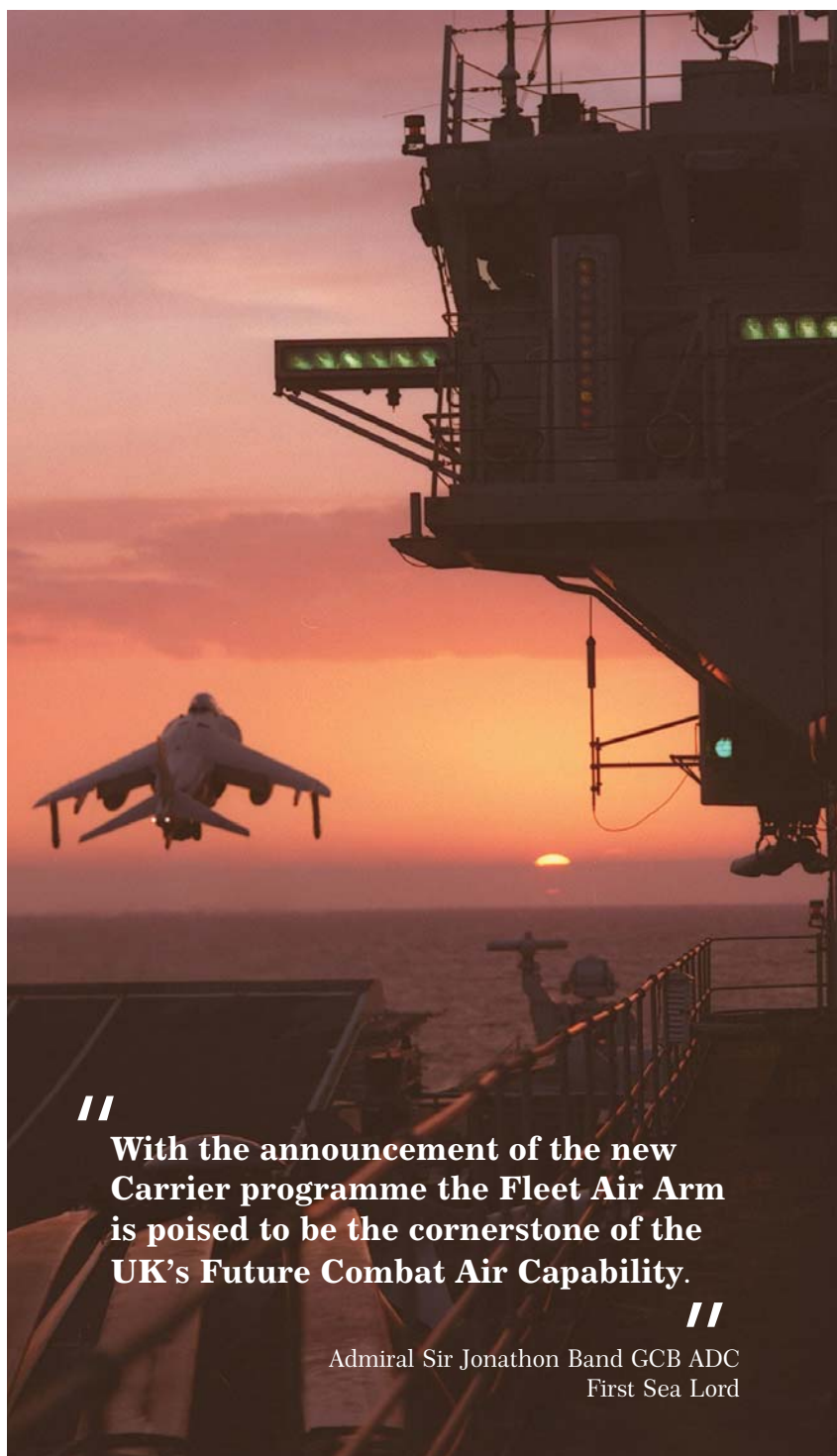




# 100 Years of Naval Aviation

FLEET AIR ARM



“ With the announcement of the new Carrier programme the Fleet Air Arm is poised to be the cornerstone of the UK’s Future Combat Air Capability. ”

Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB ADC  
First Sea Lord

In 2009 the Royal Navy will be celebrating a hundred years of Naval Aviation with a programme of events throughout the year highlighting the distinguished history, spirit and professionalism of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm and the enduring importance of Naval Air Power to our country’s defence policy.

From the early pioneering experiments of intrepid Naval Aviators in wood and fabric bi-planes, hurling themselves from temporary structures on the upper decks of warships, to the challenging demands of modern warfare, the men and aircraft of the Royal Navy’s Air Arm and their courageous, can-do attitude have become legendary.

The history of Naval flying is one of the most remarkable stories of the past hundred years and the actual Centenary itself will be celebrated with a birthday fly past over *HMS Illustrious* on 7 May 2009, the anniversary of the day, in 1909, when the Admiralty placed an order for its first aircraft, His Majesty’s Airship One, ‘The Mayfly’. The ability to rise above the sea and look over the horizon, to stay airborne for long periods and to carry crew and weapons was to be a turning point in naval thinking and the genesis of an exponential development in technology that was to radically shape history.

Although the term Fleet Air Arm did not actually come into being until 1924, the first four Naval Aviators completed their flying training in 1911 and the first launch from a Royal Navy battleship was achieved the same year. From those early formative years of Naval aviation to current operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, Naval personnel and aircraft have played a leading role and it is fitting that the Royal Navy will be celebrating such a notable Centenary at a time when our Naval Air Squadrons have never been in such high demand.



Fly Navy 100  
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Tel: 01935 456150 or 456530  
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[royalnavy.mod.uk/flynavy100](http://royalnavy.mod.uk/flynavy100)



## Future Lynx



**The programme for the Naval Variant of the AgustaWestland Future Lynx continues on budget and schedule to meet the in service date of 2015.**

Building on 5 decades of successful helicopter operations from Frigates and Destroyers, the Future Lynx takes one of the key components of Fleet Air Arm Capability into the 21st century, incorporating the latest design technology and state-of-the-art sensors. This will enable the aircraft to contribute to the whole spectrum of war fighting, peacemaking and peacekeeping operations expected of maritime forces for the next 30 years.

Combined with the Future Air-to-Surface Guided Weapon, the Future Lynx will be capable of providing Force Protection, Maritime Security and delivering Maritime Strike against the plethora of potential threats facing allied maritime forces in all environments. 'The challenges of maritime security impact on all our lives' said Admiral Simon Charlier, Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm. 'The Future Lynx will be a key constituent of the Royal Navy's ability to control and exploit the Maritime environment.'

