



# Twenty Four

## The Magazine of XXIV Squadron Association

Issue 23

2016 is our 101st Anniversary

Summer 2016

**Editorial** - Sadly the Association is currently without a Newsletter Editor, a Secretary and vice Chairman. As a stop gap measure as a means of keeping Members up to date, this issue of the Newsletter has been compiled from postings already on the Association Blog for those who do not subscribe or visit the site.

We trust this will give you a flavour of what is topical relating to matters XXIV.

### Diary Dates for 2016

30 September 2016 (Fri)	Informal off base Evening Session - 8pm onwards for those arriving Friday evening.	The <a href="#">Hilton Hotel</a> , J16, M4, Swindon SN5 8UZ
1 October 2016 (Sat)	<a href="#">AGM and 101st Anniversary Reunion</a> - 11:00 hrs on inc lunch and Squadron Programme	<a href="#">RAF Brize Norton</a>
1 October 2016 (Sat)	Ladies Guest Night style Dinner with Music 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm	The <a href="#">Hilton Hotel</a> , J16, M4, Swindon SN5 8 UZ
11 November 2016 (Fri)	Special Association visit to Hawker Memorial and Somme	<a href="#">Arras and Ligny-Thillois</a>

**Centenary Reunion 2015  
Posted Sep 2015**



OC XX IV with Centenary Cup

The clouds cleared away once again to allow everyone to enjoy another successful Reunion at RA F Brize Norton. This year the Association were guests of the Squadron as part of the Centenary celebrations.

The picture above is of Wg Cdr Daz Rawlins taking into safekeeping the silver cup that had been purchased and engraved by the Association Members in honour of the occasion.

Here are a few photos of Association Members relaxing and catching up on a bit gossip in the Sergeants Mess prior to an excellent buffet lunch and a visit to the Sqn HQ history room.



Sgts Mess Group 1



Sgts Mess Group 2



Sqn HQ History Room

If you have any other photos of the day you want to share with us, contact the Association Secretary and we will post them on this BLog.

And that's exactly what Tim Gosling has done. Here are three hot from his smart phone.



Centenary Dinner Mess Layout



A400M Atlas open for Static Display



**"Fair Stands the Wind for France!" - 11th Nov 2015  
Posted Sep 2015**



Area Map to Ligny-Thillois

Background article about these visits from the XX IV Sqn Association's Nominated Hawker Memorial Liaison Officer – Chas Whitaker.

As Remembrance Day 11 November 2015 approaches I thought it would be pertinent to write a piece for the Association Blog about the visits that 24 Sqn and XX IV Sqn Association members, and their wives and partners, have made to pay our respects to our first Sqn Cdr, Major Lanoe Hawker VC DSO, at his Memorial in the village of Ligny -Thillooy. As you may know, this Memorial was erected in 2012 - due largely to the initiative of Flt Lt Phil Mobbs (then a serving C- 130 Captain on 24 Sqn at RA F Lyneham).

We had a very good trip again last year, but our party was very much the same team as has travelled on each of the three trips so far. So I thought I would try to encourage a few more to make the journey with us this year! First of all, a little background may be appropriate.

Although Major Hawker lost his life on 23 November 1916, his Memorial was actually inaugurated on 11 November 2012. This date was chosen because it was considered better to align the Inauguration with France's Remembrance Day Commemorations.

Unlike our own Remembrance Day, which takes place on the closest Sunday to 11 November, France's Commemorations ALWAYS take place at 1100 on the 11th day of the 11th month each year, (because this was the time that the Armistice was signed at the end of the First World War in 1918). So it is in an easy date for us all to remember! But it is not always a Sunday - and indeed 11 November 2015 falls on a Wednesday.

When settling on the 11th November 2012 for the Inauguration, this date was chosen - rather than the anniversary of Major Hawker's death - because it was felt more people would visit and pay their respects at the Hawker Memorial in years to come if ceremonies coincided with France's Remembrance Day.

Whether we will retain this tradition in 2016 - the one hundredth Anniversary of Major Hawker's death - remains yet to be determined. Next year is also the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and it may prove appropriate to align the 2 Memorial Ceremonies

Please give serious consideration to making a trip to visit Major Lanoe Hawker's Memorial in Ligny-Thillooy the next time you are in France or, better still, join up with us on our visit in November this year. And of course, we need a large contingent on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary in November 2016 of Major Hawker's Final Flight in November 1916.....

No matter what the reason that helps you decide to come with us, I am certain that you will find the journey very worthwhile - and the social dimension will be great fun too! It always is!

### **Association Committee Vacancies Posted Sep 2015**

After quite a few years of no changes within the Association Committee, we have on offer two posts as a result of this years AGM, [see MINUTES XX IV ASSN AGM 12 Sep 2015.]

Neither of the posts are onerous and you would have many quiet periods during the year.

Deputy Chairman - as the name implies, to take over in the absence of the Chairman at the AGM and other occasions during the year as required. To assist the other Committee members as requested in help making arrangements for any other social events and the annual Reunion.

Secretary - a little bit more involved but manageable as one of the team:-

1. Be the Postal Address for all Association Correspondence
2. Take ownership of the Association email account
3. Keep up to date the email address book used for maintaining email contact with the membership for Social events and News of interest.

4. Keep up to date the TOTAL Membership database records, i.e.
  1. Record New Members
  2. Make any changes to details
  3. Note Deceased Members
  4. Monitor Subscriptions for those not on email.
5. Take notes for the AGM Minutes and type up for Chairman's approval. Agree AGM Agenda with Committee.
6. Keep receipts and list of Secretary's expenses and submit annually to Treasurer prior to AGM.
7. Work with Committee for Summer Social and Annual Reunion and collate all returns, cheques and paperwork etc.
8. Answer and reply to requests for information or queries on matters relating to the Association or Squadron history, throughout the year via email or post.
9. Pass on any material to Web Rep for Internet publication on Association Web Site or Blog.

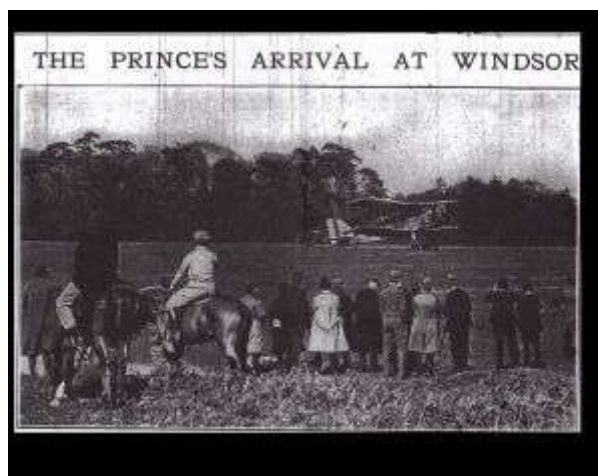
Contact the Chairman if interested.

### **Edward VIII flies home courtesy XXIV - 1930 Posted 2015**

This interesting article was spotted and sent in by Gerrie Forthergill-Lukes to add to our historic archive. Gerrie is not an Association Member but was on the Squadron in 1963 at Colerne and again at Lyneham 1981 and 1991. He writes:-

"On May 28th 2015, Channel 4 showed a documentary Edward V I11, The Lion King. In his closing words the Presenter said that at the end of the holiday in 1930, the Prince of Wales hitched a lift on an R.A.F. machine from Sudan to Egypt. My thoughts went to 47 Sqn who were based in Sudan at that time, and in fact turned out to be the carriers. From Egypt he sailed to Marseilles where he disembarked to continue his journey by air. 24 Sqn were his hosts. The 3 Officers mentioned have been confirmed by the R.A.F. Museum archives Hendon as being with the Sqn on those dates.

Congratulations on you Century, 100 Not out.



Prince of Wales Apr 1930

AFTER a magnificent flight from Marseilles, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales arrived home from Africa on April 25, when he landed on his private aerodrome in Windsor Great Park. Quite a considerable portion of the

Prince's journey home has been carried out by air. The Prince and his party left Malakal on April 13 in R.A.F. Fairey IIIIF machines and flew to Khartoum, via Kosti. The journey was continued on April 16 to Wadi Haifa and Assuan, and Cairo was reached the following day.

The Prince proceeded by the P. and O. liner Rawalpindi to Marseilles, where he arrived on April 25 at 5.45 a.m. Meanwhile, three R.A.F. machines—one a Westland "Wapiti" piloted by Sqn Ldr Don, and the others, a Fairey IIIIF piloted by Flight-Lieut. A. W. Heslop and another "Wapiti" piloted by Flying Officer H. W. Pearson-Rogers set out from Northolt on April 22 for Marseilles, where they arrived on April 24, for it was announced that, weather permitting, the Prince would make the last stage of the journey home by air.

