

JABBERWOCK 116



SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

FLEET AIR ARM
MUSEUM

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

**August
2024**



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• The Fairey Albacore • Operation Swiftmove 1973 • SS Oriana Story
Cold War Warriors • Bovington Tank Museum visit form • Operation
Neptune Service of Commemoration • *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, just advise you are a SoFFAAM member to the reception staff. Members can bring up to four guests (one guest only for junior members) on any one

visit, each at a reduced entrance fee, currently 30% off the standard price. Members are also allowed a 20% discount on goods purchased from the shop and cafe.

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

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

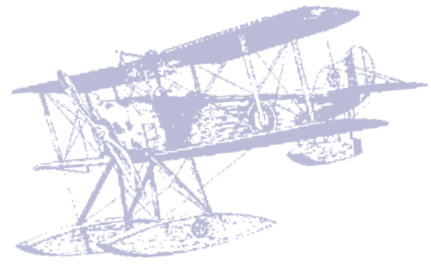
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COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Merlin ZH846 of 820 Naval Air Squadron hovers above the French *Rubis* Class nuclear attack submarine, *Améthyste* (S605) on the 8th March 2024.

Operating from HMS *Portland*, they formed part of a screen along with other NATO ships who are participating together in Exercise Steadfast Defender 2024 task group off the coast of Norway. HMS *Portland* is part of the task group along with HMS *Prince of Wales* and other supporting vessels that formed the UK’s carrier strike group (UKCS).

Steadfast Defender 2024 (STDE 24), is the principal NATO, multi-domain flagship exercise for 2024 and is a large-scale multinational live exercise (LIVEX) conducted across various geographical locations within Saceur’s (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) area of responsibility. Steadfast Defender 2024 took place through the months of February to May demonstrating NATO’s unity and strength, as Allies from all the European, Canadian and North America nations were involved at sea, on land and in the air.

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Photographer: LPhot Edward Jones

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Editorial

We are sad to note the death of naval fighter pilot Commander Nigel Ward DSC, universally known as “Sharkey”. Your Editor served with him in HMS *Ark Royal* in the 70s, when he was the Senior Pilot of 892 Squadron, flying the formidable F4K Phantom. He later commanded the Sea Harriers of 801 Squadron in HMS *Invincible* during the Falklands conflict. He was an ebullient, aggressive and outspoken man and we are sorry to lose him at the age of 80.

In this issue, we re-print an article about the qualities of FAA aircraft at the outbreak of the Second World War, which have been widely criticised by post-war historians. The article concludes that, even if the capability of equipment was not very high, operational aircraft met the Admiralty’s specifications (founded on the type of warfare predicted) and in many cases, such as the capability of the Fairey Swordfish, exceeded expectations. Unfortunately, the successor to the Swordfish, the Albacore, proved to be of limited capability, although even this unloved aircraft had its moment in the Western Desert in 1942. It is illustrated by another of Jim Humberstone’s superb drawings.

We carry details of a Saturday

morning talk in September, one of the events occasionally organised by the Society, which we hope will secure popular support. We also carry an entertaining description from a SoFFAAM member of the embarkation of 819 (normally shore-based) Squadron in HMS *Hermes* in 1973. The author includes a (perhaps rather tall) story concerning an Admiral and the unguarded lift shaft.

In “Snippets from Council Meetings” we learn that it may soon be possible for the public (and SoFFAAM members) to visit Cobham Hall again. We are also reminded that this year sees the Society’s 45th birthday.

Finally, we are pleased to report that the General Manager of the FAAM and his associate, the Museum’s Public Programming Manager, are continuing to identify activities in the museum that could benefit from funding from the Society. The first of these is the travel bursary, previously mentioned, and there are several other interesting ideas under consideration.



Malcolm

Council snippets

From the June Council Meeting

The General Manager reported that FAAM has enjoyed a busy May half term, which coincided with the Museum commemorating its 60th birthday.

Their improvements to Cobham Hall are progressing well and planning approvals for the installation of solar panels to the roof are imminent. From June, visitors will be able to book a place on a Behind the Scenes Tour for a chance to see what we keep in our stores in Cobham Hall. Catherine Cooper, Lead Curator, Archives, detailed recent acquisitions to the archives, including anecdotes from the First World War and a Squadron Diary from the Second. FAAM management expect a good take-up of the Travel Bursary, funded by SOFFAAM, which aims to supplement travel costs for trips by schoolchildren to the Museum.

Chris Penney remarked that the society first formed in 1979 so happy 45th birthday to us! Regarding Society talks, Richard Macauley said that the Zoom broadcasts do have some stability but still need more practice to help us better understand the auditorium AV system. Rosanne

reported that the recent visit to Heli Ops had been successful. The next visit will be to the Tank Museum at Bovington in September.

The Society's Treasurer, Laurence Whitlock, reported that Society finances are running smoothly, invoices and expenses are paid in a timely manner, income managed via online banking and recorded in our Excel based accounting workbook. The data we are gathering is now providing a far higher level of transparency and financial accountability and will also help to inform the SoFFAAM strategy in future. Online payments, invoices and expenses are now paid by BACs, which has significantly reduced the overhead of having to get cheques signed.

The Chairman agreed to confirm with Admiral Tom Cunningham that he wished to continue in the role of President of the Society and would discuss with him the clarification of the roles and responsibilities of this position. In Any Other Business, the date of the AGM was discussed. It was agreed that in future it will be held in October and will be a Zoom-only event.

Have you viewed the SoFFAAM website lately www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor

The SoFFAAM website says we were formed in 1979, so we're 45 this year!

This Saturday marks the 75th anniversary of the start of the Yangtze Incident, which lasted until July 49 and resulted in the famous "splice the mainbrace" fleet order issued by KGV1.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the 'Great Escape' from SL3. Searching the internet a FAA connection between the two anniversaries stumbled across on the excellent Facebook Page My Unofficial FAA History records... Captain Peter 'Hornblower' Fanshawe RN - one of the main organisers of the "Great Escape" from Stalag Luft III in March 1944. He'd been a PoW since the Norwegian campaign of 1940, in which he was senior observer of 803 Naval Air Squadron in the aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal* and was flying with pilot John Casson (son of actress Dame Sybil Thorndike) when their Skua was shot down.

Casson and Fanshawe were among fifteen Skuas launched from HMS *Ark Royal* around 00.05 on the morning of 13 June 1940. Six were from 800NAS, nine from 803NAS. Eight of the raid were shot down by Messerschmitt Bf109s and Bf110s, Fanshawe in L2896



This Skua photo is a mystery. Does our membership know the circumstances involved?

A7-A was shot down into the sea at Orkdalsfjord Sør-Trøndelag 17 miles west of Trondheim by OFw Erwin Sawellisch of 4/JG-77.

Only seven of the aircraft launched recovered onboard the carrier, and the raid inflicted minimal damage on the German battleship. Fanshawe and Casson were both captured and taken as PoWs (along with four others on the raid). They were taken to Stalag Luft III, where both became members of the Camp's escape committee.

Post-WWII he served at RNAS Yeovilton before taking command of the sloop frigate HMS *Amethyst* (F116) when he saw action in Korea, and was awarded the DSC. He was the Commander RNAS Lee-on-Solent

when he was promoted to Captain in December 1953 and appointed as Commanding Officer Royal Australian Naval Air Station Nowra in Australia.

Peter retired in 1966 and died in 1994.

**Regards,
Chris Penney**

Dear Editor

I can add a little to the story of Firefly WB271 (Letters - Jabberwock 115).

I was AEO Heron Flight in 1971/72 and responsible for restoring Sea Fury TF956, which we collected disassembled from BAe Dunsfold and completed it for its first flight in January 1972. We were then asked to look to see whether it was practical to restore Firefly WB271, which was then in the Museum. My understanding was that the aircraft had been purchased from the RAN by a group of aircrew when HMS *Victorious* had visited Australia some 6 years previously. The aircraft was in good condition but unlike the Sea Fury, which had been delivered with a significant spares back up, there was little in terms of ground equipment or spares. To try and improve that situation I, with CPO Gourlay who had led the work on the Sea Fury, embarked on a road trip round the UK to places that we knew had had Fireflies. We were unsuccessful at Fairey's factory at Heston, which was in the process of closing but did manage to retrieve all the Firefly design and manufacturing drawings that were about to go into the rubbish skip. Transporting them back to Yeovilton did nothing for the springs on my Austin Maxi. We did manage to find some items of ground equipment



The photo as in Jabberwock 115

at Fairey's factory at Stockport, which at the time, was building Jindivik target drones. But we did find, behind their factory, two boxes that contained brand new propellers for the Swordfish, which was a godsend as the propeller on our Swordfish was about the be life expired. They had been there since 1946 and were still well greased and in their transport boxes. Other useful items were found at various locations where Fireflies had been operated including at RAE Llanbedr where they had been flown as radio controlled targets. Landing had obviously been a problem as the film they showed us of their operations contained many instances of crashes, take offs were also interesting. The sea off the end of the runway had many Firefly wrecks. I left Yeovilton before much work was

completed as one of the major problems was finding a serviceable Griffon engine. I know that one option was to use a Shackleton engine modified back to a single propeller. I am not aware that BAe Dunsfold was involved in the restoration. I would be surprised if they were as at that time the Harrier programme was in full swing and one of the reasons that TF956 was given to

the RN was that they did not have the labour available to work on it. (I am an ex Hawker apprentice and had worked at Kingston/Dunsfold before I joined the RN, which I understand was why I got the job of looking after TF956)

**Yours,
Roger Caesley**

Malcolm

Regarding Firefly WB271, Air-Britain's FAA Fixed Wing Aircraft book states that it was purchased by Lt Cdr M Apps RN and loaded aboard HMS *Victorious* in Sydney Harbour.