## First Sea Lord Praises Joint Strike Fighter Programme

**First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB ADC has welcomed the first development Short Takeoff, Vertical Landing (STOVL) aircraft off the production line at Lockheed Martin, Fort Worth, USA. The Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) will be operated by the RN and RAF crews from the UK's two new aircraft carriers due to enter service in 2014.**

In all, 138 F-35B STOVL versions of the aircraft will be bought for both the RN and RAF crews who will fly them as part of the successor programme for Joint Force Harrier. The £150bn JSF programme will transform UK defence aviation.

Speaking during a visit to Lockheed Martin, Admiral Band endorsed the UK's commitment to JSF as the optimum solution to operate from future carriers. 'It is a phenomenally exciting prospect and early indications are very encouraging. We look forward to working closely with Lockheed Martin and their senior partners BAE Systems and Rolls Royce, as the programme matures.'



JSF will replace the capability now provided by the Harrier GR7/9 and form a significant part of the UK's future combat air capability.

'The aircraft will provide a different league of capability combined with the new carriers,' said Rear Admiral Simon Charlier, Chief of Staff (Aviation) and Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm. 'As a fifth generation strike aircraft it will be world beating and allow UK defence to integrate the unique strengths of sea power and air power.'



## Go-Ahead for Carriers

**The signing of the contract between the MOD and industry in July for the two new aircraft carriers was a milestone date for the Royal Navy and the Fleet Air Arm marking an important step forward in the Carrier Strike programme.**

The Fleet Air Arm will play a central role in the introduction-into-service and operation of the carriers to be named HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales when they enter service in 2014 and 2016 respectively. In World War II aircraft carriers were seldom out of the news and their dominance in the great carrier actions of history have proved the inherent strengths of Maritime Air Power time and time again.

'The new aircraft carriers will be the largest and most potent warships ever designed and built in the UK,' said First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band. 'Together with their embarked aircraft they will provide the UK with a potent and powerful world-class joint expeditionary carrier force that will deliver air power in support of the full range of future operations at sea, in the air and on land.'



## Rear Admiral Simon Charlier

Chief of Staff (Aviation)  
and Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm

**Welcome to the first of a series of Newsletters to promote the Royal Navy Centenary of Naval Aviation in 2009. Naval aviation is the term most readily associated with the hazardous business of flying from moving decks at sea and the history of Naval aviation from 1909 to the present day is a story both inspiring and humbling in equal measure.**

There are many anecdotal tales of the reactions of Service Chiefs to the Wright Brothers' new fangled flying machines but the decision by the Admiralty to order their first aircraft, HM Airship Number One on 7 May 1909 transformed the Royal Navy's role from traditional surface warfare to the use of Air Power from the sea.

The advances in Naval aviation were incredibly rapid leading to the formation of the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps in 1912 and the formation of the Royal Naval Air Service in 1914. This was the official recognition and beginning of naval aviation in its own right, and is represented today by the Fleet Air Arm. By the end of the First World War, the Royal Naval Air Service had played a major role in the Dardanelles Campaign, conducted the first ever attacks against warships using Royal Naval Air Service seaplanes and taken the fight against the Zeppelins to Germany.

At its height in 1945, the Fleet Air Arm comprised some 78,000 people, 3,700 aircraft, 59 aircraft carriers and 56 Naval Air Stations around the world. The rapid advances in technology and the innovative spirit that led to the angled flight deck, the steam catapult, the mirror landing site, the ski jump and the revolutionary Harrier Jump Jet has led to many notable Fleet Air Arm firsts and since the Second World War, flight decks and embarked helicopters have been an integral part of the fighting capability of almost every ship in the Royal Navy.

From the iconic action against the Italian fleet at Taranto in 1940 to today's era of joint and international operations, Naval Air Power has proved a formidable defence asset. Currently, in Autumn 2008, the Fleet Air Arm is deployed in unprecedented numbers in support of operations in Afghanistan, with 845, 846, 847 and elements of 848 Naval Air Squadrons supporting ground forces and the Harriers of the Naval Strike Wing delivering active ordnance over enemy positions.

In addition to the Fly Navy 100 programme of events numerous other activities, dinners and reunions are being planned throughout 2009 by the Royal Naval Air Stations, the many Fleet Air Arm Associations and affiliated Service and aviation organisations. The Service in St Paul's Cathedral on 8 May 2009 will also be an important opportunity to pay tribute to the courage and supreme professionalism of the 6,000 Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm personnel who have lost their lives in the service of Naval aviation over the past hundred years.

# Programme of Events 2009



**Press Conference and Launch of Royal Navy Centenary of Naval Aviation, Royal Aeronautical Society**  
Monday 16 February 2009

**Mountbatten Festival of Music**  
19, 20 and 21 February 2009

The Massed Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines will perform the Mountbatten Festival of Music at the Royal Albert Hall

**Centenary Fly Past over HMS Illustrious, Greenwich**  
Thursday 7 May 2009

Afternoon Reception and Centenary fly past over *HMS Illustrious*

**Centenary Dinner HMS Illustrious, Greenwich**  
Thursday 7 May 2009

Centenary Dinner in the hangar of *HMS Illustrious*

**Service of Thanksgiving St Paul's Cathedral**  
Friday 8 May 2009

A Service of Thanksgiving will be held in St Paul's Cathedral followed by a reception in The Guildhall, Merchant Taylors' and Skinners' Hall

**Telegraphist Air Gunners Association Memorial Service and Lunch, HMS Collingwood**  
Sunday 17 May 2009

**Opening of 'One Hundred Years of Naval Flying' Exhibition**  
Fleet Air Arm Museum, RNAS Yeovilton  
Thursday 2 July 2009

**Centenary of Naval Aviation**  
Royal Garden Party Buckingham Palace  
Thursday 9 July 2009

**RNAS Yeovilton Air Day**  
Saturday 11 July 2009

**Fly Navy 100 Fly Past over Eastchurch, Isle of Sheppey**  
Friday 24 July 2009

Centenary fly past over Eastchurch, the birthplace of Naval Aviation and home of the first Royal Naval Air Station, as part of Sky Sheppey 2009

**RNAS Culdrose Air Day**  
Wednesday 29 July 2009

**Dedication of Channel Dash Memorial, Manston**  
Saturday 29 August 2009

Channel Dash Association dedication of a Swordfish Memorial in memory of the unsurpassed bravery of the Channel Dash Heroes

**Fly Navy 100 Fly Past and Reception HMS Illustrious in Liverpool**  
Saturday 17 October 2009

**Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance, Royal Albert Hall**  
Saturday 7 November 2009

**Royal Centenary Gala Dinner, Old Royal Naval College**  
Greenwich  
3 December 2009

Royal Centenary Gala Dinner in the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College Greenwich

Please Note:  
Dates may be subject to change  
due to operational commitments



1909 - 2009



# Naval Air Opera



## Royal Navy contributes over 40% of UK Personnel in Afghanistan

Over the next seven months, more than 40% of the 8,100 UK personnel in Afghanistan will be from the Royal Navy. This unprecedented number comprises over 2,500 Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade, 700 Fleet Air Arm personnel, flying either with the Naval Strike Wing or the Commando Helicopter Force, and 20 Headquarters and support staff. The Royal Marines make up over half of the UK ground troops.