Thus, immediately the Rawalpindi docked, the Prince, who wore a light grey suit with a grey-blue pull-over, and his party motored to the Marignane aerodrome, where the three R.A.F. machines were in readiness. At 7.35 a.m. the three machines started off, the Prince in the "Wapiti" piloted by Sqn Ld. Don. At 9 a.m. they landed at Bron Aerodrome, Lyons, to refuel, having covered the 175 miles from Marseilles in 1 hr. 30 min. Here Twenty-five minutes later the flight was resumed, and the next stop was Le Bourget. No members of the public were allowed on the ground, but the Prince was greeted by the British Ambassador, Lord Tyrrell, and officers of the 34th Air Regiment.

After luncheon, at the regimental mess, several officers asked the Prince to sign their pilot cards, which he did, but when, shortly after, some 40 more made the same request, he smilingly said he was afraid he would have to leave that for a future occasion. At 1.45 p.m., amid enthusiastic cheers, the Prince set off again, escorted by nine French aeroplanes led by Capt. Lackeman. The French coast was crossed at 3 p.m. at Grisnez, where the French escort left them, and in "exchange" a R.A.F. flying-boat took over escort duties across the Channel.

The crossing took 15 minutes, and on reaching the English coast nine "Siskins" of No. 25 Squadron (Hawkinge) met them and escorted them to Windsor. At Windsor the "Siskins" and the two other machines which accompanied the Prince from Marseilles turned off and returned to their bases, and the Prince's "Wapiti" made a perfect landing, at 4 p.m., on his private landing ground at Canadian Camp (Smith's Lawn), in Windsor Great Park. Thus the 650 miles from Marseilles was covered in 6 hr. 10 min. flying time, or at a speed of 105 m.p.h.

After a welcome cigarette and a few minutes' chat, the Royal car arrived, and the Prince, together with Prince George drove to the Fishing Cottage to join the King and Queen, where the Prince stayed some time for tea and tales of adventure. Later the Prince went onto Fort Belvedere and thence to York House.

### **What's happening at Lyneham! Posted Oct 2015**



Main Training Building - Lyneham

Over the past 2 and half years DIO, working with its contractor Hercules a 50:50 joint venture between Kier Group and Balfour Beatty, has transformed the former RA F base at Lyneham into a new training facility for the army's Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), which is due to complete its move to the site from Arborfield and Bordon in early 2016.

If you have been wondering what has been going on at Lyneham, now MoD Lyneham, since you last went down the main drag, here is the latest press release from the UKGOV official site - read on.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dio-provides-a-new-training-facility-for-army-engineers>

## **Cambridge Flying Group operates ex-24 Sqn Tiger Moth G-AOEI**

**(N6946).**

**Posted Oct 2015**

An interesting email in from Andrew Wood, who trained with The Cambridge Flying Group, about an ex workhorse of XX IV Squadron circa 1940. If you can offer any help, please add a comment.

"Her first posting with the RA F was with 81 Communications Squadron, part of the Air Component of the British Expeditionary Force in France. Following the Dunkirk evacuation she was overhauled and joined 24 Sqn in October 1940. She was later transferred with other 24 Sqn aircraft to 510 Sqn at Hendon. Released by the RA F in 1955, our Group became her second civilian owner (and first civilian operator) in 1958.

As part of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of France, we have been investigating our aircraft's WWII RA F history. Whilst the 81 Squadron Operations Records Books have provided quite a bit of insight into her service in France in 1939/40, the 24 Sqn ORBs for 1940/42 which we have obtained do not shed any light on her activities with 24 Sqn. We would be very interested to learn of any information your Association may have about this.

Echo India (as she is now known) has been in regular use with us as a training aircraft since 1958. Hundreds of current pilots learned to fly on her or earned their tailwheel conversion at her controls.

Here is a picture of her taken earlier this month when we celebrated her service with 81 Sqn in 1939/40. We were joined on the day by members of 81 Sqn Association and the family of one of her 81 Sqn pilots, Doug Bevis (who also joined 24 Sqn, briefly, on return from France in June 1940)."



Tiger Moth G-AOEI

as a p.s. - various Tiger Moth serials appear on our more detailed aircraft listing page on the Association Web Site but not the full listing. In a stand alone document compiled by Simon Batchelor and presented to OC XX IV a couple of years back, G-AOEI [originally N6946], a MkII Moth is shown. - see extract below.

DH82 Tiger Moth K2568, K2570, K2572, K2575, K2576, K2578, K2579, K2581, K2582, K2583, K2584, K2585, K2586, K2587, K2593, K2595, K2596, K2597, K2598, K2599, K2600, K2601, K4243, K4244, K4259, K4276, K4277\*, K4278, K4284\*, BB802.

DH82 MkII Tiger Moth N6747, N6946, N6964, N6965, N9431, N9444.



## **The Tiger Moth "Echo India" Story - Pt 2** **Posted Oct 2015**

The story of ex XX IV inventory Tiger Moth "Echo India" continues with some some more details from Andrew Wood as follows:-

"The serial numbers of the six MkII Tigers referred to in the post are interesting as five of them (all except N9431) are known to have been 81 Sqn machines. Of these five, N6965, also survives (but has not flown for about 15 years).

Another of the five, N6964, was flown back from France by Doug Bevis on 23 May 1940; I have his logbook entries for May and June (kindly provided by his son, Keith) which also include his first flights in her at Hendon with 24 Sqn in June that year.

This aircraft was part of a flight of six Tigers which returned from St Omer Clairmaries on 23 May; along with the Lysanders of 2 Sqn, they were the last BEF aircraft to leave French soil. On crossing the English coast en route to Hawkinge they were fired upon by coastal defences at Dover!

IWM have a series of four photos of N6964 taken that April in France, one of which is shown:



N6964 in France Apr 1940

Finally, a still from my helmet camera footage of a flight in EI this May which shows the WWI cemetery at Pozieres, just a few miles along the road between Albert and Bapaume from the Lanoe Hawker memorial."



G-AOEI over WWI cemetery at Pozieres

**Association Diary - 2015 onwards**  
**Posted Oct 2015**

Wednesday 1st June 16 – Summer Social with pre lunch drinks with Heather and Richard Bates prior to Lunch at The Crown, Blockley, heart of the Cotswolds.

Saturday 1st October 16 – Annual Reunion, AGM @ RA F Brize Norton and Ladies Guest Night, Hilton Hotel, Swindon. You can even self book a room at a special rate (Use Booking Code GSQNB). The price per person for the Dinner with wine, port and music is expected to be £47.

### Four Rescued from Antarctic Ice Posted Oct 2015



Huddersfield Examiner newspaper cutting - Dec 1972

The contents of this post resulted from an extremely unusual source and a quirky chain of events. I was sent a small newspaper cutting from the Huddersfield Examiner dated 2nd December 1972 by my daughter's boyfriend relating to his mother and fathers engagement that year. Nothing out of the ordinary in that but on the reverse was the following headline – “Four Rescued from Antarctic Ice” and that a RA F Hercules was the aircraft that spotted them, leading to the eventual happy outcome.

This started the old grey cells working and after some nifty Google forensic searches, a link was tracked down to an archive copy of a news bulletin produced quarterly by the New Zealand Antarctic Society, entitled "Antarctic" dated December 1972. GOLD had been struck. In fact it turned out that Gold had in fact been struck twice as you will see.

The meat of the story is shown below but a link is included for you to read the whole of the article with map for reference and indeed the entire bulletin. [P264-266]

#### Men Drift for Five Days on Ice Floes in McMurdo Sound

For five days four men—an American, two New Zealanders, and an Englishman—drifted helplessly on ice floes in McMurdo Sound when their trimaran was swept into pack ice and had to be abandoned. Starving, frostbitten, and near total exhaustion, the men from the University of Canterbury marine biology unit at Cape Bird, were picked up from a small ice floe by a United States Navy helicopter on the afternoon of December 2 after an aerial search by British and American aircraft for nearly 30 hours.

On the evening of November 27 the four men launched the trimaran for the first trip of the season. Their last radio communication with Scott Base was on November 25. They were not known to be missing until December 1 when a helicopter made a cargo flight to Cape Bird. The huts were deserted, the trimaran was missing, and the last entry on the temperature recording graph was dated November 26.

Major P. G. Frazer, leader at Scott Base, who saw the men on November 23 when he flew by helicopter to collect the party's voting papers for the New Zealand General Election, immediately approached Captain A. N. Fowler, the United States Navy support force commander, who ordered a search to be made. Hercules aircraft from the Royal Air Force and the United States Navy, helicopters, and a Military Airlift Command Starlifter took part in the mission.



Ross Island

### SPOTTED ON FLOE

Nearly 24 hours after the search began the missing men were spotted by a trained ice observer, Chief Aerographer's Mate A. C. Boeger, who was returning to Christchurch aboard an R.A.F. Hercules piloted by Squadron Leader P. Forrester. Their small ice floe was then three miles west of Cape Royds. Their remarkable journey had taken them westward from Cape Bird, south through Wohlshlag Bay, along the Ross Island coast, and then westward again.

