

JABBERWOCK 107



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

FLEET AIR ARM
MUSEUM

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

**May
2022**



IN THIS ISSUE

Frank Ott RNVR obituary • The story of R G Shaw • Davis and his Albert Medal • Channel Dash Remembered • Around the World in 17 Days • Hawker Hunter GA11 - WV381 • SoFFAAM Christmas Lunch • 'Humphrey' - Fortuna Glacier Rescue • Talks and Book reviews

Plus all the usual features etc.

THE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM



The Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum



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

ADMISSION

Members of SoFFAAM are admitted to the Museum free of charge, on production of a valid membership card. Members may be accompanied by up to three guests (one guest only for junior members)

on any one visit, each at a reduced entrance fee, currently 50% of the standard price. Members are also allowed a 10% discount on goods purchased from the shop.

Note: These concessions are provided at the discretion of the General Manager of the Museum and could be removed at any time.

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

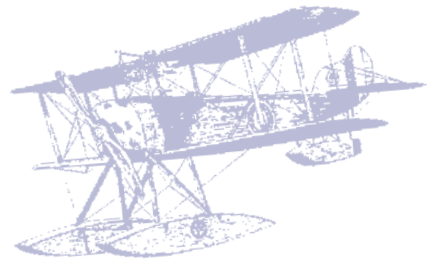
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Frank Ott RNVR



Davis and his Albert Medal



Stan Orr's medal collection



'Humphrey' - Fortuna Glacier Rescue

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COVER ILLUSTRATION

A very evocative painting by Philip E West depicting Swordfish W5907 as flown by Sub. Lt. Kingsmill and Sub. Lt. Samples with L/A. Bunce in the rear, during Operation Cerberus, the German naval operation to get warships *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* from Brest back to German ports.
 © Philip E West

Editorial

We are sad to report the death of long-lived member Frank Ott and carry a brief obituary in this issue.

Frank contributed greatly to this magazine in earlier days and, by coincidence, we carried one of his memoirs "A long day in May" in Issue 106. We also carry an article on Operation Grapple from our previous Chairman, Richard Hufton. Entitled "H bombs and Hula Girls", it describes British H-Bomb testing in the days when it was thought acceptable to carry out such tests in the atmosphere.

In previous issues, we mentioned that your Society's Council still needs new members. Council members are Trustees of the Society and play an important role in its organisation and management. In their responses to the recent member questionnaire, several respondents expressed an interest in becoming a Trustee. Those who did so are welcome to follow up their interest by email to the Chairman or Membership Secretary. At the recent Council meeting, the General Manager reported that the Carrier Project continues at pace with much work being done behind the scenes. Carrier is a major showpiece for the Museum and we look forward to seeing its improved

version. It was good to hear from the General Manager that visitor numbers to the Museum have returned almost to pre-pandemic levels.

Our monthly talks have continued successfully, with encouraging audiences. Broadcasting the talks via Zoom is proving popular and the technical difficulties of this medium are being steadily overcome. Zoom enables members to log in to the talks from anywhere with internet access and we hope that its availability will encourage more joiners. Although Society membership is still healthy, the numbers are slowly declining. All members are invited to encourage new joiners.

Finally, an apology to member Colin Musson, of Ontario, who sent several photographs of Wyvern operations. The two pictures on page 20 of Issue 106 were among these but were incorrectly attributed to John Perring. We often say that the magazine benefits greatly from members' contributions and, as a rule, we aim to attribute them correctly!



Malcolm

Council snippets

From the September 2021 Council Meeting

FAAM has enjoyed a positive February half term with general visitor numbers mirroring February 2019 pre-pandemic figures almost like for like. This helps to build confidence ahead of the new season.

The Museum has regained a degree of walk-up flexibility although our advice to members is to continue to book online – especially if they wish to benefit from guest entry (as online tickets remain cheaper than those available at walk-up). The Museum continues to encourage mask wearing and social distancing amongst other advisory measures and will review these again ahead of main season in April. The Carrier Project continues at pace with much work being done behind the scenes to prepare the site for eventual works.

The Chairman said that Zoom attendees to Society talks were increasing, some of whom were from locations remote from Yeovilton. He had attended the funeral of Frank Ott and remarked that Frank had been a volunteer at the Museum into his 90s. The Secretary raised the issue of the shortfall in Council members. The Constitution stated that there should be 14, but at present there were only 10. We

could amend the Constitution to state a reduced number, although we should aim to recruit to 14 to ensure a good variety of Trustee experience. Saturday 10 September has been reserved for Members' Day. FAAM can provide one lecture and a visit to the Barracuda.

A Zoom centred approach to how talks are delivered appears to give a good experience within the Auditorium and on Zoom. Further finessing is required, but good progress is being made every time we have a talk. New membership applications have continued to be disappointing, with only three received this year. We are currently owed £139 from underpaid standing order membership renewals, following the fee uplift 14 months ago. All these members have been contacted, with no response thus far. We have therefore stopped provision of Jabberwock to those members continuing to underpay their renewal.

The new design of the Society's website appears to be well received. The number of visits appear to be encouraging. There was general agreement that the Society should hold the Grand Draw this year. It was also agreed that it should be entirely digital.

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor

I've always understood that the Royal Navy did not issue side numbers ending in '8' or '9' to front-line squadrons, i.e. 800-numbered squadrons. This convention seems to have held through the Phantom era where 892 NAS's Phantom FG1s were allocated side numbers '001' through '007', then '010' upwards, although 767 NAS, being a second-line, home-based training squadron, was allocated side numbers including '158' (Phantom FG1 XT866).

Only in the Falklands era did this change, with side numbers ending in '8' or '9' being allocated to 801's enlarged embarked Sea Harrier complement, when the 899 NAS FRS1s attached to

the squadron were number 006 to 009; XZ456 and XZ494 being 008, XZ453 and ZA190 being 009. That happened even though numbers 000 and 002 were not used until 809 NAS FRS1s arrived on *Invincible* in mid-May, when ZA174 became 000 and XZ491 was 002. As a front-line squadron only 800 NAS later bucked the trend using 122 to 128 as side numbers on its Sea Harriers.

And so to the question; was not using '8' and '9' on front-line squadrons ever a rule? If yes, was it based on squadron size, tradition, superstition, or what?

**Regards,
Nick Greenall**

Dear Malcolm

I hope that my message below is of sufficient interest to appear in Jabberwock.

In a box of old family photographs my wife has come across a photograph of Richard George SHAW seated in a WW1 aircraft. Richard George Shaw was born 02/11/1898 at Kensington and died a bachelor in 1953, and is said to be buried at Canford Church, Canford

Magna, Wimborne. He was the son of Sir Walter Sidney Shaw, (a distinguished judge), died 1937, and Dorothy Emma Shaw, died 1941, who resided at Fenner's, Canford Magna, Wimborne.

Richard George Shaw was a cousin of my wife's late mother and it is her hand-writing on the reverse of the photograph where she has added the year 1915. The original handwriting just states, 'Dickie in the 1st world war'. On

a family tree tracing back to Elizabethan times, handwritten by Sir Walter Shaw, after Richard George Shaw's name is, 'DFC'. Online I have found an entry under a Naval History Homepage for those awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1918. Lieut. Richard George Shaw (Sea Patrol).

I have little experience of delving into ancestry and would welcome SoFFAAM members' suggestions as to the identity of the aircraft, the most likely year that the photograph was taken, and any other

information. I suppose identification of the aircraft type may help in identifying the Shaw awarded the DFC, although it is unlikely that there would have been more than one Richard George Shaw, awarded the DFC.

**Best Wishes
John Briden**

Editors note: See page 8 where our chairman Graham Mottram has written an article on R G Shaw.

Dear Graham

Thank you very much for coming along to represent SoFFAAM when we took receipt of Stan Orr's medals (pictured), log books, album and so much else!

It is good that NMRN was able to secure this purchase and we really appreciate the large contribution that SoFFAAM made towards it.

Please pass my thanks to the SoFFAAM Council.

**Best wishes
Barbara Gilbert
Curator (Archives), FAAM**



Editors note: This email, received from Barbara Gilbert was to Graham Mottram our chairman, who attended the event when Stan Orr's medals etc., came into the possession of FAAM. See pages 30-31 to read about how SoFFAAM was involved in this acquisition.

Dear Malcolm

I reported in Jabberwock 103 that 736 NAS was to disband in September 2021.

They had a reprieve until March 2022 when they finally disbanded along with 100 Squadron RAF, as all Hawk T1's were retired from service (except

the RAF Red Arrows). 736 NAS flew farewell flights over the UK, including RNAS Yeovilton on 17/03/22.

**Regards
Richard Macauley**

Frank Ott RNVR obituary

By Graham Mottram



Lt. Frank Ott, RNVR.

When one passes the age of about 85 the chances are that many of your lifelong friends will have passed away before you, and that your funeral will be a lonely affair.

That was not the case with Frank Ott, a founder member of SoFFAAM and a long-time volunteer at FAAM, who died on 30th January 2022, three weeks after his 100th birthday. He was pleased and proud to have received his birthday card from HM The Queen. It is also fitting that the last two editions of *Jabberwock* featured a two-part story by Frank, "A Long Day in May". Frank's funeral was not an empty affair, but I was one of the few members of SoFFAAM who really remembered him and so it was appropriate that I should have represented the Society at the United Church in Wells in February.

Frank was born as a butcher's son in Dover and attended Gravesend Grammar School where he did well but had to struggle with being looked down upon by a pretty snooty bunch of contemporaries. His first paid employment was deliveries for his father, paid in coppers, and he then took a clerical job with the local council. He was a member of the local Sea Scouts and on the outbreak of war, Frank volunteered and joined the RNVR Air Branch. He had seen the posters, "Join the Navy and see the world". Frank certainly did that, even noting in his flying log book, "Wonderful view of Table Mountain", during a test flight in 1945.