For some it is difficult to understand how the Royal Navy can be so heavily involved in a land locked country without a ship in sight, but for the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Marines particularly, it is very much part of their established expeditionary and operational role.

Speaking of the considerable Fleet Air Arm contribution, Rear Admiral Tony Johnstone-Burt, Commander Joint Helicopter Command, said 'The Navy has not been in Afghanistan in such numbers before. Up until now, we have been split between Afghanistan and Iraq. The Fleet Air Arm plays a crucial role with Naval aircraft and aircrew forming a substantial part of our overall military aviation capability. They are such an integral part of the joint operation now, that there is hardly a distinguishable difference between the grey and the green – a real maturing of the Fleet Air Arm.'

The Commando Helicopter Force is a combined Royal Navy and Royal Marines force flying Sea King and Lynx helicopters. Their main task is to support the Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade.



The Naval Strike Wing Harriers of 800 and 801 Naval Air Squadrons have a well earned reputation for excellence, flying fast and low over enemy positions, bombing Taliban strongholds, undermining the Taliban's will-power and restricting their manoeuvrability. Since its formation in 2007, the Naval Strike Wing has demonstrated the diversity and adaptability of the Fleet Air Arm, operating successfully from both shore bases and HMS *Illustrious* and performing over 1,200 operational missions in Afghanistan.

### Naval Air Squadrons in Afghanistan





Being a key part of the Royal Navy, 3 Commando Brigade are an amphibious force which can deploy by sea and then fight on land. Commando Helicopter Force Sea King helicopters help to move the troops and their equipment around the battlefield, while Lynx Mk 7 helicopters provide armed reconnaissance and are able to call in targeted fire to neutralise enemy positions.

The flying tasks are diverse and challenging, calling for tactical low level flight by day and night in all weather, from ice and snow to sandstorms. The Commando Helicopter Force is a group of four Naval Air Squadrons but it is not restricted to just supporting the Royal Marines. It also forms part of the Joint Helicopter Force (Royal Navy, Army and RAF) which supports UK Land Forces generally.

Before deploying to Afghanistan the Squadrons completed pre-deployment training in Cyprus, Norway, Morocco, Kenya, USA and Oman; countries with similar hot and high altitude conditions to Afghanistan. In order to be able to operate in the desert and the mountains, the Sea Kings required a large number of modifications. These included advanced Display Night Vision Goggles, Carson main rotor blades to provide enhanced performance, new AgustaWestland five bladed tail rotor, a new Defensive Aids Suite and advanced digital radios.

'Commando Helicopter Force front line units are probably the finest in the world, renowned for their professionalism' said Colonel John McCardle Royal Marines, Commanding Officer of the Commando Helicopter Force. 'Much of their tasking is conducted in mixed formations of aircraft from all three UK Services and other coalition elements especially with UK or US Army Apache AH64s.'

Earlier this year the Royal Navy Sea King Force maintained a High Readiness Force Capability during the assault on the Taliban stronghold of Musa Qaleh in northern Helmand. Over the next seven months Naval Air Squadrons will continue to support the Afghan Army in 'taking the fight to the enemy', depriving the Taliban of their traditional winter rest period. In the true spirit of the Fleet Air Arm, however, 100 years of Naval Aviation will certainly not go unnoticed on the plains of Kandahar or in the mountains of the Hindu Kush!



Rear Admiral  
Tony Johnstone-Burt

Commander Joint  
Helicopter Command

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**For the Fleet Air Arm it is very much business as usual but there is no doubt that the Centenary of Naval Aviation will be a momentous occasion and I can think of no better way to celebrate it than being on operations in a joint environment.**

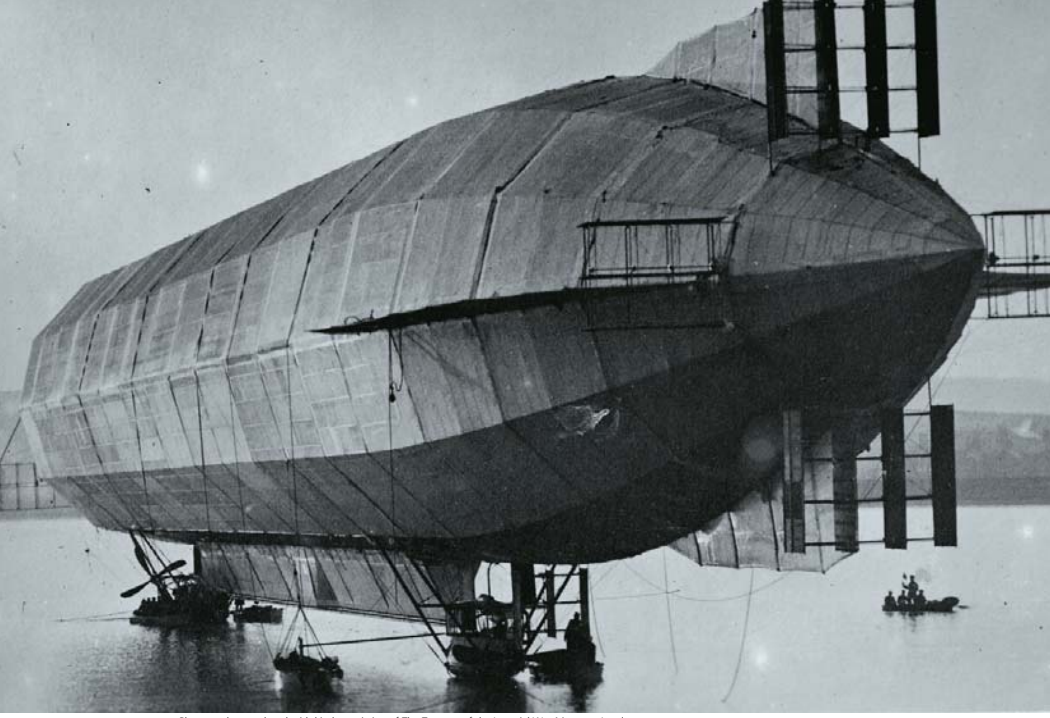
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tions  
in

Afghanistan





Photograph reproduced with kind permission of The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London

# 100 Years Naval Aviation MILESTONES

## 1909

Admiralty placed order for first aircraft, HM Airship 1 'The Mayfly'.

## 1911

First four Naval aviators complete flying training at Eastchurch.  
First aircraft launch from the battleship *HMS Africa* in the Medway.