The photo showing *Victorious* leaving Sydney Harbour was taken on Thursday 10 November 1966. WB271 was put ashore at Singapore Naval Base on 9 December 1966 whilst *Victorious*

carried out exercises then loaded onboard again before *Victorious* sailed for the UK on 4 May 1967.

Note the caption states 'Sidney' rather than 'Sydney'.

Tony Jupp

Designers note: This is embarrassing, such a schoolboy error in the misspelling of 'Sydney' when I typed the caption, I must try harder.

Dear Malcolm

I read with interest your article on HMS *Victorious* leaving Sydney Harbour in November 1966 in Jabberwock no. 115, complete with Fairey Firefly on deck.

I can confirm it to be true. The aircraft was purchased by Officers of 814 Naval Air Squadron with the intention of presenting it to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton.

Being "Procedure Alpha" for leaving port, and being one of the tallest on the deck lining party, I was usually first in line on the port side.

We were on passage to Freemantle, Perth via the Southern Ocean where we passed round-the-world yachtsman Sir Frances Chichester in his yacht, *Gypsy Moth*, going in the opposite direction.

After a 2-week stay in Freemantle we headed back to Singapore for Christmas. 814 Naval Air Squadron in time honoured fashion, headed ashore to RNAS Sembawang.

**Regards,
Bob Windsor**

Dear Editor

I served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1956 - 1982. In 1966 I was on HMS *Victorious* with 893 Squadron Sea Vixens.

The Firefly was saved from the scrap yard by the ships Officers, LT Cmdr. Apps was instrumental in saving the A/C, and getting it on board in Sydney, where it stood in 893 hanger. Having carried out my basic training on Fireflies at HMS *Gamecock* in 1957, I was given the job of looking after her to some extent. When we arrived back in Singapore Dec 1966, it was transferred to HMS *Eagle* I believe, back to the UK and in to the Museum.

I next came across her when I left 892 Squadron on HMS *Ark Royal* drafted to Yeovilton and on to Heron Flight in 1971 and in 1972 was part of the team that restored her to flying condition. Capt. Lepard did the test flight with Lt Cmdr Apps as observer.

I knew the aircraft very well and did many Air shows flying in the observers seat with tool box in case we went U/S. when not in the Firefly I flew in the Swordfish as we did a three ship display, along with the Sea Fury.

In 1974 on dropping the engine oil filter water came out, this resulted in removing the cylinder heads and both cylinder blocks, where we found that the cylinder liners had become porous, which resulted that BAC kindly rebuilt the engine using a Griffon 57 as spares. The tools to lift the engine blocks were purloined from the RAF at St Athan and should be with Navy Wings now.

The picture of the *Victorious* leaving Sydney which shows the Firefly on the Bows taken by the Ships Photographer.

Cheers
Dave Waller

Dear Editor

The Fairey Swordfish pictured here is from the aircraft that is now in the Shearwater Aviation Museum.

It was recovered from a farm in Tillsonburg, Ontario and restored over 25 years by a dedicated group of former members of the Royal Canadian Navy Naval Air Branch who were members of the Canadian Navy Air Group founded in 1970 by a group in Edmonton, Alberta and spread in Chapters across Canada. Members of the Tracker Chapter (Toronto, Ontario)



Fairey Swordfish HS469 © Stephen Porrior

restored this particular Swordfish to airworthy condition before it was

delivered in a Hercules aircraft to Canadian Forces Base Shearwater and assembled by technicians from the base. L/CDR Beattie from Navy Wings in the UK performed the first flight and the Shearwater Aviation Museum determined it was such an historic

aircraft to Canada's Naval Aviation Heritage, they decided not to engage it for permanent airworthy operation as it might get damaged.

Regards,
Stephen Porrior



Stephen also sent us this pin badge dedicated to Robert Hampton Gray whose story we told in Jabberwock 105

Dear Editor

I was intrigued by a description by the renowned petrolhead and farmer, Jeremy Clarkson, in the Sunday Times of a few weeks ago of a hitherto unknown military engagement. This was the attack on the German battleship *Bismarck* by "RAF Swordfish".

I wrote to the newspaper to ask if Mr Clarkson could provide more details of this (presumably ineffectual) attack, but they ignored my letter. That was a

pity, as I would have liked to know where these aircraft had been based.

Sincerely,
Trevor Robert Harris

Editors note: Another case of 'if it flies, it must be the Royal Air Force?'. Shame on both Jeremy Clarkson and the Sunday Times who you would expect both to know about the finer details given their interests and reputations. Poor fact finding by journalists is an unwelcome but sadly everyday occurrence these days.

Dear Editor

At last I've got round to do something I meant to do for ages after reading your Membership piece in the back of Jabberwock 115. I joined SoFFAAM as a Life Member not long after I left the FAA in 1979. As I prefer to keep a hard copy, it's more enjoyable and handier to refer back to old copies. So I've sent a small cheque to boost the 'coffers' and cover some of the cost of sending me hard copy.

The Museum is very dear to me, but I don't have much chance of visiting these

days. In 1974 I joined the Museum as the Senior Maintenance Chief working with Cmdrs. Dennis White and Leeves, not forgetting Harpy Cox. It was a mis-employment job for up to six months which lasted for 18 months. A very good time, lots of interest and challenges as I had no regular staff and most of the aircraft were outside, just what Manpower control to give me. We took the Museum to the Farnborough Air Show and the Royal Exchange Building in

London (opened by Princess Anne).

Yours Sincerely
Derek Poulton

Editors Note. Thank you Derek for your very kind donation of £200. This is very much appreciated as all donations are. You can read about Derek's time at Eglinton, Northern Ireland and his 'association with Bernadette' in the letters section of Jabberwock 111.

Dear Editor

I joined SoFFAAM after picking up a leaflet when visiting the museum this year. I have known about RNAS Yeovilton all my life as my mother was stationed there in WWII.

For your amusement (hopefully) here is a cutting of a letter she wrote to her local press about 30 years ago.

I have a tablecloth embroidered with signatures of some who worked with her - I think she embroidered it herself.

She served from July 1943 up to her de-mob in July 1946. Her last 'ship' was HMS *Goldcrest* (RNAS Dale, South West Wales) and I have her hat ribbon for that.

It would have been nice to see more about the WRENs support in the administration wing at RNAS Yeovilton during WWII at the Museum.

Yours
Margaret Fuller

Ex-Wren recalls the old ferry

IN the run up to D Day in 1944 a leave ban was imposed for six months.

However, I was stationed at RNAS Yeovilton and we had all day Sunday off so a friend and myself used to spend it trying to reach home (my parents were living at this address). We actually had only about half an hour here - time enough to fill our cycle baskets with goodies and have some tea.

We used to set off first thing to cycle to Bridgwater (about 30 miles but mostly flat). We would entrain there to Bristol Temple Meads station, cycle through Bristol (very much in ruins from the bombing) and so through to Patchway, and down to Aust to catch the ferry. After our brief stay here we cycled to Severn Tunnel Junction to catch the 6.20pm train back to the little station near our quarters. We were obviously able to get the train back but not to come all the way. Occasionally Captain Groves would let me stand at the helm to justify my uniform because although I was a Wren I had no contact with ships or boats as I was at a Royal Naval air station!

**Mrs Helen Mayo, Tutshill,
Chepstow.**

Dear Malcolm

Jim Humberstone's article on the Avro Anson states that Ansons '... arrived fairly late on the scene, taken on charge immediately post-war ...'.

This is incorrect, most FAA Ansons were taken on charge during the war as Air-Britain's FAA Aircraft 1939-1945 attests. Also note that the Avro

652 was not a civil version of the Anson, the Anson was a distinct type developed from the 652 as the 652A. Only two Avro 652s were built, both for Imperial Airways, and both eventually served with the FAA, not one as Jim states, both being taken on charge

for use with 811 Sqn at Lee-on-Solent on 9 July 1941. These were G-ACRM and G-ACRN that became DG655 and DG656 respectively.

Tony Jupp

Dear Malcolm,

Good to see my old friend Corsair KD431 in print with the early story.

I am credited with the last deck landing of this aircraft and I was happy to join Chris Clark, the first pilot to test fly this aircraft, at a Museum gathering organised by Dave Morris (FAAM Curator of Aircraft) in August 2005.

Dave Morris's considerable surgery revealed the aircraft as I had known it, including the E2-M coding which identified it's Easthaven location, which I

trust will remain in place. Removal or any other marking would not be historically correct. This activity is featured in Dave Morris's book of 2006 'Corsair KD431: Preserving The Time Capsule Fighter' (ISBN 075094305)

My own records and photos of the day will be available for Richard Macauley when he visits as planned for inclusion in a future Jabberwock.

Peter Lovegrove

A plea for Jabberwock back copies

Do you have any back copies of unwanted Jabberwock Magazines?

