

MINUTES OF THE 46TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON ZOOM ON THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025

The meeting started at 19.10 and was held online. Those present were:

Malcolm Smith, **Chairman**
Robert Heath, **Secretary**
Attendees as listed at Annex A.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Council members: Chris Penney & Tim Smith; plus from Bill Covington (Patron) and Nikolaos Diakidis (Greece).

2. APPROVAL OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

The Minutes for the 45th Annual General Meeting were approved and have been signed by the Chairman.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

The General Manager, Marc Farrance, reported as follows:

General Updates – FAAM has enjoyed a positive summer overall. Although the very hot weather led to a slower start to the holidays, we saw really strong visitation in the final week as the rain brought volumes of visitors. Wet weather typically continues to drive consistency in our numbers, giving a welcome boost to visitor figures. Visitor numbers for the financial year so far track just ahead of budget in terms of visitation and related income. Following conclusion of the holidays the Museum returns to its five day a week opening, from Wednesday to Sunday,

Gallery Filming The Museum has recently been the subject of several filming enquiries. One visit of interest was hosted by me and Dave Morris as we welcomed the team from True North TV for filming on an upcoming episode of *Warship: Life in the Royal Navy*. We had the honour of hosting Rear Admiral Jerry Kyd, who shared vivid stories from his time in command of HMS *Ark Royal*—bringing history to life in a way only someone who's been there can. A real highlight was getting up close with the iconic Harrier cockpit, accompanied by JJ Chalmers and some fantastic first-hand tales from Lt Cdr David 'Moggy' Morgan. Especially interesting was a rare peek inside ZD433—an airframe 'Moggy' has flown more many times.

Esmonde Update – The Museum extends its sincere thanks to the SoFFAAM for its continued support—particularly for helping us to enhance the Swordfish area within Hall 2, in preparation for the arrival of the Eugene Esmonde Victoria Cross medal in October 2025. Work is now underway to transform this gallery space, beginning with

the removal of existing displays, followed by a complete refurbishment. We anticipate the installation of new interpretation and exhibits, including the medal in a specially designed display case, in early 2026

Travel Bursary Update – Following on from two successful Travel Bursary claims from Mere School and All Saints Church School Montacute, we have accepted an application from St James Church School, Taunton. This trip is in December 2025 and once completed will take the total spent from the travel Bursary to £900, and just short of 150 pupils who have been able to visit the museum because of the SoFFAAM Travel Bursary.

Programming Updates – Over the Summer we ran our Pioneers of STEM family programming, which included Fairey themed Lego, Engine- focused Science Shows, and Flight focused Animal activities. Feedback has been very positive as always. Finally, just before the summer season we introduced an AI photobooth in Hall 4. This photobooth (operating on a profit share basis with the company who run it), can take your photo and transform it into a Naval or Fleet Air Arm setting, taking a bit of artistic license! To date, over 2300 photos have been taken since it was installed in early July.

Curatorial Updates – The Curatorial team has been focused on the archives for the last three months. In July, Steven and Catherine visited the RAF Museum, Hendon and assisted in packing up their Fairey Archives for transfer to Yeovilton. This was the culmination of discussions over many years to allow the Conservation Engineers better access to technical drawings of the Barracuda aircraft. This is a very large collection, with a substantial number of technical drawings of several aircraft types, as well as technical reports, photographs and business correspondence. It is largely uncatalogued, so the full extent is unclear. Relocating the archive is one small step in making this archive accessible. After an extensive application process, in August we were lucky enough to be awarded a significant grant by the Archives Revealed programme. Archives Revealed is the only grant programme in the UK dedicated to the cataloguing and unlocking of archival collections. The programme is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation and The National Archives. The grant that we have received will pay for an Assistant Curator (Archives) to join the team on a fixed-term basis to catalogue the Fairey archives.

Staffing – In late August we have welcomed Sarah Roberts to FAAM as our new site-based Marketing Assistant. Sarah brings a wealth of experience, and she will play a key role in building local partnerships and acting as an important link locally.

Barracuda Update - After a year of intensive planning, costing and gaining all the necessary approvals and authorisations, the Conservation Team was finally in a position to travel to Alta in northern Norway to undertake the recovery of the wreckage of Barracuda LS551. Week 31 in July was the optimum week for daylight hours (24 hr daylight) and least likelihood of rain and high wind. The exercise would span four days only, due to the cost of putting a team on the ground and the cost of the helicopter works and shipping container haulage. This was divided into one day on the mountain bagging and netting parts, one day air lifting the bags down, one day packing into a shipping container and one day spare if the weather or logistics were showing complications. The operation was a complete success, the team excelled themselves (as well as parts identification and drone operating, Barracuda Volunteers Tony Jupp and Stephen White both had helicopter air lift experience from their respective previous service careers which helped) the helicopter company was brilliant and the Norwegian locals that helped were similarly superb. The wreckage is now on its way back from Norway and may arrive this Autumn at FAAM to be assessed in detail and start being processed to add into the build of DP872. There are a number of key items that will be

retained as whole items to display (the lower fuselage piece with the 1600lb bomb crutch installation – the first time a 1600lb bomb was used by the FAA was against *Tirpitz*, and a piece of wing trailing edge that has obvious flak damage sustained from the attack on *Tirpitz*). Dave Morris will now be working with the NMRN marketing team to see how we can maximise the publicity and potential funding from the news of this operation.