## 1912

First launch of an aircraft from a ship underway, *HMS Hibernia* off Weymouth.  
The Royal Flying Corps was formed with Naval and Military Wings and the Central Flying School.

## 1914

The Royal Naval Air Service was formed.  
The first strategic air raid was carried out. Three Avro 504 aircraft flew 250 miles across enemy country to bomb the Zeppelin sheds at Friedrichshafen, an outstanding achievement in navigation and daring.

## 1915

Two Naval aviators, Flight Sub Lieutenant Warneford and Commander Bell Davies were each awarded the Victoria Cross.

## 1916

Battle of Jutland – first use of aircraft in a sea battle.

## 1917

First deck landing on a ship underway.

## 1918

First true aircraft carrier *HMS Argus* commissioned.  
RNAS and Royal Flying Corps merge to form the RAF.

## 1923

*HMS Hermes* commissioned – the first aircraft carrier to be designed as such. First with an island.

## 1924

The Fleet Air Arm of the RAF was formed.

## 1937

The Fleet Air Arm returned to Admiralty control.

## 1939

Lieutenant McEwen in a Skua of 803 Naval Air Squadron shot down the first German aircraft of WW2.

## 1941

Nine Swordfish from *HMS Victorious* made a night attack on the German battleship *Bismarck* crippling her steering control.



## 1940 – The Battle of Taranto

On the night of 11 November 1940, 20 Royal Navy Swordfish 'Stringbag' aircraft crippled half the Italian battlefleet at Taranto. The aircraft from 813, 815, 819 and 824 Naval Air Squadrons launched from *HMS Illustrious*, flew 170 miles at a laboriously low speed and pressed home a determined attack, dropping their torpedoes on the battleships, cruisers and destroyers at anchor in the harbour. The daring attack was an outstanding success and was the first time in history that an enemy fleet had been defeated without ever sighting or engaging the opposing ships. It was also the first major offensive against the Axis powers in the Second World War and later proved the inspiration for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.



## 1942

The Channel Dash is a story of unsurpassed bravery and dedication. On 12 February 1942, 18 young Naval aviators in six Swordfish armed with torpedoes attacked the might of the German battlefleet in the English Channel. They faced insurmountable odds. Crippled and ablaze before they got into range, they flew on, delivered their attacks and 13 men died. Lt Cdr Eugene Esmonde was awarded the Victoria Cross.

# Years of 1909 – 2009 ONE YEARS



## 1945

Lieutenant Gray DSC, RCNVR, flying a Corsair from *HMS Formidable*, sank a Japanese destroyer with a direct hit by a bomb when his aircraft was already in flames. He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown MBE, DSC, became the first pilot to land a jet propelled aircraft on the deck of an aircraft carrier.



## 1950 – 1953

During the Korean War, Naval Aircraft from *HMS Triumph*, *Theseus*, *Glory* and *Ocean* flew many thousands of arduous operational sorties.

## 1953

Navy Whirlwind Helicopters played a big part in the campaign against Communist terrorists in Malaya.

First helicopter lift of assault troops.

## 1954

The steam catapult conceived by Commander Mitchell OBE, RNVR and developed by Brown Bros and Company Ltd was introduced. The mirror landing sight came into use to assist the high approach speeds of modern aircraft. The first anti-submarine helicopter squadron was formed.



## 1956

The first ever assault landing by helicopter. Two squadrons of Whirlwinds from *HMS Theseus* ferried 500 Royal Marines ashore at Port Said.

## 1962 – 1966

Navy Wessex and Whirlwind helicopters flew thousands of sorties over dense jungle supporting British troops in Borneo.

## 1963

First VSTOL landing by Hawker P1127 on *HMS Ark Royal*.

## 1969

The first Sea King Squadron, 700S was formed.

## 1974

Helicopters from *HMS Hermes* evacuated British subjects from Cyprus during the Turkish invasion.

## 1978

First deck landing by a Sea Harrier on *HMS Hermes*.

## 1979

The first Sea Harrier Squadron, 700A was formed.

## 1982 – The Falklands

The Falklands Conflict. Naval Sea Harriers and helicopters played a major role in securing the territorial integrity of the Falkland Islands and achieving air supremacy and victory over the numerically superior Argentine invaders.



## 1990 – 1991

Royal Navy Sea King helicopters were deployed on Operation Granby in The Gulf, supporting the 'Desert Rats'. Immediately on their return from Kuwait they were deployed again on a major humanitarian mission helping Kurdish refugees stranded in Northern Iraq.

## 1992 – 2005

Lynx and Sea King helicopters and Harriers were deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina. 845 Naval Air Squadron was the longest serving unit in theatre continuously deployed for 13 years.

## 1998

Merlin enters service and 700M Naval Air Squadron formed.

## 2003 – 2005

Operation Telic saw the first use of the Sea King Mk7 Airborne Surveillance and Area Control helicopter. The 'bagger's' onboard sensors are so powerful that they were used not only in their primary air defence role, but also to detect land vehicles providing battlefield reconnaissance and detailed targeting information during actions on the Al Faw peninsula.



## 2004 – 2008

Sea Kings from 845 and 846 Squadrons together with RAF helicopters from the Joint Helicopter Command evacuated over 4,500 men, women and children from Lebanon to Akrotiri in Cyprus.



## 2006 – 2008

Royal Navy helicopters and Harriers from the Naval Strike Wing continue to play a major role in operations in Afghanistan.





# Merlin Force

The Royal Navy's Merlin helicopter force, based at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall, is deployed on operations with the Fleet worldwide. Weighing over 14 tonnes and almost 23 metres in length, the Merlin helicopter is a formidably capable and agile aircraft. Able to fly at speeds in excess of 150 knots and with a range of over 600 miles its primary roles are Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare and surveillance. Additionally, the aircraft performs the secondary roles of troop transport, load lifting, search and rescue, and communications flights.

The Merlin Force is divided into four Naval Air Squadrons. 824 Naval Air Squadron is the Merlin training unit providing fully trained aircrew and engineers to the front line squadrons 814, 820 and 829 who provide Merlin to the Fleet. The Merlin Force is currently engaged in a high tempo of operations. 814 NAS has recently returned from a successful deployment with six aircraft in *HMS Illustrious* for Op Orion '08, whilst 820 NAS has supported the ongoing detachment of Merlin aircraft to Seeb in Oman which contributes a significant part to the Royal Navy's effort in the Persian Gulf. 814 NAS has recently taken over this task whilst 820 NAS has returned to the UK to focus on its more traditional ASW role and a future deployment.

Test and Evaluation Centre (AUTEC) in the Caribbean.

