



# LOYALTY

The 33 Squadron RAF Association Newsletter

Issue 11 Autumn 2019

## 1955-1970: 33's Cold War Years



Part 2 of Don's Edy exploits with 33 in the Western Desert



Cold War Javelin and 'Battle of

Britain' film pilot

Ron Lloyd returns to 33

Victory Parade

1919 to

Remembrance

Day Parade 2019





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Picture above: Flanked by the founder of the 33 Squadron Association, Mr Paul Davies, and former 33 Squadron pilot Mr Andy Abbott, the Association's new Chair, Mr Richard Brewster, laid a wreath during the Last Post ceremony at the Menin Gate on Saturday 5 October 2019, Day Two of the Annual Battlefield Tour. This photograph, taken by Daphne Vangheluwe, is one of 99 published photographs taken that evening that are available online at [www.lastpost.be](http://www.lastpost.be).





## From the Editor..

Welcome to the Autumn edition of 'Loyalty', the edition historically published just before the renowned Puma reunion in London. This year, unfortunately, work prevents me from attending as I will have another course of future Puma pilots sat in class learning about the technical and operating intricacies of the Puma 2, but I am confident that the Association will be well represented. One of my students will also be unable to attend, the next OC 33 Squadron, Wing Commander Sam Fletcher. Sam will be taking over from Chris Royston-Airey next year and will have the honour of commanding the Squadron in its 50th year of service as a Puma squadron, 33's longest continuous period of service with one type of aircraft.

Chris and Sam continue the long line of remarkable men who have commanded 33 over the years. In previous editions we have covered our long and impressive history, from our formation as a Home Defence squadron in 1916, a role that equates to the World War Two role of the Air Defence of Great Britain, and the Defence of UK Air-space in modern parlance. We changed roles slightly towards the end of the First World War, adding the training role to our capabilities, notably the new role of night flying and night bombing. Those of you who have read the 2019 Battlefield Tour books and Report will be up to speed with our movements after the Squadron was reformed in 1929, will be aware of the amount of time 33 spent in the Middle East, from 1935 to 1944, changing role from a bomber to a fighter squadron, changing types from Hart to Gladiator Hurricane to Spitfire, and flying in a variety of countries and theatres until it returned home in 1944 to play its part in defeating fascism and restoring peace in

Europe.

As comfortable as we are in our knowledge of 50 years of Puma helicopter operations, the 15 year post-war and Cold War periods are probably the least well-known periods of our history. In this edition I have tried to build on the 'Flight' article of 25 May 1959, published in Loyalty Issue 8 Summer 2018, entitled 'Javelins of St George' by looking at our 'jet age period, which again saw the Squadron based in the North of England flying Venoms, Meteors and Javelins in an Air Defence role before moving out to Malaya again and taking on the Bloodhound SAM role. I am very pleased to include an article by Mr Ron Lloyd, who joined 33 straight from Cranwell and flew the Javelin FAW9. Ron flew Spitfires and Me109s from Hawkinge during the filming of the 'Battle of Britain' and also ran a UAS before he left the RAF, and I am hoping that he will return to 33 Squadron again in the New Year and join us during the Association's social events.

That leaves me 33 in Germany (1945-1949) and Malaya (1949-1955 / 1965-1970) to research for next year, while starting to plan the four editions of Loyalty in 2021 that will cover the Puma years. I served on 33 from 1982-1985, 1988-1994 and 1999-2004, so there are lots of gaps that only you can fill. Please help me out by putting pen to paper / fingers to keyboard and recoding your memories of your time on 33 so that we can mark the 50th anniversary celebrations in style. Once that is all wrapped up I will be hanging my pen up at the end of 2021 and handing the editorial reins over to someone else!

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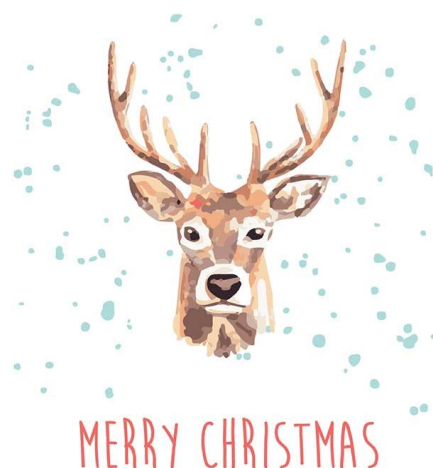
### SQUADRON GROUNDCREW REP

Sean Docherty (WO Eng 33 Sqn)

Best wishes to you and your families for Christmas, and I wish you all a Happy and prosperous New Year.

*Proud to be ..... 33*

*Dave Stewart*





## From the Chairman....

I could not have imagined back in November 1971, flying in a Puma from 33 Squadron from RAF Halton to RAF Benson to refuel, that I would find myself on 33 Squadron at RAF Odiham eight years later in March 1979, or even imagine that I would become Chairman of the 33 Squadron Association. That is life, I guess, and to quote Mr Paul Davies' words to me a year or two back at our visit to the Tower of London, "You are good at winging it!"

Well that is as may be, but first let me pass on a huge vote of thanks to Mr Dave Stewart for his two years in the Chair and for keeping the 33 Squadron Association on track these last few years under what at times proved difficult and testing circumstances. We are very well established now, at home and abroad, with a solid Constitution and active core of members who enjoy regular updates via our website, Facebook page and the 'Loyalty' newsletter. We are certainly more aware of the Squadron's illustrious and varied history now than we ever were when we were on 33! The Association has participated in a number of social events, ranging from Families Day gatherings, Tower of London visits, the Cenotaph Parade and three enjoyable and interesting Battlefield Tours. You have worked hard to ensure that the Puma's 50th Anniversary of Service with the RAF will be marked properly in 2021, establishing support at the highest levels on station and in MoD before you handed me the reins. Thank you for everything you have done to take the Association forward Dave, and I am looking forward to adding to our annual events with your aspiration of having a Founders' Day event in January.