A United States Navy VX E6 Squadron helicopter piloted by Lieutenant A. Costlow and Lieutenant (j-g) J. McComas, landed on the ice floe, picked up the men, and flew them to McMurdo Station where they were taken to the hospital for treatment and rest. In addition to the effects of hunger and exhaustion, they were suffering from minor frostbite and snow blindness.

with thanks to:-

<http://www.antarctic.org.nz/pdf/Antarctic/Antarctic.V6.8.1972.pdf>

This is not necessarily a XX IV story, but it is a Hercules saga, although the captain's name, Pete Forrester does ring a bell. If you have any background details to add to this story, do "add a comment" to the post.

The thought did occur as to why the Hercules was in that neck of the globe in the first place. Its not as if it was a V C 10 a bit of course! The answer was luckily enough a few pages further on in the bulletin. [P269]

### ROYAL AIR FORCE HERCULES FLIGHTS TO U.S. STATION

Two Royal Air Force Hercules air craft took part in the summer Antarctic airlift with Military Airlift Command Starlifters and Hercules aircraft of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The R.N.Z.A F. completed ten return flights between Christchurch at the beginning of this month; the R.A.F. detachment made 20 flights, the last on December 15.

Arrangements for British co-operation were made with the Royal Air Force by the United States National Science Foundation. The R.A .F. crews flew home in time for Christmas with something new to talk about in the mess. On December 8 one Hercules flew to the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station, there to fly round the world three times in 12 minutes.

Squadron Leader C. M. Quaipe arranged a training mission to the South Pole for sentimental reasons. The air craft followed Scott's route to the Pole up the Beardmore Glacier. A Royal Air Force officer attached to the United States Navy's VX E6 Squadron flew to the South Pole as a navigator in the 1961-62

season, and on January 6, 1958, Squadron Leader John Lewis flew a single-engined de Havilland Otter from South Ice over the Pole to Scott Base after Sir Vivian Fuchs and his party had left on the second stage of their crossing of the continent. But the flight on December 8 was the first by an R.A.F. Hercules and its crew.

Once again, any additional details would be of interest to our followers.

## OPERATION LIMA TANGO - 2015 Posted Nov 2015



Hawker Memorial, Mayor and Pipes. 11-11-2015

Another excellent turn-out by Association Members and partners for the annual act of remembrance at the memorial to Major Hawker V C DSO RFC (XX IV 's first OC) in the French village of Ligny-Thillois.

A total of nineteen assembled for dinner in Arras on 10 November with the same number sitting down for a good lunch in Bapaume after the various ceremonies on 11 November. The Mayor and village council once again extended generous hospitality both before and after lunch in the village hall, where a musical dimension was provided by our Chairman, Sam Wright, whose playing of the pipes was much appreciated by one and all. Sam also piped at the ceremonies, adding his own version of the Marseillaise to that played by the Mayor's grandson on his trumpet.

For once, the weather was mild and no brass monkeys were seen on parade, either at the village war memorial or during the one kilometre route march down to the cemetery.

[with thanks to Keith Chapman, words and Di Carrington, photo]

## End of Year Squadron Summary Posted Dec 2015

Here is a brief summary from our part time reporter on site at Brize Norton to sum up 2015 for the Squadron:-

"After another successful year, members of XX IV Squadron have been able to enjoy the annual review, Christmas lunch and Station celebrations. The theme for 2016 looks to be tactical, with work getting under way on both A400M Atlas, C 17 Globemaster and on training to increase the number of C 130J tier 3 crews. Training processes developed by XX IV are now being rolled out to the rest of 2 Group and indeed in some cases the Royal Air Force as the benchmark standard. The Squadron is growing at a rate faster than they could have ever imagined"

Till our next meet up in 2016.

**£369 million MOD Hercules support deal sustains 1,200 UK jobs  
Posted Jan 2015**



Hercules C130J - Crown Copyright

The Ministry of Defence has agreed a £369 million deal for the continued in-service support of the RA F Hercules C-130J fleet, securing around 1,200 UK jobs until 2022.

The Hercules aircraft – one of the RA F's workhorses – are a vital part of its transport fleet, carrying troops, supplies and equipment in support of operations around the world. Recently, they have been involved in humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq, Nepal and South Sudan.

Click for full article <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/369-million-mod-hercules-support-deal-sustains-1200-uk-jobs>

**A Magical piece of History  
Posted Feb 2016**

Hope you like this post sent in by Keith Chapman which shows the "other" Lancaster out for the day around Toronto.

"This is for all my friends who love aviation and historic aircraft.

As most of you will know, there are now only two airworthy Lancasters left in the world. One is owned and displayed by the RA F; the other (featured in this video) is in Canadian hands. Both are in superb condition.

Watching this short video will lift your spirits! It certainly made a great start to my day.

Terrific aircraft in the museum too & very impressive people to maintain and fly them.

I loved the TV reporter's remark about the Lancaster's bomb aimer station: "Every airliner should have one, called 'none of your business' class!"

Wonderful stuff! Click on link below. "

KC

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2678274946/>

**Air Commodore John Lewis Mitchell LVO DFC AFC RAF  
Posted Feb 2016**

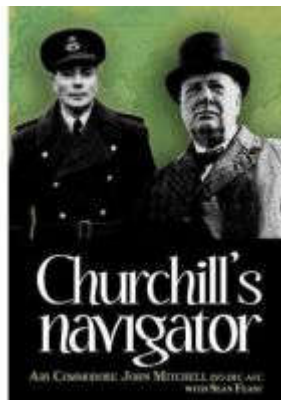


Print of York LV 633 "Ascalon" leaving Gibraltar

Some sad news received last week from Clive Mitchell, son of Air Commodore John Mitchell, that his father had passed away. John's association with XX IV squadron stems from him having been the navigator on Churchill's personal RA F plane, based at Northolt, 1943-45. He was the last remaining crew member!

The photo above shows John with a print from the original artwork of York LV 633 "Ascalon" on departure from Gibraltar and taken at his home in Lymington.

For those of you who have read our newsletter over the last 17 years, you will no doubt have followed John's exploits, serialised from his diary, about his time as Churchill's navigator. We had not quite reached the last page of his diary, part 17, set in August 1944 was published in Issue 22 of our Newsletter, but we will ensure the remainder are posted on line in due course.



Churchill's Navigator (the book) - cover showing John with "the Owner".

**Lady "Sam" Cheshire  
Posted Feb 2016**



Sam and John Cheshire

Yet another piece of sad news spotted by Association Member Tony Johnson was the announcement in the Daily Telegraph of the death of Lady "Sam" Cheshire, wife of Air Chief Marshal Sir John Cheshire on the 5th February in Dorothy House Hospice, Winsley, Wiltshire.

Despite many other social commitments, Sir John was Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey between 2001 - 2006, John and Sam supported the Association by attending several Guests nights and they would have been remembered by those on the Squadron during Johns tour with XX IV at Colerne on Hastings between 1965 - 67.

A card of condolence has been sent by the Secretary and a personal letter from our President.

Sam and John Cheshire

**Grateful thanks for your kind tribute to Sam Cheshire  
Posted Mar 2016**



Sam Cheshire

The Association has received the following note of thanks from Sir John Cheshire & family regarding Lady Cheshire and is shown below for you to read.

"Penny, James and I were deeply moved to receive many hundreds of letters, cards and e-mails about Sam. We therefore seek your understanding and forgiveness if we break with tradition and convention and respond to your kindness with this electronic vote of thanks. Please be assured that our thanks are equally sincere in this format – and certainly a great deal easier to read.

Your many moving messages of condolence and your personal anecdotes about (and memories of) Sam have, of course, left a deep and lasting impression on all three of us. Those happy memories will surely act as much needed relief as we face the darker times that lie ahead. We salute and thank you all for taking the time and trouble to share those happy reflections with us.

With grateful thanks and very best wishes from us all."

John, Penny and James



## St. Clement Danes Squadron Crest Slate Appeal Posted Mar 2016



St Clement Danes Slates

The XX IV Squadron 'slate badge' at St. Clement Danes Church is worn almost beyond recognition. The present Squadron Commander Wg. Cdr Daz Rawlins is keen to replace this slate badge.

This is quite a costly venture currently estimated at approximately £900. The Squadron will be raising approximately £400 and have approached the Association for a contribution if possible towards this cause.

The Association would be prepared to add a small sum to the "fund" but the Association Committee is asking if any members of the Association would like to make a contribution towards the replacement of the 'slate badge'. We are aware that some members already donate towards the running of the Association but there may be others who would consider this a worthy cause and would be willing to donate.

The reason why the Association fund can't donate £500 is because the recent purchase of the Centenary Cup and upcoming costs likely to be required during the Hawker VC centenary in France.

Once the slate is ready to be installed, we would hope to consecrate this at a ceremony at St Clement Danes to which members would be encouraged to come

Cheques may be made payable to "24 Sqn Association" and sent to the Treasurer

Mr. R Hale, 14 Weiss Rd., London, SW15 1DH

Many thanks

Sam Wright (Chairman XX IV Sqn. Assn.)