Frank trained at Piarco, Trinidad, and then Arbroath, and qualified as an observer with a commission. He was appointed to 738 squadron at USNAS Lewiston, Maine, gaining experience in Grumman Avengers, the aircraft in which he would see much operational service against the Japanese. Frank moved to 851 Squadron when it formed up in October 1943 at Squantum, Massachusetts, before embarking in HMS *Shah*. *Shah* was deployed to the Indian Ocean looking for Japanese submarines and making strikes against coastal and shore targets in occupied

Burma. Flying in the back seat of an Avenger, Frank spent many hours over the Indian Ocean and became Senior Observer in January 1945. The squadron's VE Day celebrations in May 1945 were cut short by an urgent message requiring *Shah* to put to sea to intercept Japanese ships leaving the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was at this point in the war that Frank earned his DSC. 851 Squadron Avengers found and attacked the Japanese cruiser *Haguro*. This sounds unimpressive but involved two very long flights in one day, both of almost five hours, the longest missions of the Second World War flown by Fleet Air Arm aircraft. Frank's Avenger landed with only enough fuel for another ten minutes of flying.

Post war, Frank returned to administrative work, first at the Admiralty and then with London County Council, but continued in the RNVR as a Commanding Officer in the Sea Cadets. In 1956 he moved to Birmingham as Assistant Bursar at the University where his flair for administration and his pragmatism were greatly valued. When he left in 1973, the University's

Secretary wrote that they would miss being able to ask, "What does Frank think?" Frank's next and last (paid) job was as Bursar at Bristol University, a demanding role overseeing a large expansion in student numbers and the need to buy and sell buildings and land to keep the university fit for purpose. He fulfilled this important and demanding role until his retirement.

He then became secretary of SoFFAAM for several years, and produced a book, "Air Power at Sea" which we sold in the shop quite successfully. He and his wife also raised Great Danes for many years, originally driving around with one of these in the smallest imaginable car, an Austin A30. Frank's wife was taken ill and partially disabled and Frank dedicated the next ten years to caring for her, still contributing to SoFFAAM and volunteering in the FAAM archives from 1993 to 2016. He was also a dedicated member of Wells United Church and to Glastonbury Male Voice Choir and it was a rousing send off by them which made a very old man's funeral a memorable and well attended one.

Did you join the RN / RM / WRNS / QARNNS in 1952?

The Royal Naval Engagements Team are looking for Veterans who joined up in 1952 so that they can reach out to them with information regarding The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.

The exact details of the festivities are not yet known. But if you joined up in 1952 (or know anyone who did) please contact Sara at RNA Central Office.

Tel: 023 92723747 Email: sara@royalnavalassoc.com



The story of R G Shaw

By Graham Mottram



Richard George Shaw born 2 November 1898 and seated in a DH9. Photo taken during WW1.

Richard George Shaw was born in Kensington on November 2nd 1898, the son of Walter Sydney Shaw (a barrister) and Dorothy Emma Shaw.

After prep school in Bromley, Kent and at the age of 14 in September 1912 he joined Rossall School, a boarding school at Fleetwood in Lancashire. He left on June 12 1917 and joined the Royal Naval Air Service on the 24th of the same month. His father, a law graduate of Trinity College Cambridge, was

beginning to build a very successful legal career which took him across the British Empire, from St Vincent to Grenada and ultimately to be Chief Justice of the Straits Settlements 1921-25. He was knighted in 1921. His son lodged with his uncle, G.L Tregatt in the Gloucester Road in London when the family moved overseas.

After a month at Crystal Palace, HMS *President III*, learning to be a naval officer, he was sent to Chingford

to learn to fly, on Avro 504s and BE2s. His advanced flying training was at RNAS Cranwell before heading to RNAS Manston for the DH4 School and Bombing Course. On satisfactory completion, although his results were not distinguished, he was posted to 17 Squadron at RNAS Dunkirk on 31 March 1918. One day later he was in 217 Squadron Royal Air Force, at RAF Dunkirk.

If his flying training was not particularly distinguished, his war flying made up for it. His unit was tasked with attacking German submarine and naval targets in the area around Zeebrugge and was equipped with Airco DH4 bombers. This two seat biplane can be described as a precursor to the De Havilland Mosquito a generation later. Although designed as a bomber, the version with the superb Rolls Royce Eagle engine had a performance close to that of many fighters, and it was decently manoeuvrable. Only just turned 19 years of age and from a school which had a long list of wartime officers, Shaw clearly had a strong sense of duty and did everything and more that was

asked of him. Little more than three weeks after he arrived at Dunkirk, the Royal Navy mounted its ambitious and ultimately disastrous attacks on the German held ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend, hoping to block the seaboard approaches and prevent their use by submarines. Timed to take effect on St George's Day, April 23rd, ships and Royal Marines began their attacks just after midnight but were driven off with little success and high casualties. Follow up air raids began once the skies were light enough and the ex-RNAS units from the Dunkirk area began a day long programme of bombing and strafing. Dickie Shaw was one of the raiders on Ostend but the local air defences had been alerted by the time he was bombing and he was attacked by an Albatros DV single seat fighter. His gunner, H. Tallboys, was obviously a cool individual with a good eye and, as Shaw threw the bomber around out of the Albatros's fire, Tallboys shot the German down. When they reached home safely and Shaw made his report, the claim for a combat victory was confirmed, and it was the first one ever scored by 217 Squadron.



Albatros DV.



Hansa Brandenburg W29.



DH4 lineup of 217 Squadron RAF.

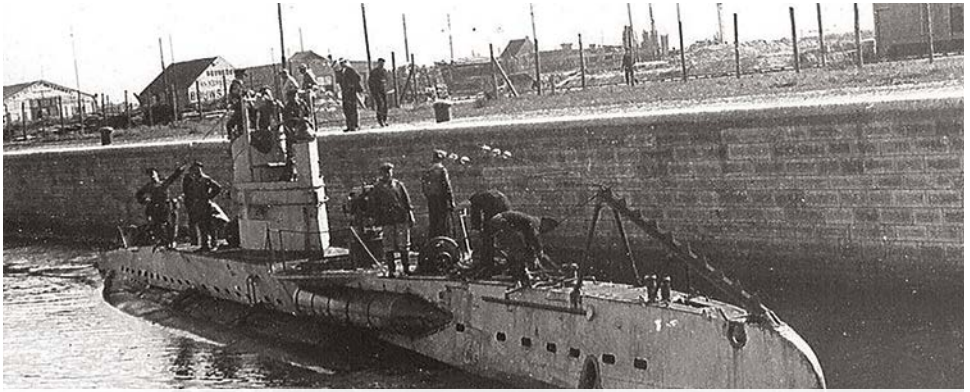
The Albatros was most probably from one of the rarely-mentioned Marine Feld Jastas that were located near the Belgian coast.

(Shaw's gunner's identity is quite difficult to track accurately. There were several "H. C. Tallboys" in the services at that time. There was one Harold Charlton Talboy (note the spelling with only one "L") who was a Petty Officer Armoured Cars F2084, who was also a member of the Royal Garrison Artillery and later a commissioned balloon observer RAF who was shot down and wounded. He was a member of the RAFVR in WW2 and retired as a Wing Commander.)

Besides the Marine Feld Jastas the coastal air units also faced the fighter seaplanes from the naval air station on Zeebrugge Mole, which was equipped with fighter seaplanes, an aircraft type rarely seen in Britain. Just how much air combat took place from time to time over this area of the North Sea is totally overlooked but Shaw's next major

engagement was one of the bigger ones. The early morning patrol from Zeebrugge air station was mounted by seven Brandenburg W29 fighter seaplanes of the station's 1 Staffel. The same morning's anti-submarine patrol from 217 Squadron comprised two DH4's piloted by Dickie Shaw (A7941) and Lt. A. Phillips (A7863). The German patrol was 8 miles from home when they clashed with the two De Havillands. The British Official Report said: "Lt. R. G. Shaw, pilot, and Lt. U.G. A. Tongue, observer, destroyed one EA, and Lt Phillips, pilot, and Lt. Dougall, observer, destroyed another. Both EA were observed to crash into the sea".

The Operations Book of Seefrontstaffel I reported: At 8.30 two de Havillands were attacked in Quadrant 805k, which dropped their bombs. In the course of the fight aircraft 2513 (pilot Olt.z.S. Koch, observer Flg.Mt Marschel) was shot down and smashed up on the water. Nothing of the crew could be found during a search. The two



UB-II type submarine that operated from Zeebrugge.

de Havillands escaped to the west.”

Clearly, the two British crews reported seeing the same aircraft plunge into the sea but there was no doubt about that victory. The combat must have been a major element in the recommendation for Shaw’s DFC, which was gazetted on 21 September 1918:

“In company with another machine he recently attacked seven enemy seaplanes and destroyed one of them. Lieut. Shaw has shown exceptional ability as a flight leader. He has carried out successfully 21 bombing raids, 51 anti-submarine patrols, and has descended to very low altitudes to attack hostile submarines, destroyers and trawlers, scoring at least two direct hits. This officer displays great determination and keenness in his work.”

Shaw spent a couple of spells in hospital towards the end of his service with 217, and was then transferred to 21 Training Squadron before eventually being demobilised in September 1919. Quite how he filled his time after the war is not easy to determine. When he

took First Class passage to Marseilles on SS *Insulinde* in January 1928 he was listed merely as “Business”. By that time the RAF was looking to strengthen its reserves and Shaw joined the RAF Auxiliary Air Force in April 1928, becoming a Flying Officer in 601 County of London (B) Squadron. By January 1935 he had reached the rank of Squadron Leader and was given command of the unit. At the conclusion of his service in 1936 he was permitted to retain the title of “Squadron Leader”.