We would especially like to receive numbers 101, 106 and 108 for our back catalogue. Showing Jabberwock and giving them to prospective new members when we are at events promoting SoFFAAM depletes our small stock.

We will happily arrange collection or pay postage to relieve you of any unwanted copies. Please ring **07768**

562976 or email soffaam@btinternet.com - many thanks.

Richard Macauley



Entente Cordiale 120

French RNAS Aircraft by Chris Penney



Depiction of Richard Bell Davies' Salonika Victoria Cross action in FAAM's Hall 1. Insert France's Great War Croix de Guerre Medal Ribbon. © FAAM

Almost 100 years after Horatio Nelson's overwhelming naval victory at Trafalgar in October 1805 Britain and France signed the 1904 Entente Cordiale or 'Cordial Agreement' and in 1919 a military alliance resulted. Highlighting 2024's UK-France anniversary, this occasional series starts with a look at three Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) aircraft of French manufacture.

FAAM's Search & Rescue Exhibition includes a painting of the first combat SAR mission and centre stage is a

Nieuport 10 sesquiplane biplane-type. During the First World War Nieuport designs formed the backbone of the Allied air forces between 1915-1917 and the first such was the two-seat Nieuport 10 used initially for artillery scouting.

In October 1915 - as part of the Salonika Campaign - French and British divisions marched north from Thessaloniki, northern Greece, to aid the Serbian Army retreating from superior Bulgarian forces. On 19 November the important rail junction at Ferejik in



Caudron G4 bombers were flown by RNAS 7 Squadron. © GWAS

then Bulgaria was targeted by RNAS 3 Wing stationed on the Aegean Island of Imbros. As five aircraft bombed Ferejik one succumbed to ground fire and force-landed. Seeing this Squadron Commander Richard Bell Davies RN landed to collect his stranded colleague. Taking off again under heavy fire as his passenger wriggled into the spare cockpit, he was awarded the Victoria Cross and later decorated with France's Croix de Guerre gallantry medal.

Such was the Nieuport 10's significance the first Canadian and Belgian aerial victories of the Great War were scored by pilots flying the type. The subsequent single-seat Nieuport 11 is widely regarded as having helped the Allies end the infamous 'Fokker scourge' of 1916. To improve performance, the Nieuport 10 was re-engined as the Nieuport 12, featuring an enlarged upper wing with a rear-facing Lewis machine gun for observer use. These three variants equipped RNAS 1, 2, 3,

4 and 5 Wings, while 6 Squadron flew 11's and 12's. Nos 9, 10 and 11 Squadrons meanwhile used either the Nieuport 11 or 12 into 1917.

On 1 August 2019, 207 Squadron reformed as the F-35B Lightning OCU. Before 1 April 1918 it was 7 (Naval) Squadron, RNAS, having formed in December 1916 as a specialist night bomber unit in France. On strength at that time was the French Caudron G4 twin-engined biplane powered by two 9-cylinder air-cooled rotary piston engines each producing 80hp. The observer/gunner sat in the nose with the pilot behind giving a clear arc of fire and it carried a 250lb bomb load. This compares to 207 Squadron's 21st century stealth fighter of today that can uplift a 15,000lb bomb load.

The first twin-engine military aircraft to be widely used, the Caudron G4 reconnaissance bomber was briefly licence-built in Britain for the RNAS. When Germany deployed a fighter



Rex Warneford's night VC action piloting a Morane-Saulnier L monoplane. © GWAS

force over the Western Front however, French losses mounted and the type was relegated to the night role. The RNAS replaced the Caudron G4 with Handley Page's long-range O/100 heavy bomber.

No review of French designs in RNAS operation would be complete without the parasol wing Morane-Saulnier Type L. The Type L became one of the first successful fighters when fitted with a single machine gun that fired through the propeller (protected by armoured deflector wedges). In late 1914 French aviator Roland Garros created a gun synchronizer using a gas-powered light machine gun and took his Type L fighter into combat with the deflectors in March 1915. He achieved immediate success, but the following month Garros force-landed behind German lines: the enemy's discovery of the revolutionary armament led to a fighter arms race.

On 7 June 1915 a Morane-Saulnier L flown by Flight Sub-Lt Reginald 'Rex' Warneford of 1 (Naval) Squadron, resident at Furnes, made a night interception of a Zeppelin over Belgium. He dropped his six 20lb bombs onto the airship setting it ablaze. It was the first German Zeppelin destroyed in air combat and his Victoria Cross was gazetted on 11 June. Warneford received the Légion d'Honneur from General Joffre, France's Army C-in-C, on 17 June but was tragically killed later that day in an air accident.

During the 1917 Battle of Ypres RNAS 1 Squadron received France's Croix de Guerre and on 1 April 1918 became 201 Squadron: its Standard is the only RAF Colour to wear this French medal.

Footnote: France's Tricolour cockade was applied to factory-fresh Nieuports including export RNAS aircraft.

The "cast-offs" - Naval Aircraft between the Wars

or "The benefits of hindsight"

By Malcolm Smith



Illustration by Steev

This article is taken from our archive. It first appeared in Jabberwock 66, published in the Autumn of 2011.

The control of the Fleet Air Arm by the Air Ministry [meant that] ... no aircraft were designed for carrier operations and all were conversions from RAF designs. [Because of] ... the lack of interest in carrierborne aircraft design in the interwar years ... the Fleet Air Arm

went to war well behind in capability to its counterparts in the RAF and US Navy.

[Naval Museums website, Sea Your History.](#)

[In WW2] ... the USN's air squadrons had aircraft specifically designed for them, whereas ... the FAA had to be content with RAF cast-offs ...

[Letter to the FAAM Newsletter 3 July 2010.](#)

... in the early years [of WW2] ... the poor performance of the redundant aircraft with which the fleet was initially equipped.”

Foreword by Rear Admiral A R Rawbone to Air Power at Sea in the Second World War.

How fair are these opinions? We are all capable of looking at history through the all-powerful telescope of hindsight and these quotations are just a sample of generally-held opinions on pre-war naval aircraft. The underlying theme is that, because the administration of naval aircraft procurement was the responsibility of the RAF, naval needs were in some way ignored or, at best, under-funded. As often happens with widespread opinions, the truth is more complex.

The Political Climate

The political climate in the 1920s and early 30s was characterised by optimism that the League of Nations would ensure peace, coupled with widespread fear of a repetition of the losses of the recent War. Political weakness led to a desire for appeasement and all UK armed forces were weakened as a result. From 1919, military policy was based on the assumption that there would be no war for ten years, an assumption that was renewed every year up to 1932. The terrible Depression of the 1920s led to continuing cuts in defence budgets, rigorously enforced by Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer. At the Washington Naval conference in 1922, Britain, Japan and the USA had agreed to limit warship

building, including limits on the size and numbers of aircraft carriers. In 1933, the new German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, withdrew Germany from the League of Nations and Germany began once again to be seen as a threat to British interests.

The major threat to the British Isles was imagined to be the “knockout blow”, consisting of high explosives as well as gas, delivered by bombers, against which there was thought to be no defence. London and the Home Counties would be pulverised, civilian morale would collapse and the government would be forced to sue for peace. In the Far East, Japan was beginning to threaten British possessions, but it was unlikely that Britain could spare an effective capital ship presence for its newly completed base at Singapore if it was simultaneously engaged in the West.

The Aircraft Industry

The rapid disarmament programme after WW1 and the dearth of new orders resulted in the capacity of the British aircraft industry falling to a low ebb. As well as the lack of military orders, the Government also refused to fund a national airline or subsidise any civil aircraft development. The result of this neglect was that British civil designs and general aviation development lagged far behind those of Germany and the United States, while manufacturing capability and design skills wasted away.

Effects of the formation of the RAF

The formation of the RAF in April 1918 led to the decision to make that

service responsible for all military aircraft procurement. It also meant that the RAF provided 30% of FAA pilots and the majority of maintainers. The Admiralty's view of the importance of naval aviation was reflected in the decision to relegate air matters to a minor section headed by a Captain. This limited the availability of experienced naval aviation committees. Staff Officers in procurement committees. The post of Fifth Sea Air Lord, responsible for Naval Air Services, was not reinstated until 1937, when administration of the FAA was restored to the Admiralty. However, it was always the responsibility of the Admiralty, not the Air Ministry, to state the operational requirements for new naval aircraft and to confirm that their development through the procurement process matched these requirements.

Roles of the Royal Navy

In 1936, Sir Thomas Inskip was appointed Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence and he placed a high priority on the air defence of the UK. The 1937 Defence Review defined that the main effort should be directed to protecting the United Kingdom against air attack and to preserving its trade routes. The next priority was to be the defence of Britain's overseas territories against sea, land or air attack. These decisions led to a huge investment in expanding the RAF, but funds were also made available for new capital ships (including aircraft carriers) for the RN.

As war became more probable, the Royal Navy's view of its roles can be

summarised as:

1. To contain the German surface and sub-surface threat in home waters and the Atlantic.
2. In the Mediterranean, where the Italian navy and air force were emerging as the main threat, to protect the trade route through the Suez Canal to India and the Far East.
3. To be capable of reinforcing the protection of British possessions in the Far East, by a fleet to be based in Singapore. To fulfil these roles, the principal RN weapon was the capital ship, armed with full-calibre guns with high-explosive and armour-piercing shells. Air and surface launched torpedoes were known to be powerful supporting weapons, but they were not seen as a substitute for the heavily armoured capital ship in a fight with a similarly equipped enemy. Attacks by enemy aircraft were known to be an ever-increasing threat and there was a continuing trend to improve warships' anti-aircraft defences. These were realistic policies, although the US Navy, facing the Japanese threat across the vast expanses of the Pacific, placed much more emphasis on long range naval aviation capability. Nonetheless, the RN continued to build aircraft-carriers and to develop aviation capability. The aircraft carriers were designed to withstand air and surface attack, with armoured sides and flight decks. This made them robust vessels but limited their aircraft-carrying capacity.