## XXIV Squadron Association - Summer Social Lunch Posted Mar 2016



Crown Inn Blockley

ASSOCIATION SUMMER SOCIAL - LUNCH MENU

CROWN INN HOTEL, BLOCKLEY, 1 June 2016

Prior to the lunch Group Captain Richard Bates and Heather assisted by Group Captain Keith Chapman and Peggy will host members at Milton House High St. Blockley for pre-lunch drinks commencing 12:00 hrs and moving to the Crown at 13:00 hrs for lunch.

Members may park at the Crown prior to pre-lunch drinks

The Secretary has been hard at work liaising with the Crown and shown below is the lunch menu for this years Summer Social.

Two Courses £15.00, Three Courses £19.95, Coffee/Tea £2.50

All names and choice to be emailed to the Secretary by 15th April.

#### STARTERS

Cream of tomato soup served with crusty bread and butter (V ,Gf, available with Gf bread)

Home-made pork paté with melba toast and onion chutney (Gf)

Halved Mexican Jalapeño Peppers stuffed with cream cheese and coated in a crunchy crumb with garlic dip (V)

Squid rings coated in a light and crispy batter, lemon dip

Cheese and Onion Quiche with mini Caesar salad (V)

#### MAINS

Pan fried Salmon fillet with lemon and white wine cream (Gf)

Oven roasted chicken breast with rosemary jus

Braised Beef, slow cooked in mushroom and red wine sauce

(All the above dishes are served with potatoes and vegetables of the day)

Tomato Pasta. Roast tomato, vegetables and fresh herbs served with garlic bread (V)

Broccoli & Cream cheese bake. Broccoli florets in a creamy sauce, topped with sliced potato and cheese (V)

DESSERTS (All desserts come with a choice of custard, pouring cream or ice cream)

Apple Crumble – apple compôte topped with crunchy crumble

Double Chocolate Brownie cake filled with chunks of white chocolate

Chocolate fondant pudding

Carrot Cake. Moist gluten-free cake made with carrots, coconut and mixed spices with cream cheese frosting and finished with nibbled hazelnuts

Eton Mess. Crushed meringue, strawberries, raspberry purée and sweet whipped cream

Cheese Plate. Blue Stilton, Cheddar and Brie with biscuits, apple and onion chutney (Gf available with Gf biscuits)

Vanilla and Chocolate ice cream

[Gf=Gluten-free, V=Vegetarian]

## Squadron Update from OC XXIV Posted Mar 2016



Sqn Colours

Reproduced below is a letter from the Officer Commanding XX IV Squadron, Wing Commander Daz Rawlins, to all Association Members, with the latest

Squadron news update.

Dear XX IV Squadron Association Members.

It hardly seems a heart-beat since the splendid Centenary celebrations back last year but much has happened on the Sqn in the 6 month period. I thought I would take this opportunity to give you a snap shot of what has been keeping XX IV Squadron busy and busy we have been! Excuse the absence of full names and ranks for OPSEC reasons particularly if you post this on your Blog.

Following the departure of our previous Squadron Association representative (Rocky) to ETPS we have had a re-shuffle and decided to send you Charlie, an improved and far prettier version of Rocky who also happens to be one of our most respected, diplomatic and personable A ir Loadmasters on the A ir Mobility Force. Together with Hoggy (No2 I/C) and George (another excellent A ir Loadmaster) Charlie will be our front-of-house for the XX IV Sqn Association Engagement Team and hopefully you will have already seen the benefits of this initiative.

Looking to the future, we are delighted to have been given the details of the Summer Social on the 1st June 2016 and although I am on leave, I am hoping my wife will issue me with a pass to attend! Notwithstanding this, we will do our utmost to support.

The EGM date of the 1st Oct is firmly in our diary and we have recently suggested you the use of the Atlas Building and Conference Room. I would be delighted to formally offer you this location; it is mobility friendly, warm and comfortable for you to enjoy. In addition, my team will seek to run the Simulators on the day. I would respectfully mention that there are steep steps to the Simulators and because of Health and Safety I could only offer this to those who are not of limited-mobility.

However, for anyone who falls outside that bracket, I will arrange something equally as exciting. Finally, our Squadron shop will be stocked, open and ready to fleece every available Association member! I have just ordered some red and black Sqn Lanyards for our RA F ID Cards which most definitely identify XX IV Sqn members from about 100 yds and of course, we still have limited stocks of Centenary Coins, T Shirts and our new Sqn print displaying the C 130J , Atlas and C 17 on it.

Before I get to the 2016 Ligny-Thillooy Hawker expedition, I must tell you about some recent correspondence from the Air Staff. The 28 October 2016 will mark the 100th anniversary day for the death of former German fighter pilot Oswald BOELCKE who served during WW I on the Western Front and died in a crash after colliding with another German aircraft during an air combat with British fighter pilots. The

Tactical Air Wing 31 "BOELCKE" and the independent tradition community BOELCKE have developed the idea of erecting a plain memorial stone in front of the town hall of the French City BA PA UME (BOELCKE crashed nearby that town) which should remember both Oswald BOELCKE and the historical date. By commemorating Oswald BOELCKE people should not only remember an outstanding fighter pilot but all fallen soldiers of both nations. The rescue of a young Frenchman by Oswald BOELCKE on 28 Aug 1915 demonstrated that even during war times there was still room for humanness among the nations.

The German Air Force has already requested the formal permission by the French Air Force. The respective mayor and the assemblymen of the electoral district Pas-de-Calais valued the project and have both given their general approval. Afterwards two formal meetings between German and French representatives have already taken place in October and December 2015. As of now it is intended to hold a small ceremony with delegations of both the German Air Force and the Armée de l'Air on 28 October 2016. However, since Oswald BOELCKE dies during air combat with British fighter pilots (not to forget the Royal Flying Corps dropped a wreath a day later "To the memory of Captain Boelke, a brave and chivalrous foe" both Germany and France would highly welcome the participation of a RAF delegation on this occasion. XXIV Squadron has been chosen to receive this honour and I will lead a small party out to the event.

Of course, the 100th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme and of Hawker being shot down is a significant event in the Squadron calendar. The 11th November event is firmly in our thinking and Charlie and George will work up viable options as well as considering some of your excellent suggestions. You can assume the Squadron Standard will attend providing I can get clearance to allow it to leave the UK. I will also seek to gain permission for a flypast on the Friday but because this is a working day, it rather depends on the training programme.

Optimistically, I would like to think we have a strong case given the ample notice you have given. We will tie in the Squadron's contribution with a wider Staff Ride to study the Somme so it is likely we will be out in the area all week probably staying in the same town as yourselves. My intent is then to travel directly to over to Pisa to join in with the 'Folgore' Annual commemorative ceremony with Col Bertonecello. When we firm up plans for this I will send out the details.

You will already be aware of our initiative to replace the commemorative Welsh slate in the RAF Church at St Clement Danes in London. One of our Junior Officers (Samantha) is championing the project to replace this at a total cost of £880. Having recently viewed the slate, it most certainly needs replacing. The plan is to hold a small consecration Service at a suitable date when the replacement slate is available. This event will be open up to all Squadron and Association members who are available to attend.

One of the Engagement Team has approached the Association for financial assistance, however small, but I totally accept that your generosity in commissioning the Centenary Silver Bowl was considerable. Of note, the Centenary Bowl still shines brightly and has been deployed during several Dining In Nights! Although I formally thanked you in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal and following your AGM, I would like to repeat my thanks to the Association once again for the splendid gift and appreciated generosity.

So on to business! I started by saying how busy the Squadron has been over the past 6 months. Here is a snap shot.

'A' Flight, C 130J conversion has been developing the new C 130J Course which will see an ab-initio pilot, straight from 45R Squadron, achieve Tactical Air Transport (TACAT) proficiency within 6 months of arriving on the Squadron. This is a significant venture and one which will see the C 130J Force be in a position to talent spot individuals for more specialist duties at a much earlier stage. This 'cradle-to-grave' approach is pioneering for the Force and runs alongside a Qualified Pilot Instructor / Qualified Role Instructor (QPI/QRI) scheme aimed at giving our non-QFI instructors a recognised, Central Flying School (CFS) accredited qualification. We have just had this signed off by CFS after months of hard work. In addition, A Flt are developing 3 Engine Take-Off procedure for the C130J and Regulated Take-Off Graphs for high-terrain locations such as Bardufoss in Norway.

'B' Flight has been equally as busy. Development of a new Defensive capability has been a main effort as well as delivering routine Tactical Courses including Air-to-Air Receiving to the Frontline. Later on in the year, they will be delivering some Tactical Training to the Royal Oman Air Force as directed by the ACA S so you will appreciate much of their work has been directed by the very highest levels. Like A Flight, they will be involved heavily in the new C 130J Course Design. In addition, the SDR will see some new capabilities come to the C 130J Force which I will brief you on during our next meet. The Flight

recently deployed to Scotland for a Tactical Exercise (TARTAN SPIRIT) and will do the same for the whole of May for another Exercise in California.