Sunday last was marked by the Association marching for the third year at the Cenotaph and for the old and new Association members who marched that day I know that it was once again a fantastic and deeply moving experience. My thanks must go out to Jez Reid for all of the work that he has undertaken year on year from the outset of this initiative, which includes getting the Association registered with the RBL and badgering them to increase our numbers, registering our members correctly and in good time, organizing wreathes, emailing updates, issuing tickets to the members and ensuring adherence to dress regs - so thank you Jez.

On that morning prior to the parade, over a cuppa and a bacon buttie, Dave Stewart, and I were playing



**33 Squadron Association AGM, 33 Squadron, RAF Benson, 18 May 2019 - Dick takes over as Chair of the Association from Dave Stewart, who stepped down to become Vice Chairman and continue as the 'Loyalty' Editor.**

catch up and the perennial question of membership came up. Earlier in the year I wrote to a number of members personally, as some of you will know. My thanks go to all those who responded in such a positive way. It is ironic that all Associations suffer the same malaise in respect to subscriptions and attendance in regard to what the Association has and does organise. I know we all have very busy lives but it would be great to see some more of the old faces who, I know, are 'On the Books' so to speak, and make their presence known on the various 33 forums and at the events, as many have done and continue to do so throughout the year.

A fine example is Gordon Bruce, who was on the Squadron with me back in '79, travelled up from his home and place of work in the South of France this year, not only to attend the AGM but also to attend the Battlefield Tour at the beginning of October, and



flew in to march at the Cenotaph. Thank you, Gordon, for your continued support and yes, I know what some of you are saying - it would be great to have a beer and a catch up with former serving 33 Squadron members. With that in mind, and before we know it, it will be the Puma's 50th anniversary so watch this space! Regarding what is being organised by RAF Benson I will spread the word as the plan begins to take shape; but again this could be the one opportunity to catch up with old friends, and I cannot stress that enough. I would urge you all to try to attend any of our future events, especially the Puma's 50th Anniversary.

If you haven't yet read Dave Stewart's outstanding October Battlefield Tour report then I urge you to do so. The tour culminated in Holland near the town of Schoondijke, firstly at the crash site of WO George Roney, a New Zealander flying with 33 Squadron who was shot down on the 6 October 1944 on the opening day of Operation Infatuate. Jan Westhove, our first Association Honorary member who, along with the Dekker family on whose land George's remains were recovered, has been the driving force in seeing that a permanent memorial to George will be erected in his memory. 33 Sqn Association members attended the ceremony on 6 October, along with many local people and local Dutch politicians and yes, in true SH tradition the weather threw it down. Afterwards we attended a memorial service for George in the local Schoondijke church, where the Association members were able to pay their respects at his grave behind the church after a lovely reception with the congregation and local dignitaries. During the Memorial Service I gave two speeches, one from George's family in New Zealand

thanking the town for keeping George's sacrifice and memory alive, and one on behalf of the Association. George was in his early twenties when he gave his life, and it brought into sharp focus my own life and how fortunate I have been to have served for 40 years and step away unscathed. In my speech I touched on the fact that George had probably never had the love of a good woman, he never experienced the birth of children, the contentment of old age or of being a Grandparent and the joy that brings, as some of us have experienced.

My apologies if that strikes too sentimental a note but I am passionate about the Association and those with whom I have served. All of us have experienced the loss of a loved one, either a family member or someone we served with at one time or another, but we need to ensure that we stay in touch and support each other as we go on in life and, as I see it, that is part of the Association's remit .

Finally, as we look forward towards Christmas and the New Year may I be the first in wishing you and your families a very Happy Christmas and New Year. I look forward to seeing you again soon, not only at the Puma Reunion this year, but hopefully sometime very soon thereafter.

*Loyalty*

*Dicky Brewster*



**Schoondijke, Sunday 6 October 2019: Honorary Association member Jan Westhove holds the plaque that he has had specially created for a permanent monument that will be erected near to the spot that the Dekker family have kept a temporary monument to George Roney since our visit in 2017.**



## *From the Hart : OC 33 Squadron.....on the roof of the world!*



As I write this, I'm currently taking part in "Himalayan Rider", a 3-week motorcycle expedition to Nepal. Opportunities like this are one of the reasons why I joined up, being out here is an amazing experience - more to follow on my return...

Since the last edition of Loyalty, 33 Squadron has continued its overseas and home commitments at a high tempo, as always. A busy summer period has seen nearly all the Squadron being involved in exercises or operations, with A Flight currently deployed and B Flight just back from environmental training. It was great that some of 33 Squadron Association were able to make it to Families Day to enjoy RAF Benson at its very best. So much has been going on, here are my personal highlights from the Squadron:

A Flight, led by Squadron Leader Doug Fowler, carried out a hugely successful Pre-Deployment Training week at RAF Woodvale as part of Exercise HART ATTACK. The main aim was to qualify the crews and gain essential flying hours prior to heading out to Op TORAL in October. Focused on urban operating, the Flight utilised the areas around Liverpool to hone the formation skills in the demanding urban environment. Beyond these core skills the crews also provided essential support to local emergency services for their awareness and familiarisation of rotary platforms. The police, fire and reserve units were all involved proving the Pumas role in Military Aid to Civilian Population/Authorities MACP/MACA. The essential training was

extremely well received. The feedback from Wing Commander Gary Lane (Regional Liaison Officer) recognised the value of civilian and military aviation working together. A good job by all.

As part of the key preparation for deploying to Op TORAL is the Degraded Visual Environment (DVE) training that takes place in El Centro, California. The Puma Training Flight, led by Squadron Leader Tim Smith, was the backbone to the exercise, where crews were refreshing skills from before and new aircrew were experiencing their first exposure to the challenges of landing at night, on NVDs, in dust and with another aircraft only a few rotor spans away. Demanding, but essential to give them confidence to operate in these conditions. El Centro, run by the US Navy, once again proved to be an excellent training base. There was plenty of time for the Squadron members to get into San Diego and soak up some of the atmosphere too. A great success saw the engineers working extremely hard, maintaining serviceability and ensuring the flying programme achieved every day. All the crews came back to the UK fully qualified and ready to deploy. A fantastic result - I just wish I had been able to join them for some sun on the exercise!

