

RAF News



Farewell, Sir

The Royal Air Force pays tribute to The Duke of Edinburgh

News

HRH Prince Philip 1921-2021



HONOUR: RAF Regiment



PROMINENT ROLE: Gp Capt Nick Worrall, Station Commander of RAF Northolt - of which HRH Prince Philip was Honorary Air Commodore

Services pay their respects

MORE THAN 730 military personnel took part in HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's funeral ceremony at Windsor Castle.

Although Covid-19 restrictions limited those attending the service to 30 people, the Armed Forces played a key role in the tribute to Britain's longest-serving Royal Consort.

Personnel from units with whom Prince Philip had a special relationship assembled in the Quadrangle of the fortress as a Grenadier Guards bearer party moved the Duke's coffin from the State Entrance.

The representative detachments included 89 members of the Royal Air Force, 42 Royal Navy sailors, 96 Royal Marines and 507 soldiers.

Service chiefs, including Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, gave a royal salute before the coffin was placed on the specially-adapted Land Rover hearse Prince Philip helped to design.

And the RAF lined the route of the procession as the coffin moved from the State Entrance at Windsor Castle.

A Royal Navy Piping Party played the *Still* as the Land Rover stopped outside St George's Chapel and the *Side* as a Royal Marines bearer party took position and lifted the coffin.

The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery fired minute guns – one round every 60 seconds during the procession.

Ceremonial volleys were also fired at nine UK locations and in Gibraltar to begin and end the National Minute's Silence immediately before the funeral service.

Once the doors to St George's Chapel had closed behind the coffin, the Royal Navy Piping Party piped the *Carry On*.

The Land Rover, Service chiefs and military detachments dispersed in silence for the duration of the funeral.

Inside the chapel, a Pipe Major of the Royal Regiment of Scotland played a lament and Buglers of the Royal Marines sounded *The Last Post*.

After a period of silence, the State Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry played the *Reveille* and the buglers of the Royal Marines sounded *Action Stations* – a specific request of the Duke of Edinburgh.

Prince Philip had a close personal relationship with the Armed Forces throughout his life holding appointments in all three Services, including Honorary Air Commodore of RAF Northolt from 2012-2021.



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GRIEF: HM The Queen and members of The Royal Family

Drilled to perfection



Simon Mander

AIRMEN AND women joined the Band of the Household Division at Pirbright Army camp in Surrey to practise for the funeral of The Duke of Edinburgh.

Preparations got underway as Buckingham Palace released details of the service expected to involve around 730 military personnel.

Plans for the event are in line with Prince Philip's own personal wishes and recognise and celebrate his more than 70 years of service to The Queen, the UK and the Commonwealth.

It will be a Ceremonial Royal Funeral, the same as for Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, rather than a State Funeral – something which is generally

reserved for monarchs.

Ahead of the ceremony, representatives of all three Services were put through their paces in foot and rifle drill at Brunswick Lines, while musicians involved in the proceedings took part in a massed band practice.

Behind-the-scenes a large-scale logistics operation was launched to Covid screen members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF on duty at the event.

The Funeral Service was expected to begin with a national minute's silence at 3pm preceded by a ceremonial procession in the grounds of Windsor Castle.

Prince Philip's coffin, covered with his Personal Standard and dressed with a wreath of flowers,

will be moved by a Grenadier Guards Bearer Party from the Private Chapel at Windsor Castle to the Quadrangle.

It will then be carried in a purpose-built Land Rover, flanked by military Pall Bearers, in a small ceremonial procession to St George's Chapel on a route lined by representatives drawn from the Armed Forces.

Members of the Royal Family and The Duke of Edinburgh's household will walk behind the coffin from the Quadrangle.

The Duke of Edinburgh's medals and decorations, together with his Field Marshal's baton and RAF wings, will be pre-positioned on cushions on the altar in St George's Chapel.

Ceremony Crew View

Cpl Kevan Looseley, 600 Sqn, Air Operations

“It is a very sad occasion but I feel hugely privileged to be part of this. I have had the honour to meet HRH at a formal dinner where he declared he would sooner have joined the RAF than the Royal Navy. When we join up we swear an oath to the Crown. I meant every word of it. We will be doing lots of drill – the way the Army want it rather than our way, but I know we will show them how it is done”



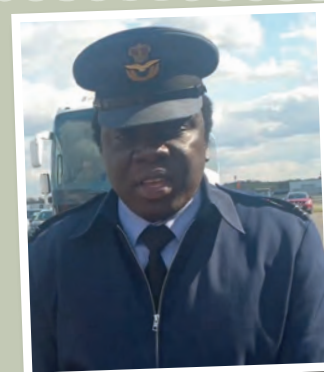
Flt Sgt Andy Harris, Weapons Engineer, RAF Northolt

“Over my career I have been very fortunate and have taken part in HM The Queen's Jubilee in 2012 and a number of Remembrance events. I took part in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme as a youngster. Prince Philip is a major part of RAF Northolt and he flew many times from this base. This event is extremely personal to me and I am very proud and fortunate to take part. We expect to spend a lot of time being shouted at as we get ready for Saturday”



Flt Lt Gilbert Mensah, OC Estate Flt, RAF Northolt

“I am very proud to be among the selected few to take part in this historic event. As a Commonwealth ex-soldier and now an airman this means a lot to me. We have been on station since last weekend drilling and making sure everything is perfect. There's a bit of anxiety but we are looking forward to taking part in such an important ceremony”



SAC Catherine Richards, Air and Space Operations Specialist

“I am excited and nervous about this event but I am proud. I never expected to take part in something like this so early in my career. I have never done anything like this before - it is quite a contrast to my previous career. I expect a lot of drill and hard work building up to the event over the next few days and we are all working towards being able to do HRH Prince Philip and the RAF proud”



SAC Matthew Rush, Air and Space Operations Specialist

“It is a great honour. I take immense pride in representing myself, my station and the wider Armed Forces. We will be making sure that all of the Services perform together to the required standard on the day. I'm a bit apprehensive about working in a joint environment but we all have the same goal in mind”



Interviews by Ken Pike

Proud to take part in Chapel ceremony

Northolt station chief who flew with Prince Philip worldwide escorts him on his final journey

SPECIAL BOND: Pallbearer and RAF Northolt Station Commander Gp Capt Nick Worrall



EXPERT AVIATOR: HRH Prince Philip

Simon Mander and Ken Pike

RAF Northolt

AS RAF personnel selected to take part in the Duke's funeral ceremony polished their drill technique alongside the Army and Navy, Gp Capt Nick Worrall prepared for the biggest occasion of his career.

The RAF Northolt Station Commander was chosen to be part of the pallbearing party to escort HRH Prince Philip on his final journey to the west entrance of St George's Chapel through the grounds of Windsor Castle.

He is one of a select group of military personnel to walk alongside the modified Land Rover Defender 130 Gun Bus carrying the Duke's coffin.

“He had a huge sense of service before self. His loyalty to the Royal Family, the country and the Services is an inspiration to us all”

He said: “It is a huge honour. It will be very poignant and emotional and I am very proud to be part of that. I feel incredibly privileged. HRH Prince Philip influenced me so much over the years.”

The station under Gp Capt Worrall's command held a special place for the Duke among his many military affiliations.

Home to 32 (The Royal) Sqn it was from the famous WWII Middlesex station that



BURIAL PLACE OF KINGS: St George's Chapel

the Royal family flew to formal engagements on board the squadron's BA146 aircraft.

The Prince's passion for aviation and his skill as a pilot allowed him to take the helm during many flights worldwide.

