down notes from the board, I managed to get a friendly typist in one of the offices to type out and duplicate some of my notes. This seemed to work, so after a time all Course Notes were printed, rather unusual for that time. This really cut the pilots' course down to three or four days; usually on the next day the CO took over. Around this time the CO made sure that I got a few hours in observing on the R4B. I remember 'Auto-rotation Landings' being demonstrated where the pilot at height cut the engine to idle, then immediately pushed down into a rapid descent, in fine pitch. Just above the ground ensuring a correct flare through a sudden pull-up - using the kinetic energy of the rotors to lower her gently onto terra firma. (Is this still done today?)

At this time the US Navy and Marines led the world in helicopter usage, proving them suitable for many jobs at sea or on shore. They were now using a more advanced

Sikorsky, the S51 model. Over the past three years Royal Naval helicopters had proved themselves in all emergencies and odd jobs.

The Admiralty decided that these strange things did have a future ...

The Admiralty decided that these strange things did have a future, ordering the British version of the Sikorsky S51, to be built by Westland Aircraft under license and named 'Dragonfly'. So late in 1949, I was sent on a course to Westland aircraft at Yeovil, where Dragonfly production was already well advanced. Then to engine makers, Alvis of Coventry, who were making the Alvis Leonides radial engine fitted to the Dragonfly. Alvis of course produced motor cars and engines in the classic style. Their aero engine had been developed over a period and was now ready for helicopters. Although the Leonides had been fitted to fixed wing aircraft, initially it was viewed with doubt by some helicopter people; but in service from what I remember - it worked well.

Early 1950 we were running the first Westland Dragonfly course - no longer in 'the Dungeons' - we had moved into a building on the airfield. Our Course Notes had printed diagrams of the engine and its components included; I'd managed to get a draughtsman to draw these up. Life for me at *Siskin* was now

great, doing a job that interested and inspired me; the Chief's Mess was well run and at weekends I was off on my bike. There was a good Motor-bike club so we'd sometimes roar off in a group to Hayling Island or down Chichester way.

With the arrival of the Dragonfly the prestige of our squadron seemed to improve, also that of its ground training unit. Then in mid 1950 the Korean War started and suddenly Helicopters became valuable tools; no longer the subject of odd jokes. (Vide the TV series 'MASH'). Also a vital task - the US Navy were using helicopters for Plane-Guard to rescue downed aircrew instead of a destroyer, which took valuable time to arrive. The Fleet Air Arm was in the news with aircraft from the carrier HMS Triumph doing a great job assisting the US Navy off that coast. However, there was a catch for me; servicemen would be retained for 'the duration of the Korean War.' Although my contract expiration was two or so years off, this could impact tentative plans to get a civilian job in the helicopter field.

By 1951 I'd become a Chief Tiffy

By 1951 three staff had joined our training unit and I'd become a Chief Tiffy. We'd also managed to improve the scenery, with Westland 'loaning' us some reject Dragonfly parts. This was timely because visitors to our

unit became quite common; these were usually officers, sometimes of foreign Navies or Air Forces, but there was the occasional civilian. Then one day a Captain from the RAN visited with a few followers; a friendly person interested in everything, who soon found that I'd been to Oz and liked it.

Gosport was a plum posting ...

Gosport was a plum posting in the post war Navy, two years there was normal then off to sea or somewhere well away from civilisation. Our Commander managed to delay efforts to move

me, but after 2½ years I was off to Scotland. The wrench from the rotary wing world to a routine depressing place hit me, but I had to be patient hoping that blue skies were not far off. While at Gosport I'd met some interesting types. The lads looked forward to going away on detachment with a helicopter and its pilot; expecting to work odd hours and their aircraft to perform odd tasks – but the upshot were the hidden benefits available. They particularly liked Alan Bristow who the lads reckoned had been quite a character. I remember a Distillery fire in Scotland somewhere around 1951, where a Dragonfly did good work spotting the fire from above;