His parents had moved to Canford Magna, Wimborne in Dorset after his father’s return from overseas, and they settled in a house called “Fenners”, suggesting that his father had played cricket during his time at Trinity College. Dickie appears to have joined them during this time. Sir Walter Shaw died in 1937, leaving an estate worth £4500 to his family, and Dickie was one of the beneficiaries but listed with “no occupation”. His mother died in 1941 and Dickie lived in the house until his own death in 1953.

Davis and his Albert Medal

By Graham Mottram



Flight Lieutenant E P M Davis RAF 1931.

Most of the seaplanes and flying boats of the First World War had extensive wing areas to counteract the extra weight and drag their waterborne existence brought to them.

In a crash, the multiple struts and bracing wires could easily collapse into a cage from which it was difficult to escape. The Franco-British Aviation Type B flying boat was a particularly threatening aircraft, whose wings were behind the cockpit and which could easily fold forward around the crew. It was one of those which led to the award of the Albert Medal to Flt. Lt. E. P. M.

Davis in October 1917.

Edward Henry Meggs Davis was born in Galway in 1846 and entered the Royal Navy at the age of 14. He made Captain in 1887, and retired a Rear Admiral in 1905, dying in 1929 after falling from a window he was seeking to repair in his house at Bexhill on Sea. One of his commands was HMS *Royalist* and his actions whilst cruising the Pacific still exercise those who disapprove of the British Empire. In between annexing Pacific islands for the Empire, Meggs married Ethel Mary Lambe in Stoke Demerel near Devonport in 1895 and had four sons, all of whom had military careers.

Edward Peverall Meggs Davis was the oldest of the boys and he joined the RNAS in April 1916, gaining his Pilot's Certificate 3472 at the age of 18 at Chingford on 28 August 1916. He was sent to Calshot in October to do the Seaplane Course, which he passed with excellent results. He flew from Bembridge on the Isle of Wight for a short period but by early 1917 was back at Calshot as an instructor.

One of the students later that summer was six years older than his instructor. James Douglas Grant had been born in 1892 in Singapore, the second of four sons of Alexander and

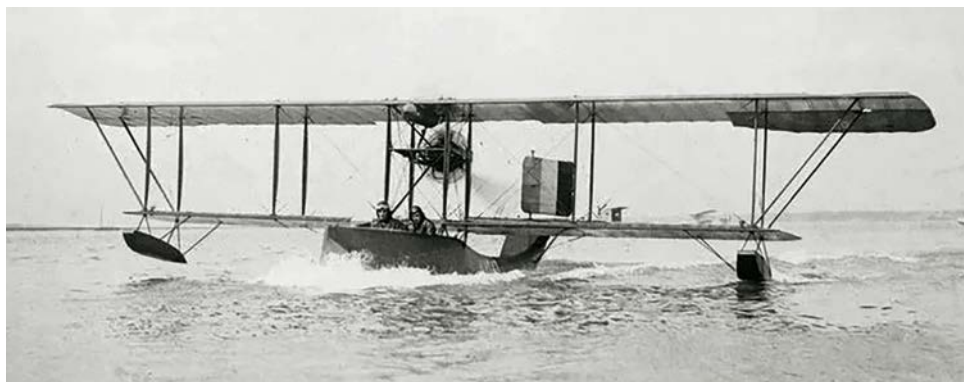
Agnes Grant, whilst his father was working overseas. The family settled back in their native Aberdeen around the turn of the century and Grant began an apprenticeship as an electrical engineer. He joined the RNAS in early 1917, underwent "conversion training" from civilian to officer at Crystal Palace and then did his basic flying training at Redcar. Advanced training followed at Cranwell before he was posted to Calshot for the seaplane course in July. He had been flying seaplanes for some time, albeit with a break of about three weeks whilst he was treated in Haslar Naval Hospital for a traditional sailor's disease before he took off in a FBA Type B, probably N1058, in early October.

The citation for Davis's Albert Medal read thus :

"On the 3rd October, 1917, whilst carrying out a practice flight, a seaplane, piloted by Flight Sub-Lieutenant James Douglas Grant, fell into the sea. The seaplane turned over and the pilot was enclosed in the boat under water. Flight Lieutenant Edward Peverall Meggs

Davis immediately flew a seaplane to the position of the accident, made fast to the wreck, and dived under the wreck in his uniform and endeavoured to extricate Flight Sub-Lieutenant Grant. To do this it was necessary for him to dive amongst and struggle through the mass of wires and broken parts of the wreck. Notwithstanding the imminent danger of being caught up amongst them, Lieutenant Davis continued his efforts to get Flight Sub-Lieutenant Grant out, until the emergency boat arrived on the scene. No other help was at hand until the arrival of this motorboat, which at the time of the accident was about a mile and a-half away. Flight Lieutenant Davis risked his life in endeavouring to save that of his brother officer, as there was every chance of his becoming caught under water in the wires of the wreck." According to Grant's personnel record, the aircraft was seen to enter a steep side slip and plunge into the water. Davis was airborne and immediately flew over and alighted by the wreckage.

The award of the Albert Medal



An FBA Type B flying boat trainer.

was made very quickly, being added to Davis's personnel record on 4 November 1917. Grant's body was recovered and returned to his family, who buried him in Allenvale Cemetery in Aberdeen. After a long period instructing, Davis eventually went operational, joining 306 Flight at Houton Bay in the Orkneys sometime in mid-1918. On 12 August he and Lt. W. Sanderson dropped two bombs on a U-boat whilst out on patrol in Curtiss H16 N4895.

Davis received the AFC in November 1918 for his long service as an instructor and remained in the RAF during the inter-war years, mainly in the seaplane and flying boat world. He had a spell on HMS *Pegasus* in 1924 and he married Frederika Van Der Goes, daughter of a Dutch diplomat, at St Marylebone Parish Church in February 1928. He was a keen member of the RAF Golfing Society. In August 1931, still only a Flight Lieutenant, he piloted one of two flying boats which made a 6,000-mile round trip from the UK to the Red Sea and back. One of his RNAS personal assessments had rated him "an excellent instructor but lacks command". His progress up the ranks perhaps reflects that and it

was not until 1937 that he made Wing Commander with the appointment as Air Attaché to the British Embassy in Brussels. He filled that role from July 1937 until May 1940, when forced to flee by the German invasion.

Promoted to Acting Group Captain, Edward Davis was posted to command RAF Detling. This Kent airfield was mainly used by Coastal Command, but fighters had landed there in emergencies and the Luftwaffe had added the station to their target list. August 13th 1940 was Adler Tag (Eagle Day) the Luftwaffe's first day of its intensive push to destroy RAF Fighter Command, and it was a hectic and murderous day on both sides from dawn to dusk.

The last major raid of the day was by 40 Stukas of IV/LG1, and they had an unchallenged run into their target. The men and women of Detling were heading to their canteens for supper when the bombs began to fall. The devastation was massive and included the Operations Block, where Davis was. In all, 67 personnel were killed; 14 of them have no known grave. Edward Davis is one of those and he is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.



Flt. S/Lt. E P M Davis
at the age of 18.



Rear Admiral
E H M Davis.



Runnymede Memorial. © MoD

Channel Dash Remembered

By Chris Penney



This illustration comes from the box art of the Airfix 1:72 scale model of the Swordfish Mk.1, commemorating Lt. Cdr Esmonde's VC combat during 825 NAS action over the English Channel. © Airfix

The 80th Anniversary of 825 Naval Air Squadron's 1942 involvement in Operation Fuller were recalled at events across Kent on 12 February 2022.

Operation Fuller was the name given to the various preparatory measures ordered by the War Ministry in advance of the probable return of German heavy warships from Brest to ports in Germany. Their high-risk strategy of returning via the English Channel in 1942, rather than by more circuitous routes, has earned the exploit the name of the "Channel Dash".

In the evening of 11 February 1942, the Kriegsmarine's 32,000-ton battlecruisers *Gneisenau*, *Scharnhorst* and heavy cruiser *Prinz Eugen* were preparing to depart the naval base of Brest in occupied Brittany. They were heading back to Nazi Germany via the shortest possible sea route - along the northern coast of France through the English Channel, which at Dover is just 20.7 miles (33km) wide. The winter weather forecast offering poor day-time visibility during the passage would help. The British assumption that the enemy

vessels would take the safer night transit of the 350 mile-long (560km) Channel waterway was about to be proved incorrect.

The various precautionary measures detailed in Operation Fuller were highly classified and this seems to have prevented their importance from reaching units at the operational level. The warships left harbour without being spotted. Coastal Command Hudsons were tasked to fly reconnaissance sorties but their crews had various problems with their radar and were apparently not aware of the significance of the task. An aircraft that might have spotted the vessels in the Western Approaches went off task an hour early. Overnight on 12 February, the Luftwaffe made low level 'hit and run' attacks on the 10 Group fighter airfields at Exeter and Warmwell to distract from what was happening in the Channel. At first light Spitfires of 306 (Polish) Squadron,

based at Churchstanton* on the Blackdown Hills supposedly at readiness to engage the fighter "umbrella" over the warships, were instead scrambled to intercept fleeing Luftwaffe bombers.

Later that morning the enemy flotilla was finally sighted by the RAF through cloud, already approaching the Dover Straits. The three targets were screened by a large escort of protective destroyers, E-boats and minesweepers. Extensive Luftwaffe support of 250 fighter aircraft covered the entire daylight route between Normandy and Brunsbüttel on the German Elbe. This included the Luftwaffe's new clipped wing Focke-Wulf Fw 190. Introduced the previous August and now deployed to French airfields, it outclassed the latest Spitfire V with its superior speed, acceleration, and dive performance.