Worrall added: “Northolt had a special relationship with Prince Philip.

“He visited us here on many occasions as part of his Royal duties and his role as an Honorary Air Commodore of the station.

“Prince Philip first took the helm of the aircraft in 1995 and he flew the 146 on many occasions – he would do it whenever he got the opportunity.

“On one occasion he spent three weeks with the BA146 and crews on a world tour – he wanted to take every take-off and landing that he could. He was a real team player with the crews and we loved flying with him.

“He spent two years pretty much flying himself round the world, whether it was supporting one of his many charities or other official duties and Royal tours.”

The Duke of Edinburgh's first official visit to Northolt was in 1946 with then Prime Minister Clement Attlee to meet Lord Mountbatten, his uncle.



ROYAL FLIGHT: 32 Sqn BA146 piloted by Prince from Northolt on Royal duties

His final visit to the station took place in July last year, accompanying HM The Queen on a flight to Balmoral.

Recounting that last encounter, Gp Capt Worrall said: “He was in great spirits and enjoyed being here and seeing aircraft out on the pan.

“Prince Philip had sharp wit that really resonated with Service personnel.

“When he came on an official visit as Honorary Air Commodore on a really windy day he was very amused that a number of people were losing their hats.

“His Royal Highness has had an enduring impact for us.

“He was exceptionally accomplished. When you look at what he did, whether it was commanding a naval ship, acting as the skipper on a yacht or piloting the 146, it was always to an excellent standard.

“He had a sense of service before self. His loyalty to the Royal Family, the country and the Services is an inspiration to us all.”

Duke of Edinburgh: the skilled airman



PILOT: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh climbs into the cockpit of a Queen's Flight Whirlwind helicopter at the conclusion of a visit to the Central Flying School at Little Rissington, Gloucestershire, August 23, 1966. The Prince would frequently take the opportunity to pilot his own aircraft on official visits to RAF stations



RAF COLLEGE: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at the controls of the Queen's Flight Devon, which flies his Standard, before taking off from Cranwell after reviewing the graduation of No 59 Entry, July 28, 1953



CO-PILOT: Prince Philip sitting in a 230 Sqn Puma HC.1 during a visit to Ternhill, May 30, 1972



ROYAL FIRST: On October 24, 1959, Prince Phillip became the first - and possibly, only - member of the Royal Family to fly a single-engine aircraft. Having been given some instruction on how to fly a Turbulent ultra-light aircraft by his Equerry-in-waiting, Squadron Leader John Severne (just visible behind the Prince), His Royal Highness flew the aircraft from White Waltham airfield in Berkshire for a short flight. Looking on at the right of the photograph is Norman Jones, chairman of the Tiger Club, a light aviation organisation of which the Prince was an honorary member

SINCE EARNING his RAF wings in 1953 Prince Philip had a lifelong passion for aviation. One of his earliest sorties came that year in the Queen's Flight Devon, which flies his Standard, after reviewing the graduation of Cranwell's No 59 Entry.

He even boarded a Vulcan bomber for a flight over southern England which included a simulated nuclear strike on RAF Andover - before landing at Farnborough.

On October 24, 1959, the Duke became the first - and possibly, only - member of the Royal Family to fly a single-engine aircraft by piloting an ultra-light Turbulent.

He was an honorary member of the Tiger Club, which still encourages aviation sport including aerobatics, air racing and display flying.

Prince Philip also flew helicopters - memorably piloting a Westland Whirlwind during his visit to Christmas Island in 1959.

He frequently took the opportunity to fly his own aircraft on official visits to RAF stations.



V SPECIAL: The Duke of Edinburgh climbs up the access ladder of Vulcan B.1 XA900 of 230 Operational Conversion Unit at Wyton, Huntingdonshire, on June 24, 1958, prior to having his first flight in a V-bomber later in the day. The Duke sat in the co-pilot's seat of the aircraft, piloted by Wg Cdr F Dodd, for a flight over southern England which included a maximum rate climb to 40,000 feet and a simulated nuclear strike on RAF Andover before landing at Farnborough



TOUR: Prince Philip in the pilot's seat of a Westland Whirlwind helicopter during his visit to Christmas Island in 1959

PHOTOS: AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (RAF)



VISIT: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh in the cockpit of a Wessex HCC.4 of The Queen's Flight after arriving at Coltishall, Norfolk, July 27, 1973



FLYING TRAINING: The Duke of Edinburgh refuelling his Harvard training aircraft in 1953

News

HRH Prince Philip 1921-2021



UK MILITARY bases across the world paid their respects following the announcement that HRH Prince Philip had died.
In the Gulf the Union Flag was lowered to half mast as Royal Air Force personnel serving with 902 Expeditionary Air Wing joined contractors for a memorial service. PHOTO: CPL STEVE BUCKLEY



FALKLAND ISLANDS Governor Nigel Phillips, senior officers from Mount Pleasant and members of the public gathered for a 21-Gun Salute in Stanley, Falkland Islands.



THE ROYAL Air Force Ensign flies at half mast at RAF Akrotiri as station personnel mark the death of HRH Prince Philip.

Tributes to a 'truly inspirational' leader

PRIME MINISTER Boris Johnson led international tributes to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, who passed away at the age of 99.

Speaking in the House of Commons Mr Johnson celebrated the Duke's wartime service, his 'steadfast support' to the Royal Family and his huge contribution to the life of the nation.

He said: "It was with great sadness that a short time ago I received word from Buckingham Palace that His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh has passed away at the age of 99.

"Prince Philip earned the affection of generations here in the United Kingdom, across the Commonwealth and around the world.

"He was the longest serving consort in history, one of the last surviving people in this country to have served in the Second World War at Cape Matapan, where he was mentioned in despatches for bravery, and in the invasion of Sicily, where he saved his ship by his quick thinking, and from that conflict he took an ethic of service that he applied throughout the unprecedented changes of the post war era.

"Like the expert carriage driver that he was he helped to steer the Royal Family and the monarchy so that it remains an institution indisputably vital to the balance and happiness of our national life.

"He was an environmentalist, and a champion of the natural world long before it was fashionable.



"With his Duke of Edinburgh awards scheme he shaped and inspired the lives of countless young people and at literally tens

"Prince Philip earned the affection of generations in the UK, across the Commonwealth and around the world"

of thousands of events he fostered their hopes and encouraged their ambitions.

"We remember the Duke for all of this and above all for his steadfast support for Her Majesty The Queen.

Not just as her consort, by her side every day of her reign, but as

her husband, her "strength and stay", of more than 70 years.

"And it is to Her Majesty, and her family, that our nation's thoughts must turn today.

"Because they have lost not just a much-loved and highly-respected public figure, but a devoted husband and a proud and loving father, grandfather and, in recent years, great-grandfather.

"Speaking on their golden wedding anniversary, Her Majesty said that our country owed her husband 'a greater debt than he would ever claim or we shall ever know' and I am sure that estimate is correct.

"So we mourn with Her Majesty The Queen, we offer our condolences to her and to all her family and we give thanks, as a nation and a kingdom, for the extraordinary life and work of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh."

Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Mike Wigston



"IT IS with overwhelming sadness that the Royal Air Force mourns the death of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh.

Throughout his great life, His Royal Highness has been the embodiment of service and respect; a constant example to us all, across all ranks and ages, our families and the wider Royal Air Force community.

"His Royal Highness was a talented and gifted pilot"

His Royal Highness served with distinction in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, fighting for our freedom. He was of that generation whose courage and resilience inspires us to this day. He has been deeply connected to the Armed Forces and to our cadet organisations ever since,

holding the rank of Marshal of the Royal Air Force and, until recently, Air Commodore-in-Chief of the Air Training Corps.