Events and Programming: -

Joint Tour of The Fleet Air Arm Museum & Navy Wings (15th October 2025)

Active Aviators – 23rd Oct 2025

Christmas Concerts 2025, Thursday 11th and Friday 12th December 2025

5. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

The Chairman, Malcolm Smith reported as follows:

As the outgoing Chairman, it has been a great honour to serve in this role, particularly at the time when several new initiatives have been successfully implemented, membership numbers are growing, co-operation with and contribution to FAAM projects has been very productive, and on top of all that SoFFAAM finances are in great shape. Thank you to the whole team, because without you this could not have happened.

6. OUTREACH - PUBLICITY AND RECRUITMENT

The Vice-Chairman, Tim Brandt, reported as follows:

Governance

The Outreach Sub-Committee has met quarterly, as planned. The Committee is providing effective co-ordination of outreach activities, and particularly of the SoFFAAM marquee at external events.

The Finance Sub-Committee will be meeting in October to review the finances and to consider if any changes to subscriptions may need to be recommended to Council.

Outreach

SoFFAAM has had a very successful year in Outreach activities.

We have attended the following:

6 April - Yeovil Model Show

28 June - Honiton Armed Forces Day

12 July - Middle Wallop Wings & Wheels

24 July - HMS Heron Families Day

27 July - Boscombe Down Aero Collection Old Sarum model show.

23 August - Henstridge Fly in

We plan to attend the Yeovil model show on 26 October, the Middle Wallop model show on 23 November and have a stall at the FAAM on two days over the October half term.

I must thank those members of Council who give up their time to give us a presence at these events, which allow us to meet members and engage with the public, as well as

providing a small but steady stream of new members. The Barracuda model is proving very popular and attracts significant interest.

SoFFAAM presented an award for the ‘Best British Naval Aviation Model’ at the Yeovil model show in April. The winner was Ian Domeney of Poole Vikings Model Club with a very nice model of a Wyvern. The award is planned to be a regular fixture at the 6-monthly Yeovil show.

Website. The Website has had some minor updates to provide clearer information on the activities of SoFFAAM and how the Council runs it. Several more minor enhancements are planned.

Facebook. Chris Penney continues to provide an excellent Facebook presence for SoFFAAM, which has expanded to 850 regular followers at home and overseas. Additionally Chris has co-ordinated radio, advertising and press releases in a variety of local media outlets.

7. TREASURER’S REPORT

The Treasurer, Laurence Whitlock, reported as follows:

In summary the key SoFFAAM items are:

Income	£32,024
Expenditure	£28,436 (including FAAM project donations)
Net Profit	£ 3,588

Strategy of SOFFAAM

- To raise funds mainly by membership, social events and gift aid
- To respond to requests for help from the museum
- To communicate with members, and others by the ‘Jabberwock’ the Society’s quarterly magazine, and by other publications where appropriate

Total Revenue Overview

- Subscription levels of both renewing and new membership remained steady. Income enabled the society to cover usual expenditure (i.e. Jabberwock) and donations and events income allowed the society to provide funding to the FAAM when requested.

Profit Highlights

- SOFFAAM ‘Talks’ programme of 14 talks (inc. members day) generated just over £4500 in net profit during the financial year. Just over 1000 people have attended the SOFFAAM talks either on Zoom or In-Person.

Major Financial Trends

- Lloyds will commence charging SOFFAAM for banking with them from 11th Nov 2025.
- Printing & Postage costs for Jabberwock are increasing year on year.
- Software licence costs are increasing year on year

The Auditor’s Report was presented and the results approved by vote, without dissent.

8. ELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER

The Treasurer proposed that Malvern Carvell should continue to act as the Independent Examiner. The proposal was carried without dissent.

9. MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

David Merrett reported as follows:

As of this month, paying membership stands at 991, which is a net increase of 41 over the past 12 months with 45 new joiners.

Of the 45 new members 14 came from member referrals, 9 came from events (Henstridge Wings and Wheels 5, and Yeovil Model Show 4), 5 came from FAAM visits, 4 came from attending talks, 3 came from the FAAM website, 1 came from the SoFFAAM website, 1 was a re-joining member and 8 remain indeterminate.