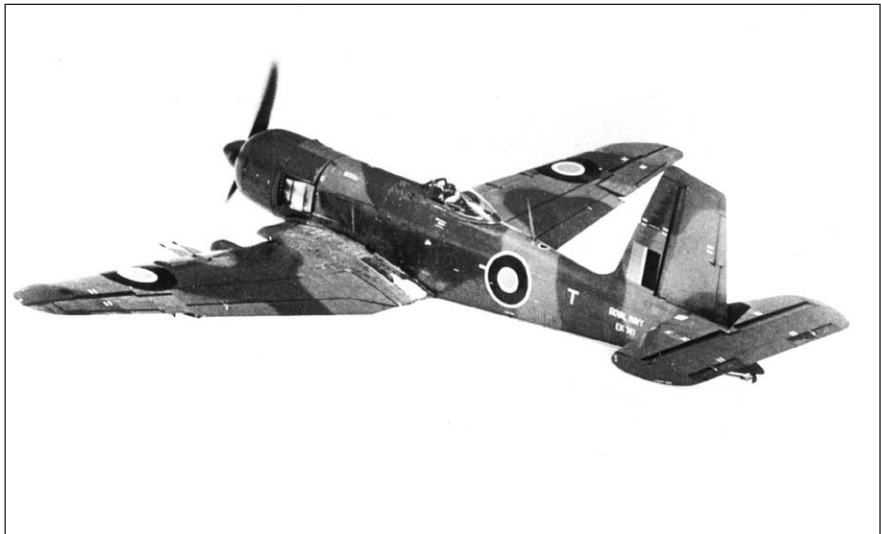
Whirlwind Mk 7 training with the Sproule Net

according to them there were rewards later. There was talk of one Bank Holiday in the West Country where a helicopter made 'Trips around the Lighthouse' for happy holidaymakers; they were happy to sub up to the beer fund after.

Geoff Curtis ... was a genuine nice guy

Squadron Chief Geoff Curtis was a tall bony individual, he looked formidable but was a genuine nice guy. Now 'tracking' R4B rotors was done using a canvas flag on a pole;

a last job - 'tracking' with everyone watching. It was slippery (frost or ice) so one of the two holding the Flag pole slipped, pulling the other over and also the pole which the rotors threw some distance. No damage but really humorous, so hearty laughter and jeers from onlookers. Geoff Curtis arrived from somewhere. Very irate, he roared, "What the hell do you two clowns think you're doing?" Standing there, yelling and waving his arms, he looked comical, so uproarious laughter. This really peed him off, turning on us he



Blackburn Firebrand with the Bristol Centaurus engine

chalking blade tips a different colour then showed blade position as they rotated, all 3 coinciding was the optimum. At Christmas 1949, with most of us ready to charge off on leave that noon; outside the hangar

yelled in his broad 'Ampshire. "As for you f*****g gang of idle scrimshankers, you can all bloody muster here this afternoon, for a safety lecture." Dead silence, down cast faces; a long minute

By the Editor: Many thanks to Bill Reeks for permission to include this extract from the 852 Squadron Linebook in its original format (and spelling!) This priceless document covers the experiences of the squadron from its formation in November 1943, training with the USN at their Naval Air Station at Squantum, Massachusetts, and their subsequent operational deployment to the Escort Carrier HMS Nabob. The final entries are dated late in 1944.



FLEET AIR ARM MEMORIAL





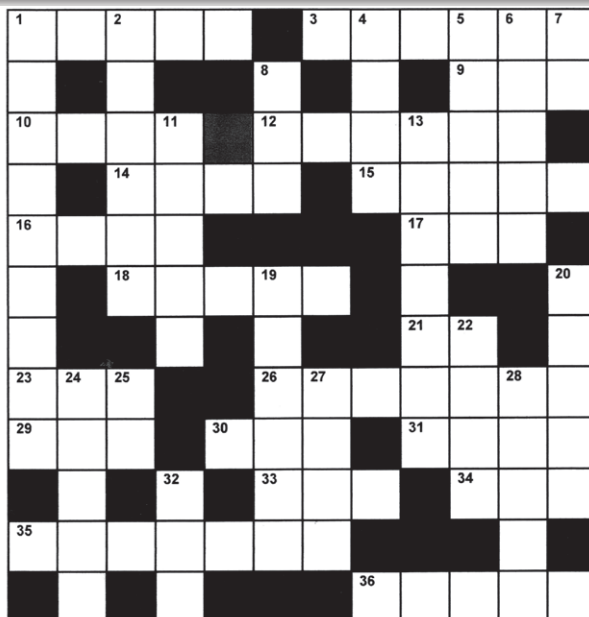
The picture at top left shows the The Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield, Staffordshire, which was dedicated in October 2007 by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the presence of the Queen. Other pictures show the progress to date on the Fleet Air Arm Memorial. These pictures were taken in mid 2012 by a member of the Sea Harrier Society.