His Royal Highness was a talented, gifted pilot: earning his Royal Air Force wings in 1953, qualifying on 59 different aeroplanes and helicopters and with nearly 6,000 hrs at the controls – often flying the Royal Family himself in aircraft of the Queen's Flight.

We remember his dynamism, his curiosity, his passion for aviation and the technology that drives us forward. Above all, we recognise the deep sense of duty and a life that has been the epitome of service before self.

On behalf of everyone in the Royal Air Force, serving and retired, I offer our heartfelt condolences to Her Majesty The Queen and The Royal Family at their loss, and our immense gratitude for the life and inspirational service of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip."

UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace MP

"I JOIN the Prime Minister in paying tribute to His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh at the time of his death. A constant supporter and ambassador of the Armed Forces throughout his lifetime, he will be very much missed by members of the military community.

As a Royal Navy officer, The Duke of Edinburgh upheld all values that the Armed Forces represent. His leadership, dedication and passion for serving his country is something that all those in uniform can relate to. It is only fitting that the Armed Forces will play such a high-profile role in the events to commemorate His Royal Highness's life and lay him to rest. The Duke of Edinburgh had a long affiliation with the Royal Navy, having trained at Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth before deploying on board HMS Ramillies, HMS Kent and HMS Shropshire to serve his country during the Second World War.

Throughout his life The Duke of Edinburgh kept a close association with members of the Armed Forces of all ranks. Upon completing his Naval service in 1953, His Royal Highness continued to uphold the high standards and values of

the Armed Forces through various military titles including Honorary Admiral of the Fleet, Captain General of the Royal Marines, Colonel-in-Chief of the Army Cadet Force and Air Commodore-in-Chief of the Air Training Corps.

As a former officer in HM Armed Forces, I have seen for myself the impact of His Royal Highness's role and work with our Servicemen and women. His commitment and support to those on the frontline, and his interest in innovation for future generations of the Armed Forces, was admirable.

All sailors, soldiers, marines and airmen are inspired by the example set by their predecessors. The Duke of Edinburgh and his generation will forever be treasured by the Armed Forces for their leadership and sacrifice during the Second World War.

As we mourn The Duke of Edinburgh and offer our condolences to Her Majesty The Queen, we will remember all that His Royal Highness contributed towards the Armed Forces and be forever grateful for his service."



News

HRH Prince Philip 1921-2021

Frequent visits to RAF stations



LIGHTNING: The cockpit of the two-seat trainer being viewed by Prince Philip during a tour of Coltishall, Suffolk, on July 27, 1973



SHARING A LAUGH: Airmen at RAF Wattisham, Suffolk, enjoy a light-hearted moment with Prince Philip, June 8, 1978



RAF BENTLEY PRIORY: Meeting members of the Royal Observer Corps after the presentation of the new Standard by HM The Queen on July 25, 1991



INSPECTION: Reviewing the guard of honour during a visit to RAF Wyton, Cambridgeshire



PROUD GRANDPARENTS: Her Majesty The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visited RAF Valley on April 1, 2011, and met, among others, Flt Lt Wales – Prince William, their SAR pilot grandson
PHOTO: SAC DEK TRAYLOR



WATTS UP: HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, in conversation with Wing Commander LH Bartlett, Wing Commander Flying at Wattisham, during an official visit to the station on May 21, 1953



RAF COSFORD: The Duke of Edinburgh meeting apprentices at 2 School of Technical Training during a visit to the station on July 8, 1996



RAF CRANWELL: HRH The Duke of Edinburgh pictured with Air Chief Marshal Sir Glen Torpy, Chief of the Air Staff, at the RAF College Cranwell, May 28, 2009



RAF ODIHAM: The Duke of Edinburgh during a visit on October 14, 1994

PHOTOS: AIR HISTORICAL BRANCH (RAF)

AMONG THE long list of Honorary Military positions across the UK and Commonwealth, Prince Philip was a Marshal of the RAF, Air Cdre in Chief of the Cadets, Air Cdre of the University Air Sqns and an Honorary Air Cdre of RAF Kinloss.

His made frequent official visits to RAF stations, always leaving a lasting impression on those he met and chatting about his personal love of flying

and admiration for the Service. In 2011 he joined HM The Queen to present their serving RAF pilot grandson Prince William with his helicopter Wings during a graduation ceremony at RAF Valley.

On one of his last official RAF engagements, he accompanied HM The Queen to present a new Standard to 603 Sqn in 2015. After touring the squadron and meeting with personnel and their families, His Royal

Highness presented two members of the squadron with their Afghanistan Medals.

The Royal couple were met by Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh and President of the Squadron Association, Gp Capt Bob Kemp.

He said: "Her Majesty and His Royal Highness arrived exactly on time and I was able to remind Her Majesty of her previous visit to 603's headquarters

some 40 years before. Clearly remembering the previous visit, Her Majesty responded: "Has it been that long?"

"As I escorted the Royal couple from the building back to the car, Her Majesty said to His Royal Highness, 'I keep meeting this chap,' clearly referring to our meeting earlier that day. It was a memorable day for all."



HRH THE Duke of Edinburgh (centre right), seen here with HM The Queen and Prince Edward cover their ears to protect them from the noise of a Harrier demonstrating its ability to deploy away from traditional airfields during the Silver Jubilee of the RAF at Finningley on 29 July, 1977. It appears from the image that HRH The Duke of Edinburgh didn't find it necessary.

PHOTO: AHB



HM THE Queen accompanied by HRH Prince Philip, reviews a parade before the presentation of the new Royal Observer Corps Standard at RAF Bentley Priory, in July 1991.

PHOTO: AHB



HRH THE Duke of Edinburgh chats to RAF personnel at Westminster Abbey after he and Prince Harry visited the Field of Remembrance on November 10, 2016. PHOTO: MATT CROSSICK/EMPICS

A passion for flying which never left him

Staff Reporter

HRH PRINCE Philip forged a successful career in the Royal Navy serving with distinction in World War II.

In a personal tribute, Royal biographer Gyles Brandreth said The Duke's passion for flying led him to consider joining the RAF instead.

Prince Philip joined the Royal Navy in 1939, graduating as the best cadet in his class, and was appointed a midshipman in January 1940.

He served on the battleship HMS Ramillies, before being transferred for brief spells on HMS Kent and HMS Shropshire.

Following the Italian invasion of Greece in 1940 he transferred to HMS Valiant and was Mentioned in Dispatches for his role in the Battle of Cape Matapan in the Mediterranean in 1941. He continued to serve with the Royal Navy until 1951.

But flying with the Royal Air Force would have been his first choice, according to Gyles Brandreth who interviewed the Prince while writing the biography *Philip – The Final Portrait*.

