

# SoFFAAM Members' Day at the Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton

By John Heath

**I would like to welcome you to Members' Day 2026, which will take place at the Fleet Air Arm Museum on Wednesday 17 June from 10am until 4pm.**

I am focusing the event on four aspects. The first is to hear all the latest news from Marc Farrance (Museum General Manager) and an opportunity to ask any questions. We then focus on the Swordfish with Steven Valentine (Museum Curator) and view the new display centred around Lt. Cdr. Eugene Esmonde including his actual VC medal.

Following the inclusive buffet lunch, we then spotlight the Sea Fury with renowned display pilot John Beattie of Navy Wings. His presentation will take place in front of the museum's Sea Fury in Hall 2.

Finally we step behind the scenes for a unique, hands-on encounter with a selection of rarely seen pieces carefully brought out from storage by the curators from Cobham Hall. Each with its own story and link to the Sea Fury and Swordfish.

The team will explore the details, craftsmanship, and personal histories that bring these objects to life in an intimate, "show and tell" setting, where questions are encouraged and stories unfold piece by piece.

## Marc Farrance

Marc is the General Manager of FAAM and previously worked at The Museum of Naval Firepower, gaining 25 years' experience working within Naval Heritage. He has delivered several major initiatives including the Cobham Hall Environmental Efficiency Project in refurbishing, decarbonising and modernising the Reserve Store, including installation of two solar arrays.

Marc now has oversight of the entire FAAM operation.

## John Beattie

Navy Wings stalwart John Beattie is an outstanding display pilot, having been awarded the Honourable Company of Air Pilots' Hanna Trophy, for 'An outstanding contribution to the art of display flying of fighter aircraft'.

John started display flying whilst an FAA pilot, though his first display was actually in an AAC Westland Scout while on detachment. He subsequently led the Sharks helicopter display team, before joining the RNHF in 1986, displaying their Swordfish, Firefly and both the Sea Fury FB.11 and T.20.

After retirement, John flew for the airlines but today he will regale us with stories of his time with the Sea Fury.

## Steven Valentine

Steven studied Modern History and Politics at the University of Southampton and then worked at both the IWM Duxford and the RAF Museum providing talks on the Supermarine Spitfire and Avro Lancaster. This inspired him to complete a Masters in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester with a dissertation on the presentation of warfare in national and regimental museums. In 2023 he joined the Fleet Air Arm Museum as Curator (Archives) and has given talks on the Battle of the Atlantic and appeared in a History Hit programme on the Swordfish. Steven will explore the role the Swordfish played in naval engagements.

## The Small Objects Collection

Items will be brought over from the archive in Cobham Hall that are associated with the Swordfish and Sea Fury. These will include artefacts and items that personalise the stories of these two iconic aircraft. They will be presented by the conservation team so we can interact with them.

**Only SoFFAAM Members are allowed on this Members' Day.**

Park at the museum in the usual way and enter via the ground floor entrance (go past the usual entrance stairs) and ring the bell if the gate is closed. Congregate in the Auditorium and please abide by any instructions given by the Museum Staff.

Payment is by either BACs or PayPal at **£35.00** per person.

## BACs Payment

Name: Society of Friends of the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

Sort Code: 30-99-98

Account No: 00857987

Reference your payment SURNAME/MEM Day.

**PayPal** - Please email [heathjohn1955@gmail.com](mailto:heathjohn1955@gmail.com) to obtain a link which will be emailed back to you to enable you to make the payment

**Complete the application form below and email to John Heath at [heathjohn1955@gmail.com](mailto:heathjohn1955@gmail.com) by Friday 29 May 2026**

Name .....

Address .....

..... Post Code .....

Email .....

Tel No ..... Membership No (if known) .....

If you have any questions, you can email John Heath at [heathjohn1955@gmail.com](mailto:heathjohn1955@gmail.com) or by phone at 07743 483356.

**This form can also be downloaded from the SoFFAAM website, go to [www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk](http://www.fleetairarmfriends.org.uk)**