Even if the various elements of Fuller had been better co-ordinated, the challenging flying conditions



Handley Page Halifax's of No. 35 Squadron RAF bombing the German battlecruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* in dry-dock at Brest, 18 December 1941. © IWM

with low cloud and fog would make attacking the fast-moving capital ships a formidable proposition for the Fleet Air Arm and RAF Bomber and Coastal Command squadrons. At 12.25 the six Fairey Swordfish of 825 Squadron that deployed from RNAS Lee-on-Solent, Hampshire, to snow-covered RAF Manston in Kent for just such an eventuality, took-off to circle Ramsgate and await an RAF escort. Of five Spitfire squadrons expected, only ten Spitfire Mk VBs from 72 Squadron at Gravesend met them to provide their top cover. Unwilling to wait longer, 825 Squadron CO Lt Commander Esmonde DSO led his torpedo-armed biplanes out over the Kent coast towards the disappearing Nazi warships. Overwhelmed by the strength of the enemy defences before they got within ideal striking range, the 825 crews nevertheless pressed on in a doomed attack on the German convoy. The six low and slow Swordfish were quickly shot down, with all but five out of the eighteen aircrew killed.

The Commanding Officer of RAF Manston recommended Esmonde for the award of the Victoria Cross. The posthumous award was gazetted on 3 March 1942 and the citation read: "The King has been graciously pleased to approve the grant of the VC, for valour and resolution in action against the Enemy, to the late Lieutenant-Commander (A) Eugene Esmonde DSO RN. On the morning of Thursday 12 February 1942, Lieutenant-Commander Esmonde, in command of a Squadron of the Fleet Air Arm, was told that the German Battle-Cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*

and the Cruiser *Prinz Eugen*, strongly escorted by some 30 surface craft, were entering the Straits of Dover, and that his Squadron must attack before they reached the sandbanks north east of Calais. Lieutenant-Commander Esmonde knew well that his enterprise was desperate. Soon after noon he and his squadron of six Swordfish set course for the Enemy, and after ten minutes flight were attacked by a strong force of Enemy fighters. Touch was lost with his fighter escort; and in the action which followed all his aircraft were damaged. He flew on, cool and resolute, serenely challenging hopeless odds, to encounter the deadly fire of the Battle-Cruisers and their Escort, which shattered the port wing of his aircraft. Undismayed, he led his Squadron on, straight through this inferno of fire, in steady flight towards their target. Almost at once he was shot down; but his Squadron went on to launch a gallant attack, in which at least one torpedo is believed to have struck the German Battle-Cruisers, and from which not one of the six aircraft returned. His high courage and splendid resolution will live in the traditions of the Royal Navy and remain for many generations a fine and stirring memory."

The other 12 aircrew killed received posthumous Mentions in Dispatches. Vice Admiral Bertram Ramsay, Flag Officer Dover, commented: "The gallant sortie of these six Swordfish aircraft constitutes one of the finest exhibitions of self sacrifice and devotion to duty the War had ever witnessed." The Fleet Air Arm Battle Honour English Channel 1939-45 is held by 811, 812, 818, 819,

825 and 841 Squadrons and includes the 'Channel Dash' action (but not Dunkirk or D-Day).

The Channel Dash Memorial Trust that evolved from the Channel Dash Association has delivered lasting memorials to all who participated in the 1942 Operation. On Ramsgate Harbour waterfront a stone memorial is dedicated to the 825 Squadron aircrew involved. At Dover there is a further memorial to 825 Squadron; Royal Navy units including Motor Torpedo Boats from Dover and the destroyer HMS *Worcester* (27 sailors killed); the RAF squadrons (42 aircraft and 107 airmen lost); Dover's radar-equipped army coastal batteries and the three principal Kriegsmarine warships themselves.

The main 80th Anniversary service of remembrance was held at the former RAF Manston airfield where a memorial

from the Kent Branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association records the 825 action. Attendees included a FAA Wildcat HMA.2 and crew and Commanding Officer Commander Hugh Saltonstall from 825 Squadron at Yeovilton, as well as a representative from the German Navy's *Deutsche Marine*. RAF personnel from 72 (F) Squadron at RAF Valley, also took part, as they train ab-initio FAA/RAF fast jet pilots on the Beechcraft Texan T.1. The action was also recalled at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church, St. Bartholomew's, Yeovilton.

Model maker Airfix has re-released a 1:72 Swordfish Mk.1 in the markings of Esmonde's aircraft, W5984/H for the anniversary.

***Churchstanton was renamed Culmhead and was briefly used by 24th Naval Fighter Wing Seafire IIIs on RAF detachment in April/May 44.**



'Channel Dash Heroes'. © Philip E West www.philipwest.co.uk

Around the World in 17 Days

By Ivan Childs



An early version of an Avro 696 Shackleton MR.2.

In 1968 I was the captain of a Shackleton crew on 204 Squadron. We were based at RAF Ballykelly located on the shore of Lough Foyle in Northern Ireland, some five miles from the old RNAS airfield at Eglinton.

Other units on the base included No 210 Squadron, also flying Shackleton Mk 2s, and No 819 Squadron, with their Wessex HAS.3s. Ballykelly had some unusual features including having the railway line between Coleraine and Londonderry crossing the main runway - trains had priority unless there was an emergency - and being located below the high-water mark - several large

pumps kept the airfield afloat!

At that time British forces maintained a presence in the Far East, mainly in Singapore with a Shackleton squadron based at RAF Changi. The normal and quicker route to reinforce them was to transit across the Middle East and then via Gan. However, to cover a situation where it was not possible to take that route, the alternative westabout route was exercised periodically. My crew, along with one other from the squadron, were selected for this 'arduous' task and so, supported by a Britannia aircraft carrying spares and groundcrew, we set off in Shackleton WR 961 on 7 July 1968.

With winds not too strong from the west, airborne for just under 11.5 hours, our first leg took us direct to Gander in Newfoundland. We had the one night there in a hotel and it was ironic that performing that evening was a band from south of the Irish border. Differences were ignored and we all joined in singing a variety of Irish songs. Over the next three days, to avoid flying over high mountains, we routed via Charleston in South Carolina and Dyess in Texas to reach McLellan just outside Sacramento, a total of some 22 hours airborne in the three days. The Shackleton, manufactured by Avro, was derived from the Lancaster through the Lincoln, the Mk 2 with its tailwheel looking like a slightly overgrown Lancaster. Thus, when we were taxiing out ready to take off from Charleston the following exchange took place over the radio - "Hey, is that a Shackleton out there", from Air Traffic the response "Affirmative". "That's what my engineer said, he's an old Hairy!".

At McLellan with our first day off some of us took the opportunity to visit San Francisco, a truly fascinating city the Golden Gate Bridge being but one attraction. Up early on 12 July, we were airborne heading for Honolulu some 2,200nm away which, at Shackleton speeds, took just over 11 hours. With, by modern standards, antiquated navigation equipment, the procedure was to fly for just over 10 hours relying purely on DR and sun-shots, and then lower the radar scanner to look for land. At that time Honolulu was one of the busiest airports in the world and

on that day they were using the long 08 runway for take-offs and the two shorter parallel runways, 04R and 04L, for landings. These runways crossed each other and so co-ordination by Air Traffic was crucial. It also required pilots to do as they were told without question. Approaching from the east we were told initially to "Continue down the middle to be allocated 04L or 04R in due course". We were then told to land on 04L as there was a Boeing 727 on base leg for 04R; he touched down when we were about two miles on finals and was then cleared to taxi across our runway. Between him clearing our runway a Boeing 707 crossed our path taking off on 08. We were then instructed to follow the Boeing 727, even if it meant taxiing at a far higher speed than usual. When a fully laden Boeing 707 taxiing out for take-off was instructed to taxi behind the Shackleton the response came "What, behind that lousy looking bomber?" The 707 then tucked in far too close behind us and so, when the aircraft ahead made a sharp left turn and we followed, he was too heavy and slow to make the turn. He was then taxiing against the flow - Air Traffic spoke to him for some 30 seconds, I learnt many new words and continued with a smile on my face as we taxied to the American base at Hickam alongside Pearl Harbour.

After a day off in Honolulu, we were off early to Wake Island, just over 10 hours flying time. The next day was a 7-hour transit to Guam for a night stop. Next morning, before it was light and whilst waiting for start clearance, we

witnessed a whole fleet of USAF B52s taking off to bomb North Vietnam. They used the full runway length and even then, appeared to just stagger into the air. Our take-off was far sprightlier as we continued to Labuan for a refuelling stop and then on to Changi in Singapore, a total of 12 hours airborne that day.

At Changi we had two days off! The first morning it was into town early to the tailors to be measured for some new uniforms and a lightweight suit – back early evening for first fitting and then ready for collection the following afternoon. Not everything went so smoothly, as back in the mess my brown suede shoes had been cleaned, with boot polish!

The next two days had us flying to Gan for a night stop and then on to Sharjah in the Persian Gulf, two long days with a total of some 22 hours airborne. Following a day off in Sharjah we continued to Malta with a refuelling stop at El Adem, 12.5 hours in the air plus one hour on the ground at El Adem. The next day, the 24th, had us routing up over France and then on airways heading for Ballykelly and home. With the other Shackleton 30 minutes behind us we were going to get home first. However, approaching Wallasey on airways, Air Traffic Control called us to confirm that we were a Shackleton. A USAF F100 had crashed in the sea

just off the Isle of Man, the pilot having ejected – we were cleared to “drop out of the bottom of the airway”. Getting to the scene just to the north-west of Peel, we determined that a fishing boat had picked-up the pilot and was taking him to Peel Harbour. The SAR Whirlwind helicopter from RAF Valley arrived soon after us and the winchman was lowered onto the quayside to recover the F100 pilot. Whilst this was going on, we were flying up and down just off the adjacent crowded beach before escorting the Whirlwind back to Valley. A copy-book rescue and, with an aircraft sent to collect him, the pilot was back in his Lakenheath crew room just 90 minutes after having ejected.

