



# No 206 Squadron Association

## Newsletter July 2024



***President: Group Captain Steve Austin MA, BEng, RAF***

***Chairman: Squadron Leader Bill Bird MBE, MBA, MA, FRAeS, CITP, RAF( Ret'd)***

***Life Vice President: Air Commodore Bob Joseph CBE BSc RAF (Ret'd)***

***Life Vice President: Mrs Marie Emmerson***

***Life Vice President: Air Commodore Steve Skinner BSc RAF (Ret'd)***

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### **Editorial**

Welcome all to the latest Association newsletter, my apologies for the slightly delayed publication whilst I dealt with a rather pressing family matter. Since I last wrote, the Annual Reunion was held in May at the Sudbury Hotel. Thank you to all those members who took the time to reply to my email with regards to future Reunions; being Secretary can feel quite lonely at times as generally the volume of outbound correspondence somewhat outweighs the inbound! The general view was to go with the status quo, Faringdon, next year. However, there was a significant number who wished to see things shaken up and perhaps a return northwards to Morayshire in the following year. I have liaised with all my fellow association secretaries in an effort to deconflict event timings ... although May is a very popular month for maritime gatherings! You should have already received a Flyer for the Autumn Lunch on 22 November 2024; please make a note of the next Reunion which is set for 30 May/1 June 2025 in Faringdon. I hope you enjoy the articles that follow. I express my sincere gratitude to my 2 stalwart contributors, Duncan Wright with the Squadron news and my pre-decessor Andy Collins for his efforts. I am also most grateful to Stu Butler for another contribution. Finally, a planned article has not quite made the publishing deadline awaiting authorisation, so I have included another tale by Bob Denwood....that I hope my predecessor has not already used!

And that as they say is a wrap, may the rest of your summer be drier than it has been so far in Yorkshire!

*Keith Girdwood July 2024*

A warm welcome to the following new members:

Neil White

Simon Chafer

Chris Birks

Calum Langan

Tom Summerscales

It's great to see a couple of the T & E era join up...please encourage the others!

## 206 Test & Evaluation Sqn – Association Report

More leadership change in the offing as we approach a general election. What this will hold for us in the military remains to be seen but in the interim, we will keep pushing on delivering trials to enhance FL operations.

Departing the Sqn:

- Lt Col Ryan 'Doc' Heary departs the UK on promotion from Maj and returns to the USAF. He is taking up a position as a TP Instructor on the USAF Test Pilot School at Edwards AFB.
- Sqn Ldr Mat Moore departs after 8 years with the Sqn. He has been the stalwart of the ISTAR section conducting trials on mainly Poseidon and Shadow during his time here. He leaves us to take up a role as a TP Instructor with ETPS at Boscombe. With his departure, 206 will hand over responsibility for ISTAR T&E to 56 Sqn at Waddington.
- Flt Lt Ben Mason was an A400M Evaluator Pilot. He re-joined the RAF from British Airways during COVID when many airlines were laying pilots off. He was on a limited contract which he has completed and now returns to train to fly the Boeing 787 Dreamliner as a long-haul pilot.
- FS John Flynn has been part of the A400M Evaluator Loadmaster section for over 5 years. He has decided to leave the RAF and move on to pastures new. At the age of 57 he has decided to begin a new career in the civil service where he no doubt make even fewer cups of tea than when he managed an Atlas galley.
- FS Ian McIntyre joined 206 Sqn from the FL as an experienced FL Loadmaster to augment the A400M flight. He leaves the RAF to take up an instructional role as a civilian teaching Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineer students at the training unit formerly known as RAF Lyneham.

New Arrivals:

- Maj Rachel 'Tumble' Williams is Doc's replacement and joins the sqn as a fully-fledged USAF C17 TP. She will shortly begin her conversion to the A400M to participate in future air-drop testing.
- Sgt Ben Hollingsworth joins the unit from XXIV Sqn. He is an experienced A400M Loadmaster and rear-crew instructor. He will be a useful addition to the diminishing ALM section and will bring fresh FL operations knowledge to the T&E world.