The National Memorial Arboretum honours the fallen, recognises sacrifice and fosters pride in our country. It is a spiritually uplifting place and is emerging as a world-renowned centre for remembrance

CROSSWORD No 2

1956 - The Suez Crisis

Compiled by RGH

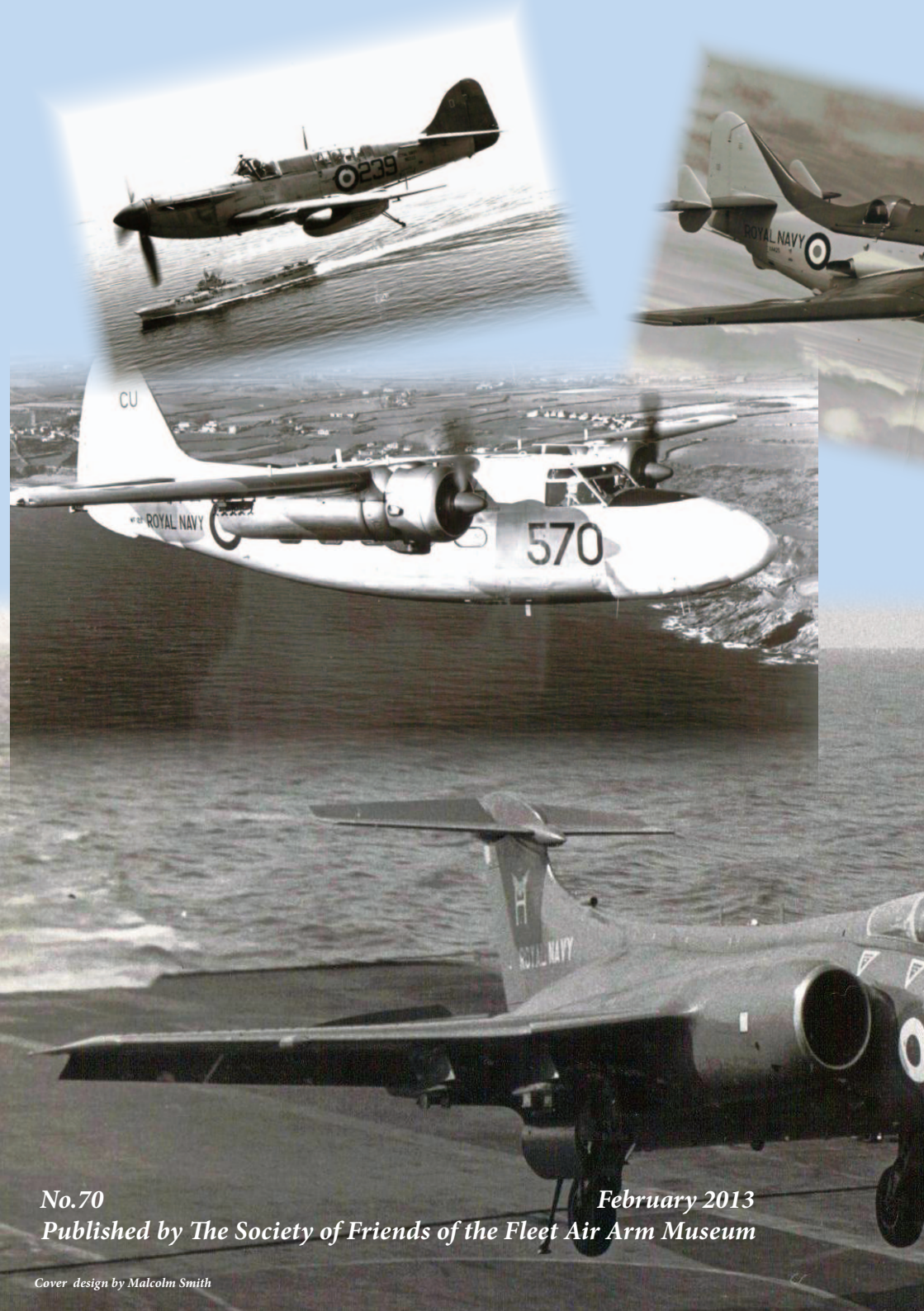


ACROSS

1. Hollow shape/pattern (5)
3. Resist (6)
9. Toothed wheel (3)
10. Travel by water (4)
12. Egyptian President (6)
14. Sea rise/fall (4)
15. Vital organ (5)
16. British Prime Minister (4)
17. Non-specific (3)
18. Postpone (5)
21. Before noon (1,1)
23. Lady in that garden (3)
26. RN carrier #3 (7)
29. King (3)
30. Egyptian jet fighter (3)
31. Leg joint (4)
33. Not young (3)
34. Facilitates hearing (3)
35. Regimental sub-division (7)
36. Workshop machine (5)

DOWN

1. Suez operation codename (9)
2. ----- Nations (6)
4. Lean against (4)
5. RN carrier #1 (5)
6. An apology (5)
7. For example (1,1)
8. Singular (3)
11. Large passenger ship (5)
13. Hawker jet fighter (3,4)
19. RN carrier #2 (6)
20. Popular card game (5)
22. Animal hair (4)
24. DH jet fighter (5)
25. Former/previous (2)
27. Repulsive (4)
28. Attain (5)
32. Senior NCO/RN (1,1,1)



No.70

Published by The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum

Cover design by Malcolm Smith

February 2013