Current Membership Statistics:	2025	2024
• Gift Aid Declarations	749 (76%)	722 (76%)
• Lifetime Members	223 (23.6%)	224 (23.6%)
• Family Membership	21 (2.1%)	18 (1.89%)
• Junior Membership	4 (0.4%)	4 (0.42%)
• Overseas Membership (6 Individual, 12 Lifetime)	18 (1.8%)	20 (2.1%)
• Members taking e-Jabberwock	337 (34%)	295 (31%)
• Members with a valid email address	740 (74.6%)	697 (73%)
• Paying annually by standing order	582 (58.7%)	569 (60%)
• Paying annually by cheque/cash/SumUp	88 (8.9%)	84 (8.8%)
• Paying annually by BACS/PayPal	109 (10.9%)	81 (8.5%)
• Lapsed (no current address, member still paying)	10 (1%)	10 (1%)

Existing member referrals continue to be the most important method of recruiting new members, closely followed by those from events attended by council members and other volunteers. However, significant positive feedback has been received over the year through letters, emails and donations about Jabberwock. There is no doubt that it remains an important factor in both publicity and recruitment for the Society.

10. TALKS AND VISITS REPORT

Rosanne Crowther reported on Visits as follows:

Key events included:

2024 Christmas lunch which was well-attended

Members' Day, which was very well organised and very well received by members

High costs are making some events a significant challenge.

Hydrographic Office visit, yet to come, but in great demand

2025 Christmas lunch scheduled for the 10th January 2026

Richard Macauley reported on Talks as follows:

Attendance figures for Talk Evenings have recovered profoundly since the Covid fall-off. Zoom attendance at talks is also improving and the Zoom presentation has also been refined.

A good variety of speakers for the 2026 season have already been appointed, but Richard stated clearly that a Talks Manager is being actively sought to take over from him for Thursday evenings, likewise a Saturday Talks manager is now required.

Richard was profuse in his thanks to each of the team members active at the talks.

Chris Penney previously reported that two profitable Saturday talks took place and four are planned for 2026, but he can no longer manage them himself.

11. EDITOR'S REPORT

Malcolm Smith reported as follows:

Malcolm Smith complimented Richard Macauley on the high standard and quality of the "Jabberwock" publication and the meeting agreed wholeheartedly. David Merrett said that he was familiar with a large number of 'societies' with a similar purpose to SoFFAAM, but none could come near to matching "Jabberwock" – probably SoFFAAM's greatest attraction.

Richard Macauley thanked Malcolm Smith and Robert Heath for their valuable input to the production of Jabberwock.

12. ELECTION OF PRESIDENT

The General Manager took the Chair.

The Chairman stated that Admiral Tom Cunningham had agreed to continue in the role of President. This was approved without dissent by vote.

13. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Tim Brandt was elected as Chairman unanimously.

14. ELECTION OF COUNCIL

All those who had agreed to stand as Council members were elected unanimously.

A list of the elected members of the Council is at Annex B.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Tim Brandt took over as Chairman.

Tim Brandt thanked Malcolm Smith for his long-term support and steady hand in control of SoFFAAM. Tim also welcomed John Heath and Vic Flintham to the council and was fulsome in his thanks to the FAAM team, who did everything possible to help SoFFAAM.

A key target for 2026 is to lift membership to over 1,000 and to implement new ideas currently being developed.

As an item of AOB, Graham Mottram cautioned SoFFAAM on how it managed donations made to other charities. Tim Brandt and Laurence Whitlock responded by pointing out that SoFFAAM had conducted investigations into the topic and SoFFAAM made donations to the FAAM, who then disbursed the funds in a way beneficial to the FAAM.

Richard Macauley made a point of thanking Chris Adams for his constant topping up of the SoFFAAM leaflet dispensers in the FAAM. A valuable but easily unrecognised contribution.

The meeting closed at 20.00hrs.

Approval of the Minutes given above.

Position :

Signature :

Date :

ANNEX A

**SOFFAAM AGM, LIST OF ATTENDEES
02 OCTOBER 2025**

General Manager:

Mark Farrance

Council Members:

Malcolm Smith
Tim Brandt
Richard Macauley
David Merrett
Richard Hufton
Laurence Whitlock
Rosanne Crowther
Peter Cowlan
Robert Heath
Chris Adams
John Heath
Vic Flintham

Members:

Robin Bailey
James Carter
Graham Mottram
John Whitfield

ANNEX B

SOFFAAM AGM, ELECTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

02 OCTOBER 2025

Patron:

Commodore 'Bill' W M Covington CBE

President:

Rear Admiral Tom Cunningham CBE

Chairman:

Tim Brandt

Vice-Chairman:

(Vacancy)

Members

Malcolm Smith
Laurence Whitlock
Robert Heath
David Merrett
Richard Macauley
Chris Penney
Rosanne Crowther
Chris Adams
Richard Hufton
Peter Cowlan
Tim Smith
John Heath
Vic Flintham