Promotion:

- It seems that the world is short of senior officer Flight Test Engineers. Both Flt Lt Cam Stewart and Flt Lt Alex Dampier have recently promoted to Sqn Ldr. They leave the sqn without any junior FTEs to do all the admin. We will need to find some new whipping-boys! However, allowing in-situ promotion has prevented the loss of 2 FTEs from RAF Flight Test.

**C17.** There has been a paucity of C17 trials of recent times. That will change shortly as we have proposals for a New Air Drop System (NADS) on the horizon. While initially a desktop study, the prospect of increasing AD capability on the C17 is exciting. Alongside NADS, there are plans for new secure comms systems and the simulator has just had its annual review of suitability as a training asset. The assessment of simulators by T&E personnel informs the FL on exactly what the simulator can – and often more importantly – can't be used for when training crew members.

**Voyager.** An upgrade to components that make up the Defensive Aid Suite (DAS) means that the Voyager team will be busy this autumn. They get to take their aircraft in to the low-level environment at Donna Nook where they test countermeasures against specific threats in a controlled theatre. This is one of a very few occasions where they get to operate their airliner in a more tactical hands-on manner.

**Electric Training Aircraft.** The Sqn has now become involved in 2 projects to determine a possible electric propulsion training aircraft to pacify the those in power pushing a carbon neutral agenda. This is an exciting project which will give some of our TPs access to some real experimental test and the opportunity to work hand in glove with the

cutting edge of next generation aircraft design in the civilian sector. The 2 companies are CFS and Swift, they are focusing on an electric motor drive for a propellor training aircraft.



The Swift Electric Aircraft.

**A400M.** The big news for A400M is the completion of the Low-Level Parachuting (LLP) trial culminating in the Capability Handover to the FL. This was completed just in time for the A400M to take part in the D-Day celebrations where 3 aircraft

dropped parachutists to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day. Over 200 British paratroopers were dropped to the original D-Day drop zones. FS Flynn was part of the crew for the 2<sup>nd</sup> aircraft giving 206 some representation at the event.



80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day Celebrations.

Along with LLP, the A400M has also been involved with a trial to drop an Air Portable Fuel Cell (APFC). APFC is a 2-ton container used to provide fuel to marine craft by aerial delivery. Next on the horizon is Large Boat Aerial Dispatch (LBAD) which will see the first major capability milestone for extracted loads. LBAD will be trialled in cooper-

ation with the Joint Aerial Delivery Test and Evaluation Unit (JADTEU) who have just taken delivery of the trial boats and are working out how to rig a platform to drop them on. Expect some pictures later in the year.

**Social**. The Sqn recently held the annual Ladies Guest Night at The Clifton Club in Bristol. This proved to be a very popular evening with nearly all of the Sqn members in attendance.

Nihil Nos Effugit. Dunc Wright – 206 Sqn Association Liaison.

## **An Appeal for Assistance**

**‘Head-Up’ is Seeking Help.** This Charity looks to establish a ‘Retreat’ for Armed Service Veterans suffering Mental Health issues as a result their in-Service traumas. The driving force is a small group of ex-Army Veterans who have fought their own demons. They aim to establish a Retreat in a peaceful environment which is both laudable and ambitious; the organisers are seeking sponsors and fund raisers and look to obtain a rural site for the Retreat in the West Midlands. If anybody is able to offer advice, have ideas or contacts, or have nuggets of information which might be of help, ‘Head-Up’ can be contacted at [info@head-up.org.uk](mailto:info@head-up.org.uk).

## **Museum Visit – RN Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton**

The Royal Air Force is justly proud of its museums at Hendon and Cosford, but the Royal Navy have a collection of aircraft to rival, though not to surpass, that of the junior service. Taking up a significant portion of the north side of Yeovilton airfield is the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum. Well signposted, and with a reasonably sized carpark, getting to the museum is fairly straightforward. Ticket prices are reasonable, considering what is on show, with the adult price being £19 if booked on the day, or £15 if booked online. Seniors get one pound off those figures. Entry, however, is timed for the online booking and you are expected to arrive within 30 minutes either side of the time selected. For those of normal mobility, entrance is via the first-floor shop, up a longish set of steps. For those less agile there is a side gate where the visitor must press a bell to summon someone to open a security gate to the ground floor.