The Squadron has bid a fond farewell to some pivotal characters in recent weeks. Squadron Leader Matt Gower (Squadron 2ic) departed in September to take up the role of JO Career Manager (Desk Officer in old speak). He was a stalwart of the Squadron and will be a



great loss to both the Squadron and the Puma Force. Matt's ability to juggle the busy role, while also being the Officers' Mess PMC for most of his time on 33, is a credit to his capacity and hard work.

Flight Lieutenant Baz Stokes has moved across to 230 Squadron as OC Training, where his enthusiasm for flying - and his straight talking - will be greatly received! Joining the Squadron are several old sweats of Puma Mk1 and early Puma Mk2 days: Squadron Leader Jez Allinson and Squadron Leader Johnny Longland join as Flight Commanders for A and B Flight and Squadron Leader Jamie Anderson will be joining very soon. Great to see them back and bringing all the previous Puma experience with them.

Our Holding Officer Force also said goodbye, with both Flight Lieutenant Sam McSevich and Flying Officer Sam Randle heading off to continue their flying training. They were fantastic assets to the Squadron and we hope to see them back on the Puma Force in the future. Jumping into the holding roles are Sergeant Sam Smith

and Sergeant Sam King, both joining the Squadron until they start at Shawbury for crewman training.

Such a busy period for the Squadron. I am extremely proud of what has been achieved, from keeping aircraft flying to maintaining operational output and welcoming in our new personnel. As we run up to the Christmas break and festivities, I'm sure everyone will get a chance to relax and enjoy it and I hope some of the Association will make it to the Puma reunion, catching up on almost 50 years of Puma flying!

*Chris Royston-Airey*

*Wing Commander*

**OC33**



Squadron Leader Matt Gower receiving his CR badge from OC 33.



The new 2IC, Squadron Leader Max Bond, saying goodbye to Flying Officer Sam Randle. I hope the Holding Officer Force was thanked for the wonderful job they did in tidying up and reconstructing the stands for the Gulf War One exhibits at the front of the hangar. Good job gentlemen, good luck for the future and we hope to see some of you back at Benson one day.

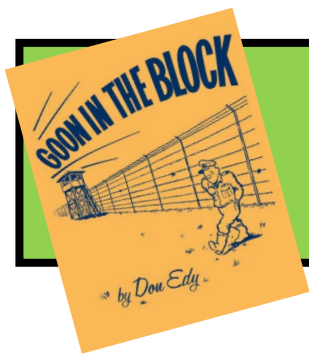


The multi-talented Squadron Leader Johnny Longland, proving that he can turn his hand to anything out on the El Centro det! Let's hope all of his talent is put to good use when he takes the Chair of the 'Puma 50th Anniversary' celebrations for 2021. We are standing by to assist Johnny, and have pre-positioned Scotty on the Committee already!



20 November 2019: 33 Squadron's very own Chief Technician Paula Cil won the Unsung Heroine Award for her work encouraging young people to get involved in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) activities and for her welfare support to families of deployed personnel. Air Marshal Sue Gray, well known from her days as an engineering officer with the Puma Force and now the highest ranking woman ever in the British Armed Forces, presented the awards at the Guildhall, London throughout the evening. Many congratulations Paula, and we love the cummerbund!





## Goon In the Block - Part Two (Chapters 5-8)

Continuing the serialisation of Don Edy's memoirs with 33 Squadron in the Western Desert

### Chapter 5

In the morning we had a hurried breakfast and then our new friends drove us to the aircraft. We thanked them for their hospitality and were soon flying off along the coast. It was September 16, 1941 when I glided down to Gerwala landing ground and became an active member of No.33 Fighter Squadron, M.E.F., R.A.F., exactly one year and twenty-six days from the time I enlisted in the Air Force in London (Ed.Ontario, CAN).

As far as places went in the desert, Gerwala was a very pleasant one. The landing field was a fairly small one so there was just enough room for one squadron and no chance of being crowded out by others. The field, aircraft dispersal, flight tents and maintenance units were all on one side of a deep wadi, or ravine. All the living quarters and the messes were on the other side. This arrangement saved us from a great many sand storms that were kicked up by the planes landing and taking off. The station was about a mile from the coast road and another half mile from the sea.

Lance and Don met us at our planes and told us where to taxi and report. Already we had been spotted for A Flight so first we met the ground crew and NCOs in charge. They seemed to be a good bunch of men and they greeted us to the squadron warmly. Lance then drove us back across the desert and the wadi, up to the mess. This proved to be one of the elite places in the desert. Most squadrons had big tents or marquees for their messes but ours was a real wooden hut with two rooms, one the dining room and the other the lounge, complete with bar. True enough it was very rustic but the boys had fixed it up nicely with curtains, rugs, and easy chairs and I came to love the place.

The CO of 33 was Squadron Leader Marsden, a slightly built, nervous little man who no more looked like a fighter pilot than Mr. Milquetoast. It always came as a shock to me to meet some famous fighter pilot and find him to be a meek little man with a blonde moustache, or the delicate features and build of a girl. I met a lot of Englishmen during the war who did amazing things while in the services but to see them you wouldn't think butter would melt in their mouths. Marsden had had a rough time earlier and was on rest. His Hurricane was shot down over the sea and he had to bail out. The destroyer that picked him up was No. 33 and a friend of mine from London was on it.