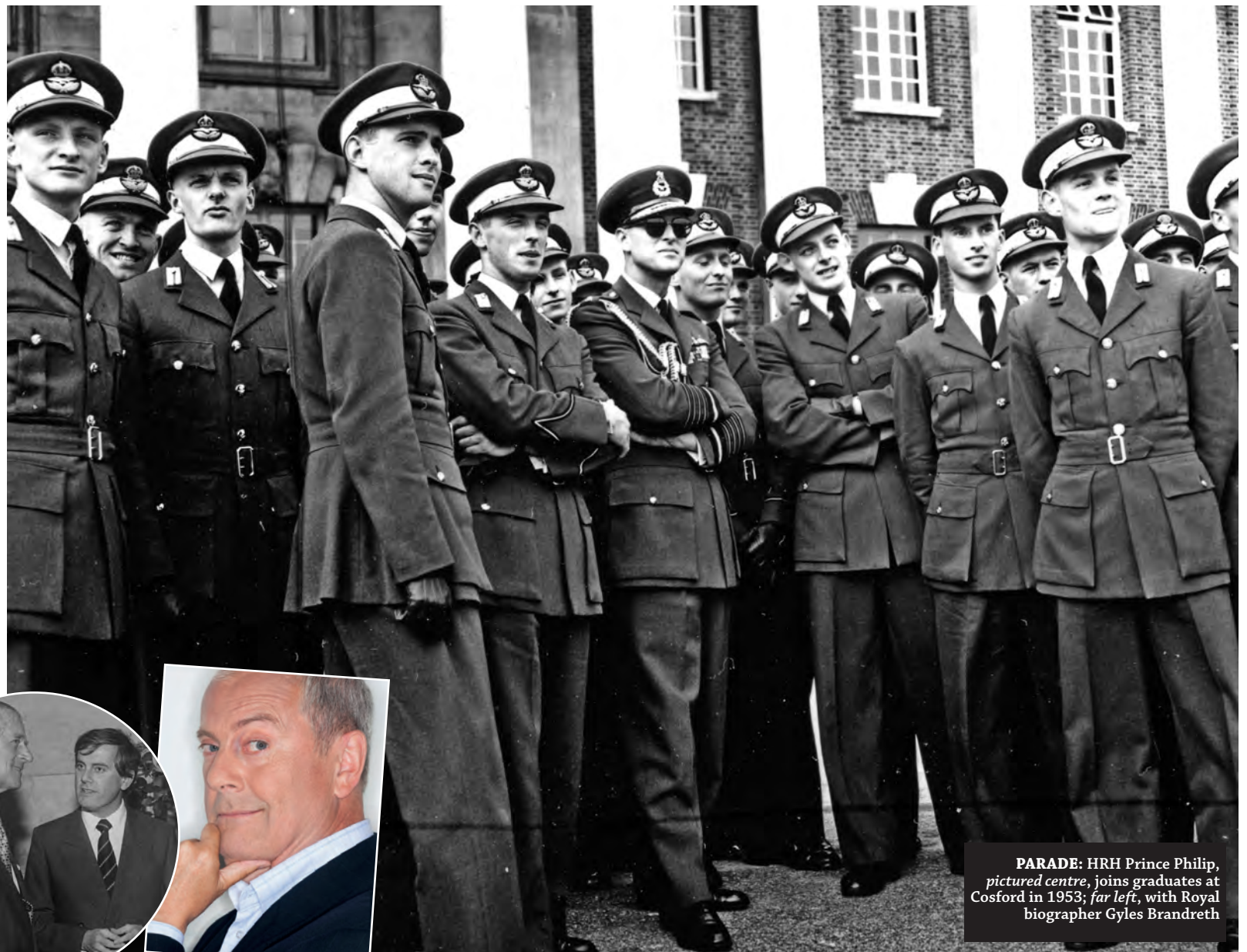
HRH Prince Philip made his first flight as a pilot from White Waltham in Berkshire, in a Chipmunk, in November 1952; his last, in a BAe 146, flying from Carlisle to Islay, in August 1997.

Brandreth said: "It was a privilege to know the Duke of Edinburgh.

"He was such a remarkable, multi-faceted individual, who led a life that was quite extraordinary.

"Writing his biography, I spent time with him talking about his early life in Greece, in France, in Britain.

"He was never comfortable talking about personal matters,



PARADE: HRH Prince Philip, pictured centre, joins graduates at Cosford in 1953; far left, with Royal biographer Gyles Brandreth

but he was always happy to talk about his Service appointments in general – and anything to do with flying in particular.

"In May 1939, six weeks short of his eighteenth birthday, Prince

Philip of Greece joined the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth and set himself on course for a career in the Royal Navy.

"But he told me that, left entirely to his own devices, 'I'd have gone into the Air Force without a doubt.'

"Flying was one of the great unremarked-on passions of his life.

"Over 45 years, he clocked up a total of 5,986 hours of flying in 59 types of aircraft, including nine helicopters.

"I think an RAF pilot might only

clock up 8,000 hours in a full career, so he didn't do too badly as what he called 'a part-time amateur'.

"In my book, *Philip – The Final Portrait*, I have tried to portray him in the round and to do him justice. He was a very special man."

Forces charities join national salute

Staff Reporter

FORCES CHARITY chiefs honoured the work of HRH Prince Philip and his support for good causes.

Among those to join international tributes following his death were the Royal Air Force Association and the National Memorial Arboretum – a venue the Duke visited on many occasions.

RAFA chief executive Air

Marshal Sir Baz North said: "We are immensely proud of His Royal Highness's links with and of his commitment to the RAF Association, culminating in His Royal Highness being the President of the RAF Association on three occasions.

"We shall always remember his wise counsel and contribution, and in

particular his support to the RAF Association at key moments in its history."

Philippa Rawlinson, managing director of the National Memorial Arboretum, added: "Our staff and volunteers are immensely saddened by the death of His Royal Highness, a loyal friend to the Arboretum."



SUPPORT: HRH Prince Philip at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire; inset left, RAFA president Air Marshal Sir Baz North



There's so much more to SSAFA

We are SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity. We have been supporting the Armed Forces family for more than 135 years and not just during times of conflict. We help those currently serving, veterans and their families to regain their independence and dignity. Our services are diverse, and so are the people we help. Whether practical, emotional or financial we can get you the support you deserve.

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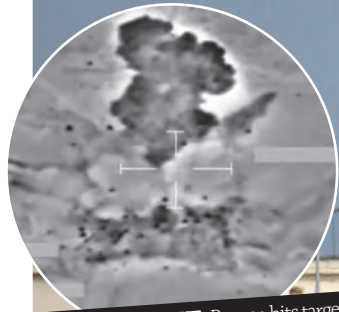
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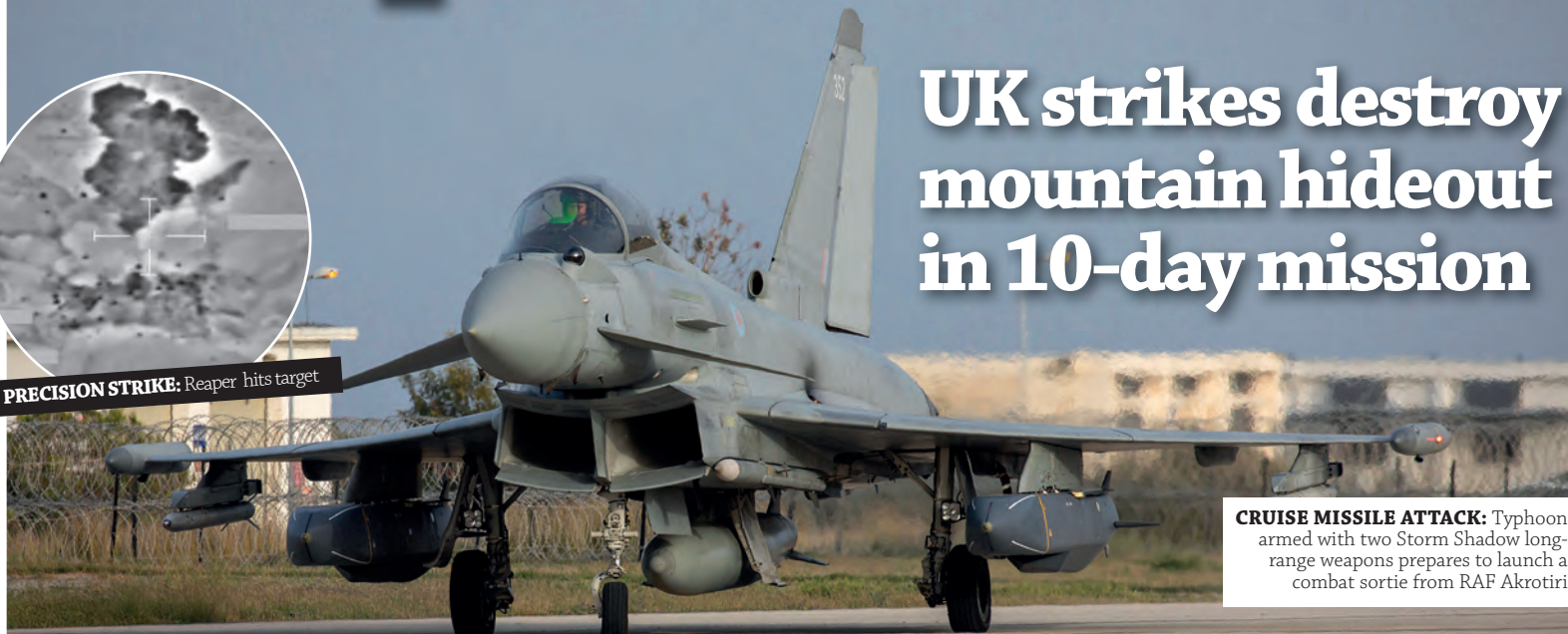
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Typhoons blitz Iraq terror lairs