'C' Flight Atlas Conversion continue to train crews for LXX Squadron and currently have 5 Courses running. There have been some interesting challenges for Atlas, specifically an Engine related issue has required the careful allocation of flying hours to the Force. This has slowed momentum slightly but the plan for the Squadron is to continue as directed and run with the current Course schedule. The Squadron will return to RIAT this year to defend the top award we won in 2015 and you will see an Atlas and C130J fly in formation (line astern) at the 2016 Queens Birthday Flypast (QBF). XXIV Squadron will co-crew both aircraft.

Of note, Seb, a 'C' Flight Pilot was awarded a Green Flying Endorsement this week for his efforts in landing a Lancaster with an Engine Fire! Yes – Seb is a BBMF Pilot in his spare time but don't feel too sorry for him. He loves the attention! Finally, the Atlas Cargo Hold Trainer will be Ready for Training (RfT) in August 2016 and the 2nd Simulator will be finished in June.

'D' Flight Training Support, who also has Maintainer Trainer School (MTS) in its Command Chain has made significant progress in several areas. They are the foundations of the Squadron's training structure and the Air Mobility Force Commander (1\*) has recently endorsed the concept for XXIV Squadron to become the Air Mobility Training of Excellence. This is significant and not only reflects the hard work 'D' Flight has done to demonstrate the training benefits of such a concept but it also highlights the high regard the Squadron is held in.

XXIV Squadron now owns every Air Mobility Platform Training Officer including 32 Squadron's (146) and 10 Squadron's (Voyager). If this wasn't a sign of things to come, the C17 Though Life Training Solution which may see a new C17 Schoolhouse at RAF Brize Norton in the future which is likely to be managed by XXIV Squadron! My plans for total training dominance and takeover are certainly firming-up! On a more serious note, it is the right and proper way to proceed.

The provision of an external and specialised training organisation to support the Frontline Squadrons is vitally important from an Air Safety perspective. It provides assurance at all levels and makes XXIV Squadron solely accountable for the training and standards. MTS, commanded by Samantha, still delivers Engineering Training to the C130J, Atlas and C17 Forces. They have recently sailed through an Internal Audit making a huge improvement from last year. The Flying elements of the Squadron did equally as well during their annual CFS visit.

It is difficult to articulate just how busy we are on the Squadron at present in such a short update. The Squadron is front and centre of all high-profile engagement on the Station. In the past 6 weeks alone, we have had Mr Fallon, the Defence Secretary visit. The Indonesian Defence Minister and a French 4\* General have all spent much time with us.

The Royal Air Force Oman Training I previously mentioned is vitally important for the RAF/RAFO enduring relationship and a number of other countries have expressed an interest in XXIV Squadron training. The Squadron you will have served on is completely different in structure and purpose but the Core Values and Ethos remain the same. This is typical of the Royal Air Force in general where I think the challenges we face, particularly regarding global counter-terrorism, are unprecedented, asymmetric and have no rules. There is no longer a single post which cannot deliver anything less than 110% at all times.

So finally, I wish all of you a very Happy Easter Break and look forward to seeing you in the near future. Please feel free to call round for a coffee any time and forgive me if the lines of communication are not always as fluid as they should be from our side. We are genuinely working relentlessly to stay afloat but the Association are always in our thoughts. Excuse any typo's. I've given my Flight Commanders some Easter leave so the usual sanity check of my prose is just not possible!

In Omnia Parati.

Wing Commander Daz Rawlins, Officer Commanding XXIV Squadron.

**Hawker VC - fascinating information from New Zealand  
Posted Apr 2016**



## Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre NZ

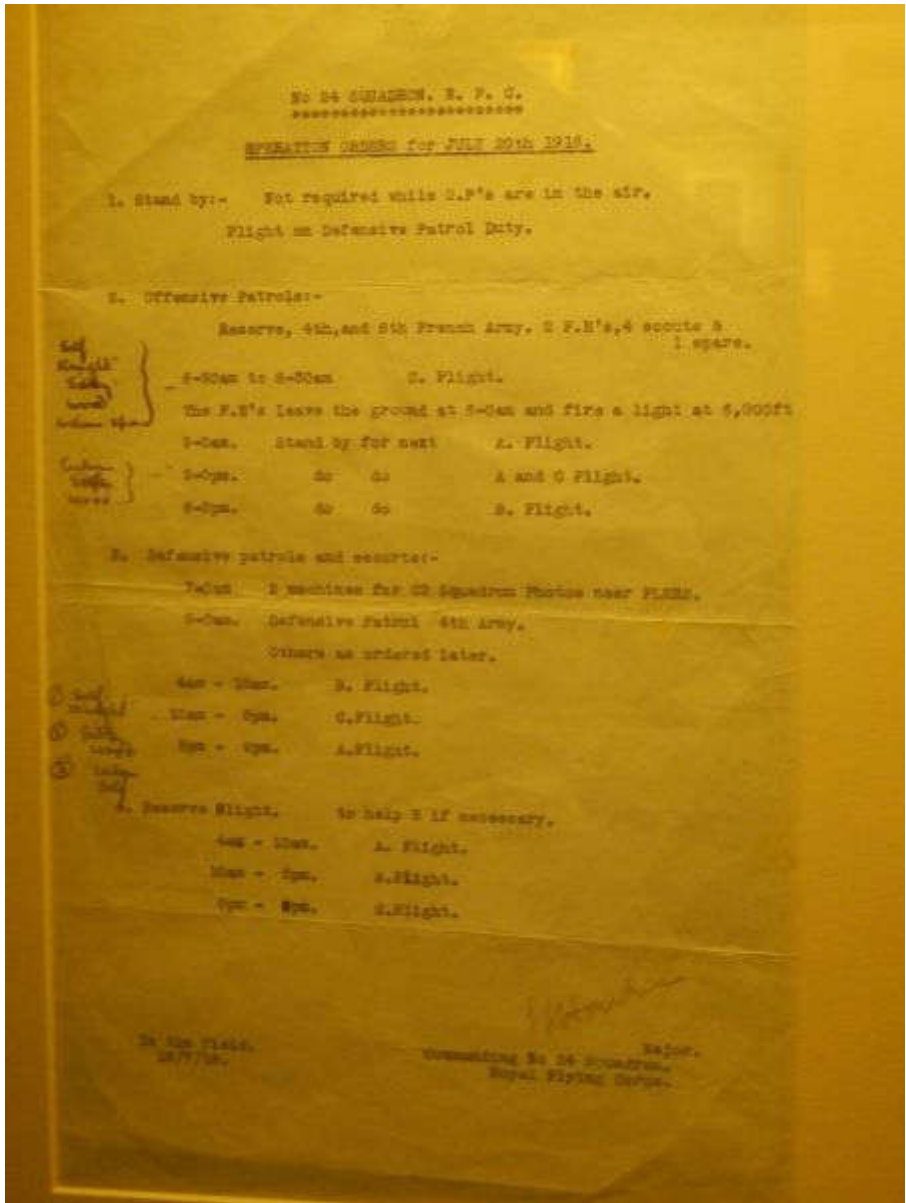
When Association member Chris Carrington was in NZ about three months ago, he visited the Aviation Heritage Centre in Blenheim (South Island) which has been set up and funded with no expense spared by Peter Jackson, the film mogul famed for his 'Lord of the Rings' Trilogy and 'The Hobbit'.

The focus is on WW1 aviation. Displays include many original and replica aircraft of the period. Most are maintained in flying condition.

Of particular interest to us in XX IV Association, as we prepare for OP LIMA TANGO 2016, is the fact that, alongside these wonderful machines are displayed collections of RFC & Luftwaffe memorabilia, including original material relating to XX IV, Hawker himself and Manfred von Richthofen. Chris reports that among the most interesting items he found were an Op Order signed by Hawker (Zoom your Browser window to enlarge image)

At the bottom, you'll see that the Orders were signed "In the Field" by Hawker himself on 19 July 1916. Of special note are the hand-written annotations in the left margin. The word 'Self' occurs frequently (!!)

confirming that Hawker liked to lead by example by flying as much as possible, even if it meant disregarding instructions from Field HQ that commanding officers of fighter squadrons were not to fly on combat sorties.



Hawker - Op Order

No. 24 Squadron R.F.C. OPERATION ORDERS for JULY 20th 1916 and also a display of Richthofen's post-combat trophies, including a silver cup commemorating his victory over Hawker on 23 Nov 1916.

That date is rather crudely engraved on the cup, a photo of which is also shown below. It seems that Richthofen was not the most modest of men and had a cup specially made for each of his victories, thus keeping his silversmith busy for quite a long time! His victory over Hawkers was his 11th and the number 11 is engraved on the cup, together with the type of aircraft that Hawker was flying.



von Richthofen Silver Cup

Any other contributions and comments are most welcome to our growing on-line history of XXIV.