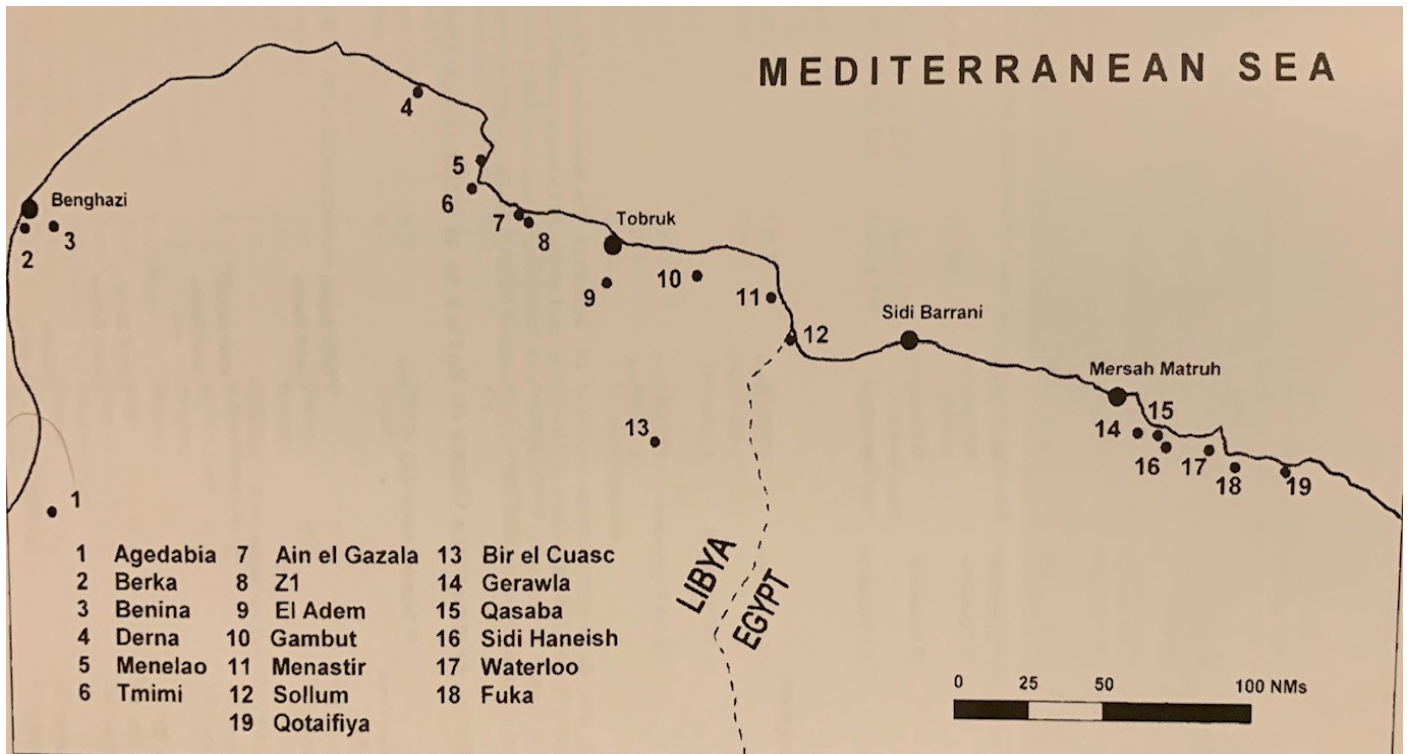
Marsden welcomed Tommy and I and then introduced

us to the Flight Commanders. They were Flight Lieutenant 'NJ' Johnson and Flight Lieutenant 'Tiny' Tofield. Actually there were two others but they left a couple of days later to go on rest and I can't remember their names. The other officers in the Squadron were Andy Anderson, a Canadian in the RAF, Dudley Winsland, an Englishman we called 'Winnie', Dudley Dove, a South African, and George Rumsey, a pilot who also acted as Adjutant for 33. These were the only Flying Officers left in the Squadron, the others all having been killed or wounded in the last few weeks.

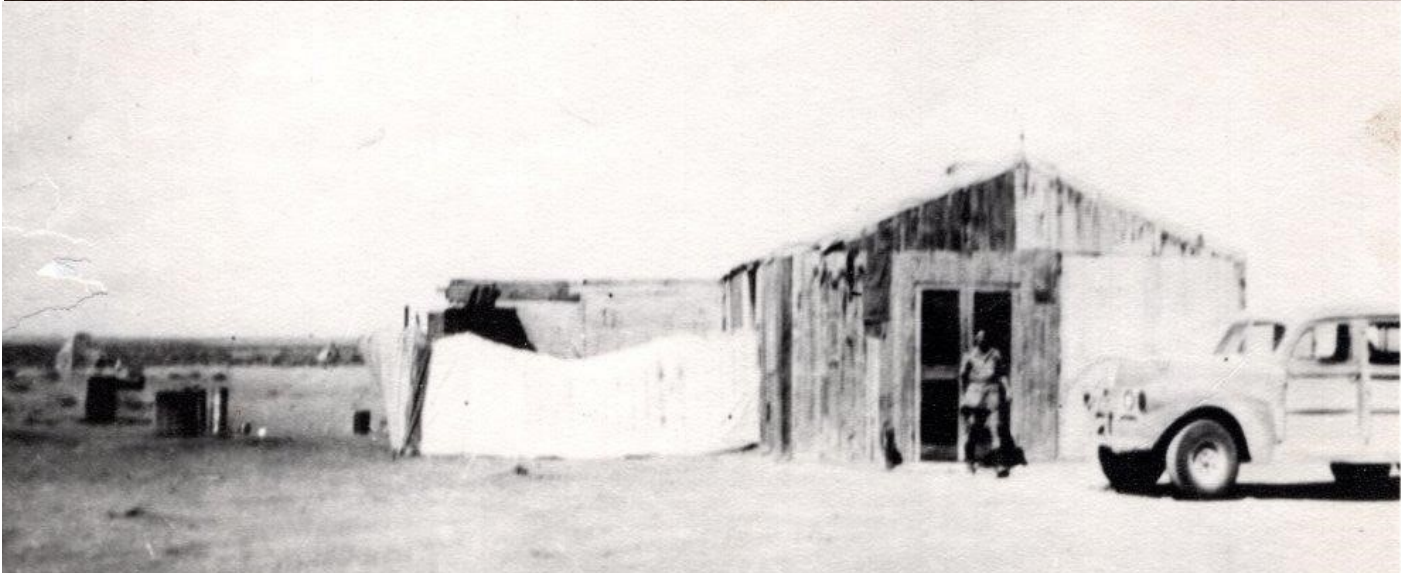
At lunchtime the Administration officers came in and we met them. The Maintenance officer was Jock Peasant, fat and jolly and always ready with a joke or story to keep our spirits up. 'Doc' Henderson was a real clown and a lot of fun but he looked after us as if we were his own. There were two other older men but they were quiet and reserved. I have a feeling that because the pilots came and went so quickly these two didn't want to become too friendly and then suffer from the loss. Finally there was the Intelligence officer, Flight Lieutenant Badcock. He was always the centre man in any group around the bar. The first time young Mac met him and was introduced he said: "Badcock, eh? Tough luck old man, was it syph?" and that nickname stuck, much to the IntO's chagrin.