We then returned to Ballykelly remaining at our more traditional 1,000 feet above the sea routing around the Antrim Coast to Loch Foyle. We therefore landed just under 10 hours from leaving Malta, having had a memorable climax to what had been an extraordinary Westabout. Both Shackletons and the accompanying Britannia had stayed serviceable all the way around, an almost unique feat bearing in mind the usual serviceability of the aircraft. We had flown 14 legs accumulating some 120 hours flying time in 17 days – you may think it was 18 days, but then we had lost a day crossing the international dateline heading west.



This is the actual aircraft Ivan flew 'Around the World'. Sent to RAF Kemble in April 1972 and declared obsolete in September 1977 before being scrapped. © The Shackleton Association Archive.

Hawker Hunter GA11 - WV381

By Bob Wealthy and David Webb, abridged by Richard Macauley



Hawker Hunter WV381 at the Lee Victory Festival 2021. © Richard Macauley

While attending the Lee Victory Festival as reported in Jabberwock 105, the story of the demise and subsequent restoration of Hawker Hunter GA11 WV381 / 732 VL came to light.

The plight of this aircraft is as told by Mike Groth in Jabberwock 106, "The one that got away". We continue the story of how this cockpit section of this aircraft now sits proudly on its purpose built trailer, as a small piece of British aviation heritage which has been lovingly and painstakingly restored to its former glory.

Hawker Hunter WV381 was built at Hawker Siddeley Aircraft factory, Kingston, Surrey, as a Mark F4. It first entered service on 3 August 1955 with

222 Squadron RAF where it served until 1961. It was in 1962 that this particular airframe, along with 39 others, were chosen to be converted to GA.11 types and delivered for use by the Royal Navy, subsequently, this aircraft was allocated to 764 Naval Air Squadron.

This aircraft was at RNAS Lee-on-Solent (HMS *Daedalus*) for the fitting of a Harley light to the nose. On 1 November 1972, the aircraft was scheduled to return to Yeovilton but the pilot aborted his take-off. Lt Mike Sharp RN (764 Naval Air Squadron), noticed the Air Speed Indicator (ASI) gave an erroneous indication which appeared the aircraft had not reached sufficient speed to take-off. This resulted in Lt.

Sharp ejecting from the aircraft and leaving it to crash through the airfield fencing, travel across the coastal road and into the sea. Thankfully, no one was injured as the aircraft careered across this main road.

On recovery and assessed as beyond economical repair, WV381 was struck off charge and subsequently delivered to RAE Farnborough for weapons trials and allocated for instructional duties. On 12 April 1973 WV381 was moved by the Royal Navy to RAF Kemble. On 28 August 1973 WV381 was delivered to the UK Atomic Energy Establishment, Culham, Oxfordshire where the forward and centre sections of the fuselage were used by the Lightning Studies Unit for lightning strike trials.

In August 1973 and after many trial strikes, the consequences were that it received numerous holes in the fuselage. On 10 June 2007, WV381 was released by the UKAEA, or to give it its proper name the former HMS *Hornbill*. WV381 was loaded onto a Royal Air Force forty foot trailer to be taken to RAF Benson where it came under the care of David Webb a civilian employee with 33 Sqn Tool Stores at RAF Benson. Some days later the centre section was removed and scrapped. Dave Webb now takes up the story of this restoration project:

"In January 2009 C/T Martin Welch contacted me reference the restoration of the cockpit section. He set all the wheels in motion contacting various departments around RAF Benson for some help.

The restoration took the best part of eight months to complete, a

task that required every single item being removed, cleaned, restored and refitted, The nose section has had all the numerous holes and panels dressed or replaced where needed, a task that has been carried out by the Expedient Repair School (ERS) PASF. It has also provided the ERS students with a useful training aid, "hands on" metal working experience. The surface finish restoration has been carried out by SERCO and the RAF Painters and Finishers to the exact specifications of its former Royal Navy colours, including the multitude of stencilling that adorned it. The finished article is totally authentic in every detail including the rarer round nose configuration it wore whilst in RN service.

Martin himself removed instrument panels and all the parts that needed to be checked, cleaned and fixed. Special thanks go to the Puma helicopter servicing flight team for all their help and also the SERCO painters and finishers, not forgetting Mike Prendergast for all the graphics.

The RAF Benson restoration team were: C/T Martin Welch, C/T S Guzdek, Sgt L Bretell, SAC S Hensley, Mr. D Webb, Mr. J Todd, Mr. B Bray, Mr. G Clarks, Station workshops, Station painters and finishers, SERCO, RAF Bicester."

On the 27 August 2009 the fully restored cockpit section of WV381 was wheeled out on its purpose built trailer from Puma servicing flight, S hangar to be a proud exhibit at the RAF Benson Families' Day.

Thanks must go to Dave Webb and

those that helped him make a success of the restoration project. This small but significant piece of aviation history has had the good fortune of being saved from the scrap man and will continue to serve as a testament to those who not only flew in these aircraft but also the engineers who serviced and maintained them.

This Hunter nose section including the cockpit has gone on to be displayed at various air shows and fairs, nationwide and internationally. It is now part of the HMS *Daedalus* display area at the Hovercraft Museum, Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire. This is in a hangar originally constructed in 1917 to support seaplane training operations at RNAS Lee-on-Solent.

Compiled from information supplied by Bob Wealthy and David Webb and originally produced by Solent Aeromarine Enterprises for Gosport Aviation Society now part of the Daedalus Aviation and Heritage Group.



The very first public outing of the newly restored cockpit was to Al Ain airshow, Abu Dhabi in 2010. Dave is standing in front of the cockpit and takes up the story. "I was contacted by Neil Airey at Lakes Lightning, as Ken Ellis at Flypast magazine requested some cockpit owners to attend the airshow at Al Ain. The three cockpits involved were Neil's Lightning, a Hawker/BAe Harrier and my Hunter. The four days spent at Al Ain were an eye opener and an event not to be missed if you ever get the chance to attend. There were many different types of fixed and rotary wing aircraft on display. Other types of displays included falconry, military vehicles, racing cars, motor cycles and all manner of police cars and other transport. I must say a very special thanks to Flying Aces, the Abu Dhabi Tourist Authority and the Defence Council for all their help and backing." © Dave Webb



Cross and Cockade International are pleased to announce their latest Aircraft Monograph publication is coming soon:

The de Havilland DH2 And The Men Who Flew Them

Beginning with its development by The Aircraft Manufacturing Company, this first major narrative explores the career of this relatively unknown but pivotal pusher single-seat scout. It fought over several major battlefields, which included The Western Front, Macedonia and the Middle East.

In 260 pages, with 300 photographs, colour profiles and scale drawings, the book considers and investigates every chapter of the DH2's fighting life, along with all the key pilots who took part, including at least three who won the VC at various times. The advent of the DH2 ended the scourge of the Fokker Monoplanes and then achieved considerable success through the Somme Offensive. Although already outclassed by late 1916,

when the Red Baron in his modern twin-gun Albatros claimed Lanoe Hawker VC as his 11th victim, the DH2 squadrons showed great courage, fighting on well into 1917. The monograph includes a comprehensive Serials List, with matching INames Index, plus seven further detailed Appendices about its construction and deployment.



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SoFFAAM Christmas Lunch

By Rosanne Crowther



This was the first formal “get together” of SoFFAAM members for almost three years.

Needless to say it was quite a memorable occasion to be able to sit around a table and have a light hearted conversation with other guests. In addition to be able to consume a delicious lunch in a delightful setting.

Despite not being able to meet at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, all were suitably impressed with our “new surroundings”. The 36 members and guests bravely took part in the Quiz which took place

after lunch - was it any wonder that the winning table The Dimwits won the star prize, when the author of the Quiz paper was one of the guests on the table?

We finished with the customary grand draw. A number of the books and paintings had been bequeathed to raise money for SoFFAAM at Peter Hoskin’s bequest, via his son Russ and this was an ideal opportunity to do so.

Who knows where we shall be for our Christmas Lunch 2023, hopefully Long Sutton Golf Club, as we were made most welcome by all the staff.

'Humphrey' - Fortuna Glacier Rescue

By Dan Hedger



'Humphrey' on Fortuna Glacier rescuing a troop of SAS and crashed Wessex HU.5 crew. This has been painted by SoFFAAM Member Dan Hedger and signed prints are available - see page 29 © Dan Hedger

With the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands War upon us, I decided to paint an aviation painting that would commemorate the actions of the Fleet Air Arm in the conflict.

With so many suitable subjects to pick from, the dramatic rescue of the SAS troops from their disastrous mission to the Fortuna Glacier by Royal Navy Westland Wessex helicopters makes for a particularly emotive scene to capture on the canvas. Early on

21st April 1982 in the South Atlantic ten miles off of South Georgia, HMS *Antrim's* flight commander, Lieutenant Commander Ian Stanley, and his crew Lt Chris Parry, Sub Lt Stewart Cooper and PO ACMN David Fitzgerald lifted off in the destroyer's anti-submarine warfare Wessex HAS.3, nicknamed 'Humphrey'.

'Humphrey' was joined by two Wessex HU.5s from the tanker RFA *Tidespring*. The three helicopters were all loaded with men of 19 (Mountain)

Troop from D Squadron Special Air Service (SAS), led by Captain Gavin Hamilton. The heavily-equipped troopers, dressed in winter white nylon camouflage suits over their combat kit, were flying out to South Georgia's Fortuna Glacier on a reconnaissance mission of Argentinian positions.