Roles of Naval Aircraft

To support the RN's roles, naval aircraft were specified by the Admiralty to provide the following capabilities:

1. Reconnaissance and Spotting - to scout ahead of the fleet, search for and report enemy vessels and surfaced submarines, also to spot for the fall of shot for the big guns.
2. Strike - to attack enemy bases and shore installations.
3. Torpedo - to attack enemy surface vessels, whether in harbour or on the high seas.
4. Fighter - to defend both the fleet and its aircraft against enemy aircraft, which were mostly expected to be the float planes and reconnaissance aircraft operated by the German and Italian Navy.

All these roles call for long endurance and the ability to navigate over the open

ocean. At the same time, naval aircraft had to fit into the relatively confined dimensions of RN aircraft carriers.

RN strategy was that the pilot needed to be supported by a qualified Observer, trained in navigation and reconnaissance, meaning that all roles required at least two crew members. Because of constraints on funding and ship capacity, roles had to be combined into Torpedo Strike and Reconnaissance (TSR) and Fighter Bomber (FB). The small numbers ordered and the complexity of the multi-role requirement meant that there was little competition in industry to supply naval aircraft, so that usually only the Fairey and Blackburn companies responded to the specifications.

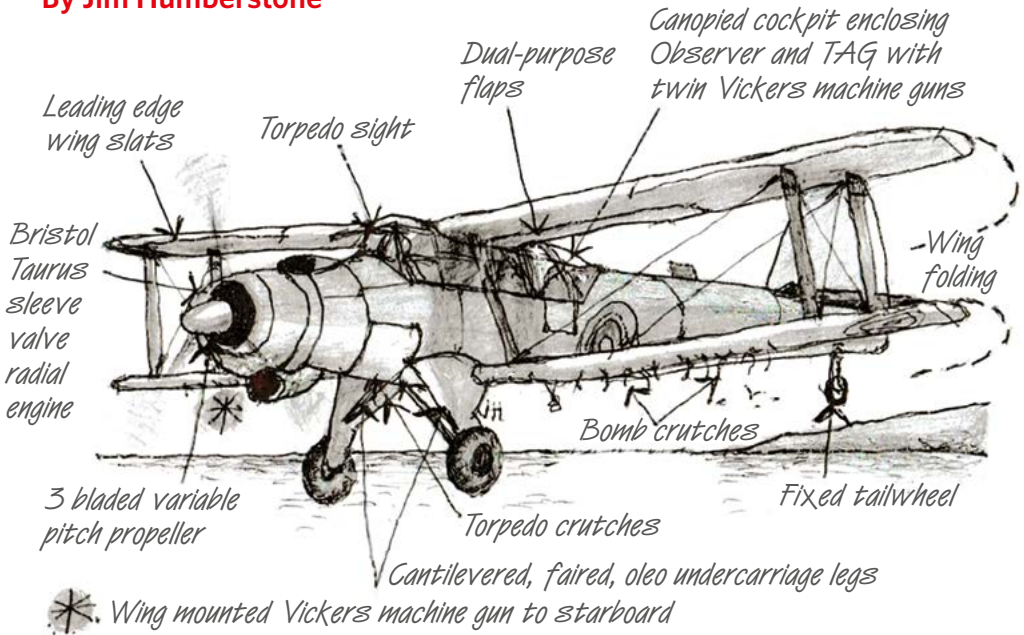
We shall continue this article in Jabberwock 117 to be published on the 1st of November.



It was the responsibility of the Admiralty to state operational requirements ... Illustration by Steev

The Fairey Albacore

By Jim Humberstone



Fairey Albacore Torpedo Bomber Reconnaissance. © Jim Humberstone

One of the last biplanes to serve with the Fleet Air Arm, the Albacore has been much under-appreciated, perhaps because rather than completely replacing its Fairey cousin, the Swordfish as intended, it was outlived by it.

Their nomenclature is interesting, both being named after large, handsome fish of the Tuna variety. (The Albacore, *Thunnus Alalunga*, is slightly larger than the Swordfish.) The Albacore's design reflected the Admiralty's views on the role of carrier borne

strike aircraft in the second half of the 1930s. The specification (Air Ministry S41/36) called for a Torpedo Spotter Reconnaissance (TSR) replacement for the Fairey Swordfish. Additionally, a dive-bombing capability was specified.

Several features incorporated in the Albacore were improvements on its predecessors. The new design was some five feet larger in both length and wingspan than its predecessor. A significant improvement was in aircrew accommodation and comfort, with the three aircrew accommodated under

an enclosed canopy with provision for heating. Monocoque metal replaced the tube with Irish linen fabric covering construction of much of the Swordfish's airframe. Flap operation, doubling for dive brake purposes, now benefited from hydraulic power obtained from the Bristol Taurus sleeve valve radial engine. This engine offered some 400 extra hp from fourteen cylinders, compared with Swordfish's nine-cylinder Pegasus, or 'Faithful Peggy', as it was affectionately called. The engine was paired with a three-blade variable pitch, constant speed propeller.

The Albacore introduced improvements in overall performance, when compared with the Swordfish. It was faster, by some 20 mph, albeit with a slight loss in maximum range. Torpedo-carrying capability did not change, with the 18-inch 1,610 lb version of the standard weapon remaining the primary weapon. Like the Swordfish a fixed, forward firing .0303 Vickers machine gun, operated by the pilot, was complemented by rearward defence by the TAG's equivalent weapon, with perhaps a Lewis mount as an alternative. A distinctive feature of the Albacore was its torpedo sighting facility. This comprised a shallow curved rod at the pilot's eye level, with a set of small lights illuminating in a simple non-electronic way to assist the pilot in laying off the aircraft to deliver its weapon with due allowance for the speed and direction of his target vessel. One minor problem for pilots was that their position in the cockpit, unlike that in the Swordfish, was ahead of the upper wing-plane

thus rendering that element out of their sight, with consequent reduction in orientation.

The aircraft, now designated Torpedo Bomber Reconnaissance (TBR), entered service in 1940 in the newly formed 826 Naval Air Squadron and went on to equip 15 front line squadrons. By the time production ceased in 1943, some 800 Albacores had left the factories. Such is the aura surrounding Swordfish successes against capital ships, especially at Taranto and the attacks on the Bismarck in the Atlantic, that it is easy to overlook equivalent successes by the other TBR, namely the two audacious attacks by Albacores on Axis capital ships. The first took place in the Middle Sea in late March 1941. When alerted to the sailing of an Italian squadron, which included the modern 30 knot battleship *Vittorio Veneto*, and several 8" cruisers, Cunningham dispatched a strong group of his ships to intercept. The group included the aircraft carrier *HMS Formidable*, equipped with a mixed complement of Swordfish and Albacores.



A Fairey Albacore at an unknown location, unless our readership knows otherwise? March, © militaryimages.net The Albacores attacked



The 21" torpedo weighed in at a hefty 11,100 lb (5,045 kg). © Reddit

Vittorio Veneto, No strikes were registered from the six torpedoes launched, but shortly after three in the afternoon, contact was again made with the battleship as it sailed west. This time with two Fulmars as cover, a flight of three Albacores braved the battleship's formidable AA fire and launched their torpedoes, at ranges little more than half a mile. The battleship was hit below the waterline, in the vicinity of the port outer propeller, causing thousands of tons of sea water to gush into the ship's hull, leaving the vessel temporarily dead in the water and beginning to settle by the stern. Sadly, the aircraft scoring the hit crashed after delivery of its weapon. All three crew were killed, but a DSO was awarded posthumously to Dalyell Stead the pilot. It says much for the damage control skills of the Italian crew that she had recovered enough in an hour to limp westwards at 15 knots.

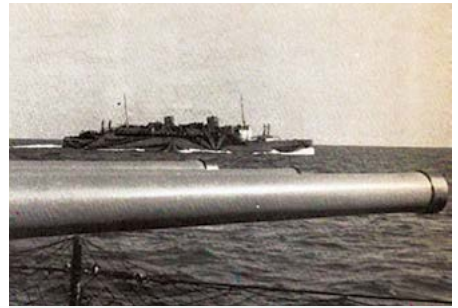
Reports were still coming in of the

second Italian squadron NW of the Italian battleship. A third air strike was launched at dusk. This saw an attack by a mixture of Swordfish and Albacores from *Formidable*, complemented by two FAA aircraft from Maleme air base on Crete. This sortie resulted in with the crippling of one of the larger cruisers, the *Pola*, initiating the night action off Cape Matapan, to which the FAA had indirectly contributed. It was a wholly unequal encounter, leading to the sinking of Italy's three powerful modern cruisers and two destroyers and the loss of 2,400 men, including the Italian Admiral.