### **Diary of a Navigator - Pt 18 - The Yalta Conference Posted Apr 2016**

Another instalment (Pt 18), now on the Blog, from John Mitchell's diary of his VIP flying days with the then Prime Minister Winston Churchill during

January and February 1945.



Yalta Conference 1945 - from the history  
press

No sooner had I taken a few days leave with the family, now three of us, than we found that the four aircraft now comprising the York Flight would all be involved in the biggest non-combatant airlift to be organized up to that time, 'Ascalon' by now was under command of Squadron Leader 'Ozzy' Morris and his crew, all ex-511 Squadron, Lyneham. Another Big Three Conference was in the offing: Code-named Operation ARGONAUT. Once again, Stalin was not prepared to leave Russian soil while the war was still being fought. A rendezvous in Russia would have to be as far south as reasonably practical to be sure of good weather in January/February. We did not know the destination until summoned to the Cabinet Office for preliminary



planning. Axis press feelers were suggesting that the Big Three would meet in Luxor but we had a hunch it might be in the Crimea, we had, after all, made use of Sarabuz near Simferopol, on the way home from the Moscow Conference. Some twenty-five 4-engined aircraft (RA F and US) were to stage through Malta where the Prime Minister would meet Roosevelt, arriving in the cruiser USS QUINCEY. The Western Big Two would then fly on to the Crimea in their respective Skymasters, the bulk of the supporting staff having gone before. They were to land within a short time of each other so that the official welcome and guard of honour could be carried off in one fell swoop.

We found that our destination was to be Saki, the SNA F base on the west coast of the Crimea 12 miles southeast of Eupatoria, a pre-Revolutionary health resort. We were soon to discover the terrible damage wrought by the Nazis on Russian towns and villages and by the fighting for their subsequent liberation. There was very little accommodation available and certainly nothing in the way of suitable buildings at the airfield. Because of the size of the Allied air-lift, the RA F had provided some weeks beforehand the essential elements of a staging post: air traffic control and a radio navigational beacon, a small meteorological forecasting station under the Chief Met. Officer, Wing Commander Davis from HQTC with the necessary radio teleprinters and, of course, a maintenance pdy, under Squadron Leader Ellis, as the CTO, plus all the messing facilities necessary for the personnel. All this in tented accommodation, with the agreement of the Russians who were glad to be relieved of much of the mechanics of handling so many visiting aircraft. All this was in place by the time we arrived. In addition, the 20,000 ton liner 'Franconia', chartered from Cunard, was steamed out to the Black Sea to lie offshore Sevastopol, as a communication centre for the British delegation and to be a stores and supply vessel for those basic living requirements that the devastated Russians could not supply. It also had ample cabin accommodation for the PM's party and staff should this be necessary.

The two VIP aircraft were to have fighter escort through Greek and Turkish air space and across the Black Sea, provided by the USA F long range P38 twin-engined aircraft based near Athens. The Russians had provided an additional base for them at Sarabuz, near Simferopol, where we had landed in the previous October on our way home from Moscow.

29th January 1945. With a seven and a half hour flight plan we had originally been scheduled to leave Northolt at midnight to arrive in Malta in daylight. However, that evening we received additional briefing that the local weather was deteriorating fast and that snow flurries might reduce visibility below take-off limits. Messages were hurriedly passed to No 10 that we should be obliged to get away at 2100 hours local time. This was duly accomplished - all the domestic loading having been completed during the afternoon. The flight at 8,000 feet was directly across France from St Valery to Marseilles thence to Elmas (Cagliari) and so to Malta. En route, there were now very many radio navigational beacons available, so my work was becoming considerably less strenuous!

The earlier take-off however would make our arrival time about 04:30 hours local time in the morning - still dark on the tarmac at Luqa. The A DC, Commander Tommy Thompson, had gone to considerable trouble to make a signal informing the Cabinet Office representative in Malta, General 'Pug' Ismay, who had gone on ahead, that the PM would not disembark on arrival but would remain sleeping in his very comfortable cabin until 0800 hours or so when he would go by car to Valetta harbour to embark on HMS ORION - his accommodation for the next three nights. He was not feeling particularly well, being plagued once again by the injection and pills given him before departure. Unfortunately, this signal never reached 'Pug' Ismay nor, in turn, the Governor or any other senior officer.

Furthermore, our own ETA of 0330 hours GMT sent on RA F channels was misinterpreted as Local Time (all operating signals are made in GMT). So when we landed we found (or rather the A DC found) a guard of honour and band, plus the Governor, General Sir Edmond Schreiber, the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, and Uncle Tom Cobbly and all, who had been waiting over an hour in the cold pre-dawn. It had been described as a tarmac 'laced with gold braid'. For a short while there was some embarrassment, causing maximum inconvenience to the highest personages on the Island, especially as the PM had announced, or rather given orders, that he wanted no noise - no aircraft engines to be run, etc, after he had landed. We had taxied in particularly gently. The guard of honour dispersed quietly, the VIPs rather grumpily. Some hours later the PM 'went ashore' at 1030 to his accommodation: in HMS ORION. He was not at all well. After he had gone and the other passengers had followed, Lord Moran put his head out of the curtains of his upper bunk and asked a rather tired Bill Fraser who was passing "How far are we from Malta?". Bill, with a straight face, said "Nine foot six, Sir". His Lordship was not amused! It was indicative of the quietness of the aircraft and its smooth handling on the ground that he had slept though it all!

This was not the first occasion the Lord Moran had fallen sound asleep in an RA F aircraft on the ground. When the PM was flying home in the Liberator 'Commando' from his Middle East visit in February 1943, the

aircraft had developed a mechanical defect just before take-off from Maison Blanche, Algiers, for Lyneham. It had to taxi back to the tarmac and temporarily disgorge its passengers, for they were to remain overnight while the engine was fixed. On this occasion, after everyone was thought to have disembarked, the doors of the bomb bay were shut and Lord Moran left in the dark interior. Only later was he discovered missing and locked in. He was recovered, however, to where the party was staying at the Villa Klene in Algiers, none the worse for his snooze but perhaps disappointed that he was no nearer home.

Getting some twenty-five VIP aircraft punctually away from Malta at ten-minute intervals, carrying over 500 passengers in all, was quite a job: a large number of them belonged to the USA F. Tragic to report, one of the 51st Squadron York's ex-Lyneham, MW 116 flown by Flight Lieutenant Eaton Clarke crashed in the sea off Lampedusa out of fuel, on route to Malta, with a number of Army and RAF Officers on board, including CIGS's ADC, Captain Barny Charlesworth, who had been on his staff since Dunkirk. There were also members of the Cabinet Secretariat and Foreign Office lost: only 4 of the crew and three out of the 18 passengers survived. The reason for running out of fuel and not finding Luqa, with its very powerful radio beacon, was never satisfactorily resolved.

The President's 'Sacred Cow' had arrived empty at Luqa to meet him, flown in by Colonel Otis Bryan (ex TWA Chief Executive, temporarily serving in the US ATC). His Skymaster had been modified to carry additional fuel in the wing tanks, thus dispensing with the huge internal tanks we carried. It had also been fitted with more powerful engines which gave him an edge on us in cruising speed.

3rd February 1945. The air fleet was dispatched to the Crimea during the preceding day and night. The 'Sacred Cow' was last to leave and with its slightly higher cruising speed would catch us up by the time of arrival, thus giving the Russians a chance to do the honours to both VIPs together. It was a cold, starlight night as we prepared for departure at 0330 hours. The Owner had dined with Roosevelt on the USS Quincey and had gone straight to bed before take-off. We headed east toward Kythera and then turned northwards to rendezvous with our fighter escort which would make a dawn take-off from Hassani (Athens). These six P38 'Lightnings' would then formate on us all the way to Saki where they would peel off and land independently at their temporary base at Sarabuz. A similar group of six would 'intercept' the 'Sacred Cow' as it followed ten minutes behind us.

It was now broad daylight as we flew over Samothrace and so on to Alexandropoulos and Midye, having a fine view of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus which were to our starboard. Breakfast was served to our passengers: besides the PM, we had Section Officer Sarah Oliver (we had taken her to Teheran a year earlier), Lord Moran, Sir Edward Bridges (Secretary to the Cabinet), Tommy Thompson the ADC, Mr Martin and Mr Rowan (Private Secretaries), Hughes the Detective, and, of course, Sawyers.

We had a smooth flight in sunshine but increasing cloud cover beneath us obscured the Crimean coastline. We had no difficulty in picking up the Saki radio navigational beacon but our fighter escort leader told us he was having difficulty making contact with the fighter controller at his destination airfield, Sarabuz. Without such contact and directions he was 'lost': could we guide him below cloud and give him a steer when in sight of the ground? We told him to form close formation behind us and we would take him down through the overcast, like a guide dog, on a predetermined bearing and then send him and his mates on their way from overhead Saki. We presumed, or hoped, he carried maps of the Crimea! This we accomplished without further ado and they made their destination successfully.