UK strikes destroy mountain hideout in 10-day mission



PRECISION STRIKE: Reaper hits target



CRUISE MISSILE ATTACK: Typhoon armed with two Storm Shadow long-range weapons prepares to launch a combat sortie from RAF Akrotiri

TYPHOONS LAUNCHED a 10-day blitz of Daesh terror targets in northern Iraq during a surge against Islamist militants.

RAF jets pounded caves in the Makhmur Mountain region south-west of Erbil unleashing 10 Storm Shadow cruise missiles and 42 Paveway IV bombs during multiple strikes.

Iraqi Security Force ground troops cleared hideouts while Coalition aircraft carried out a major air offensive on targets assessed as particularly challenging.

Three Typhoons fired Storm Shadow missiles operationally for the first time in a strike assessed by subsequent surveillance to have been a success.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "This operation will prevent the terrorist group and its toxic ideology from regaining a foothold in Iraq and reduce its capability to coordinate attacks around the world."

In a separate operation, an unmanned Reaper aircraft armed with Hellfire missiles struck terrorists in northern Syria, near Al Hasakah.

Middle East air chief Air Cdre Simon Strasdin said: "The RAF and Coalition supported an operation led by Iraqi Security Forces. Together, we are working towards defeating the remnants of Daesh and ensuring its will is depleted."

A Typhoon FGR4 pilot said: "We were removing Daesh from the region and denying them a critical safe haven from which to continue their operations in Iraq and Syria."

"As part of this operation, the Squadron took part in two combined missions involving Coalition assets."

"It is always very professionally satisfying to work alongside our allies to achieve the task."

Although Daesh has been territorially defeated, an estimated 10,000 terrorists are still at large in the region.

The RAF is also carrying out intel missions, refuelling and transport sorties using Reaper, Voyager, C130 and A400Ms aircraft.



FAREWELL: Air Marshal Gerry Mayhew at Waddington as V Sqn stands down

Farewell to 5 Sqn

ONE OF the RAF's most historic units has been stood down following the withdrawal of the Sentinel R1 aircraft from service.

A ceremonial parade at RAF Waddington marked the disbandment of V (Army Cooperation) Sqn – first formed in 1913 and a veteran of both World Wars and the Gulf.

A socially-distanced ceremony was attended by Deputy Commander Operations AM Gerry Mayhew and Air Officer Commanding Number 1 Group AVM Allan Marshall.

Station Commander Gp Capt Steve Kilvington said: "The Sentinel R1 has been a familiar sight at Waddington for 14 years, and has delivered exceptional support to operations across the globe from tackling insurgency in the Middle East to supporting Nato on Europe's flanks."

"Whilst the current situation means that we are not able to give them quite the send-off we would wish, everyone should feel immensely proud of what they have all achieved."

The Sentinel has flown in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, West Africa, Libya, North Africa and supported UK authorities during floods.

The aircraft has flown around 32,300 hours over 4,870 sorties.

Military personnel will be posted to new roles throughout the RAF.

NATO finds its range on Point Blank drill

AMERICAN AND Dutch F-16 Fighting Falcons trained with Typhoons in a mass military combat drill over the North Sea.

Exercise Point Blank is the first time all three European-based USAF fighter wings took part with more than 50 other aircraft during the four-day mission.

They were joined by the RAF's 3 (F), XI (F), 29 and 41 Squadrons and Royal Netherlands Air Force F-16s and F35As operating from their bases in the Netherlands.

Brize-based Voyager tankers also operated in formation to allow up to four fighters to simultaneously refuel.

Coningsby-based exercise coordinator Sqn Ldr Jim Fordham said: "This is a hugely valuable training opportunity for the RAF."

"It allows us to practise

integrating with fighters from the UK's closest ally and other Nato partners, going up against a range of simulated modern air and surface-air threats.

"The different aircraft types each have their own strengths and weaknesses, but when combined together our lethality and survivability however is greatly increased."

"The only way to generate this formidable allied capability is to regularly train together, developing and improving our tactics."

The Lakenheath-based USAF 48th Fighter Wing was joined by F-16 Fighting Falcons from



TANKER SUPPORT: Voyager



NATO AIR POWER: F-16 Fighting Falcons from Aviano Air Base in Italy joined exercise PHOTO: USAF

Aviano Air Base in Italy and Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany flying long-range sorties supported by Mildenhall's KC-135 tankers and so did not land in the UK.

The Exercise was coordinated by Scampton Air Control Centre and an E-3D Sentry from Waddington's 8 Sqn.

The manoeuvres followed the

recent Exercise Cobra Warrior and are designed to increase the readiness of Nato allies to deter potential adversaries.

Originally set up as a British and American quarterly exercise, in recent years Point Blank has grown and become increasingly important for practising complex air operations.



Signed, sealed and delivered

AN RAF MEDIC received a touching online message for using sign language to help vaccinate deaf people against Covid 19.

Henlow-based Sgt Cheryl Drysdale, pictured, was thanked on Twitter for supporting the NHS roll-out in London.

Cheryl learned to sign growing up with profoundly deaf brothers and uses the skill every day as the family's main way of communicating.

Plan to make the RAF lean, GREEN, fighting machine



BRIZE BIG BEAST: Transporter and refueller Voyager is one of the Oxfordshire station's workhorses



FAMILY TIES: MP Courts' grandfather Albert Newitt (left - who was promoted to Flt Lt) and great uncle Flt Sgt Basil Newitt (right)



FUEL-HUNGRY: RAF Typhoon
PHOTO: SAC KIRWAN-TAYLOR



FUTURE: More eco-friendly Tempest

Air Force innovators to lead way for UK

THE RAF is helping to drive forward plans to slash aviation emissions as the UK battles to hit Boris Johnson's pledge to make the UK a zero carbon nation by 2050.