The Navy's Albacores saw further action in early 1942. To counter the Arctic convoys, Germany had built up its naval presence in northern waters. Early in March the *Tirpitz* sallied from its Norwegian fjord, escorted by three destroyers, intent on intercepting convoy PQ17. With the help of decoded Kriegsmarine messages, HMS *Renown*,



The Albacore cockpit © IWM



Victoria during her last voyage before being sunk in the Gulf of Sidrea, picture taken from the Italian Battleship *Caio Duilio*
© La difesa del Traffic

Duke of York and *King George V* sailed to challenge the German battleship. Accompanying them was the aircraft carrier *HMS Victorious*, whose Albacores mounted an attack on *Tirpitz*, which on this occasion proved unsuccessful.

In May 1941, 826 Squadron was detached from *HMS Formidable*, that ship having to retreat to the USA for repairs to serious bomb damage. Since reconnaissance was their forte and the squadron was experienced in night operations, they supported the Army during the British campaign in the Western Desert, attacking Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps positions in the period leading up to General Montgomery's thirteen-day battle at El Alamein. They were active in night raids on enemy targets such as fuel dumps and lorry parks, even taking on tanks on one occasion. The shore-based Albacore squadron and RAF Wellingtons developed joint techniques, with the Albacores illuminating targets with flares for the bombers to attack. Claims are made that this was the first use of the

Pathfinder principle, one which was to be adopted later as a specialist technique through the formation of No. 8 Group, RAF Bomber Command. Their effectiveness in the anti-shipping role was underlined when Albacores sank the converted Italian liner *Victoria* during one such attack.

By early 1943, much of the Albacores' tasks, especially aboard RN Fleet Carriers, were being taken over by Swordfish, followed by the Barracuda as it became available. The final Albacore unit was 841 Naval Air Squadron, which had flown numerous shore-based attacks against shipping in the English Channel for the whole of its career. While opinions may vary, the early phasing out of the machine was thought by many to be justified. Certainly, some aircrew felt it was more difficult to fly and less manoeuvrable than the Swordfish. Whatever may have been their shortcomings, Albacores, with their crews, made an invaluable contribution to RN successes during their brief service.

Operation Swiftmove 1973 - An AEO's perspective

By Chris Howat



HMS *Hermes* at anchor in Oslo Fjord. © djwilkes.smugmug

819 Squadron, based at HMS *Gannet*, were tasked to embark in HMS *Hermes* along with 824 and the ships resident squadron 814, for a big NATO antisubmarine exercise in the North Sea in the Autumn of 1973.

This would bring the aircraft complement to 16 Sea Kings Mk 1 with the aim of maintaining a minimum of six aircraft on task as an antisubmarine screen throughout the eight days. The Admiral in charge was the Flag Officer Carriers and Amphibious Ships (FOCAS) and, with the *Hermes*, had a number of ships from various NATO

countries.

A full squadron embarkation in an aircraft carrier was a new thing for 819 as hitherto we had detached pairs of aircraft to Royal Fleet Auxiliaries and the places like Tiree and the Orkneys and a full aircraft detachment to Denmark earlier in the year.

The first problem was to get the spares for the sixth aircraft which was grounded through lack of spares and had been robbed, of necessity, to keep the other five flying. Miraculously, all the stores arrived the day before embarkation and a scramble ensued to

get the aircraft in a fit state to fly. Work continues all night and into the morning and the check test flight had to be the flight embarkation onboard with the other five. All went well.

The second problem was that the Deputy AEO and electrical wizard had to stay behind as his wife had been taken seriously ill. Fortunately, we had an SD AEO newly promoted and with the squadron additionally for experience. A very competent officer so he and I were able to work watch and watch about. The squadron worked in two watches twelve hours on and twelve hours off changing over at midday.

Embarkation day arrived and the aircraft flew with maintenance crews first to Turnhouse airport and then onto the *Hermes* anchored off Rosyth. A box of incendiaries fell into a tree at Turnhouse and one Sea King flew too close to a small training aircraft of the RAF and flipped it over onto its back but otherwise all went well! The rest of us travelled to Rosyth by bus and missed the fun.

Once onboard we were made most welcome, settled the aircraft down and found somewhere to sleep. The check test flight was successful, so the last aircraft was now fully serviceable and ready for the intense flying programme.

Each squadron would maintain its own aircraft, but the aircrew could be allocated to any helicopter depending on which was the next serviceable one to fly. The exercise started and we all knuckled down to life in the hangar and on deck, day and night. One of our Sea Kings flew without a defect for 108 hours

only doing a rotors stopped, port engine running refuel and crew change every 4 hours. I then decided to pull the aircraft out of the flying programme to carry out some urgent servicing operations.

One incident stands out when, in the night, someone disconnected the guardrail on the outboard edge of the deck edge hangar side lift. Lieutenant Commander (F) found me and accused one of 819 squadron of this dangerous action but I refuted this accusation because, when the exercise would be over we would all be going home. Much more likely to be a member of the ship's company.

On another occasion an American SD3D brought onboard several staff officers for a meeting with the admiral. On completion their helicopter would not start and I was called over to get it going. With the help of my Petty Officer Electrician, we succeeded but I was horrified, looking into the cockpit, to see the copilot with his left foot up on the end of the instrument panel to stop it from vibrating so much that they could not read the instruments. So much for their standards of maintenance!

The other item of excitement was when the shadowing Russian destroyer caught fire in its boiler room and sent out a mayday message, she was 25 miles away. We steamed to the spot and aircraft were readied to help. However, the Commissar onboard must have taken control and told all ships to stay clear as not needed and not to interfere. Besides which she had war shot torpedoes in the tubes on deck above the boiler room which could go off at



Originally built as a Sea King HAS Mk.1 - first flight on 8 March 1972 - this airframe eventually went back to Westland in 1987, and upgraded to HAS Mk.5 specifications, and then again in 2000, to be upgraded to HAS Mk.6 specifications. This long serving Sea King was finally retired in 2010, and placed in the collection at the Imperial War Museum (IWM). It is seen here at IWM Duxford in the colours of its last operational Royal Navy squadron, 814 Naval Air Squadron. © MoD

any time! So we continued the exercise and left them to it.

The exercise ended after eight days and a washup was to take place in the wardroom. I was detained by squadron business but made it just in time. However, the only seat left was a deep armchair in the front row with all the senior staff. Inevitably, exhausted, I fell asleep as the Admiral was talking. No one said anything but my relief was to take over in a few weeks' time and I had been appointed to join the Admirals staff. When I did, he graciously never mentioned my gaffe! The exercise was deemed a success but the average aircraft on task over the whole eight days was four and a half only. I was very pleased with our aircraft serviceability and the performance of all the squadron personnel. We were the best of the

three squadrons.

Thence the fleet sailed for Oslo and time to relax. The CO had his wine bill stopped so we had to help him out! Daily orders for entry into Oslo was seven pages long, both sides! Must have been a record! The American cruiser fired a royal salute, but a misfire led to an accident in which three sailors were injured. We had the official cocktail party to prepare for and someone nominated me, cannot think why, to arrange the flowers! Being a weekend, the Norwegian florist delivered them but would not arrange them, so I was given the job and four junior aircrew to help. Eventually we filled the brass shell cases with the lovely expensive flowers to my satisfaction and I let the go ashore.

The party was not without mishap. The smart Royal Marine contingent was formed up on the quarterdeck and the major in command arranged with the bosun's mate to give him the tip when the King of Norway came onboard. The major would then bring his men to the present arms, and he would march round to corner to report to the King. The bosun's mate mistook an American Rear Admiral for the King much to the surprise and horror of the major when he marched round the corner. But he could not stop now so saluted the admiral and reported the Royal Guard ready for inspection. The reply came quick as a flash: "Gee Major, I have never had a royal guard before!"

As the party came to its finale, the Royal Marine band came down on the after lift and everyone moved to the sides to enable the band to march up



Sea King HAS.1, XV672/71/H of 814 NAS demonstrates its SONAR dipping capability for the camera with HMS *Hermes* (R12) in the background. © Royal Navy

and down. While this was going on the stewards quietly removed the empty glasses and bottles and tables including those in the lift well covering the shafts where the gaps in the deck were cut for the lift chains.

This proved to be most unfortunate. As the band bravely played their lively music the chief steward came up to me as I stood near the after lift. "Sir," he said, "an admiral has just fallen into one of the lift shafts". I questioned where he was now and was told he had been hauled out and was now being treated in the sick bay, through a door on the after side of the lift well. I went across and into the sick bay to find the admiral, a little worse for drink, being treated for cuts and with rips in his trousers as well black grease everywhere from the lift chains.

Knowing my duty, I ascertained the details and left to return to the hangar and approached the Commander with some trepidation and told him that a Norwegian Rear Admiral had fallen into

a lift shaft opening and accompanied him to the sick bay. At that point I felt I was no longer necessary, repairing aircraft not admirals being my forte. So I returned to the ceremony of Colours in the hangar and mingled with the crowd.

Oslo was a great place for a run ashore visiting the ship museum with the Polar Ship, the *Fram*, Viking longships and the *Kon Tiki*. Also visited was the world famous Vigeland park and its many statues, well worth a visit if in Oslo.

In the evening, I was one of those chosen to attend a party in the Oslo Rowing Club headquarters. I had been there in 1966 and had rowed for the *Ark Royal* in a friendly race in fours. Ours was a scratch crew but we put up a good fight. So, I knew what to expect! The club hall was large and all round the walls was a mural of the then members of the rowing club, life size, in a jungle setting and all completely naked!