The SAS chose Fortuna Glacier as a point of entry as it was sufficiently far from expected enemy positions to avoid detection and the Argentines were unlikely to expect an attack from that direction. However, this choice was opposed by officers who had knowledge of local conditions and felt that the difficulties of traversing the glacier were being underestimated. As Stanley guided the flight to drop the SAS troops on to Fortuna Glacier, the helicopters hit a snow squall near Possession Bay, forcing them to abort the mission.

Later Stanley flew 'Humphrey' on a second recon, this time in deceptively clement weather and SAS Major Cedric Delves ordered a second try. After lunch the three helicopters again lifted off but met worsening weather including freezing squalls, turbulent winds and whiteout. However, unlike the two Wessex HU.5s helicopters, 'Humphrey' was equipped for ASW and had good radar, sonar and navigational gear. It carried doppler radar that allowed the pilot to fly safely even if he lost visual contact with the ground. Stanley was able to navigate for all three helicopters in the whiteouts as they flew onward. By early afternoon the sixteen men from Mountain Troop and their three pulks (sleds) were landed on Fortuna Glacier.

'Humphrey' then led the other Wessex helicopters back to the ships.

The night of 21/22 April 1982 saw the worst of South Georgia's weather. Offshore, HMS *Antrim* faced winds of 70 knots. A Force 11 sea broke waves over the ship, the motion made it impossible to move 'Humphrey' into the hangar and it remained on the flight deck straining at the nylon lashings. On the glacier, as had been predicted, Mountain Troop found the going extremely hard and impossible to cross the icy surface. It had taken nearly five hours to cover about 800 metres. As conditions deteriorated, the SAS weapons froze. The wind-chill factor rose dramatically and with whiteouts making navigation impossible, the troops tried to shelter in their tents but the poles soon shattered in the wind, with one tent blown away entirely. Hamilton's men and their kit were eventually safe but buried in the snow. The horrendous weather continued and the men's physical condition began to deteriorate, much longer and some would be suffering from hypothermia, frostbite and other cold weather injuries. In the morning at 11:00 on the 22nd, Hamilton radioed *Antrim*: "Unable to move. Environmental casualties imminent."

Antrim's sick bay was prepared to receive casualties and flight deck crews were briefed on the rescue mission. Snow squalls delayed the rescue attempt for forty-five minutes. Because of the storms, Stanley ordered the two Wessex HU.5s to wait on Cape Constance, eight kilometres from the glacier, while he found the SAS men and a landing site

from which it was safe to rescue them. However, as 'Humphrey's' navigational gear and airframe began to take on ice, Stanley scrubbed the mission and all three helicopters returned to *Tidespring* and *Antrim*.

By about 13:30, the weather had improved and 'Humphrey' and the Wessex HU.5s returned to Fortuna Glacier. Guided by flares from the ground, the Wessex flown by Lieutenant Mike Tidd landed and loaded six soldiers, including Hamilton. However, immediately after it took-off Tidd lost all visual references when the helicopter was suddenly enveloped in a snow squall. Already susceptible to severe icing, he could not climb clear of the weather and decided to turn back to get his bearings, but he then noticed his altimeter spiralling down fast. He brought up the nose but the tail hit the ground and the helicopter skidded for about fifty yards before toppling over on its side. The crew and the remainder of the SAS on the glacier were picked up by 'Humphrey' and the remaining Wessex HU.5, which had dumped fuel to reduce weight. They both set off down the glacier but were engulfed in a whiteout

as they crossed a small ridge above a small fjord. The Wessex HU.5 pilot, Lieutenant Ian Georgeson, then also lost sight of his only point of reference as 'Humphrey' disappeared below him and returned to *Antrim*. Assuming there was a danger of high ground ahead, he landed the Wessex safely, but it was pushed sideways by the wind and toppled over.

Back aboard *Antrim*, Stanley loaded 'Humphrey' with extra blankets and rations for the stranded men. Stanley took off for Fortuna Glacier for a third time, but was twice defeated by the weather and waited for a calmer window in the weather. Meanwhile those on the glacier had rigged a survival shelter from the crashed Wessex helicopters and two life rafts. The weather improved slightly and, although anxious about their luck holding out, 'Humphrey's' crew set out across the sea on their sixth sortie in twenty-four hours. In the fading light and treacherous weather conditions, Stanley landed near the two rafts. Although 'Humphrey' was filled with anti-submarine warfare equipment, its crew managed to cram all the men on board and the helicopter staggered



SAS troops with a crew member of Humphrey (in dark clothing) on Fortuna Glacier. © IWM.



A crashed Wessex on Fortuna Glacier taken from onboard Humphrey. © IWM.

into the sky fifteen hundred pounds above the helicopter's maximum design weight.

"Just as we were lifting, a ton overweight, we jolted down again. As Ian pulled power and we careered upwards, the snow fell away beneath to reveal we had originally landed on another ice-bridge across a crevasse which had now given way to reveal a bottomless chasm" recalled Lt Chris Parry in his diary. They reached *Antrim* shortly before night fell, finding the ship pitching wildly in a stormy sea. Unable to carry out a conventional hovering landing as he was too overweight, Stanley opted to pancake 'Humphrey' on

to the ship in a controlled crash landing.

'Humphrey' went on to see more action in the Falklands conflict, on 23 April locating and retrieving more Special Boat Service troops from their disabled boat.

On 25 April 'Humphrey's' crew attacked and damaged the Argentinian submarine *Santa Fe* with depth charges. By May *Antrim* had joined other ships to assist with the landings on the main Falkland Islands, where she was strafed by Argentinian Delta Dagger jets. 'Humphrey' took damage from the shells, making many holes that are still visible on the airframe that is preserved today at The Fleet Air Arm Museum.

Buy a print of 'Humphrey'

All proceeds will go to SoFFAAM and help the Society to support the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

Working with Dan Hedger, SoFFAAM are making prints available of this painting as a fund raiser, to commemorate the actions of 'Humphrey'. The painting is as used at the start of this article. The print is complete with the title and description of this action.

An A3+ (485mm x 330mm) limited edition print of 25 only, complete with caption and signed by Rear Admiral Chris Parry CBE and Dan Hedger, is available for £25.00. An A3 print of

just the painting is only £5. Postage and Packing is just £3.50.

You can order these from Richard Macauley by emailing him at soffaam@btinternet.com or **07768 562976**.

Dan is always looking for new military aviation subjects to paint, if you would like a particular aircraft rendered please get in touch with him on **07540 723854** or email him at danhedger@hotmail.com You can view his work on his website: www.aviatorartstudio.com

A monumental donation to FAAM

By Graham Mottram



SoFFAAM Treasurer Martin Turner presents a cheque for £20,000 to the Fleet Air Arm Museum General Manager Marc Farrance while SoFFAAM Chairman Graham Mottram looks on.

During the December Council Meeting, Marc Farrance asked if Barbara Gilbert could submit a bid for a very substantial sum of money.

Barbara reported that FAAM was in negotiations with the families of two FAA veterans who had important items that they wished to sell to FAAM, or they would go to auction. The major collection comprised the medals and logbooks of Cdr Stanley Orr RNVR. The name did not convey much to most of the council, but the Chairman recognised the name of the FAA's highest scoring fighter pilot of WW2, and later the commanding officer of the RN's first Hovercraft Unit. Stanley Gordon Orr was born in London in 1916 and joined the FAA in 1939. After completing his flying training on fighters, he was appointed in May 1940 to 806 Squadron at RNAS Hatston in Orkney, flying the Blackburn Skua

and Roc. He took part in raids against German-occupied Norway, before a rapid move to RAF Detling to cover the Dunkirk evacuation.

Having converted on to the Fairey Fulmar, 806 embarked in HMS *Illustrious* and headed to the Mediterranean. Stan Orr began his scoring in September 1940 and was awarded his first DSC. He was airborne on the day when *Illustrious* was bombed and severely damaged and landed at RAF Hal Far. Flying in defence of Malta in general and *Illustrious* in particular, Stan scored five more victories and was awarded a bar to his DSC. 806 then embarked in HMS *Formidable*, but she was damaged quite soon after that and 806 disembarked again to Alexandria, re-equipping with Hurricanes to fight against the Vichy French in Palestine. Orr was given a non-operational appointment for the first

time in his career with an instructor's job at Yeovilton, before helping to form 896 Squadron, equipped with Grumman Wildcat fighters, in Norfolk, Virginia. An attack of polio slowed him down for a while but on his recovery he was given command of 804 Squadron, equipped with Grumman Hellcats. He flew in the raids against *Tirpitz*, winning a second Bar to his DSC, and later a Mention in Dispatches. In September 1944 he went to RNAS Henstridge as Chief Flying Instructor (CFI) and then to Empire Test Pilots School (ETPS) at Boscombe Down. For his work on early jets he was awarded the Air Force Cross before serving operationally again in HMS *Ocean* in Korea. Back at Boscombe Down he commanded the Naval Test Squadron, which was awarded the Boyd Trophy, given annually for the best feat in naval aviation. His final job in the navy was to command the Inter Service Hovercraft Trials Unit at Lee-on-Solent. In his generation, Stan Orr was a major figure in the FAA, but he was a modest man whose achievements are mainly known in limited circles. His medals reflect his exceptional abilities as both an operational pilot and a test pilot.

Barbara's second request was for something a little more unusual, but interesting nevertheless. It was once widely known that the watch company of Rolex embarked on an unusual promotional scheme during World War 2. Rolex had lost many of its customers with the outbreak of war and so decided to provide watches to Allied Prisoners of War. These only had to be paid for on the conclusion of the war. It appears

that many officers availed themselves of this remarkable bargain offer. So many of them were airmen in Stalag Luft III, site of the Great Escape, that one Rolex model is known as "The Escaper".