Aviation minister Robert Courts has recruited Air Force expertise following the launch of a £15 million technology competition to help civvy aviation switch to British-produced bio fuels.

The MP for West Oxfordshire, which includes Brize Norton, says the Royal Air Force is set to lift the eco-drive which hopes to see the UK's first zero carbon transatlantic flight within four years and zero emissions in civilian aviation by 2030.

He said: "The Royal Air Force is phenomenally good at optimising what needs to be done and delivering. Its history is a great story of innovation.

"The Service is a huge driving force and superb at looking to the future because of its people, its training and its ethos."

He is a member of the government-backed Jet Zero Council, formed last year to bring together leading figures in the UK civilian aviation and technology sectors and which has just launched the Green Fuels Green Skies competition in a bid to hit the emissions target.

Key to that ambition is the development of UK based eco-fuel production using hydrogenated fats, alcohol, sugar, household waste and bio mass to power aircraft - a programme the RAF is already researching with industry partners.

UK Defence launched its own climate change policy last year under the command of former Army chief Lt Gen Richard Nugee,

to dramatically reduce emissions from military aircraft, ships, battlefield vehicles, Forces bases and housing.

Launching the recent Forces climate change review, Lt Gen Nugee said: "The effect of climate change will challenge how our armed forces operate today and will need to operate in the future; we need to act now to understand and prepare for the changes that have to be made. At the same time, we must reduce our own emissions to help the nation reach its Net Zero 50 commitment.

"The climate is changing, the climate is making it more difficult to operate, the climate is affecting our bases, it's affecting our equipment and so on, so we need to adapt."

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston this month said the RAF is already working on a strategy to make the service carbon neutral by 2040 - 10 years ahead of the government's own target.

The development of the next generation of combat aircraft such as the prototype Tempest and uncrewed Loyal Wingman combat platforms is at the vanguard of the government bid to slash aviation pollution.

Harnessing the cutting-edge expertise of the RAF is a top priority in the fight for cleaner sustainable aviation, Courts said.

Bringing in the RAF was a natural move for the Oxfordshire politician, who boasts strong Air Force connections.

His grandfather, Flt Lt Albert

Newitt, was an observer on Wellington bombers, flying 47 sorties with 214 Sqn before taking on a tour in the Middle East, while great uncle Flt Lt Basil Newitt served as ground crew and later as a gunner flying special operations with Bomber Command during the Battle of Britain.

Courts also affectionately describes himself as 'MP for Brize Norton' which he dubs 'the world's greatest air base'.

He added: "I am proud of growing up in a family with strong RAF links. I know that if you want to get something done and make a difference, it is an organisation which is always going to deliver."

Last month's Defence Procurement Command Paper laid out a radical shift from traditional combat kit to the fast-track development of ground-breaking technology to counter emerging threats.

Courts said: "We are seeing a huge emphasis of future combat systems like the Tempest. What we already see in the military is similar to what we are trying to achieve in the civilian world with the Jet Zero Council.

"The need to get the RAF on board is obvious. Its people have the technological genius, operational expertise and ethos to get things done."

"Brize Norton is the biggest station in the country. Every single day we see incredible operational expertise. Everything needed for military operations and humanitarian missions goes through there and it can lead the way."

"Britain means business on climate change. It is the biggest challenge of our generation and the RAF is perfectly positioned to get stuck into it as cheerleaders for what is possible."

"Civilian aviation standards follow military standards. We have real opportunity for the UK to lead internationally and the RAF is a key part of that."



BRIZE MP: Aviation minister Robert Courts



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Graduations

Mowbray's Gunner be the one to watch

It's the RAF Regiment for Sword of Honour winner

AIR MARSHAL Gerry Mayhew was the Reviewing Officer at the graduation of The Queen's Squadron consisting of 72 Officers of Modular Initial Officer Training Course No 2 and Commissioned Warrant Officer Course No 22 from Royal Air Force College Cranwell recently.

GRADUATING OFFICERS OF MODULAR IOT NO 2

PILOT

- Fg Off J T Abbott
- Fg Off O E Bell
- Fg Off J M Dutton BSc
- Fg Off O H Geddes
- Fg Off M R James
- Fg Off J W Marchant MEng
- Fg Off D J Shaw BSc
- Fg Off I S Webber MSci BA

REMOTELY PILOTED AIR SYSTEMS (PILOT)

- Fg Off A E Broughton
- Fg Off M J Drew BEng
- Fg Off N J High
- Fg Off P N Taylor

WEAPONS SYSTEMS OFFICER

- Fg Off S J M Devlin BSc MRes
- Fg Off D J Hewitt MCPara

AIR OPERATIONS (CONTROL)

- Plt Off R A Barton
- Fg Off T L Brooks
- Fg Off A G Cathcart
- Plt Off W A Clifton LLB
- Plt Off C A Dale BA
- Plt Off R Du
- Plt Off L C Goodenough
- Fg Off S D Gould
- Plt Off J D Phillips
- Fg Off S M Scott

AIR OPERATIONS (SYSTEMS)

- Plt Off D Crouchman BSc
- Plt Off A K Hardacre
- Plt Off D R Peet
- Fg Off C D Stirling
- Plt Off M J Sutton BA

INTELLIGENCE

- Plt Off S C Turner LLB

REGIMENT

- Plt Off A G Downs-Wheeler BA
- Fg Off M T Duffy
- Fg Off B Jones BA
- Fg Off L A Mowbray BComm

PROVOST

- Fg Off P G Vawer BA PgDip

ENGINEER (AEROSYSTEMS)

- Fg Off S R Brown BEng
- Fg Off S M Capper BEng
- Fg Off L S Crisp MEng
- Fg Off A J Holden Eng Tech IMechE



ON PARADE: RAFC Cranwell graduates and, inset left, Air Mshl Gerry Mayhew

- Fg Off J G Kivlin BEng
- Fg Off O J D Thomas MEng ACGI
- Fg Off J M Trickett BEng
- Fg Off S J Walton MEng

ENGINEER (COMMUNICATIONS – ELECTRONICS)

- Fg Off M A Benbow
- Fg Off D D Godfrey BEng
- Fg Off L Hansford MEng ACGI
- Fg Off J C Heath BSc
- Fg Off K S Turner MSc BSc

LOGISTICS

- Fg Off P J Dowers
- Plt Off C A Ewers BSc
- Plt Off N S Gent BSc
- Plt Off L A Gilbert BEng
- Fg Off J M Hargreaves BA
- Fg Off L G Harty
- Fg Off J A King
- Fg Off K E McBride
- Fg Off F E Moynan
- Plt Off E J Nixon BSc
- Fg Off W G Sorby BSc

PERSONNEL SUPPORT

- Plt Off R Dickinson MSc
- Fg Off P A Downey BA
- Plt Off Z A Foster
- Plt Off E R M Kirwan BA
- Fg Off C J Lord
- Fg Off H J McEwen
- Plt Off H G Willcock BA

PERSONNEL TRAINING

- Fg Off A J Balch
- Fg Off V J Morgan BSc

MEDICAL

- Fg Off J A Eva

COMMISSIONED WARRANT OFFICER COURSE NO 22

- Fg Off J S A Wright PgDip

INTELLIGENCE

- Flt Lt M D Tindall BSc

PERSONNEL SUPPORT

- Flt Lt B I Johnson BSc GCGI

Prizewinners

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THE HENNESSY TROPHY AND PHILIP SASSOON MEMORIAL PRIZE

Awarded to the best RAF cadet, other than the Sword of Honour winner: **Off Cdt M J Drew** BEng