Crabby and Don had already paired off in one tent, as had Lance and Mac, so Tommy and I took over a third one. We were issued with folding canvas cots, canvas wash basins, folding baths, and folding chairs, along with sheets, blankets, pillows, and all the little necessities of camp life. After settling in with the help of a man delegated to us as batman, we went back to the mess. On the way we passed a queer looking contraption made of burlap bags strung on posts but with no roof. On investigating we found Doc and Jock enthroned and very indignant at having their privacy disturbed.

After lunch Marsden lost no time in getting down to business. He had lost a lot of aircraft and several men in the past few weeks and the Squadron had been off operations for some time. With six new men to train it would be some time before 33 could be useful. He organised a squadron flight so that we could get used to flying with our new friends. The sergeant pilots were then called in and we met them for the first time. Here was as fine a group of men as I'd want to meet anywhere and in the following months we came to know each other pretty well.



Above: Don's 'Gerwala' and 14. Gerawla are one and the same place. The Arabic names of the airfields and ALGs throughout the Western Desert are spelt many different ways in the ORB and various reference books.  
 Below: "...one of the elite places in the desert..." 33 Squadron's Mess, a two roomed wooden hut at Gerwala, with the Squadron's Station Wagon parked outside. Presumably the 'Gents' is the roofless facility in the foreground.





In the desert we didn't worry much about rank and for convenience we combined the Officers' and the Sergeants' Mess into the 'Pilots' Mess. This helped us get to know our sergeants better. Doug Davidson was a quiet Australian, short and chunky, with a friendly face and manner. We called him 'Davo', and I don't think he ever made an enemy. Rusty Kierath was also an Australian. He was rough and tough and homely but had a heart of gold. Kelsal was a quiet Englishman but a good man in the air. George 'Bubbles' Inglesby was our only South African sergeant. He was in the SAAF but was attached to the RAF like ourselves. He was always a lot of fun. The others were all English boys and all good men. Genders looked like a schoolboy but had already been through the Battle of Britain. Stowd's burned face and hands were acquired in the same battles but he was still fighting. Lowry was a nice big fellow but he was shot down and taken prisoner soon after I arrived so I didn't know him well. Kay Stammers and Woolett were two good friends, and lastly there was Bobby Price. He was just a kid, and looked like a red-haired version of George Formby but he had more guts than any I ever knew. Bobby was killed a few weeks after the big battle started.

Sergeant Genders was to be my No.1 on this first flight. I rather imagine that these fellows didn't think much of a bunch of untried and cocky Canadians being Pilot Officers while they were still sergeant after all they had gone through. I'd be inclined to agree with them but it would be rather hard to change the system. Anyway, they never showed any resentment and were good friends.

There was nothing very special about this flight except that for the first time I took off in formation with a lot of other aircraft (We'll forget that first one at Berg El Arab.) All the airports at home and in England had runways and we took off one at a time. Here we had the whole desert if we wanted it and if the complete squadron was going up all twelve planes just pulled up line abreast and took off that way. It took a lot of concentration at first but as long as the leader started slowly and allowed the rest to keep up and out of his dust, it was fine. Once in the air we flew around for more than an hour practising turns and break aways, then reforming. That night Don and Crabby came over to our tent and we talked for hours before turning in. It was very pleasant at Gerwala and we decided that we were going to like it there.

All during the first week of training life was most enjoyable. The six days' rest granted to the Squadron was to be used for our training and to let us familiarise ourselves with the desert. We flew a lot but it was mostly in the cool of the morning or just before the sun went down in the evening. The rest of the time was spent reading or writing in the Mess while the old

record player ground away. Naturally we spent a lot of time swimming in the sea.

Every morning without exception I got out of bed early to sit on a stool outside the tent and watch the sunrise. These desert paintings were beautiful and no two were ever the same. Right from the first streak of light on the horizon, until the sun cleared the edge, the sky was the most lovely riot of pastel shades and colours. On very clear mornings the sky would look like an artist's wash, running from deep grey up through all the colours in the paint box and ending in a lovely blue overhead. Light clouds, or a haze, gave no end of the variation to this theme.

Every evening without exception I sat on the sandbags just outside the Mess and watched the sun go down. The sunsets were even more glorious than the sunrises, mainly due to the dust thrown into the air during the day's activities. Where the sunrises were of soft pastel shades and hues, the sunsets fairly screamed with colour. Once, after a sandstorm had passed, I saw a sunset that looked like the very heart of Hell so brilliant was the red of it, and so fiery.