Derek Martin was a Midshipman pilot in the FAA at the same time as Stan Orr, also on Blackburn Skuas and flew as a member of 801. Arriving off Northern Norway in *Ark Royal*, he was one of four Skua crews who were in combat with German Heinkel 111s on 7 May 1940, claiming a share in one Heinkel shot down. Five weeks later he was the pilot of one of five 801 aircraft with nine Skuas of 803 who set out from *Ark Royal* to attack the damaged German battlecruiser *Scharnhorst* in Trondheim harbour. Eight of the Skuas were shot down, including that of Midshipman D T R Martin and Ldg Airman W J Tremler. Whilst in captivity, Derek obtained one of these Rolex watches and it was this one, along with other papers, that Barbara sought to secure for FAAM.

More by practice than written policy, SoFFAAM has donated funds to the museum to enhance its collection and operations. The Council refused a request for operating subsidies at the start of lockdown on the basis that, if a national museum could not be supported by Government, then it was not a going concern. Since then we have donated £10,000 towards major electrical installation works, and now £20,000 to assist in the purchase of two significant additions to an already world class collection. The museum will have to wait a while now until we rebuild our funds.

A significant contribution to SoFFAAM

By Simon Websper, Membership Secretary.



It's not exaggerating to say that Sea Cadets transforms people. © SCC

One of our lifetime members, who wishes to remain anonymous, called me to explain that, having been a member of SoFFAAM since paying his join fee back in 1998, he now feels like he has been getting a “free ride” from the society for some time.

He has very kindly given a donation of £500 to SoFFAAM, wishing it to be used in a way that would attract younger joiners. This is something we are very keen to do, as they are the future of our society.

After some thought, our Chairman, Graham Mottram, contacted the Dorset and Somerset Sea Cadets, who have aviation as a part of their training structure. It was decided that a free

12-month SoFFAAM family membership would be granted to the top aviation cadet in each unit. This is to be called “The SoFFAAM Award”. In addition to this, a £25 prize will be awarded to the cadet who writes the best essay on the Fleet Air Arm contribution to the Battle of Britain. This will run for three years and is to be called the “ Tillard/ Cockburn Prize”, in recognition of some of those very FAA personnel.

Our sincere thanks go out to our anonymous donor and we hope that his generosity results in some interest from the younger generation! We will publish the outcome of this initiative in future publications of Jabberwock and on the SoFFAAM website.

Taming Eagles - Disarming the Luftwaffe, 1945-1948

By Chris Rogers. January 2022 Talk summarised by Robert Heath



In early 1945, the RAF set up ten Disarmament Wings to locate and dispose of the aircraft, ordnance and equipment of the Luftwaffe.

One of these was No.8401 Air Disarmament Wing to which the father of our speaker, was attached. On 7 May 1945, the Wing travelled to the Baltic coast of Germany where No 2 Squadron was allocated to the military proving ground, Erprobungsstelle (E-stelle) of Travemünde, northeast of Hamburg.

Travemünde is located at the mouth of the River Trave, opposite the airfield at Priwall, where Anthony Fokker and Ernst Heinkel covertly developed radical aircraft projects, including the giant, twelve-engined Dornier Do X seaplane. In 1938 the E-stelle specified the air wing for the German aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin*, including modified

versions of the Bf109 fighter and the Junkers 87 Stuka dive-bomber. The coastal location enabled the E-stelle to evaluate every amphibious aircraft type. Projects included navigation and communications; air sea rescue and life saving techniques and equipment. A huge hangar was built at Priwall to house aircraft such as the enormous six-engined Blohm & Voss BV 222 Viking, which was 150ft long with a wingspan of 120ft. The team discovered unknown types, including the FGP 227, a faithful fifth-scale model, to provide data for the development of the BV238 - which was even larger than the BV 222 Viking.

Another rare type discovered was the BV155 experimental high-altitude interceptor, capable of reaching 50,000ft. One of these is now in the Smithsonian collection in Washington. 8401 Wing tracked down industrial science and technology targets and at the Hamburg Shipbuilding Research Institute, the Wing encountered a two-storey vertical water tunnel, built to test propellers for air bubble cavitation.

Today, Travemünde is a beach resort. Thank you Chris Rogers for such an engrossing talk on a different, but critical slant of WW2.

307 Squadron Project

By Michael Parrott.

February 2022 Talk summarised by Malcolm Smith



Our speaker was Michael Parrott, who lives in Exeter. He discovered a plaque in the cathedral chapel naming a Polish airman named Jaworski.

In researching the story of the plaque, Michael discovered that the Polish-manned 307 Squadron had a close connection with Exeter. When Poland was invaded by Germany in 1940, Polish airmen left and subsequently made their way to Britain. Eventually, there were 16 Polish-manned squadrons, of which 307 was the only night fighter unit.

The squadron was transferred to Exeter in 1941, billeted in local accommodation. They developed close relationships with the citizens of Exeter, so close that several marriages ensued. The squadron was initially equipped with

the Boulton-Paul Defiant, which was soon replaced by the radar-equipped Beaufighter. The Beaufighter suffered from frequent engine failures and in the bombing attack on Exeter on 4 May 1942, only four aircraft were available, but these engaged the bombers and shot down four. In November 1942, the squadron presented a Polish flag to the City of Exeter. The squadron was re-equipped with the Mosquito and moved to Predannack in the air defence role but was not forgotten in Exeter. As the war ended, some of the airmen returned home, to be treated as traitors and executed by the Russian government. 21 aircrew from 307 died during the war and are buried at Exeter, only two of whom were killed by enemy action.

Our speaker later visited the cathedral to discover that the Polish flag had been removed. He encouraged the City to celebrate by raising the flag every year and he produced a small exhibition. By November 2013, this had grown to a five-day event. On the 75th anniversary a plaque was placed in the chapel to commemorate the Polish contribution to protecting the city. The role of the squadron, known as the "Lwow Eagle Owls" is now promoted by a British-Polish charitable organisation, the 307 Squadron Project.

TSR-2 Grandfather of Tornado

By Group Captain 'Jock' Heron, OBE.

March 2022 Talk summarised by Robert Heath



It was a delight to welcome back Group Captain (Rtd) Jock Heron, who described the introduction to service of the Tornado Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA).

Both TSR2 and Tornado were affected by politics, said Jock. After WW2, the RAF was lavishly equipped with V-bombers and fighters, but the 1957 Defence Review cancelled all manned aircraft replacements except the English Electric P1 Lightning, the TSR-2 and the Buccaneer for the RN.

The Operational Requirement (OR) 339 for TSR-2 was issued in 1957, specifying Short Take-Off and Landing (STOL) capability, Mach 2 speed at high altitude and Mach 1.2 at sea level. Vickers Supermarine and English Electric were contracted to produce the airframe and the engines were to be two Rolls Royce Olympus. Development was

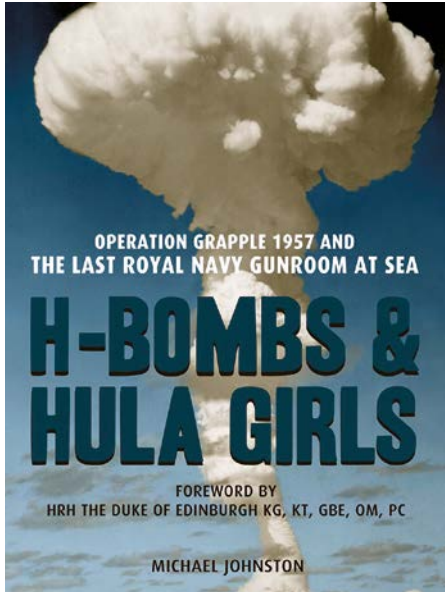
prolonged, but the first flight took place in September 1964. The project was late, poorly managed and hugely over budget, leading to its cancellation by Labour in 1965.

The Government placed orders for US and French manufactured aircraft, only to cancel them in 1967. Meanwhile, English Electric had developed its own project, the UKVG, which was designed to meet the requirement for STOL, high speed and low-level operations. The Government decided to develop a similar aircraft, the Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MRCA) known as the Tornado. This would be built by Panavia, a German company with three partners from UK, Germany and Italy. The two engines were to be the Turbo-Union RB199. The project was based in Manching, Germany, where the first flight took place in 1974. Germany bought 324, the UK 384 and Italy 100.

Performance details included STOL take-off run of 2,500ft to clear a 50ft obstacle; payload 4 x 1,000lb bombs; landing roll 1,500ft; range of action 250 nautical miles; speed Mach 1 at sea level. The Tornado GR1/4 was an outstandingly good aircraft, said Jock, adding that it finally left RAF service in 2019, but still serves in the air forces of Germany, Italy and Saudi Arabia.

H-Bombs and Hula Girls

By Michael Johnston. A book review by Richard Hufton



Sub-titled 'Operation Grapple 1957 and The Last Royal Navy Gunroom At Sea'.

This is a fascinating record of life in the Colossus-Class aircraft carrier HMS *Warrior*, seen through the eyes of ten National Service RNVR Midshipmen during the post-Suez era. The author Michael Johnston was one of the ten and 60 years later he has skilfully collated an amusing and honest recollection of *Warrior's* involvement in Britain's hydrogen bomb test programme. Using notes and sketches from personal diaries, supported by contemporary

accounts and photographs, there is much in this volume to hold the interest of laymen and ex-service readers alike. The memoirs reflect experiences of watch keeping, seamanship and often disastrous small boat handling abilities, monitored by Cdr R A Begg, a towering genial father figure who did not suffer fools gladly.