The VIPs set out for Yalta by road some eight hours driving away, after the greeting ceremony. The weather was dull and the spring thaw resulted in mud everywhere, except on the hard standings and concrete taxiways. The 'Sacred Cow' landed shortly behind us and when the President had been lowered to the ground by the lift in his aircraft a small procession was formed up to inspect the guard of honour. Molotov and Vishinski had been sent to greet them. From our vantage point we could see that the President looked terribly ill.

Saki was an airfield of the Soviet Naval Air Force. It had one concrete runway 1300 yards long with flat approaches in all directions, and a second concrete strip or taxiway used for parking aircraft. In the distance was a line of some twenty or so Bell Airocobras (P39) covered and looking unused. There were no night-flying facilities of any sort. We were glad to find the rather rudimentary, tented staging-post set up by the RAF. Not only did this encampment provide servicing facilities for the RAF aircraft coming and going throughout the VIP's stay at Yalta, with the attendant passenger handling, but also an air-portable Meteorological Station, complete with teleprinters and radio-communications, linked to Malta and Cairo.

On decanting our party, Jack Payne at the bottom of the steps and in charge of the block and tackle of our portable stairway, quickly assessed that the wet and dirt of our surroundings would soon make a mess of

our interior, even just unloading the baggage, etc. The damp would soon turn our bed linen, etc, mouldy. It would be most unlikely that several fan heaters could be provided to keep going day and night for the next ten days or so, which we expected the conference would last. We discovered that Otis Bryan, the President's pilot, had already made urgent arrangements to fly the 'sacred Cow' to Payne Field, Cairo (the USA F base) for the duration of the conference and would return 48 hours before the VIPs departed. Bill Fraser quickly sought out our A DC before he left by road for Yalta with the VIPs and a similar dispensation was granted to us.

So, three hours after landing we flew out for Cairo, routing ourselves directly over Turkey to Nicosia, thence to Cairo West airfield, without any niceties of diplomatic clearances. In the dark, the risk of interception over Turkey was nil. The A DC had asked us to take three Foreign Office officials from our Moscow embassy who were making their way to the UK after assisting with the administrative details of the Conference. They were Messrs Balfour and Barclay, (the former became Sir 'Jack' Balfour) and Brigadier 'Pop' Hill, the Intelligence Liaison Officer from 30 Mission (though there was precious little intelligence exchange ever offered from the Russian side). It was a five and a half hour flight and the only incident I can recall was Jack Payne forbidding the passengers to put their boots on the furnishings. The Owner's Stateroom was, of course, out of bounds!

It was dark when we landed in Cairo - about 2030 hours local - and the arrival of the PM's Skymaster caused quite a stir amongst our local RA F friends. They knew 'Ascalon' and the crew of old. Furthermore, the location of the projected Big Three meeting had not yet been released to the world press. The emergence of 'Pop' Hill with a cigar, short and fairly tubby, in a British warm coat and a Russian black fur hat was as good a take-off for the PM as any 'double-act' could be, and this entirely accidental. As is so often the case, accidental deception is more effective than a planned counter-intelligence event. Berlin Radio gave it out the next morning that the PM had arrived in Cairo and that the Big Three were to meet in Luxor. This was just before the official Yalta announcement. We the crew, anyway, were off to the Hotel National and the aircraft was warm and dry, clean and secure. So the crew never got to Yalta, not that we would have done so even if we had stayed at the Saki staging post. Twenty years later I was to return to the Crimea and to Yalta, several times during my tour as the Air Attache in Moscow - but never to visit Saki or Sarabuz.

In Cairo, Bill Fraser had been forewarned by the A DC to contact the AOC of 216 Group for the PM might wish to visit Alexandria on his return flight from Yalta. Suitable airfields in the vicinity were to be surveyed with a view to their use by the Skymaster. We therefore called on Air Commodore Witney Straight and instead of using our own expensive aircraft for local flying as it were, he lent us his own small twin-engine communication aircraft, a 6-seater Beechcraft Expeditor (C45 in USA F parlance) and his personal pilot. We flew first to Gianaclis, an RA F training base located south of the city of Alexandria, on the fringes of the salt marsh of Lake Maryut. Plenty large enough for the Skymaster but poor roads and access to Alexandria through the slum outskirts. The PM would probably want to go to the harbour. We flew on to Aboukir for lunch: a lovely spot and an RA F flying boat base with the Officers' Mess looking straight out over the bay to the scene of Nelson's victory in 1798. There was one runway only, 1,000 yards long, and that bisected by a level-crossing of a light railway line. Local senior officers were worried that in a cross wind the Skymaster might not cope but little did they know that she handled like a large Avro Anson, and with the steerable nose wheel cross-winds were little problem. The aircraft would be fairly light of fuel anyway so, on Bill's assurance that he would accept the conditions, the choice was made and we returned to Cairo to await developments.

We already knew that it was likely that we should fly to Athens after leaving the Crimea: now it was a stop off at Alexandria where the PM had in mind to intercept the President to make his farewells. The President would be sailing home to the United States in the cruiser USS Quincey which had been waiting for him in the Bitter Lakes. After ten days in Cairo, the Skymaster was ordered back to Saki to be ready for the end of conference and departure. Unaware of the close relationship the crew enjoyed with the A DC, the RAF had added another 48 hours to the safety margin we had arranged, so we returned far too soon.

8th February 1945. We took off empty at 0800 hours local for the five and a half hour trip to Saki, flying the same route northbound over Nicosia and west of Ankara to land well before dark. On arrival Jack Payne and the two stewards were to remain on board, in conformity with the PM's instructions never to leave the aircraft unattended in Russia, in far greater comfort than the rest of us who had to enjoy the facilities in Eupatoria with the rest of the RA F crews. We were driven over to our accommodation in a Russian truck, through a sea of mud and slush. Once off the taxi-way on the airstrip there was no such thing as a paved road. We were billeted in bungalow-type accommodation that might well of once been part of a hospital or sanatorium. Made of wood and plaster, it was surprisingly warm, heated by the traditional wood stoves with their flues let into the walls. Everywhere was that characteristic smell of burning wood and Russian cigarettes. This smell is as all-pervading in Russia as that of Gauloise in France. Our collection of huts housed most of the RA F crews and ground staff. The Americans were similarly situated. There were no paved roads as such but only rows of cottages and huts in the mud. It was fair to remember that the wretched place, along with the rest of

the Crimea, had been scorched by the retreating Russian troops and then shelled by the advancing Germans. The process of destruction had been repeated by the Russians recapturing their land.

The people were very quiet and silent; some shapeless women came in to tidy up our rooms and stoke our wood stoves. We ate our own tinned rations and drink had also been imported specially for us, whisky and beer. The beds were iron-framed and all the blankets that I saw came from the Canadian Red Cross. It was a curious camp. We even had a communal bath house: a sort of steam affair operated by these ageless Russian women. It was the only building of any size and, like our bedrooms, was wired for sound. Loudspeakers kept up a never-ending blare of Russian music, a deafening cacophony of Balalaika tunes. There was only one way to switch it off and that was by cutting the leads. The day before the main departure (10th February) the Russians gave a 'Flyers Party' for us all. What an orgy! It must have started early in the afternoon and went on until the small hours. It really was a disgusting drunken brawl. Bodies lying around everywhere, some sleeping it off in snow-filled ditches. A good deal of exchange of emblems went on and I secured a Russian soldier's hat badge without too much trouble. One or two came away with medals in exchange for a few RA F uniform buttons. It was reckoned to be a good do, on all sides.

There was some uncertainty about the date of our own departure; most of our V IPs had left in their Yorks on 10th February. Out on the airfield on 11th February to check over the aircraft, we learned that the President was leaving on the 13th and Colonel Otis Bryan was giving the 'Sacred Cow' a quick trip 'round the houses' to ensure that all was well. They were programmed to fly to RA F Ismailia with their V IP passengers who would then rejoin the cruiser USS Quincey for the voyage home by sea. He came in to land with smoke pouring from one engine. Checking with his crew, we were told that a con rod had snapped on one cylinder and he would have to change the engine. With customary American speed, they radioed the USA F base at Payne Field, Cairo on the 'Sacred Cow's' own radio set and placed their order. Within some seven hours (five and a half of which were flying time) a Curtiss 'Commando' C46 freighter arrived with a new engine and portable lifting tackle. The engine change job was done overnight and they were able to get away on 13th February as planned.