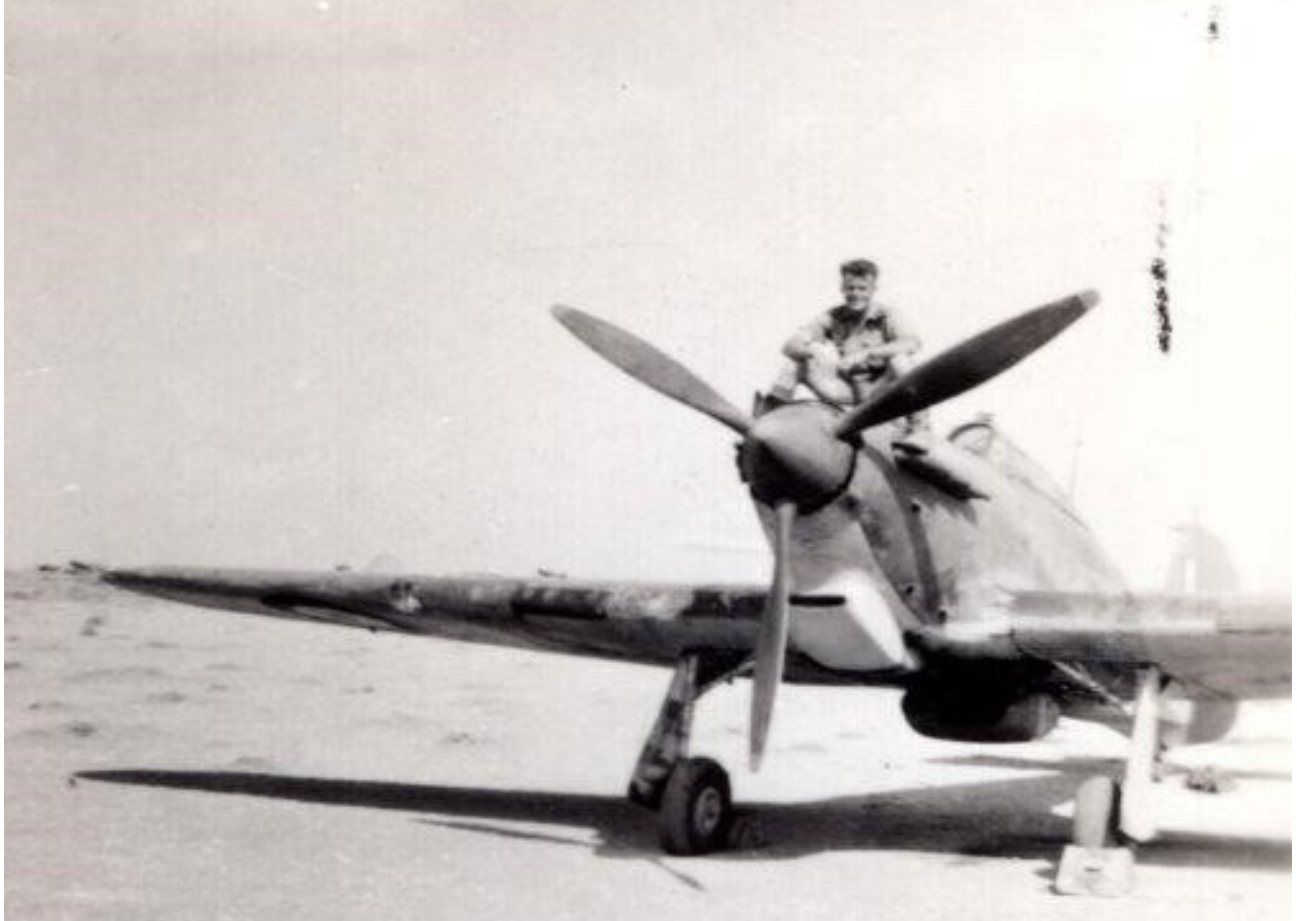
Almost every night we all sat outside and watched the show of fireworks from Mersa Matruh, some twelve miles away. The Jerries very rarely missed an opportunity to bomb this important railhead, and the sight of the exploding bombs, the tracers and ack ack bursts, the photo flashes, and the fires, was something to see. As soon as the first gun cracked off Doc would pipe up and say: "Good show chaps, poor old Matruh's getting it again. Let's go and watch."

One night the planes came over to bomb us. One dropped flares that lit the ground brightly but the bombs he dropped were wide of the mark. It was moonlight and we could see the beggar like a shadow up in the sky. Somebody wanted to go up after him but that was soon squelched. It would be almost impossible to find him again and then flares would have to be lighted to guide our boy home. That would make a beautiful beacon for the other bombers.

My career in the Air Force almost ended on my second day with 33. Andy Anderson and I went up for a few minutes practice at dog-fighting. We manoeuvred around for a while getting the feel of things and ended up in a circle, trying to get on each other's tail. We each tightened the circle, going around and around, but couldn't gain any advantage over the other. Suddenly we both decided at once to break away, wing over, and then come down on the other as he turned. In seconds we were around and diving straight at each other at a combined speed of about 500 miles per hour. Instinctively I pulled back on the stick and Andy pushed on his. We missed by inches, stuffed our hearts back behind our teeth again, and landed carefully. If I looked



Above: Don's tent at Gerwala  
Below: Don and his Hurricane - 'Bunty'.





as white as Andy, and he felt as shaky as I, we both needed a drink badly and that is just what we did.

One day six of us were to go up for gunnery practice on the desert far away from camp or any troops. On returning we were going to sneak up on our ground defences and catch them by surprise. They were a Regiment of South Africans and their two officers lived in the Mess with us. Noel Johnson led us out on the flight and when it came time to return he got us into line astern, then flew right down into the wadi that passed through the station. The wadi wasn't much wider than our planes in spots and it was exciting flying. We flew so low and kept down in the wadi so much that the sound of our engines was completely muffled until we were almost on top of the camp. The Hurricanes climbed steeply and then dove on the first defence guns before the men were at their stations. As a result we were conceded the victory and the South Africans had to buy the drinks for the rest of the evening. Incidentally, the South Africans had known that we were going to jump them some time that day but they didn't know when, so there was no danger of their shooting us by mistake.