As Merlin approaches its first decade of service with the Royal Navy, a number of crucial equipment updates are planned over the next five years to ensure that the aircraft remains at the cutting edge of helicopter technology. The £750 million Merlin Capability Sustainment Programme will include complete refurbishment of the cockpit and rear console areas and the installation of new larger, touch widescreen displays that are fully Night Vision Goggle capable. Flight, Mission and Sensor system software will also be overhauled and will feature improved Human Machine Interface as well as open system architecture



829 NAS is also very active and provides support for the Merlin flights embarked in Type 23 Frigates. *HMS Lancaster* and *HMS Northumberland* flights are currently deployed on operations in the Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and Atlantic Ocean, whilst *HMS Richmond* flight has recently returned from highly productive trials at the Atlantic Undersea

to enable future updates and modifications to be undertaken more easily. The whole programme is due to be completed by 2013.

Merlin is an integral part of today's modern Fleet Air Arm and is set to remain so for a great many years to come.



## Aircrewman's Association

Helicopters are the multi-purpose workhorses of the Fleet Air Arm and in the back seats and aircraft cabins you will nearly always find an Aircrewman. Naval Aircrewmen have distinguished themselves in many conflicts around the world but it is probably in the Search and Rescue role that they have the greatest recognition and renown. 'Naval Aircrewmen are among the most decorated personnel of all three Services' said Captain Andy Barnwell, Patron of the Aircrewman's Association. 'The first post war honour was awarded to Chief Petty Officer Aircrewman Gilbert O'Nion for the successful rescue of a downed American Corsair pilot off the North Korean coast in 1950. Since then there have been numerous awards for gallantry and exceptional endeavour.' The Aircrewman's Association is made up of over 470 current serving and former serving Aircrewmen with many members still flying in civilian Rotary Wing companies including HM Coastguard SAR operations or as Air Observers in Police Air Support Helicopter Units.

www.aircrewman.org.uk



## Top Air Engineering Student

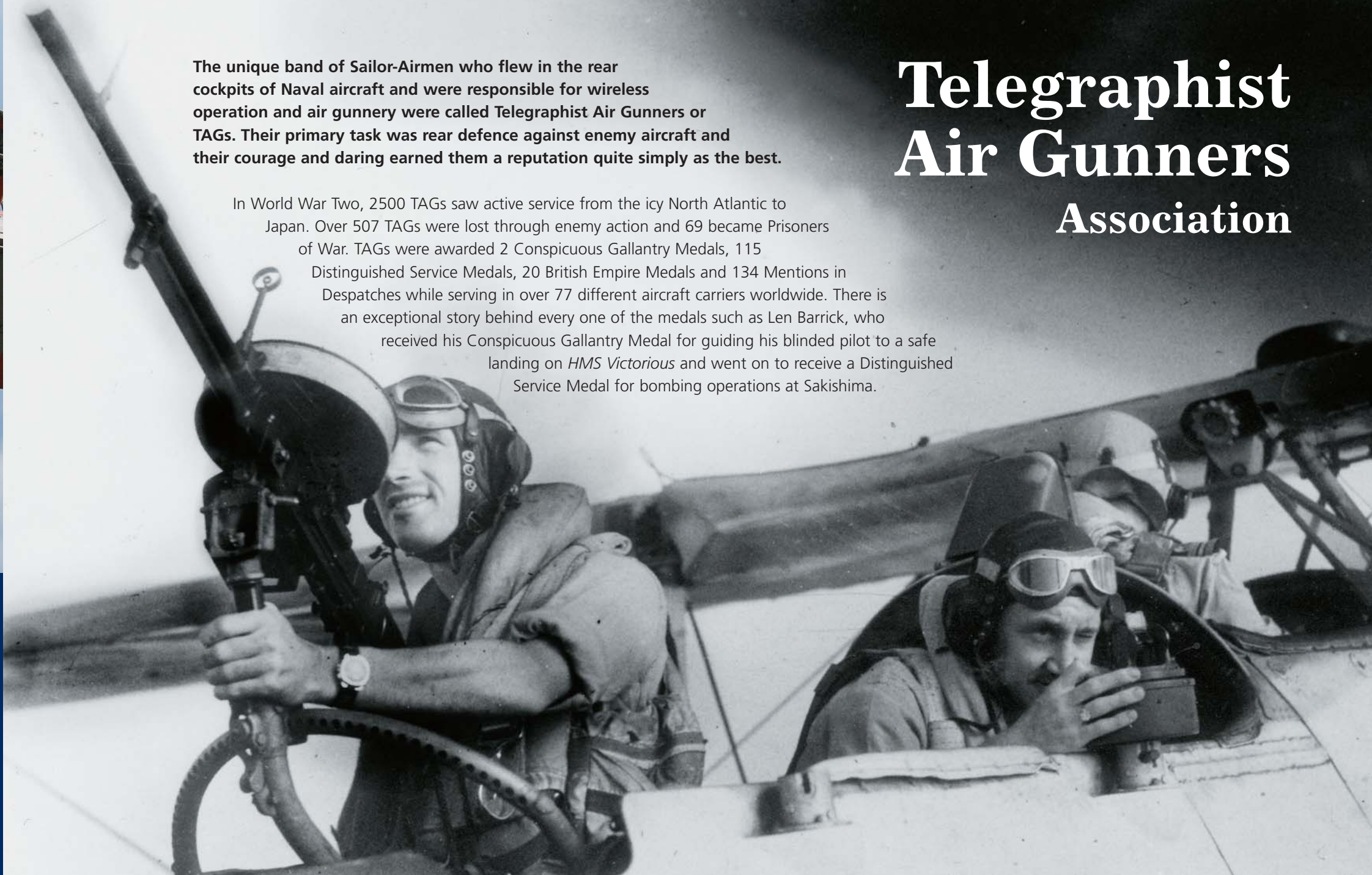
The 2008 Telegraphist Air Gunners Association annual trophy for the best Royal Navy Air Engineering Recruit was presented to Air Engineering Technician Kara Hillyard by Chairman of the Association, Mr William Jones, at *HMS Sultan* in August. Kara, who achieved over 95% in her initial training and over 97% in her Qualified to Maintain examinations joined the Royal Navy in 2007 and is now serving with 815 Naval Air Squadron.



The unique band of Sailor-Airmen who flew in the rear cockpits of Naval aircraft and were responsible for wireless operation and air gunnery were called Telegraphist Air Gunners or TAGs. Their primary task was rear defence against enemy aircraft and their courage and daring earned them a reputation quite simply as the best.

In World War Two, 2500 TAGs saw active service from the icy North Atlantic to Japan. Over 507 TAGs were lost through enemy action and 69 became Prisoners of War. TAGs were awarded 2 Conspicuous Gallantry Medals, 115 Distinguished Service Medals, 20 British Empire Medals and 134 Mentions in Despatches while serving in over 77 different aircraft carriers worldwide. There is an exceptional story behind every one of the medals such as Len Barrick, who received his Conspicuous Gallantry Medal for guiding his blinded pilot to a safe landing on *HMS Victorious* and went on to receive a Distinguished Service Medal for bombing operations at Sakishima.