THE MacROBERT PRIZE

Awarded to the cadet who, in

the opinion of his or her peers, has made the greatest contribution to the course: **Off Cdt T L Brooks**

BAE SYSTEMS TROPHY

Awarded to the RAF or International cadet with the highest marks for professional studies on the course: **Off Cdt L A Mowbray** BComm

GROUP CAPTAIN WILLIAMS' MEMORIAL TROPHY

Awarded to the RAF cadet who has shown the greatest improvement: **Off Cdt L A Gilbert** BEng

THE SARAH MOLAND MEMORIAL PRIZE

Awarded to the RAF cadet who demonstrates outstanding qualities of courage and fortitude to complete Modular Initial Off Training: **Off Cdt L C Goodenough**

THE WARRANT OFFICER BILL TORRANCE TROPHY

Awarded to the cadet who, at the discretion of the Physical Education Staff, has performed to a consistently high level: **Off Cadet M T Duffy**

TOP
CADET:
Fg Off
Mowbray



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Air Mshl Sir Roy Austen-Smith KBE, CB, CVO, DFC

Obituary

Air chief was WWII pilot and won DFC for action in Malaya

AIR MARSHAL Sir Roy Austen-Smith, who has died aged 96, was one of the last surviving senior RAF officers to see combat during World War II, when he flew during the final weeks of the conflict in Europe.

He joined the RAF in 1942, trained as a pilot in Canada, and in March 1945 joined 41 Squadron, based at Eindhoven, flying the Spitfire XIV. For the next six weeks he flew almost every day on armed reconnaissance sorties and fighter sweeps into Germany. The squadron moved frequently and was near Hanover by mid-April. On March 2, during a patrol over Schwerin airfield, he shot down a Fiesler Storch.

At 6.20am on the morning of May 5, a formation of six Spitfires, including Austen-Smith, took off to patrol between Hamburg and Lubeck. They had nothing to report and landed at 8am as the cessation of hostilities in North-west Europe came into effect. Within days, the squadron flew to Copenhagen to take part in the Victory Day celebrations later in the month before moving to the former Luftwaffe airfield at Lubeck. Austen-Smith remained with the squadron until the end of March 1946.

After a staff tour, he returned to flying duties and in 1950 joined 33 Squadron as a flight commander at Butterworth, near Penang. The squadron, the last to operate the Tempest, was heavily engaged in the Malayan Emergency mounting ground attack sorties against the communist terrorists (CT). In March 1951 the squadron converted to the twin-engine Hornet, a derivative of the Mosquito.

Austen-Smith led many sorties armed with bombs, rockets and cannons. Infantry regiments called up the airborne Hornets to mount strikes to hit CT camps, and also to flush out the terrorists from the jungle to allow Army patrols to ambush them. After a strike in Perak, the ground force commander thanked him for his "phenomenally accurate" strike.

Austen-Smith had an unusually long period on operations and was awarded the DFC, for "gallant and distinguished service in Malaya."

After returning from Malaya, he served as a squadron commander in the cadet wing at the RAF College Cranwell. In 1956, following a jet conversion course, he assumed command of 73 Squadron in Cyprus. Initially, the squadron flew the single-seat Venom fighter-bomber before converting to the Canberra medium bomber in March 1957. With the creation of the Baghdad Pact, and the aftermath of the ill-fated Suez affair, tensions rose in the Middle East and Austen-Smith and his crews deployed frequently to airfields in the region.

An appointment in MoD and attendance at the Joint Services Staff College Course



MUCH ADMIRER:
Air Mshl
Sir Roy
Austen-Smith

followed before he returned to flying duties in 1964, but in a very different role. He assumed command of a Victor bomber squadron, No 57 based at Honington in Suffolk, which formed part of the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent force with some aircraft maintained at a high-readiness state.

His squadron also made regular deployments overseas and Austen-Smith led a detachment to Tengah in Singapore during the Indonesian Confrontation.

In 1966 he left for Germany where he served in the operational plans division of the Second Allied Tactical Air Force based at Rheindahlen, near Monchengladbach.

On return from Germany in 1968 he took command of RAF Wattisham in Suffolk, the home of two Lightning squadrons providing air defence for the UK. One of his squadron commanders described him as: "The perfect example of gentlemanly behaviour. No matter whether dealing with his superiors,

"The perfect example of gentlemanly behaviour. No matter whether dealing with his superiors, or subordinates, he was affable and commanded complete respect"

or subordinates, he carried an air of affability and commanded complete respect."

In 1970 he served at the MoD as the Director of Personnel (Air) responsible for the postings and career management of aircrew officers.

In September 1972 he became the Air Officer Commanding and Commandant of the RAF College Cranwell. His arrival coincided with a series of major re-

organisations. The flight cadet entry system, which had served the RAF so well for 53 years, was being gradually replaced by a graduate entry scheme. On March 16, 1973, Austen-Smith presided over the passing out parade of No 101 Entry, the last of the flight cadet entries.

The RAF College of Air Warfare at RAF Manby closed and the Department of Air Warfare was established at Cranwell. The HQ of the University Air Squadrons also arrived and he took the opportunity to attend the annual dinners at all 15 squadrons and to meet the university vice-chancellors and student pilots.

Throughout this challenging time, the flying training school, based on two airfields, continued to train pilots and Austen-Smith flew the Jet Provost when time allowed. Personable and popular, he and his wife were generous in the hospitality they offered to local dignitaries.

In November 1975 Austen-Smith was appointed Senior Air Staff Officer of the Near Air Force (NEAF) in Cyprus. In July 1974, Turkey had invaded the north resulting in the partition of the island and the withdrawal of the resident RAF squadrons, leaving only a helicopter squadron at Akrotiri. The base, however, remained a key staging post and airhead for operations in the region with fighter squadrons also deploying on a regular basis for tactical and armament training.

With the disbandment of NEAF in April 1976, Austen-Smith became Commander of British Forces Cyprus and Administrator of the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). Whilst Austen-Smith was very familiar with the military and operational aspects of his appointment, the complex political situation on the divided island presented very different issues requiring all his diplomatic skills and tact in the delicate negotiations with international and local parties. Later, he commented: "It was a difficult but very interesting time."

After leaving Cyprus in the summer of 1978, Austen-Smith headed for Washington to become Defence Attaché and head of the British Defence Staff, a post he held for three years before retiring in November 1981 after 38 years service, 15 of which were spent overseas.

Austen-Smith was appointed KBE (1979) and CB (1975).

In 1994 he was made a Gentleman Usher to HM The Queen, a post he held for 12 years until 1994 when he was appointed CVO.

He was a fine rugby player turning out for Harlequins, the RAF and Combined Services. During his service in Malaya he appeared for the Combined Forces Malaya and for the RAF – on one occasion flying to Saigon, where the RAF team beat the French Air Force.

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● Zoom time boom time for ladies: **pp26-27**

700 ON THE BOUNCE

Doorman Doyle on target in record bid

Andy O'Hara

FORMER RAF Reservist Paddy Doyle is a man on a mission... to set 700 gruelling fitness and biking world records.

The 57-year-old, who runs courses for door supervisors – or bouncers – previously served with 4624 Sqn, 504 Sqn and had a short spell with 605 sqn.

He started judo aged eight, then took up boxing and kickboxing, winning numerous titles along the way before getting into mountain biking.

He first got a taste for making history in 1987 when he was leafing through an old copy of the *Guinness Book of Records* and reckoned he could break the press up mark.

He did, banging out an incredible 4,100 of them with a 50lb steel plate on his back – a record that stands until this day.