Inside the museum building there are four very spacious halls, each containing a varied collection of aircraft and other exhibits on a theme. Hall 1 is somewhat generic, with an eclectic mix of aircraft types, and giving access to the restaurant. That is rather limited in scope: you can get a decent cup of coffee, some sticky buns, sandwiches and a bowl of soup, but more gourmet options were not available during our visit. Moving into Hall 2 one finds a more wartime theme, with a section on the Battle of the Atlantic, the Korean war and other lesser conflicts. There are about a dozen different aircraft on display in Hall 2, with adequate, though not detailed, display boards, and at the far end is a small viewing room where the visitor can watch movements on the airfield. Access to Hall 3 is via the side door of a mock-up of a Wessex helicopter, traversing over a vibrating floor that is presumably meant to represent the vibration from the turbines of an aircraft carrier. Hall 3 itself is intended to represent the flight deck of a carrier, with no natural light but lots of floodlighting and a noise level appropriate to that environment. Plenty of aircraft are positioned in Hall 3, but the noise level was a little wearing, and we moved on fairly swiftly to exit on the far side. There we found that we were in a small room waiting for a lift to take us up the control deck of a carrier. The ride up in the lift, which is about the size of an aircraft lift on a real carrier, is enlivened with a film display explaining the activities on various decks. At the top of the ride is a long section with small dioramas showing the ops room, the approach radars, briefing rooms, and other offices that make the ship into a floating airfield. All of this gives a good idea of the operational elements of a modern carrier.



The final hall contains a Concorde, largely, I suspect, because they managed to get hold of one, for I'm pretty confident that Concorde did not operate from any RN carriers. Also in Hall 4 are several more examples of RN aircraft. On the first floor, which is partly a mezzanine floor there are smaller areas, dealing with the Swordfish, the WRNS and with display boards showing the history of the RNAS and Fleet Air Arm. Finally, and perhaps inevitably, one passes through the shop to arrive at the exit at the top of the steps down to ground level.

I found the Fleet Air Arm Museum to be well worth the entrance fee charged, particularly as if you retain your ticket you can use it again for free entry for the next twelve months. There are plenty of museum staff, mainly, I assume, volunteers who are more than willing to give information, guidance and advice on the exhibits to visit. We spent about four hours on our visit, and filled the time very enjoyably. There does not seem to be much facility for research at the museum, but one of the staff was happy to give me information on the various websites where I could obtain more information on any particular topic.

*Andy Collins*

### **I learned about flying from that.....**



Unlike the fast-jet world, you get to fly large aircraft once or twice a week (if you're lucky). However, this incident relates to my time as a Station Commander when, I could largely pick and choose my trips – some of which I flew as captain and some as co-pilot, depending on the task and how much preparation time was available within my working day. This particular day was very different. The Station was tasked to fly about thirty ASC (Advanced Staff College) students on demo sorties and, as we were short of aircraft and crews, the plan was to fly them in blocks of about ten on a single aircraft, with intermediate landings to swap passengers over. I was to be co-pilot for the first sortie and captain the aircraft for the second and third events.

We launched on the last of the three sorties with the intent of doing a broad-spectrum capability demo in the danger area just to the north of Kinloss. As was normal at the time, we were carrying a simple SAR (Search & Rescue) fit in the bomb bay comprising a life raft and two tethered survival containers. Given we were at light weight, once we were established in the danger area we shut down the outboard engines to conserve fuel and commenced the demo. Again, in accordance with SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures), we were listening to the Lossiemouth approach frequency – and it was here that we heard the call that would change the plan. As we ran in to conduct a simulated weapons drop, we heard, 'Mayday, Mayday, Mayday! Jaguar aircraft preparing to eject.' At this stage we had no idea of the emergency aircraft's location or the nature of the problem but, given we had a SAR load we offered our assistance if required. The response from Lossie confirmed the aircraft was local and that a SAR helicopter was being readied – hence our help was not required. We therefore continued our demo and all returned to normal. However, after a very short pause, Lossie came back with information that the helicopter had a short-term problem and it would be really useful if we could make the ejection datum ready for easy location and a later pick-up by the helo. At this stage we were still unaware of the Jaguar's location but, in anticipation of a climb and transit we restarted both the shutdown engines and did a quick