# Telegraphist Air Gunners Association



## Fly Navy Heritage Trust

One of the aims of Fly Navy 100 is to raise awareness of the history and heritage of the Fleet Air Arm and to support and preserve the Fleet Air Arm's legacy of success through the work of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust.

The Fly Navy Heritage Trust, along with the Fleet Air Arm Museum, The Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church and the Royal Navy Historic Flight are the guardians of the Fleet Air Arm's history and throughout the Centenary Year the Trust will be highlighting and celebrating significant actions, conflicts and anniversaries with a programme of promotional and fund raising events.

The first of these events will commemorate the War in the Atlantic where in the nine months leading up to Easter 1943, merchant ship losses totalled almost 700. From then onwards all convoys were accompanied by an Escort Carrier or a Merchant Aircraft Carrier, each armed with the Swordfish. For the remaining nine months of that year, losses were in the order of 60, and in 1944 there were no ships lost at all when under

escort with air coverage. The longest campaign of the war, fought in the most arduous conditions, the Battle of the Atlantic against the U boat menace had been won.

Rear Admiral Terry Loughran, Chairman of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust said 'The same spirit, sense of service and sacrifice infuses our aircrew to this day. Flying from moving decks at sea is a dangerous business and the courage, bravery and tenacity of our people is the golden seam running throughout our history. We plan to start our Centenary Year by celebrating the Battle of the Atlantic with a Swordfish Dinner to be held on 25 February 2009 at *HMS President*. Please do join us in marking this most significant of achievements and help support us in keeping our venerable and much loved Swordfish flying.'

FLY NAVY HERITAGE TRUST



## Swordfish Dinner

Celebrating the  
Battle of the Atlantic and  
100 Years of Naval Aviation

at  
*HMS President*  
St Katherine's Dock, London  
on Wednesday 25 February 2009

Corporate Tables Available  
All proceeds will go to the Fly Navy Heritage Trust

For details please contact  
Lucy O'Flaherty  
Fly Navy Heritage Trust, RNAS Yeovilton  
T. 01935 842005 E. [office@fnht.co.uk](mailto:office@fnht.co.uk)



1909 - 2009



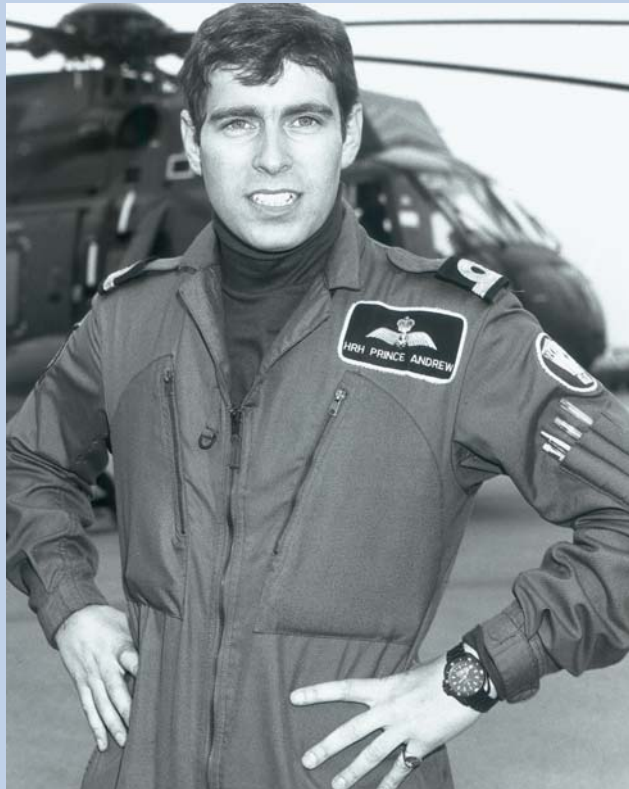
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## Fleet Air Arm Royal Pilots

Members of the Royal Family have a long-standing tradition of flying in the Services and His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales and His Royal Highness, The Duke of York have both served as front line pilots in the Fleet Air Arm.

The Prince of Wales completed his flying training on the Wessex 5 at Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in 1974 winning the Double Diamond trophy and leading a flypast of sixteen Wessex aircraft on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of 707 Naval Air Squadron. He went on to front line service with 845 Naval Air Squadron, a Wessex 5 Commando Support Squadron operating from the aircraft carrier *HMS Hermes*. He left *HMS Hermes* in September 1975 having gained over 500 flying hours and completed 200 deck landings.

The Duke of York qualified as a Sea King pilot at Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose in 1982 and joined 820 Naval Air Squadron, flying Anti-Submarine Warfare Sea Kings and seeing active service in *HMS Invincible* during the Falklands Conflict. The Duke of York served for over 20 years in the Royal Navy, converting to the Lynx with 702 Naval Air Squadron at RNAS Portland and then joining 815 Naval Air Squadron as the Flight Pilot in the Type 22 Frigate *HMS Brazen* followed by appointments as the Flight Commander of *HMS Cambleton* in 1991 and Senior Pilot 815 Naval Air Squadron in 1996. As Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm, he is said to be delighted that the Royal Navy is planning such a fitting tribute to the Centenary of Naval aviation.



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// **I am extremely proud to have served with the Fleet Air Arm for twenty years both on peacetime operations and during active service in the Falklands Conflict.**

// **HRH The Duke of York  
Commodore-in-Chief Fleet Air Arm**



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ROYAL  
ALBERT  
HALL

# mfm

## Mountbatten Festival of Music 2009

Royal Albert Hall  
19 - 21 February 2009

The Massed Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines will perform the Mountbatten Festival of Music at the Royal Albert Hall on the evenings of 19, 20 and 21 February 2009. The Festival will include a dedicated piece of music to celebrate the Centenary of Naval Aviation.



### The Massed Bands of Her Majesty's Royal Marines

Tickets available from the  
Mountbatten Trust Office, *HMS Excellent*  
T. 02392 547205  
E. mfmrm@dsl.pipex.com

## The WHITE ENSIGN ASSOCIATION



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The Centenary of Naval Aviation**

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**Flight Sub Lieutenant Reginald Warneford  
7 June 1915**

The first Naval Aviation Victoria Cross was awarded to Flight Sub Lieutenant Reginald Warneford serving with the Royal Naval Air Service. Whilst flying over Belgium on a night-time mission to intercept Zeppelins, Flt Sub Lt Warneford spotted Zeppelin LZ.37 flying over Ostend. He climbed to 11,000 feet and diving towards the giant airship, he released his bombs. As the giant airship exploded, Warneford's aircraft was turned upside down. Upon regaining control, he discovered that the force of the blast had ruptured his fuel pipe forcing him to land behind enemy lines. In true can-do-spirit, however, he repaired the aircraft himself and took off again in thick fog for the flight back to base.