Britain had committed to hold thermonuclear weapons trials, collectively known as Operation Grapple, before an international moratorium halted atmospheric tests. Work started during 1956, with the construction of an airfield and support base on Christmas Island, a mid-Pacific coral atoll 144 miles north of the equator, named by James Cook in 1777. Malden Island 430 miles to the southeast was designated as 'ground zero'. During preparations for the trials, the Task Force Commander AVM W E Oulton mobilised thousands of servicemen, Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) scientists and a naval support flotilla led by *Warrior* commanded by Cdre Roger Hicks. Air operations would be delivered from RAF aircraft assisted by Avengers and Whirlwinds from *Warrior*.

In February 1957 *Warrior* left Portsmouth for Christmas Island via the

Panama Canal. Offshore moorings laid at the Island by RFA *Salvictor* provided the Midshipmen with opportunities to demonstrate their skill in navigating motor launches between the carrier and the lagoon, entering through a narrow gap in the coral. Following weeks of rehearsals, the first megaton weapon, code named 'Short Granite' was released on May 15 at 10.38 from Valiant XD818 at 45,000 ft above 'Ground Zero'. Wearing protective flash hoods, gloves and dark goggles, *Warrior's* crew faced away from the explosion, which detonated at 8,000 ft. The initial flash was followed by intense heat. After 10 seconds it was deemed safe for them to turn round as a shockwave preceded the astonishing sight of a rapidly ascending column of fire and vapour topped by an expanding mushroom cloud 10 miles high. Two further test drops were made over Malden with the remainder continuing off Christmas Island.

During the voyage south to the Cook Islands, 751 Squadron's three elderly lend-lease TBM Avengers were classed obsolete and catapulted off the flight deck. Berthing in Callao (Peru) on August 9, *Warrior* welcomed aboard Vice-Admiral Sir W A Robson RN, Flag Officer for the South American tour. Official dinners, dances and cocktail parties proved popular with the Midshipmen who were able to socialise with diplomats' daughters. Four days later *Warrior* moved to Valparaiso harbour. Ferrying the Admiral ashore became a test of nerves for the Midshipmen who disliked his frequent use of the 'Snotty' appellation.

Invitations to various entertainments rolled in and *Warrior* returned the hospitality with a formal dinner attended by Chile's Vice President. After a brief very cold Falkland Islands stop, it was on to Puerto Belgrano, home port of the Argentine Navy (ARA). On September 2 *Warrior* secured alongside the Cruiser *General Belgrano* (formerly USS *Phoenix*) to begin a two-day visit. The interest shown by Senior ARA Officers during tours round the ship confirmed earlier rumours that *Warrior* might be sold to Argentina who believed Brazil, having purchased HMS *Vengeance*, had altered the regional balance of power.

Buenos Aires provided a round of diplomatic activity, military parades and chaotic scenes on public 'open days.' On September 9 *Warrior* welcomed on board ARA Vice-Admiral Isaac Rojas who inspected the Guard of Honour. The squadron made a brief diplomatic visit to Uruguay before leaving for Rio de Janeiro, the last port of call in South America, where *Warrior* hosted a state visit from Brazil's President J K de Oliveira. Most found time to experience the tourist hot spots before *Warrior* departed for Gibraltar and home. *Warrior* arrived in Portsmouth on October 11, having completed a 39,985 nm voyage of discovery for the ten Midshipmen. After months of haggling *Warrior*, renamed ARA *Independencia*, was sold to Argentina in July 1958 concluding a little known but significant chapter in RN history.

This A4-sized softback is now widely available from internet booksellers for as little as £4.99 + postage.

SoFFAAM Website - new features

By Richard Macauley

We now have a 'News' tab in the main menu and a 'Members Only' area which is under the Membership tab.

The 'News' tab gives us an opportunity to post news worthy items about the Society without cluttering the home page.

To access the 'Members Only' area you need to use the following details.

NEWS: <https://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/news/>

MEMBERS AREA: <https://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/member-login/>

Username: **soffaam**

Password: **JabberwOck**

The words are case specific and the 'o' of Jabberwock is a zero. You must not share these with anyone else. We wish to keep this area as a benefit to members only. Please contact **soffaam@btinternet.com** if you encounter any issues or problems.

SoFFAAM visit to Historic Helicopters near Chard, then the Chard Museum for lunch and a conducted tour.

Saturday 9th July 2022

Our first external visit for several years and as the venues are "close to home" there is no coach travel involved as members are encouraged to car share to the respective venues.

09:30: Historic Helicopters Chard.

A coffee and introduction to this company who maintain and fly a number of historic helicopters, from a

Whirlwind, Wessex and Sea Kings.

Depart HHC no later than 12:45 for the Chard Town Museum.

A Ploughman's lunch awaits which will be based on ham, green salad and an apple. Plus a variety of fruit and selection of hot and cold drinks. An introduction to Chard Museum follows lunch and a conducted tour of the Museum.

VISITS FORM

Please complete this form and return it to **Rosanne Crowther, SoFFAAM Visits Co-Ordinator, St David's, 5 Church Close, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6DS** no later than **Saturday 11th June 2022** and include your cheque for £35.00 per person payable to SoFFAAM with a SAE for further joining instructions and programme to be forwarded nearer the time.

Photocopies of this form are acceptable if you do not wish to tear out this form from your copy of Jabberwock. **Please note the address details above.**

HISTORIC HELICOPTERS CHARD

Their location is between Chard and Crewkerne, just off the A30 (**Follow the signs for Chard Equestrian Centre because that is where they are based**). Please note that using Post Code TA20 4BP will get you to the general area, but different mapping/SatNav apps might give a different location. You must be at the site for 09:30 to allow for coffee prior to the introduction to Historic Helicopters.

www.historichelicopters.com

CHARD MUSEUM

High St, Chard, Somerset TA20 1QT

There is very limited parking for vehicles on the High Street outside the Museum. The nearest Car Park is the Minnows Public Parking, 8-9 Bath St, Chard TA20 2ET (next to Sainsbury's)

www.chardmuseum.co.uk

Due to the limited number of guests allowed at both sites, this visit is initially restricted to Members only. However, nearer the closing date, I may be able to offer places to non members if all 30 have not been booked.

| Name | Address | Tel No. | Membership No. | Paid |
|------|---------|---------|----------------|------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

If you have any questions, please contact Rosanne Crowther
Tel: 01935 822143 Mobile: 07599944448
Email: rosannecrowther678@btinternet.com

Please consider the Membership points below

By Simon Websper

Standing Order payment membership cards for May, June and July will be sent separately, within the relevant month of expiry.

Receipt of a membership card does not confirm receipt of payment. Other cards are sent on receipt of payment only.

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

| | | |
|------|------------------------|-----------|
| 3756 | Mr T Healey | Dorset |
| 3757 | Mrs J Healey | Dorset |
| 3758 | Mr D Glover | Berkshire |
| 3759 | Mr B de Broglio | Australia |

Total members as of 12 April 2022: 943 Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: 699. Opting to Gift Aid allows us to claim an extra 25% of your subscription from HMRC

To ensure continued provision of Jabberwock magazine, please update your standing order to reflect the current membership fees shown on the form on the opposite page and let us have any shortfall from 2021. There are currently some 60 members who remain underpaid over the past sixteen months,

despite reminders being sent. Please check your standing order now. The August issue of Jabberwock magazine will be withheld if not corrected.

Please let us have your email address to save us postage charges on other communications. It now costs us 68 pence per letter sent.

“Going green” and receiving Jabberwock via your e-mail saves the Society money. Thank you to those who have switched recently! This is very much appreciated.

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

Don't forget to check our latest tab on the SoFFAAM website, '**NEWS**'. Visit us at:

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

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

Tel: 07527 707204 / 01823 43344

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

Membership Application

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

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

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

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

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

Family Membership at £37.00

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

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

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP (Please also complete Address below)

Name

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP (Two adults and up to 3 children)

Adult 1

Adult 2

Child 1 Age

Child 2 Age

Child 3 Age

Address

.....

..... Post Code

Telephone No

Email address

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Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations in your self-assessment tax return or ask HMRC to adjust your tax code.

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

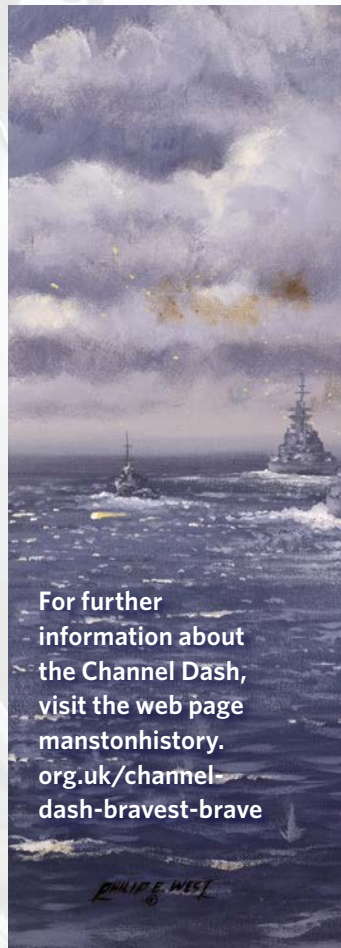
Please complete and return this form to the Membership Secretary:

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

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

Channel Dash Memorial

Unveiled in Ramsgate on 12 February 2010.



For further information about the Channel Dash, visit the web page manstonhistory.org.uk/channel-dash-bravest-brave

A granite stone of remembrance was erected by the Channel Dash Memorial Trust and unveiled by Admiral Lord Boyce. Consisting of black marble tablet insets, plinth and square base. One tablet depicts the operation and the badge of the Channel Dash Association. The second tablet (shown here) has the badge of 825 NAS, a depiction of a Fairey Swordfish and a Victoria Cross representation. Inscribed below these pictorial elements are the names of the brave air crew who lost their lives.