Over the past 35 years he has dedicated much of his time to endurance fitness, mountain biking and breaking records.

He is often to be found in the Shropshire Hills, splattered with mud, with a heavily-weighted backpack on, going hell for leather on one of his mountain bikes, eating up the miles.

When he's not sweating it out in the country, he's sweating it out in the gym; punching, kicking, doing star jumps and burpees – all with a heavy backpack on and often with weights around his wrists and ankles.

Doyle got back on his saddle recently to set another low technical mountain bike cross country record, carrying a 22lb backpack. He had to negotiate gates, stiles and muddy footpaths while achieving a new course distance of 30km in a time of 1hr 48mins 48secs.

He's now the proud holder of 694 physical fitness and biking records, many set at the Grand Union Canal, Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and Heart of England Way footpath in Warwickshire.

Of his latest challenge, he told *RAF News*: "It was a tough day as I had not competed since last year. However, I am getting closer to the 700th career sporting milestone.

"Each challenge has its different tough mental obstacles. I do not so much push myself physically to the wall, I smash through the wall and worry about injuries afterwards."

The mean machine's role of honour includes:

● Multi-terrain cross country speed march, carrying 40lb backpack, 6hrs 28mins, 26 miles,



FIRST RECORD: Press ups, May 1987

July 26, 1996. Clent & Lickey Hills, West Midlands. Witnessed and filmed by BBC *Record Breakers*.

● Mount Snowden North Wales speed march, carrying 45lb backpack, 3hrs 20mins. Set on August 11, 2002. Officiated and witnessed by members of World Association of Special Forces.

● Cross country speed march carrying 60lb backpack, 26 miles, 7hrs 51mins. Set on February 14, 2011. South Warwickshire footpaths and Grand Union Canal. Escorted by pacers and members of 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment.

● Five-mile World Road Speed March record carrying 120lb backpack in 1hr 29mins 40secs, July 5, 2015. Solihull.

● RAF Hurricane 80K Mountain Bike Challenge with a 30lb backpack. 4hrs 47mins 18secs. Rowington Village footpaths, bridleways, Grand Union and Stratford-upon-Avon canals. June 12, 2020.

And what will Doyle do after he reaches his 700-record target? Keep on going, of course. "I won't be stopping anytime soon," he said. "I've got a good few more records in me yet."

■ **DOYLE** is offering free mountain bike courses in the Shropshire Hills to Air Force personnel throughout the year.

Courses cover downhill skills, planning and safety. Once completed information will be available to those considering becoming mountain bike leaders.

Contact Doyle at: patrick814@btinternet.com for more information.

DOYLE: Just another day at the office

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Olympic dreams

The guide for world-beating paralympian

Tracey Allen

TRIATHLETE SAC Luke Pollard is setting his sights on the Tokyo Olympics. The 29-year-old airman from RAF Brize Norton hopes to be competing at the Games this summer with world record-holding Paralympian Dave Ellis.

Dave has less than 10 per cent vision and Luke is his guide in the gruelling swimming, running and cycling discipline.

Dave, 34, won both the paratriathlon ITU World and ETU European Championship titles in 2013, 2017 and 2018.

Luke, who took up triathlon in 2012, was given RAF elite athlete membership in 2016 and has had his membership extended to help him get to Tokyo.

He has to wait until the end of June to find out if he and Dave will be selected to represent Great Britain at the Olympics.

Having elite athlete status means the young airman, who works as an RAF supplier, can train for his sport full-time, as a professional athlete would. He and Dave are currently based in Loughborough and have access to the university's first-class sports facilities.

Luke said: "Loughborough

is where the British triathlete programme is based so I can train with the whole Paralympic triathlon squad. It's a really great environment and the facilities are second to none.

"Training during lockdown hasn't been easy but I appreciate that I'm in a very lucky situation having access to the university pool every day."

The duo train for about 27 hours a week. When they train and compete, Luke and Dave are tethered together – at the upper leg when swimming and the wrist when running and they ride a tandem for the cycle races.

Luke said: "It's an intense sport and Dave is an outstanding athlete. You need to be pretty speedy to keep up with him and not hinder him."

The pair are currently training every day and Luke says he hasn't had a day off since December. He added: "In training everything that Dave's going through I'm going through as well. I think that's why I enjoy it so much, you're getting to do something with a mate."



Flame burns bright for RAF triathlete



ELITE ATHLETES:
SAC Luke Pollard and Dave Ellis on their bikes, left.

The pair celebrating a European triathlon victory, above.

Pollard in action for the Royal Air Force, right.



We've stayed on the ball...

Zoom time boom time for the UKAF Volleyball Ladies

THERE'S ONLY been one way for teams to stay connected during lockdown – by Zoom of course.

And the UK Armed Forces Ladies have taken full advantage of the benefits offered by the digital platform to stay on the ball and hone their fitness together whilst waiting for a return to more traditional training and, ultimately, competition.

The women haven't been able to physically train together for a year, but that's not stopped them training together virtually – over a screen.

Head coach WO2 Nicola 'Spud' Mead seized the high-tech chance to maintain group fitness, motivation and team spirit.

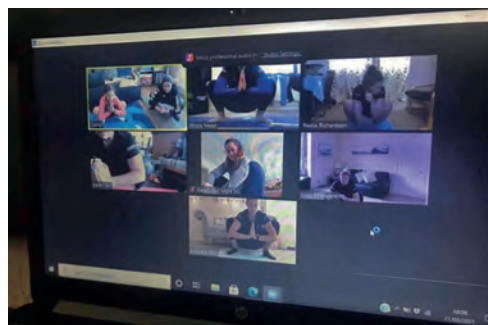
She told *RAF News*: "The past 12 months have been extraordinarily difficult for the nation and as we now approach the road out of lockdown I wanted to start a programme that would have all players and myself starting to think about competitive sport."

"This would be through Zoom sessions with the team and provide a fantastic platform of opportunity to start some low-level fundamentals and core training utilising known strength and conditioning techniques to ensure all players avoid injury and that we mentally build up confidence."

"The UKAF Ladies volleyball team is dynamic, powerful and talented and we have some exciting times ahead."

Every Sunday Mead takes the UKAF Ladies through a strength and conditioning programme designed to mimic the movements the players would typically perform on the volleyball court.

"We don't want players getting injured as soon as we start playing again," added Mead.



ZOOM ROOM: UKAF team training during Covid

As well as the physical benefits, the players have had the chance to mentally reconnect as a team, which for many has been a lifeline amidst the isolation of lockdown.

RAF, UKAF and GB player SAC Yasmin 'Yas' Kaashoek has found the sessions invaluable.

She said: "It's been really tough not being able to play the sport I love and I've definitely missed the UKAF team camaraderie."

"But being able to train online has allowed me to stay connected with my teammates and boost my mental health."

The National volleyball season runs from September to May, culminating for the Services in the Crowns and Inter-Services competitions, of which the RAF are current reigning champions in both.

And with the hope of Services sport returning this summer, the UKAF Ladies Volleyball team are putting the work in early.

"We're all excited to get back to competitive sport and we're committed to being there for each other as a team," said RAF and UKAF team member Flt Lt Louise Tagg.



TEAM TALK: Huddle pre-Covid



OP SHADER: Flt Lt Louise Tagg and Hercules



HANDS UP IF YOU'RE SICK OF LOCKDOWN: RAF Volleyball players in 'good old days'



NET GAIN: Celebrating in last competitive season



ENGLAND DUTY: Mead (left) & Kaashoek



The Royal Air Force thanks you Sir, for your service

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16 >



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