fuel calculation to ensure we could reach the stricken aircraft's location. At the same time Kinloss was informed and the reserve-ready SAR crew were brought to cockpit readiness in anticipation of a scramble. At some stage during this preparation an ejection call was heard from the Jaguar pilot.

Lossie then passed us the datum and asked if we could mark the position for the follow-on helicopter. The word 'datum' was quite important in this conversation. The navigators quickly plotted the position and we ran in at speed (for a Nimrod at least!) towards it. All lookout positions were manned and as many eyes as possible scanned the sea surface for signs of a dinghy – and anyone who has done this will know that dinghies are not that easy to see, even down at 200 feet. The first pass over the datum was completed with nothing seen and, after a quick wingover at the far end, we returned from a slightly different direction. It was at this stage that one of the beam lookouts shouted, 'Mark, Mark! He's 200 feet above us!'

As normal, the lookout's call also initiated release of a flare to mark the position – which hit the water well before the pilot splashed down! By this stage the helo was serviceable and approaching the area, so we were able to exit the position to allow the recovery to commence. The helicopter soon spotted our flare and the Jaguar pilot in his dinghy; he was quickly recovered back to Lossiemouth with only minor injuries from the ejection.

By pure coincidence, the Jaguar pilot was the Station Commander at Lossiemouth which, given I was in command at Kinloss, kicked off an interesting local media report. While we played only a small part in the rescue, the Staff College students thought it was an amazing demo and went away thinking our coordination was second to none! I don't recall OC Lossiemouth's exact words but he did make the point that all was going well during his ejection until he was almost run down by a Nimrod! The bottom line: 'datum' can mean lots of things so, in common with many things aircrew hear over the radio, don't jump to conclusions and, make sure you have assessed the situation as fully as possible in the time allowed before rushing in to help. As it happened, all ended well and the cooperation between our two stations was impeccable – with a valuable and respected pilot rescued from a very broken Jaguar.

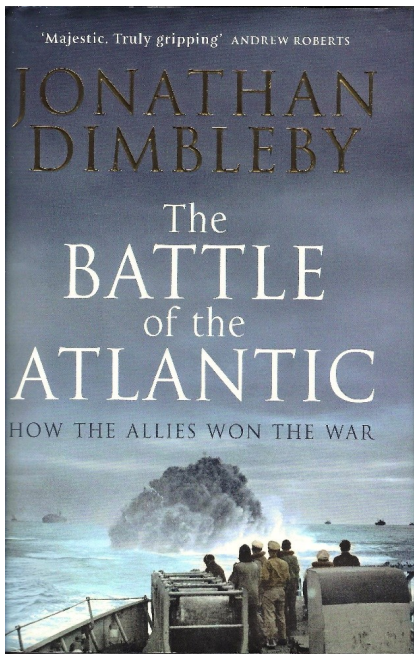
This incident shows exactly why in the flying business 'every day is a school day'. While incidents in large aircraft tend to unfold over an extended period, with such long sorties it is rare not to find something that contributes to the data bank of knowledge – something, indeed, that may have much wider applicability. That said, for a maritime patrol crew operating a long way from home, having time to think about the potential outcome of a series of 'happenings' is not always a good thing!