**Flight Lieutenant Richard Bell-Davies  
19 November 1915**

Flight Lieutenant Richard Bell-Davies Royal Naval Air Service was taking part in a bombing raid on the Bulgarian railway when a fellow pilot, Smylie was shot down. Bulgarian troops were moving in to capture him, so Bell-Davies landed and picked Smylie up. Smylie squeezed into the fuselage between the engine and the cockpit and the laden aircraft took off just as the Bulgarians opened fire. Bell-Davies was awarded the Victoria Cross for being the first pilot to rescue a fellow pilot under fire. He went on to be a Vice Admiral during World War 2.



**Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde  
12 February 1942**

Lieutenant Commander Eugene Esmonde was told that the German battleships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen, together with 30 escorts were entering the Straits of Dover. They had to be stopped. Esmonde, with six Swordfish set course for the enemy. They came under intense and ferocious fire but Esmonde demonstrated outstanding leadership and determination flying straight into the onslaught.

He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



**Lieutenant Robert 'Hammie' Gray  
9 August 1945**

Lieutenant Robert Hampton Gray was a Canadian who became one of the Fleet Air Arm's most popular and courageous pilots. On 9 August 1945 he led his section of Corsairs in a shipping strike off the island of Honshu. Gray's aircraft was hit and set on fire, but he bombed his target before crashing into the sea. He too was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. He was also honoured by the Japanese who were so impressed by his bravery that they built a memorial in his memory.

# Naval Aviation Victoria Crosses

## Fly Past Over Eastchurch The Birthplace of Naval Aviation



**On Friday 24 July 2009 a formation of current and historic aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm will fly over Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, the birthplace of Naval Aviation and home of the first Royal Naval Air Station.**

The Royal Navy flypast will be the opening event of **Sky Sheppey 2009** a weekend of flying displays, events and exhibitions celebrating 100 years of British aviation.

The historic development from balloons and kites to bi-planes and aeroplanes that took place on the Isle of Sheppey between 1908-1911 is a remarkable story of courage, initiative, inexhaustible enthusiasm and astonishing feats of endeavour that not only established the important beginnings of the British aviation industry we know today but epitomised the early pioneering spirit of aviation in the Royal Navy.

Eastchurch and nearby Leysdown, saw the first experimental flights made by members of the Royal Aero Club, including the young Hon CS Rolls, who by the end of 1909 had won the Saloman trophy for staying airborne for one and a half miles. In the same year the Short Brothers established the first British aircraft factory manufacturing bi-planes under licence and in 1910 Thomas Sopwith won the Baron de Forest's prize for the longest flight from England to the Continent.

In 1911, the first four Naval Aviators began their flying training. Frank McClean provided the airfield and the aircraft, Horace Short provided the ground instruction, George Cockburn undertook the flying instruction and Eastchurch became the first Royal Naval Air Station.

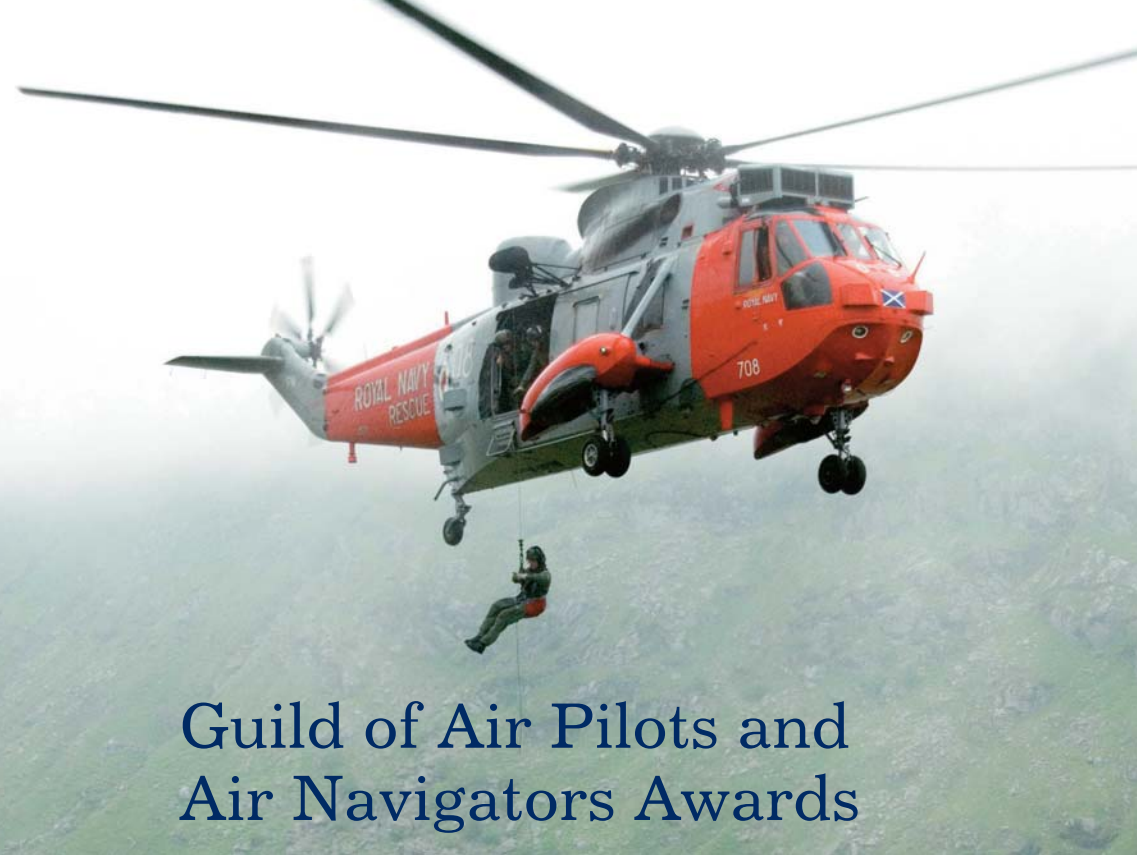


Photograph reproduced with kind permission of The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, London

Over 200 Naval officers volunteered for 4 places on the first Royal Navy flying training course. The 4 intrepid students were given six months absence from duty and told they would have to forego any prospect of commanding a ship. They also had to be unmarried and were to pay for any damage to their machines! Such disincentives seemed only to add to their unquenchable spirit of adventure. Their numerous exploits went on to inspire the first bomb dropping experiments and the first machine gun mounted in an aeroplane and fired whilst the machine was in the air – capabilities that have since become the bedrock of the Fleet Air Arm.