Another time Tommy and I were testing two aircraft and we flew for or miles straight into the desert. Suddenly we came on a whole Regiment on manoeuvres and after carefully circling so that they could see we were friendly, we flew up and down between the lines of vehicles. A convoy on the move in the desert is exactly like a convoy at sea and a times one group would cover more than a square mile of land. There might be as many as ten or fifteen rows of trucks and gun carriers, with a quarter of a mile between them and possibly fifty to a hundred yards between each vehicle. It was fun to fly along on a level with the trucks and wave to the men in them. We found later that this was the Dukes, a South African Regiment, and that the manoeuvre they were on at the time ended up in the actual battle front when the great November 1941 push got under way.

## Chapter 6

At last the day came when I would fly out with my friends and find out what all the excitement of the last year was about. Air Force HQ had sent a signal to Marsden advising him that we would soon be needed so he decided on a sortie into enemy territory to give us the fell of things. Our Hurricanes had been equipped with the internal long range tanks for three reasons. Firstly we were to escort and protect reconnaissance planes from specially trained Hurricane squadrons. They flew low over enemy territory and took a quick but accurate visual count of the enemy's strength in that sector. Secondly, we were to escort and cover the destroyers and freighters that were making the

dangerous run from Alexandria to the beleaguered Tobruk. Thirdly, and later, we were to strafe the enemy supply lines far behind the battle front. Our aircraft were slow and unwieldy, much more so than the regular fighters and for that reason, although we were to protect the Reccos and the ships at all costs by diverting the Jerries, we were not to fight unless absolutely necessary. This would be tantamount to suicide against the 109s.

The first flight over No-Man's Land was well south of the front but there was always a good chance of running into enemy patrols or a raiding party on its way home. For an hour and a half we flew up and down the desert at about ten thousand feet, daring anything to come up after us.

It's funny now, looking back, but it wasn't just then. Right when we were most keyed up someone jammed his receiver on the Radio Telephone (RT) and it set up a great squawk. We thought for sure someone had seen enemy aircraft and was trying to send a signal on the RT, which never did work anyway. Well sir, I never saw so many aircraft go so many different directions in such a short time as we did at that moment. It took over half an hour to get back into some kind of formation again and we were a pretty sheepish bunch in the Mess that night. Of course we got a terrific blast from the CO for 'flapping' but the actual experience did us a world of good and I wouldn't be surprised if the chap who caused all the trouble had had just that thought that in mind. I hate to think what might have happened if any ME 109s had taken us up on that dare. All the time I flew, both in England and in the desert, I never had an RT set that worked properly so that I could talk to another plane in the air, or to the ground control.

The morning after that first flight over the enemy, No. 21 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, Tac R, was sending out three planes to spot the strength around Bardia and Sollum, the two German-held ports closest to the front line of the battle. Six aircraft from 33 were to support them and once again I flew with Sergeant ganders. These Tac R boys didn't know the meaning of danger. Either that or they trusted us implicitly and Good Lord, we didn't even trust ourselves.

For two and a half hours those boys kept us circling over the most dangerous area of the battle at the time. We flew a thousand feet above them keeping our eyes peeled for enemy aircraft and hoping for the best. We were nearly nervous wrecks by the time they turned for home and friendly territory. Luckily nothing came up after us that day and our second 'operation' went off without a hitch. Actually these Tac Rs should have been escorted by regular fighters all the time but our Air force was not as strong as it should have been so we were delegated for the job in our old Hurricanes. The fast fighter squadrons were generally patrolling high



**Gerwala 1941.**

**Above: Flight Lieutenant 'Tiny' Tofield (left) and Squadron Leader Marsden, OC 33 (right), standing outside the Mess.**

**Below: Flight Lieutenant 'NJ' Johnson.**





above us and were probably the reason nothing came up to attack us. For two days there were no operations scheduled so the Squadron rested and we swam, played cards and did a bit of practice flying. In the evening of the second day the whole Squadron took off for Sidi Barrani, the advanced landing ground for fighters. We landed there just as dusk was falling. This was the place where 33 had received such a bad strafing a few weeks ago.

It was customary for the squadrons to fly to Barrani, refuel, and then go over the front. In this way they would have more time on patrol. After landing that evening we dispersed the aircraft and then gathered in the underground Mess for a bite to eat and a few drinks before turning in. The job on hand was Tac R escort again and early the next morning four of them took off with two of our Hurricanes to protect each one. Genders and I were together again and although the recco planes kept us around Bardia and Sollum for well over an hour we were not attacked and all planes returned.

It is a strange, exciting and yet exhilarating feeling to be flying over land occupied by people that you know are your enemies. Just the thought that they wanted to shoot at you and that you could shoot at them without fear of reprimand from the authorities was something so different from the way of life we had been bred to that that we seemed to be in a new world altogether.

Back at Sidi Barrani we found that No 1 RAAF Squadron and No.1 SAAF Squadron, both fighters, had come up to patrol the front so we went back to Gerwala. The very next day we went through an almost identical routine but this time we arrived home one man short. Crabby Lowther had gone off on a patrol with a Tac R plane to see what there was in the way of equipment at Bardia. Neither one of them returned and we found out much later that they had run into 109s and been shot down. Both Crabby and the pilot of the Tac R were killed. One 109 was shot down in that area the same afternoon so we like to think that it was Crabby who got it before the others got him. This was the first time that the war had hit our little group personally and we felt it. Don, Tommy, Crabby and I had trained together in Canada and England and had all become good friends.

It doesn't pay to brood over the loss of a friend during a war. We all thought a lot of Crabby but tried to forget him as quickly as possible. The next three days found us flying over Jerry land again and again and these activities helped to keep our minds busy. One of these sorties was escorting some bombers over Bardia harbour and there is a good story connected to it.