#### **AVM Stu Butler**

*Stuart 'Stu' Butler was commissioned in 1974. He spent much of his career on the Nimrod, initially with 206 Squadron at Kinloss, a unit he went on to command before becoming Station Commander at the same base. Including his time as a Jet Provost QFI, and as crew captain during the Falklands War, he amassed over 6000 flying hours. Stu left the RAF to join BAE Systems in 2008 and finally retired in 2023.*

## **Battle of the Atlantic – Jonathan Dimbleby**

Once again my local charity bookstall has been the source of a new book on military history, this time one close to my primary interest. A hardback book of 500 plus pages would, I hoped, reveal a few new snippets of information on the history of Coastal Command in general and perhaps of 206 Squadron in particular. Certainly Dimbleby has a good reputation as an author and is a reasonably prolific producer of works on historical military matters. This work ranges widely over much of the background of the Battle of the Atlantic. It places great emphasis on just how perilously close the European Allies came to being starved of food and military supplies from the United States, both before and after that nation's formal entry into hostilities. The strategic thinking by Admiral (later Grand Admi-



ral) Karl Dönitz is examined in some detail, as is his struggle with his boss, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, with Goering and with Hitler to get the U boats he needed. The implications of success or failure in the battle on other theatres of war are examined, particularly on the PQ convoys to Russia, on the North African campaign and on D Day. At the tactical level, there are plenty of accounts of U boat attacks on convoys, and of escort attacks on U boats, along with tales of the terrifying business of simply being an escort vessel in the monstrous seas that seem to have prevailed for much of the time. These reports go into some detail, and have clearly been well researched both from documentary sources and from descriptions by survivors. So far, so impressive as a work of military history.

However, it soon becomes clear that there is a blatant gap in the story: there is virtually no mention of the work of Coastal Command, certainly at the start of the battle, and precious little in the later stages. Dimbleby comments on a few occasions on the lack of long-range air cover, and he makes a great deal of ad-

verse comment on Air Marshal Harris' extreme reluctance to release even a few long-range aircraft for conversion to maritime patrol. The only mention of a Coastal Command engagement in the battle is of Wing Commander Thomson's attack on a U-boat in 1943, where the crew had to ditch and were rescued several days later. (see Naught Escapes Us pp105 et seq.) And even that event does not make it to the index. He gives no proper explanation of why air cover was so important. On the few occasions where air cover is mentioned he continually refers to "Bombers", apparently unaware that maritime patrol aircraft have an entirely different role, different equipment, different training and different crews.

This book could have been a welcome addition to the history of one of the great, and certainly the longest, battles of WW2. At first sight, comprehensive end notes, a good bibliography and a twenty-page index appear impressive. But when one looks deeper into those items it becomes clear that there are barely half a dozen works relating to air power in a Bibliography of over 150 books and articles. One must wonder what other important factors in the battle have been glossed over. Despite its readable style, I fear that this is not one of the works that I would recommend to others, and my copy will probably return to the charity bookstall before long.

*Andy Collins*

**Another Appeal.....The Association Website.....PLEASE KEEP READING!**

Many of you I hope will have seen the Association's website, [www.206squadronassociation.com](http://www.206squadronassociation.com)

This site was set up with the intent of providing easily accessible and readable news, reports and a broad record of the Sqn's history. A number of people, especially Derek Straw and Andy Collins, provided lots of invaluable information and photographs that have made the site what it is today and to these 2 gentlemen, I am indebted.

However, as with any website, it needs constant updating and regularly reviewing to ensure it delivers what people actually want. This last point is the difficult bit and primarily why I am writing this short piece. I need your help. Your guidance. Your thoughts.

There is little doubt that time is precious for us all and frankly most can't be ~~arsed~~ bothered to take 10 minutes of their time to look at something like the website and actually provide feedback. Yes we all have our own views of what we do and do not want but, how about being ~~arsed~~ bothered for just a little while and letting me know what you think of the site, good, bad, indifferent and, if you are feeling really up for it, why not provide the odd photo or article or significant piece of news that I can add to the site and ensure it is highlighted to others?



Of note, while all things are possible, I am very wary of trying to sell the Association's 'gizzits' online due to security concerns and, to be honest, the amount of work involved. But, I am sure there are other areas or ideas we could explore. Would the Association want to set up a Golf Section? A Blog? A where are they contacts page? Etc etc etc.