After an excellent visit to the beautiful city of Oslo we set sail to return to the UK and to prepare the aircraft for the flight home, full of rabbits, of course. It was good to be back and settle down to a more routine flying programme. My relief arrived a few weeks later and I left for the south to live in HMS *Dryad* until I could sell my house and arrange for my family to move down.

HMS *Gannet* was a wonderful place to serve especially in the early days. It is now a forward operating base used by detachments of Royal Navy Merlin HM2 helicopters which are deployed from RNAS Culdrose when necessary for operational requirements.

SS Oriana - a drop in the ocean

By Philip Jackson.



Caption. © ??

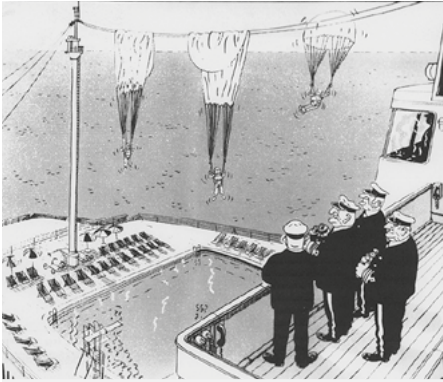
'URGENT CAPTAIN FROM GMF ZATMP'. It wasn't often that we received messages that were ultra urgent and certainly not in code.

My regular mid-morning walkabout to chat with our passengers on May 23 1978 was interrupted by this one as I dug out the company's code book from my safe and set about de-coding it.

The SS *Oriana* had sailed from Southampton three days earlier on a cruise to the Caribbean, having undergone a mid-season refurbishment break, and the ship-had

just steamed past the Azores when the Radio Office delivered the telex to my cabin.

The contents were destined to make all our plans for the day somewhat redundant and a meeting of my heads of departments was called to discuss them. Head Office had received an anonymous message stating that explosive devices had been placed on board whilst the ship was in Southampton and they were timed to go off at 1800 on that day. Naturally, it was assumed that it was a



'JAK', the cartoonist of the Evening Standard wasted no time in offering me my fifteen minutes of fame. The cartoon caption read - "Well, as they are here, we'll only charge them one way!". © Evening Standard

hoax, but nonetheless must be taken seriously and our routine contingency plans for such a situation was put into action.

Prior to the usual navigational broadcast at noon, the whole ship was pre-warned that today it was important that all aboard stopped whatever they were doing and listened in silence to its content. They did. To state the obviously the ship was to be searched, from top to bottom. A complicated task, but one which we had practiced on numerous occasions as part of our routine safety drills. The passengers rose to the occasion as only Britons can (and most of our passengers were of that stock) and having identified their own possessions in their cabins were then mustered in the various public rooms to remain there until further notice. Elsewhere throughout the ship all nooks and crannies were searched, which was a time consuming

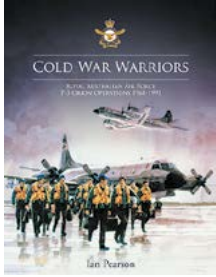
operation. This was undertaken with zest by the ship's company, on this occasion looking for the real thing - not a beer box labelled 'BOMB'.

Whilst all this was going on, the MoD had swung into action and the telex machine, which had only recently been installed, was running hot with information of their plans. It was to be a combined operation; a bomb disposal squad from the Army, an SBS crew from the RN being dispatched aboard a Hercules from the RAF to rendezvous with the ship (we were just within range). Additionally, a Nimrod was sent to assist in communications, which, on arrival and throughout the remainder of the day until the Hercules arrived on scene, exuded a very re-assuring presence to the passengers by circling the ship endlessly at what seemed to be alarmingly low altitude.

As the rendezvous area neared, to advertise our location, the Chief Engineer, much to his amusement, was asked to make black smoke: normally some thing he would be admonished for so doing. By the time the Hercules and the bomb disposal squad were on site, our search of the ship had been completed and it was decided that their presence was not required. We did however, offer them a practice drop . This was politely declined by the MoD who felt that, in addition to the costs already incurred, to lose the services of the personnel involved for another four days whilst the ship continued on its cruise would raise a few eyebrows in certain quarters.

Cold War Warriors

A book review by Chris Penney



This history of Australia's Orion maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) between 1968-91 runs to 400 A4 pages. A meaty volume, it's told from the perspective

of the two squadrons that flew the venerable turboprop anti-submarine warfare (ASW) platform.

By the early 1960s Australia's strategic need was a four-engined maintenance-light MPA that could operate from austere strips lacking dedicated infrastructure with little or no force backup. The US Navy's new Lockheed P-3 had come to the fore during the Cuban Missile Crisis and in 1964 they toured Australia with their long-range reconnaissance type. It ticked Canberra's boxes, especially not needing ground power for engine start and in 1968 the RAAF received their first P-3B. Australia's Orion delivery was timely as it coincided with the UK's "east of Aden" withdrawal announcement that would end RAF Nimrod MPA Singapore detachments.

The Vietnam War's aftermath saw RAAF Orions monitoring both

fleeing refugee boats and new Soviet submarines utilising (the former US) Cam Ranh Bay naval base. Major squadron functions involved flag-flying pacific defence diplomacy visits and SAR tasking. The hard-fought annual ASW Fincastle competition against rival Pommie, Canadian and Kiwi MPA crews brought with it much national pride for the trophy winning squadron and is well detailed.

Revealed is Canberra's secrecy with the Australian public about the extent of Cold War RAAF missions, as squadron Operational Record Books blandly stated "exercise" performed instead. Thankfully the author has spoken to many former Orion aircrew of the era and no stone is left unturned recording what such missions actually entailed. Omitted is mention of airframes retrofitted for secretive electronic SIGINT/COMINT duties, but otherwise this narrative is as comprehensive as it gets. Numerous official archive photos and cabin configuration diagrams complete this Aussie Orion service record.

If like me Cold War maritime reconnaissance is your thing then this is for you.

Published by Big Sky Publishing
ISBN 978-1-922488-32-9

Famous author requests assistance from SoFFAAM Members

Rowland White is the well-known author of military books, including subjects such as the Mosquito and Vulcan. He is currently the Publishing Director at Penguin's Michael Joseph imprint. He is researching a new account of the Swordfish attack at Taranto and has a specific interest in HMS *Illustrious* in 1940/41. He asks if any Society member could share information that offers a fresh perspective on the those events. He wonders if any members had a relative who served in *Illustrious*.

Please forward any information to him at rowlandwhite@btinternet.com, copied to the Editor, Jabberwock. smalcolm355@outlook.com



Taranto, Italy by Robert Taylor.

Probably the most famous of all the operations undertaken by the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in World War II was the strike against the Italian fleet in harbour at Taranto, in southern Italy, on 11 November 1940. The damage which the Fairey Swordfish aircraft inflicted severely hampered the Italian fleet for the rest of the war. © Fleet Air Arm Museum

Notice of our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Society's AGM will be held at **19.00 on Tuesday 15 October 2024** and will take place on Zoom only. All Society of Friends Fleet Air Arm Museum members are invited to attend.

Please email richard@fleetairarmfriends.co.uk to request a Zoom invite. The meeting will include reviews of Society activities over the past year. The meeting concludes with the election (or re-election) of the President, Officers and Council members.

If you do not have Zoom on your computer or require some help with the Zoom programme please ring Richard who will be happy to help on **07768 562976** or email richard@fleetairarmfriends.co.uk

Any member of the Society, other than a junior member, may apply to join the Council. Applications to the Secretary by 13 November 2024. Tel: 07811 254955. Email: robtheath@gmail.com or by post to SoFFAAM Secretary, 30 Royal Sands, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, BS23 4NH.



LECTURE PROGRAMME 2024

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SoFFAAM Visit to Bovington Tank Museum Tuesday 24 Sept 2024

SoFFAAM Members and one guest is allowed. Where you will see the world's best collection of tanks, representing every major conflict of the last century, displayed in awe-inspiring, modern exhibitions. These tell the story of this British invention, from the mud of the Somme, to the beaches of Normandy and the deserts of Iraq.

Please arrive at the Fleet Air Arm Museum Car Park by 09:00. You will be allowed to leave your car at the museum for the duration of our visit. We depart the museum at 09:00 prompt for the tour which commences at 10:30.

Programme at the Tank Museum

10:30am - 11:00am: Welcome introduction, along with free tea, coffee and homemade cake.

11:15am - 12:15pm: Museum guided tour.

12:30 - 13:30pm: Free time to purchase your own lunch in museum restaurant.

13:45pm - 14:45pm: Guided tours of the Chieftain tank.

14:45pm onwards: free time to explore the rest of the attractions.

After the guided tour you have approximately 1hr 15mins to yourself. The coach will depart from the Tank museum at 16:15 with the anticipated arrival time at Yeovilton of 17:15.

Please complete and return this application form, together with cheque for £37.50p (ea), payable to SoFFAAM, to reach me by Friday 30 August.

Tickets will be allocated on a first come first served basis. I will notify you immediately if for any reason the visit is postponed OR if you have not been allocated a seat. Please note that NO REFUNDS for non-attendance can be given.