We learned later that our family party had already left Yalta on the 12th and were driven to Sevastopol, there to spend two nights on board the SS 'Franconia' in some comfort before coming to Saki to fly out on 14th February. Our Skymaster needed an airing to blow out the damp and the cobwebs so on the 12th we too flew around the houses, only to find that one of our engines was belching oil smoke. On landing with three engines, Jack quickly discovered our problem: a rocker box axle had come adrift and mangled up the exhaust valve on one cylinder - number 1 cylinder and the master cylinder for the magneto timing, the worst of all to replace. No spare Pratt and Whitney engine for us in Cairo - no means of flying it in, even if there should be one - and no spare parts on hand. Jack had a brain-wave, to take a good cylinder off Otis Bryan's dud engine which, fortunately, had been left behind at Saki. He worked all through that night, with the aid of a small Russian floodlight - removing the ruined cylinder and taking the good one off the USA F engine and fitting it to ours. Jack was a master craftsman. The rest of us could offer nothing but unskilled manual help and the delivery of hot drinks and food. It rained on the open air operations and was bitterly cold but Jack had finished by midday the following day and we briefly tested the aircraft that afternoon (13th), all was now satisfactory. It was curious, in retrospect, that both these important aircraft should have similar engine failures, almost at the same time: sheer coincidence or perhaps Murphy again.

14th February 1945. The V IP party drove over from Sevastopol in the morning for Saki, a relatively short distance of three hours compared with the journey from Yalta. There was still a thin film of snow on the ground. Guard of honour and band in attendance. We did not have to hang around for long. The destination was Athens, then Aboukir and Cairo, for the PM wanted to see how the new Greek government was faring now that the Communist uprising had been suppressed. Field Marshal Alexander came with us; otherwise it was our usual family circus of passengers.

Airborne at midday we were soon in glorious sunshine accompanied by our six P38 'Lightning' escort of the USA F. Jock Duncan produced an excellent lunch and everyone was cheerful, glad to be out of the discomforts and worries for the consequences of the Conference.

After lunch, as we were reaching the Bosphorus, the PM came forward and sat in the co-pilot's seat. He was joined by Sarah, his daughter. They had a wonderful view of the ground and he spoke as we flew in sight of the Gallipoli beaches of the ghastly failure of what might have been a brilliant strategic stroke if the commanders only had had the courage of the troops. We flew over Samothrace, Lemnos, caught sight of Mount Athos in the distance to starboard, over Skyros and Marathon and so to Athens. Here there was a very different reception from six weeks before.

We stopped only one night because the PM was anxious to rendezvous at Alexandria with the President. We left Field Marshal Alexander in Athens to proceed independently to Italy in his own aircraft: Randolph Churchill joined us. He had a knack of turning up when V IP comforts were around. He was certainly not popular with senior officers who, I believe, thought that he brought tittle-tattle to his father's ears and, perhaps, spoke out of turn about information he gleaned. After all, he was only an Army Captain with limited but exotic fighting experience. On the other hand, the PM loved to have his family around, particularly Mrs Churchill. Sawyers, the valet, warned us about allowing Randolph to stock up with cigarettes from the aircraft's stores. He, Sawyers, told us that he always got the money from his mother!

14th/15th February 1945. After a tumultuous welcome in Athens and dinner at the Embassy, the PM returned to the Skymaster to sleep on board: we were to take off at 0530 hours local time in the morning, before breakfast. It was only a three and a half hour flight to Aboukir with what wind there was at 5,000 feet right behind us. The Skymaster was landed very skilfully by Bill in half the length of the short runway, much to the astonishment of the V IP's present. We disembarked the party at about 1000 hours local time and the PM went straight on board HMS Aurora in Alexandria harbour where he intended to spend the night. Meanwhile, the baggage was unloaded and Sawyers, I recall, had difficulty in negotiating the aircraft's steps. Certainly, everyone had had a good trip, breakfast and other refreshments served.

The crew were taken over to the beautifully situated RA F Mess for a late lunch. We had barely been allocated our rooms and were planning a swim in the Med when word came to return to the aircraft. Evidently, the President had arrived very much sooner than expected from the Suez Canal and there was time only for a quick lunch aboard the Quincey where the PM said his goodbyes, for the last time as it turned out. The President was a very sick man.

Sawyers was not best pleased to have to reload the baggage at short notice, but as it was for a 40 minute flight only to the RA F base at Cairo West, I suspect the Owner's clothes were hung up somewhat haphazardly. Departing from Aboukir at 1700 hours local time there was scarcely an opportunity for more than a cup of tea as we flew along the western edge of the green Nile delta before landing in the dusk. We were to spend four more sunny days in Cairo before leaving for England. The weather was absolutely grand at this time of the year in Egypt.

19th February 1945. We took off from Cairo in the cool just after midnight by UK time, climbing across the desert to El Adem and Benghazi to cruise at 8,000 feet out of the bumps. Overhead Luqa in just under six hours, we continued at this comfortable height by way of Elmas (Cagliari) and Istres (near Marseilles) and on westwards to Toulouse before turning NNW to Cherbourg and so over the Channel and home. As we flew across France, local forecasts for Northolt reported landing there to be impossible - fog. There was nothing for it but to obey our diversion instructions and land at Lyneham where we arrived soon after lunch, taking thirteen hours forty minutes from Cairo. Cars were waiting to take the PM to Swindon where a special train was waiting for Paddington. At Reading Mrs Churchill was waiting to intercept him not knowing the latest information on our diversion. The crew remained at Lyneham with the aircraft and brought it over to Northolt the following morning when the fog had cleared. So home, after just three weeks away and our son nearly two months old.

As for the Moscow Conference in October '44, the RA F had again provided the PM with his Cabinet papers during the stay in Yalta, a daily courier service for the diplomatic bags by 544 Squadron at Benson with its Mosquito aircraft. It was routed via San Severo, in the Heel of Italy, the base of the RA F Middle East PR Wing, No 336, almost exactly halfway between Benson and Saki. This route avoided having to fly over hostile territory. This remarkable courier service was maintained daily, without a hitch, from 31st January to 18th February and covered Athens, Aboukir and Cairo for the PM's return journey. This squadron had also provided courier aircraft in support of the PM's emergency dash to Athens, via Naples, a month earlier (26th-28th December).

**Sqn Ldr (retired) Trevor Peacock**  
**Posted May 2016**

The Association have just been informed about the sad news that Trevor Peacock has passed away.

Should anyone want to attend his funeral it is in the RAF Chapel in Biggin Hill 2nd June at 11:30 hrs. Anyone attending should let the family know by email [peacock27@btinternet.com](mailto:peacock27@btinternet.com) or phone Stephanie on 01959 570145.

Trevor was a Flight Engineer on XXIV at RAF Colerne on Hastings aircraft from 1960 – 1962, later becoming an Eng Leader and Standards checker. After leaving the service he was a Deputy Head of an Aerospace College.

He was once prisoner of the Japanese and was scheduled to be used for bayonet training the day after he was saved by our advancing army in the Far East. Trevor upheld the genuine traditions and gallantry of the Royal Air Force and we are sure the family are all proud of his service in which as a trainer and standards checker he gave a lot back to the students at the time he was instructing.

**RAF Association - Standard Bearer competition 2016**  
**Posted May 2016**



**The charity that supports the RAF family**

We have had some news in from one of our Association Member, ex C130K & J pilot Shawn Marston. He recently won the RAF Association National Standard Bearer competition. The winners will have the honour of representing the Association at the many events to commemorate the centenary of the formation of RAF in 2018.

Here's a link: <https://www.rafa.org.uk/what-we-do/news/standard-bearer-competition>

**Summer Social 2016 Report**  
**Posted June 2016**

It was an almost full house for our ever popular Summer Social, this year at The Crown, Blockley in the heart of the Cotswolds. Richard and Heather Bates kindly held open house for a pre lunch drinks get together a few steps from the pub itself.

Representatives from XXIV Squadron were invited along in what proved to be an ideal opportunity to network face to face prior to the Reunion in October and the Hawker Anniversary in November.

The event went entirely to plan with the seating and menu choices all laid out just so, allowing the hotel staff to cope rather well with nearly 40 diners.

Here are just a few of the photos sent in by John Martin to record the event. Well done all round with over £100 raised from the raffle for Association funds.



Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



Group 4

As a ps – having been asked during the lunch what other venues we had been to over the years and only being able to bring a few to mind, here is the definitive list from the archives:-

2016	The Crown, Blockley	2017	TBD
2015	Pear Tree, Purton	2014	RAF Northolt
2013	Sunningwell	2012	The Crown, Blockley
2011	Bibury Court	2010	Pear Tree, Purton
2009	Lyneham & Sutton Benger	2008	Pear Tree, Purton
2007	The Crown, Blockley	2006	Bibury Court
2005	Bibury Court	2004	Bibury Court
2003	Cabinet War Rooms, RAF Club	2002	Station X, Bletchley
2001	Bibury Court	2000	Bibury Court
1999	Moreton in Marsh	1998	IWM Duxford



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Twenty Four is the Newsletter of XXIV Squadron RAF Association and issued once a year to all members and published on-line.

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Vacancy - Secretary

**Squadron Liaison**

W/C Daz Rawlins (Jan 15)

F/L David Staples