Then there is the very important matter of cost. Websites do not come for free but when I wrote the site using Wordpress (from a background knowledge of these things of zero), it was probably the best value for money in the sense of ease of creating and maintaining a site that was attractive and to a degree, interactive, and secure. It was also by far and away the most popular worldwide website building software. There are now others of course which I will continue to review to see whether it is worth the Association's money to change to but this final point of cost is a very important one.

Today the Association is paying circa £180/year for the hosting of the website and its domain name which begs the question, is it actually worth it? My understanding in having talked to others who know these things is that £200 is about the going rate for sites such as ours. But should we just let the site die or leave it much as it is or perhaps develop it further?

I'm genuinely keen to know your thoughts. Go on, take 10 minutes of your time and prove you can be, um, ..... bothered. Oh, and responses by the end of August would be much appreciated.

I can be contacted directly on [snskinner@icloud.com](mailto:snskinner@icloud.com), or through the website or through the good offices of our Association's Secretary: [secretary@206suadronassociation.com](mailto:secretary@206suadronassociation.com)

**Steve Skinner**

## **THE DAY I BOUGHT MY LIFE FOR A PENNY**

In August 1946, I was flying in Liberators of 224 Squadron at St. Eval, as a Wireless Operator Air Gunner, and drawing to the close of 4½ years service. My demobilisation date drew nearer, and what had seemed an inordinately long time when I had been given the magic "demob number", had now very swiftly shrunk to a matter of weeks.

Having joined the RAF as a boy of 18½ with no civilian skills or qualifications the question of how "civvy street" would treat me loomed large in my mind. Everything I had learned over the previous 4½ years had a purely Service application. I enjoyed the flying life, but had no hope of continuing it with a civilian

The idea of signing on seemed very attractive, but now that the war was over, the RAF. was quickly reverting to peacetime status, and as I saw it, the free and easy Squadron life was tightening up somewhat. A new Station Warrant Officer was making his mark, tidying up the aircrew types, whose mode of dress and ideas of discipline were at odds with his peacetime aims. Working parades were introduced, which I for one did not enjoy. Looking back, I realise that all these measures were necessary for the efficient running of a military outfit, but I felt it was not for me, and decided to become a civilian again.

No sooner had I made the decision, than I was approached by a friend from another crew, a Warrant Officer second pilot, with whom I had downed many pints in the Mess and had flown on a crew with him as second pilot for 6 months. He had been invited to sign on again, offered a captaincy, and told to select a crew from those who were also staying on. He asked me if I would like to join his new crew as First Wireless Operator. The idea appealed most strongly, we were good pals, and flying with him would solve my problem of returning to a civilian life that was then an unknown quantity to me.

I agreed provisionally, and asked if I could think it over for a day or two. The day or two turned into three of four, and I could not make up my mind whether to stay on or to go out. Eventually I decided to spin a penny, once only, heads I would stay, tails I would go. I often wonder, if any others had the same decision to make, and took the same method of resolving it. If so, did they regret it later? I know for certain that I never did.

After two hours of telling myself - "Only one spin of the coin" - up it went, and I caught it on the back of my left hand, covered with the palm of my right. I dared not lift my right hand, deep down I wanted it to

be heads and stay on. I had sworn to myself that I would stick to what the coin told me to do, but now I wanted to thrust it back into my pocket unseen. Minutes passed, many thoughts flashed through my mind, the joys and challenges of flying, the nights in the Mess with the boys, the uncertainty of civvy street. Finally, I lifted my palm, it was tails. That was that!

Off I went to tell my pal that I was going out. We were both sorry, but the decision had been made, and he understood how and why. Within a few days, I had packed my kit, said my farewells, and departed without elation from the Squadron that had been my life and home for fifteen happy and exciting months.