Name Address

..... Post Code

Email

Tel No Membership No Guest Name

Please return your application form to reach me by Friday 30th August. Mrs Rosanne Crowther, St David's, 5 Church Close, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6DS. Tel No: 01935 822143
This form can be downloaded from the SoFFAAM website www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk

For further information on the Tank Museum please view their website www.tankmuseum.org

Protecting Fighter Pilots from High 'g'

April Talk summarized by Robert Heath



Sue and her husband, Squadron Leader Terry Adcock, a pilot with the RAF Institute of Aviation Medicine. © IAM

Our speaker, Sue Adcock, is a trustee of the Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) and has always been fascinated with flying and military aircraft.

Sue gained a mathematics degree at Oxford University and became a research scientist at the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) in 1979 - a most unusual achievement for a woman at that time. Sue became involved in aircraft system trials, which involved flying in a variety of aircraft including the Varsity and numerous fast jets such as the Jaguar, Lightning and Hawk. Sue also gained her Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) enabling her to undertake her

own aerobatics. In 1989, Sue's husband Terry, an RAF test pilot, was posted to the Institute of Aviation Medicine (IAM) at Farnborough. Being a gentleman, he volunteered Sue to participate in centrifuge tests. She accumulated around 600 runs and considerable depth of experience on the effects of gravity on the human body.

The human body is designed to inhabit an environment based on 1g (gravity). Any changes in speed or direction create forces that act on the body, which became apparent in WW1, when fighter pilots sometimes fainted under high 'g'. Little research was undertaken in Britain until mid-1939. Trials in service aircraft were difficult to measure, so the Air Ministry decided to investigate the problems of high 'g' within a safe environment under medical supervision. The resulting centrifuge was an all-British, design, completed at Farnborough in 1955 at a total cost of £350,000 (£6.5m in 2024). It continued in operation until 2019, having completed 122,133 runs, with very few changes made to its systems.

The centrifuge sits on a circular concrete base and comprises two 62.5 feet arms with a gondola at each end.

The test subject sits in a simulated cockpit within a gondola, while the medical officer sits at the centre of the rotating arm to monitor the human subjects. The rotating weight is 40 tons, driven by a 1350 hp electric motor. It could generate up to 30g, at 54rpm, but in service is limited to around 9g, at 30rpm and a speed of around 63mph.

Subjecting the human body to 9g is the equivalent of weighing 9 times more. This affects mobility and risks soft tissue injury, particularly putting neck muscles at great risk. The distortion it imposes on a human subject also makes you look 25 years older, as Sue bravely demonstrated via a film of her when under test. Without any protection, blood pools in the legs and feet and the blood pressure to the brain drops, initially causing reduced vision (grey/brown out), followed by loss of vision (blackout), followed yet again by unconsciousness (G-LOC, 'g' induced Loss of Consciousness). The effects of 'g' could be reduced by inflatable trousers, which contained bladders that inflated automatically to apply pressure to reduce blood flow from the brain during high acceleration.

A typical, fit human can tolerate between 3.5 to 5g and a g-suit will add 1g for example, making 6g, which was acceptable for the aircraft such as the Jaguar and Lightning. Aircraft today require a tolerance closer to 9g. The next step was to introduce PBG (Pressure Breathing for g-Protection) which supplied the breathing gas under pressure to the pilot, which in turn increased the pilot's blood pressure.

Throughout the talk Sue showed examples of the topic under discussion on film.

The centrifuge plays an essential role in the tests and development of techniques and equipment, all within a safe environment, but everything must be tested in the air also, under operational conditions. To this end Farnborough operated its own two Hawk aircraft and Sue and her husband, Squadron Leader Terry Adcock, worked as a team to undertake a schedule of tests up to 9.5g. During this time Sue accumulated around 150 Hawk flying hours in extreme conditions. Much of their later work was to test g-suits for Typhoon pilots, but such was their experience that they also tested the US Navy and US Air Force 'Combat Edge' suits in an appropriately modified Hawk aircraft, prior to the suits entering service in US aircraft. Enabling pilots to withstand high g forces must be tempered with the structural strength of the aircraft itself. There was a concern that pressurised pilots could inadvertently cause over stress of an airframe, but design and materials have come a long way since then.

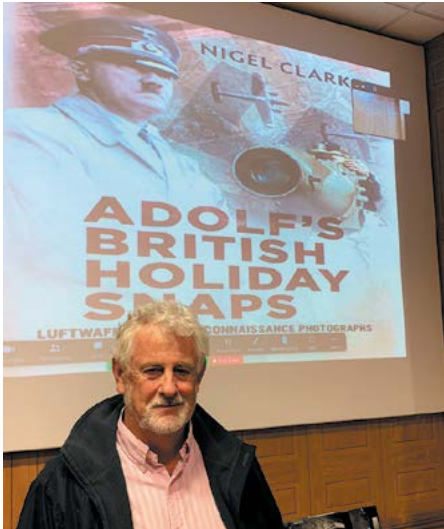
Thank you Sue, for putting across a technical subject with simple and interesting ease.



The Farnborough Centrifuge. © FAST

Luftwaffe Aerial Reconnaissance photographs

Adolph's British Holiday Snaps By Nigel Clarke
May Talk summarized by Robert Heath



Like much of the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, the area of coastal cliffs near Lyme Regis known as Black Ven is full of interesting fossils and rocks. Our speaker, Nigel Clarke, who lives nearby, has researched its history.

His research included old photographs and in a charity shop in Exeter, he discovered numerous crystal-clear aerial photographs of West Country locations including his home. These had been discovered by an Army staff driver, named Phillips. Towards the end of the war, Driver Phillips was sent

to a recently captured German airfield. Here he found a room whose contents included thousands of high-quality reconnaissance photographs taken by the Luftwaffe. He selected numerous photographs of the West Country and brought them home as a souvenir. They were discovered by his son after he died.

Aerial photography blossomed in WW1, when both sides flew over the enemy's trenches to bring back overlapping photographs to form a mosaic of the war front. In those days large cameras were mounted on the outside of the aircraft and the observer had to load and unload enormous glass plate negatives. In the 1930s, Germany grasped the need for aerial photography and aircraft flying into London Croydon airport were adapted to covertly photograph towns and economic and military facilities. The Hindenburg Zeppelin made a grand, goodwill tour around the coast of Britain, with a German intelligence officer on board taking good quality photographs. The Luftwaffe photographed every part of Britain from Land's End to the Orkney Isles, a huge undertaking that was the first complete aerial survey of the United Kingdom.

Until 1942, Luftwaffe photographs were almost entirely taken at low altitudes, but this became more hazardous as the bulk of the Luftwaffe was moved to support the invasion of Russia. Later sorties over the UK were carried out at altitudes up to 40,000ft, resulting in less detailed images. Germany had a reputation for high quality cameras and lenses and the WW1 glass plates were superseded by 35mm film with a perforated edge. This enabled the film to be fed through the cameras via a clockwork mechanism, to provide a continuous pattern of succeeding images. Nigel showed many of the photographs from around our south and southwest coasts to illustrate how they helped aircrew to identify their target.

Some of the very earliest Luftwaffe raids against the UK were in Scotland and appropriately a wide range of photos were shown by Nigel of the Forth Bridge and Scapa Flow, base for the RN Home Fleet. Plymouth Dockyard also featured prominently. Other photographs showed Kenley Airfield under attack with bomb bursts distinctly visible against the ground. A few photographs showed other bombers clearly against the countryside on their way to the target. In all, the Luftwaffe had 23 separate long range photo reconnaissance units, using a variety of aircraft including the Dornier Do 17, Junkers 88, Heinkel III and Me110. As the years went by Luftwaffe reconnaissance over the UK became more infrequent and by D-Day very little coverage is

apparent. Interestingly the German Intelligence Services, unlike the British, did not use stereoscopes, which we found to be a great benefit in interpretation. Neither did they use a broad range of people to interpret the photographs. Consequently, they failed to identify British radar facilities and were surprisingly easily misled by camouflage techniques.

The Luftwaffe's main photographic archives were in Berlin, but there were other enormous caches stored all over Germany. Towards the end of the war, US and British Intelligence Services made a rush to collect as much material as they could. All the British material was sent to RAF Medmenham for evaluation, but at the end of the war most of the material was sent to an independent US Government agency, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in Washington DC where the photographs are still available to be viewed by the public on request. The photographs are still proving their value today and are frequently called upon for research and planning purposes by archaeologists, conservationists, historians, local authorities and Government bodies. A great deal of the British landscape has changed over the years and this wealth of photographs is proving a valuable milestone to mark the changes.

Nigel Clarke has produced a book, entitled "Adolph's British Holiday Snaps" - *Luftwaffe Aerial Reconnaissance Photographs of England, Scotland and Wales*.

Bat Boat to Sea Harrier

By David Hassard

June 2024 Talk summarized by Robert Heath



Our speaker, David Hassard, is a Brooklands Museum volunteer and is now a joint leader in the Kingston Aviation Centenary Project.

He told us that Thomas Octave Murdoch Sopwith (always known as Tom) taught himself to fly in 1910 after just nine hours flying. He won several flying competitions and with the prize money started the Sopwith School of Flying at Brooklands in 1912. Sopwith employed Fred Sigrist and in June

1912 Fred took on an Australian motor mechanic, Harry Hawker. Sigrist built a training aircraft, the Sopwith Hybrid, which used the best bits from several aircraft types.