1909 - 2009



## Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators Awards

The Royal Navy Search and Rescue Flight at *HMS Gannet*, Prestwick in Scotland and 815 Naval Air Squadron based at RNAS Yeovilton, Somerset were both presented with prestigious awards by the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators at the Guild annual trophies and awards ceremony in the Guildhall, London last month.



### The Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators Congratulates The Royal Navy on the Centenary of Naval Aviation

The UK's premier organisation representing the interests of Aviators, GAPAN is a City of London Livery Company, actively helping to set and maintain standards of safety and conduct and contributing independent expert advice on all aspects of flying.

GAPAN Office, Cobham House, 9 Warwick Court, London WC1R 5DJ  
Tel: 020 7404 4032  
www.gapan.org

*HMS Gannet* Search and Rescue Flight was awarded the Prince Philip Helicopter Rescue Award for exemplary courage and tenacity in a particularly complex, hazardous and protracted rescue of three climbers on Ben Nevis in May 2007. 815 Naval Air Squadron was presented with the Johnston Memorial Trophy for an outstanding performance in the development of navigation techniques for the maritime Lynx helicopter in preparation for a four month tour of duty in Northern Ireland in 2007.

*HMS Gannet* Search and Rescue Flight is the busiest Search and Rescue unit in the UK responding to over 300 Search and Rescue missions a year. In 2007 the Flight responded to 359 call outs, rescuing 349 people. Speaking after the awards ceremony, Admiral Simon Charlier, Rear Admiral Fleet Air Arm, praised the mettle and moral fortitude of the crew of Rescue 177. 'It

was a rescue that pushed them to their absolute limits. Their airmanship, grit and sheer determination was exceptional.'



## ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL



Fleet Air Arm

**A Service of Thanksgiving to celebrate the Centenary of Naval Aviation**

**Friday 8 May 2009 at 11.00**

**Followed by a Reception in the Guildhall, Merchant Taylors' and Skinners' Hall**

*Open to all current serving, or former serving members of the Royal Naval Air Service or Fleet Air Arm and those who have had close connections with Naval aviation, particularly those who may have lost relatives or close friends. Places may be limited to two members per family.*

*Please apply to the Fly Navy 100 Office, RNAS Yeovilton  
Tel: 01935 456150 or email: flynavy100@btconnect.com*

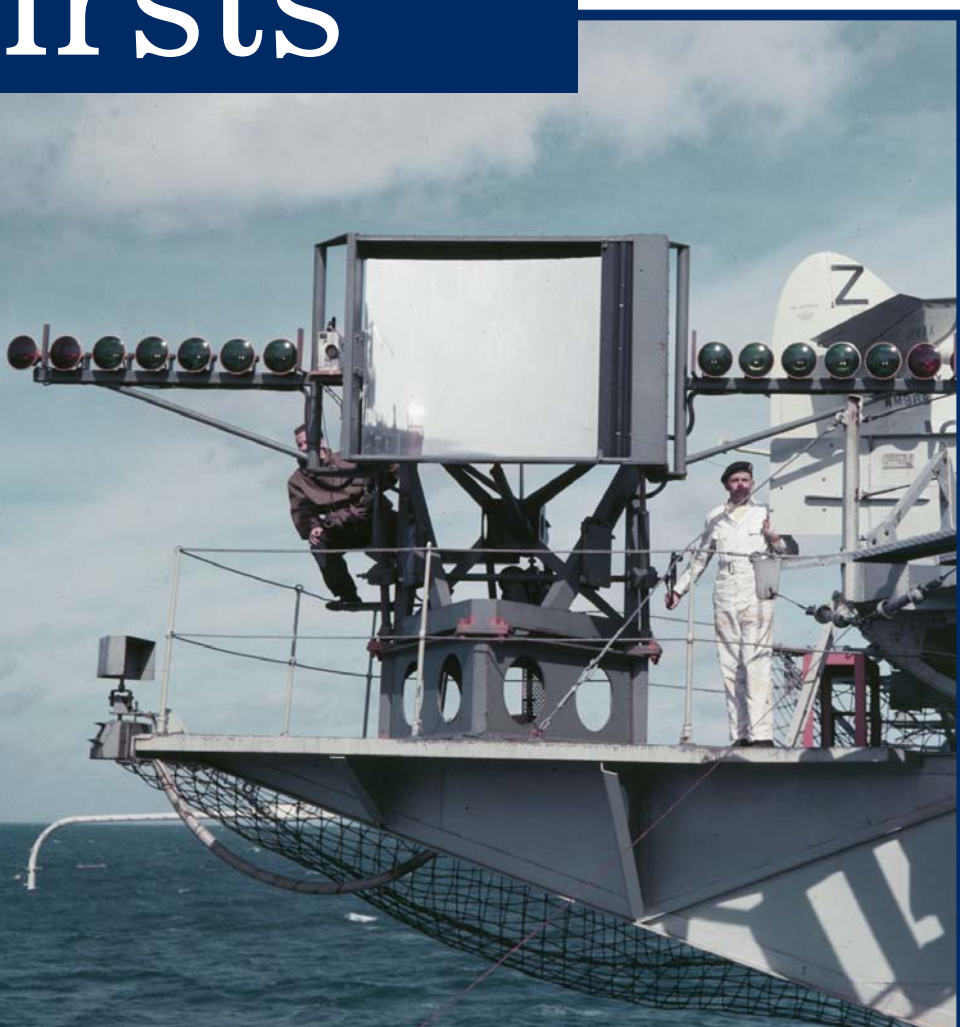


### Editor's Note

What courageous and enterprising adventurers those early Naval aviators were! They literally flew by the seat of their pants, but their entrepreneurial spirit, can-do attitude and Naval sense of humour has epitomised Naval flying for 100 years, giving the men and aircraft of the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm a special place, not just in the history books, but in the nation's heart. The Centenary of Naval aviation is a story of unsurpassed bravery, ingenuity and indomitable spirit and it is a story the Fly Navy 100 team is proud to tell. This is the first of a series of four Newsletters to be published quarterly during 2009. Articles and advertisements for future issues are warmly welcomed. Please email [flynavy100@btconnect.com](mailto:flynavy100@btconnect.com).

Commander Sue Eagles QVRM, RD Royal Navy

## Naval Aviation Firsts



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## Leading the way in Innovation

### The Mirror Landing Sight

The Royal Navy has a long-standing reputation for ingenuity and innovation, leading the way in inventing revolutionary new technologies to improve safety and operational effectiveness. Among these, the mirror landing sight, which first came into use in 1954, made an enormous contribution to the safety of high-speed approaches. It enabled a pilot to assess and maintain a correct angle of approach on to a carrier's deck by watching a projected ball of light in the mirror and comparing this with a datum of green lights placed either side. The pilot was able to immediately judge if he was too high or too low. The mirror landing sight was invented by Commander Nick Goodhart and is now standardised by many navies around the world.



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