Seven years later, while on holiday in Cornwall, I revisited St. Eval. Quite a few of my old buddies were still there, and over a pint of ale in the Mess, they told me how lucky I was to have done what the penny told me. The new crew I should have joined had crashed into the sea off Northern Ireland whilst on a night flying exercise. Of the 13 people in the aircraft, only 2 survived. The pilot – my pal Polly – and another friend, Ted Rose, a wireless operator. Ted was lucky to escape. The aircraft was turning away after a dummy low-level attack on a submarine, a wing-tip touched the sea and the aircraft cartwheeled at about 180mph, breaking up in the process. Ted was able to crawl out through a large crack in the fuselage whilst Polly managed to escape through the broken windscreen.

It amazes me that they were not killed or knocked unconscious by the impact as they hit the sea. The rest of the men went down with the debris of the aircraft. There were two navy officers on board as observers and two other friends of mine were in the crew, Ginger Darby – the flight engineer – and Paddy Ryan – the Wireless Operator to whom Ted had loaned his own personal Omega watch for his shift on the radio.

Once in the sea, Ted, whose life jacket had been loaned to one of the naval officers, was fortunate to find one of the fuel tanks that had been thrown out of the broken wing on impact. He managed to scramble up onto it and shouted into the darkness for any other survivors. Only Polly was there to answer him. Swimming towards the sound of Ted's voice he was helped up onto the tank. The submarine was unaware of the drama and cruised on at periscope depth. By a one-in-a-million chance, a Swedish Air Service plane flying overhead saw the flash of the crashed aircraft, and radioed to Prestwick Oceanic Air Traffic, who in turn alerted the accompanying surface ships. They immediately began to search the area with search lights and after about half an hour they located Ted and Polly, who had been lustily blowing his dinghy whistle. They were picked up by the frigate Loch Fada and taken to sick bay at Londonderry.

After treatment and recuperation, they were returned to duty. At the Board of Inquiry, Polly as the captain was held responsible, although the second pilot was flying the plane at the time. No doubt this would be entered in his log book.

After rescue, it was discovered that Polly's wrist was broken, and Ted had cracked 3 vertebrae in his back. Despite this, Ted continued with his rugby playing for twenty years. A recent X-ray showed no drastic problems. He has a back ache – but who wouldn't!? He was subsequently posted to 210 Squadron and served 41 years in various capacities, mainly instructing new crews in Anti-Submarine Tactics.

Polly was commissioned on October 5<sup>th</sup> 1950, and rose in rank. While acting as training captain to a Shackleton crew, he failed to notice that the undercarriage was not lowered while landing at Gibraltar. As instructor, he was once more held responsible. Despite these two black marks he was promoted to Wing Commander on July 1<sup>st</sup> 1965 and I understand that he was in command of a Vulcan Squadron at Cottesmore. I spotted his name in the new members of the Aircrew Association and wrote to him. He did not reply. He was a keen golfer and played on the RAF team. When we were young Warrant Officers, he told me that he had a cocker spaniel at home that he had trained to sniff out lost golf balls on the local golf course during late evening "walkies" – he had a suitcase full of them!

Ted is now retired and lives in Cornwall near our old squadron base at St. Eval – I speak with him 2 or 3 times a month and we “swing the lantern” about our youthful escapades. Pure nostalgia.

I still have the penny... and my life.

R S Denwood 2017

## Off Task—Sergeant Eric ‘Smudger’ Smith GM

As members will know, Sgt Eric ‘Smudger’ Smith passed away recently. By way of tribute, Eric who had previously served on Shackletons with 206 Squadron, the citation for the award of the George Medal whilst he served with 22 Squadron is below:

### AIR MINISTRY

#### CENTRAL CHANCERY OF THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD

St. James's Palace, London S.W.1.