Hawker proved to be a natural aviator and was soon appointed company pilot. In October 1912 Sopwith registered the Sopwith Aviation Company and sold a Hybrid to the Admiralty for £900. This made Sopwith an approved military contractor, so he found a ready-made factory in a roller-skating rink in Kingston upon Thames. Sopwith bought a sleek speed boat from Saunders of Cowes and put biplane wings on top and a pusher propeller engine behind to create what became known as the stylish 'Bat Boat'. Sopwith aircraft won various aviation competitions and races, also several world height records including up to 12,900ft. This resulted in sales to the RFC. Harry Hawker designed an 80hp two-seater biplane, the Sopwith Tabloid. It was very fast for its day at 92mph, with a climb rate of 1,200 ft/minute. Throughout 1914, several Sopwith design variants emerged including a torpedo carrier, also a Schneider Trophy Tabloid racer, which

won the trophy.

By the outbreak of WW1, Sopwith had acquired a new factory at nearby Ham. Successful designs included the Tabloid, the 1½ Strutter, Pup, Triplane, Camel, Cuckoo, Snipe and Salamander. At the end of the War in 1918, orders for aircraft were cancelled. The factory at Ham was sold and in 1920, the Sopwith Aviation company closed, but Sopwith retained the Kingston factory premises. In 1921, the H G Hawker Engineering Co Ltd opened under the directorship of Sopwith, Hawker and Sigrist. Sadly, Harry Hawker died in July 1921 test flying a Nieuport Goshawk. Sopwith and Sigrist continued the business by refurbishing Sopwith Snipes, which continued in RAF service until 1927.

In 1923 Sidney Camm joined the company and in 1925 he became Chief Designer. He was tasked to convert the Hawker Horsely bomber from all wood construction to all metal. His design avoided any welding instead using swage plates on tubes for ease of manufacture. The aircraft designed by Camm in the 1930s included the Tomtit, Hart, Fury, Nimrod, Audax and Demon. In 1934, Hawker bought the Gloster Aircraft Co, followed by Armstrong Siddeley, from which the new Hawker Siddeley Aircraft company emerged.

In 1935, Camm created the famous monoplane 300 mph 8-gun Hawker Hurricane. The simple steel tube and fabric covered construction enabled the Hurricane to go into production quickly, making it a sturdy and easily repairable war plane. In 1940 the Langley factory was built,

along with its accompanying runway. Hawker's successor to the Hurricane was the 2000 hp Typhoon, the RAF's first 400mph aircraft, particularly successful in the ground attack role. By 1943, the Tempest had been developed into the Typhoon, a fast fighter that accounted for 680 V1 flying bombs. Further refinement brought about the Fury and Sea Fury design, of which 900 were built. Turbojet engines were becoming available, and Hawker produced the P1040 in 1947, followed a year later in 1948 by the delightful Sea Hawk, which flew in Royal Navy service from 1953 to 1983. Hawker acquired Dunsfold Aerodrome for the development and production of the P1067 Hunter, which entered service in 1953. In 1953 it took the World Speed Record at 727mph and remained in service until 1995. Nearly 2,000 Hunters were built.

Notwithstanding the Government's decision to cease procuring manned fighter aircraft, Hawker Siddeley learned of the innovative VSTOL Pegasus engine design of Rolls Royce and designed an airframe to accommodate it. The aircraft was steadily developed into the Harrier, which was operated by several customers, including the US Marine Corps. The next Hawker design was the successful Hawk, which has since played a significant role in training pilots and is still in production. Between them Sopwith and Hawker have produced 45,000 aircraft and at least one of their designs has been in service every day since 1912.

A Saturday Morning Talk on 21st September 2024 at 11am

RAF Chivenor and the U-boat War by Rob Palmer MA



407 Sqn Wellingtons at RAF Chivenor. © BMH

We are pleased to announce another Saturday Talk at the Fleet Air Arm Museum and also on Zoom.

Churchill described the merciless U-boat attacks against our network of transatlantic trade convoys as the only thing that worried him during the war. Chivenor in north Devon was one of RAF 19 Group's airfields active in south west England and Wales during the Battle of the Atlantic, which lasted from 3 September 1939 until VE Day 1945.

Many nationalities of aircrew comprised the squadrons that operated from Chivenor during WW2, including Canadians and free Poles. For those involved in trying to defeat the Nazi U-boat peril it involved long unglamorous night sorties over vast areas of featureless ocean as part of RAF Coastal Command's war. The U-boat's

defeat by D-Day was helped in large part by the advent of radar-equipped Vickers Wellingtons and an airborne searchlight to illuminate the target. Rob has undertaken wideranging research into the crews of aircraft lost from Chivenor during the U-boat war.

Our Speaker Rob heads up the North Devon Second World War RAF aviation historical research group. He did his dissertation on RAF Chivenor and its role in the defeat of the U-boat in the Bay of Biscay during 1943. He has established this website:

www.BritishMilitaryHistory.co.uk

Tickets: A Talk ticket is £6 at the Museum or £4 for online by Zoom.

As a SoFFAAM Member you have free entry to the Museum. Non SoFFAAM members must buy a Museum entry ticket as well as a Talk ticket (it is cheaper to join SoFFAAM).

Go to our Talks page on the SoFFAAM website to get tickets and more information or use the links in our promotional emails.

www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/talks

eJabberwock readers can click **HERE** for £6 ticket or **HERE** for £4 ticket.

HeliOperations Visit

By Richard Macauley



A different take on our usual group photo. The group is gathered in front of XV670, 771 NAS from Culdrose which was one of the aircraft involved in the Boscastle flood rescues in 2004
© David Merrett

We gathered in a large warehouse in Somerton with gloomy skies outside but gleaming anticipation inside.

Greeted by Mark, the Chief Operations Officer, he briefed us about the companies start-up and the entrepreneurial spirit of a Civilian organisation flying on the military register to supply training to foreign governments. Currently based around the venerable Sea King Helicopter because there are still air arms around the world with this type in service and will be for a good few years to come.

Surrounded by thirteen Sea King airframes, we were allowed to wander at will and if doors were open and access platforms in place, climb inside to view interiors and sit in cockpits. These

airframes are a spares source to keep the companies two flying examples in the air. There were endless rows of shelves stacked with boxes of parts (1.5 million was the estimate). This was the complete inventory of spares for Sea King bought from the MoD when Sea King went out of service. Engines and gearboxes down to stringers and spare bulbs. Could they actually build a new one by drawing on this extensive stock was one question. A probable yes was the reply if given the right sized cheque and a couple of years!

Mark continued the tour in an informal way with details about the companies operations, the airframes and in looking to the future with the recent purchase of an AW159 airframe. No mean feat given Mark's service career was all about the Sea Harrier.

The companies flying activities are conducted from the former HMS *Osprey* at Portland, but potentially, an airworthy aircraft could be flown out or delivered to this maintenance facility.

This was an absolute gem of a visit for we aircraft enthusiasts so a huge thank you to Rosanne for the arrangements and to Mark for allowing us access and being our host. The sandwiches and chips at the White Hart Somerton were very welcome afterwards as well.

Membership

By David Merrett

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

3894	Cpt R S Langton	Somerset	3900	Mr S Hodgkinson	Somerset
3895	Mr G McKenzie	Somerset	3901	Mr R Gayner	Somerset
3896	Mr B Hogan	Wiltshire	3902	Mr G Symes	Dorset
3897	Mr T Goss	Hampshire	3903	Mr J Manly	Hampshire
3898	Mr K Lawton	Somerset	3904	Ms K Newton	Somerset
3899	Mr T Muddimer	Dorset	3905	Mr P Payne	Somerset

Total members as of 08/01/24: **949**

Members who have made a Gift Aid declaration: **716***

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

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If you are not paying by Standing Order, please refer to the application form on the website www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk to get details of how to pay by BACS, PayPal or cheque. Always quote your

membership number. If you have any queries about your membership number or when your membership renewal is due, just email or call me using the contact details in the orange panel on the next page.

Membership Cards

Remember we no longer issue membership cards. On arrival at the museum, please tell the reception staff

that you are a SoFFAAM member and they will find you on the membership list.

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

recently! Much appreciated. Easy to do - just drop us an email at soffaam.mem@gmail.com for this and all other membership queries.

**Visit our Membership page at:
www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk/membership**

Membership Application

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

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Operation Neptune Service of Commemoration

By Tim Smith



A lovely service was held on the carrier deck in the Fleet Air Arm Museum at 10.30am on Thursday June 6th.

The service was led by Reverend Doctor Steve Cosslett Royal Navy and the welcome was given by Yeovilton's Commanding Officer Captain Duncan Thomas. The Act of Remembrance followed D Day veteran's recollections on a large screen and The Exhortation was read by Rear Admiral Anthony Rimington. The Last Post/Reveille and Kohima Epitaph preceded the Laying of Wreaths led by the Rear Admiral followed by representatives from The Royal Marines and The Army of which there were a number of regiments and corps represented. Such is the support the Army Wildcat fleet receives, the Army Air Corps, REME and Royal Corp of Signals amongst others. The hymns were, 'I vow to thee my country' followed by 'Guide me, O thou great Redeemer' and finally verse three of 'The Airman's Hymn' 'Eternal Father, strong to save' closed the service after the closing prayers read by station personnel for The Navy, The Royal Marines, The Fleet Air Arm and Army Air Corps. The service ended with The National Anthem.