5th March 1963.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the award of the George Medal to the under-mentioned:

3517105 Sergeant Eric Charles SMITH, Royal Air Force, No. 22 Squadron, Royal Air Force, St. Mawgan.

On 3rd November 1962, Sergeant Smith was a member of the duty helicopter crew of No. 22 Squadron Detachment, Royal Air Force, Chivenor. At 0710 hours the aircraft was scrambled to the scene of an incident at Lands End, where the French fishing trawler “Jeanne Gougy” with a crew of eighteen men, had run aground and was lying on her side with heavy seas breaking completely over her. The helicopter began immediate search for possible survivors and a body was seen floating face downwards, supported by a life jacket. Sergeant Smith was lowered into the sea, and succeeded in securing the body and bringing it into the aircraft, although he was repeatedly submerged in breaking waves, twelve to fifteen feet high and swallowed a considerable amount of sea water and oil. As the tide receded, signs of life were seen in the wheelhouse and the helicopter, which had gone to refuel, was recalled. By the time it returned four men had been rescued by means of Cliff Rescue Gear, but a fifth man remained in the wheelhouse, too weak and exhausted to reach the rescue gear. It was decided that the only way to rescue this seaman was for the winchman to be lowered through the door of the wheelhouse. In appalling weather conditions, with waves breaking continually over the wheelhouse and the whole ship rocking under the impact, Sergeant Smith was lowered into the vessel. He succeeded in reaching the seaman and dragged him into a position from which he was winched to safety. It was ascertained from this man that there was another survivor in the bridge superstructure. Sergeant Smith was again lowered into the wheelhouse and extricated the exhausted seaman who was also rescued. Despite his exhaustion and the constant nausea he was suffering through swallowing sea water and oil, Sergeant Smith insisted on making two further descents to see if there were any more survivors on board. During the whole time Sergeant Smith was on the vessel, he was in the greatest personal danger from the heavy seas which pounded him. There was the added risk that the winch cable might become fouled on the rigging of the superstructure of the vessel, which would have left the aircraft captain no alternative

but to cut and jettison the cable, thus leaving Sergeant Smith in the same position as those he had saved. Sergeant Smith showed courage, devotion to duty and utter disregard for his own personal safety throughout this hazardous operation.

### ROYAL AIR FORCE

#### GENERAL DUTIES BRANCH

##### *Appointment to commission (permanent)*

##### *As Flight Lieutenants (General List) :*

1st Oct. 1962

Alan Robert CUSHMAN (3128958).  
Clive Ernest EVANS (4163201).  
Norman John Grosvenor HODNETT (3521942).  
Alistair Sellar MITCHELL (2763388).  
Peter John ODLING (3515407).  
Barrie Anthony RILEY (2545076).  
Keith Ernest Walter SHIPMAN (2591334).  
Sidney Carl STERLING (586427).  
Terrence THORNTON (4093954).  
John VERNON (4174360).

##### *As Flying Officers (General List) :*

1st Oct. 1962

Ronald Gustav ALENIUS (2774499) (since promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant).  
Douglas Maxwell BARR (4230014) (since promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant).  
Alan Alexander BRUVN (4159109) (since promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant).  
Malcolm Askew HUGHES (2742290).  
Bernard John Michael LIMB (506099).

##### *As Flight Lieutenants (Supplementary List) :*

Ian Tait JOLLY (4054423). 19th Nov. 1962.  
James Norman BROWN (3149755). 3rd Feb. 1963.  
Douglas George CATT (4151282). 4th Feb. 1963.

##### *As Flying Officers (Supplementary List) :*

Terrence Edward WIGGINS (4187312). 22nd Aug. 1962.  
Peter Philip DALE (4106723). 22nd Nov. 1962.

##### *Promotion*

##### *Flying Officer to Flight Lieutenant :*

J. A. RICHARDSON (1805730). 28th Feb. 1963.

##### *Pilot Officer to Flying Officer :*

D. T. MAY (507068). 16th Dec. 1962.  
D. KING (586176). 24th Feb. 1963.  
R. A. RAYMOND (4163205). 1st Mar. 1963.

2nd Mar. 1963

A. G. W. VICKERS (1811943).  
J. J. WALTERS (1588963).  
A. TAYLOR, B.Sc. (507255). 3rd Mar. 1963  
(seniority 3rd June 1961).

## **Association Reunion May 2024—Sudbury Hotel, Faringdon**



**So if the pictures above tempt you for a weekend of good food, wine and company and you missed this year's event....put May 30– June 1 2025 in your diary!**