The recco planes had reported a ship unloading in the harbour so Command decided to get it and give the

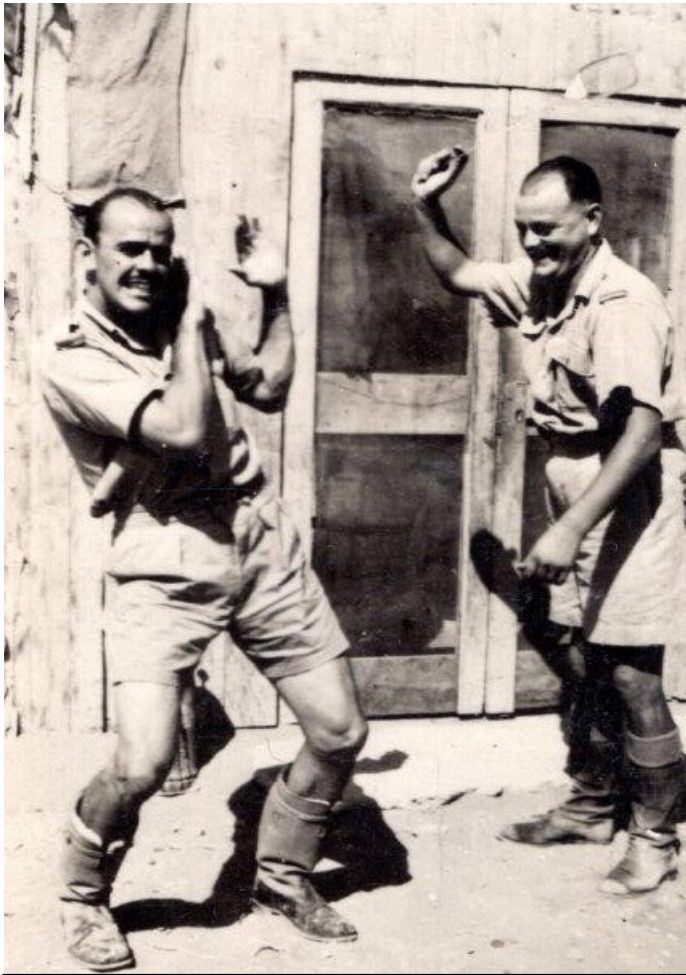
Germans a show of our strength in the air. Two squadrons of Marylands were to do the heavy work and six full squadrons of fighters would support them. All these aircraft would rendezvous over Bagush and proceed from there.

Whether by accident or design I don't know but shortly before take-off a group of war correspondents arrived at Gerwala. We gave them lunch and talked for a while, then they decided to stay and watch the departure of the raid. Bagush was just a few miles away and they could have a good view of all that went on. 33 took off in good style and climbed to three thousand feet, circling the landing ground before heading for the rendezvous point.

We arrived on time and fell in behind another squadron that had been a bit early. The bombers were late and pretty soon the six fighter squadrons of the escort were flying around in a great circle waiting for them. When the Marylands did arrive we all took our positions around them and then headed out to sea. All this time the correspondents were at Gerwala watching the show and eagerly counting the aircraft as they passed overhead. Of course they counted all the fighters two or three times and soon had about a hundred and fifty checked off. Their reports to the public were terrific.

Meanwhile I was having the time of my life. We were in a position directly above and behind the bombers, and around us were grouped the other five squadrons. I felt there was little worry for us about any Jerries. This was the first bombing raid for me so I watched everything with interest. The formation climbed to ten thousand feet and then set course for Bardia. I could see the harbour long before we arrived over it and sure enough there was the sliver of a small freighter tied up to the dock. The Marylands were going to a precision job, American style, and all the bombs were to be dropped at once at a signal from the leader. They dropped all right but someone miscalculated and while half the bombs hit the dock area the other half hit the water and missed the ship altogether. I could see the tiny splinters of silvery bombs as they dropped and it seemed an eternity before they landed. The result was rather disappointing to me. From that height all I could see was a few small spouts of water and some smoke.

All the time we were over the target the Germans were shooting at us but the shells burst quite a distance below or far behind. It is a most fascinating sight to watch those little black puffs of smoke appear out of nowhere. They look lazy and harmless and not at all dangerous. The bombers continued on their course for a few minutes after releasing their loads, then swung south in a circle so that the Germans could see all the aircraft and be properly impressed. We didn't follow them as the faster fighters could take care of anything



Gerwala 1941.

Above: (left) Lance 'Wildcat' Wade (US) and Jock Peasant, wielding the fly swat! (right) Andy Anderson (Can).  
Below (l-r): 'Winnie' Winsland, Dudley Dove (SA) and Tony Morello.





that came along so 'NJ' led us in a fast dive for home. We didn't see a German plane on the whole operation.

When the little Mess at Gerwala came into view we all formed up line abreast, with our wing tips tucked close behind the wing of the next fellow, and in this formation we did a lovely beat-up of the station. Close formation flying is very exciting and a lot of fun. It was never done anywhere near enemy territory but we did a lot of it back at base. It is possible for one plane to fly beside another with its wing tip not much more than a foot from the fuselage of the other fellow, and its propeller only a foot or so away from his wing tip. There isn't a much prettier sight than to see two or three planes flying together in tight formation. The CO took a dim view of that beat up because the vibrations from the props nearly shook the Mess down, and somebody blew the burlap throne room away.

### Chapter 7

Things were quiet for us for the three days following the raid on Bardia and we spent them fooling around in the Mess or down at the beach. It was very pleasant in that little hut after lunch, or in the evening. We had an old hand wound record player and someone always had it going. Mac's favourite was 'Falling Leaves', and he played it to death. Due to the sand which got into everything, a needle barely lasted for one side and a record might last for about a dozen playings. When the original of 'Falling Leaves' wore out Mac bought six more copies on his first strip to Alex. We did get a bit tired of it after a while but now, listening back, that piece brings back some wonderful memories.

Swimming was the big treat of our life in the desert. If the squadron was flying in the morning we spent the afternoon in the sea. If there was no flying till the afternoon then we would spend the morning down at the beach. Several times the squadron was off flying for the whole day and then we would get the cook to fix up a lunch and so spend the whole day swimming, lying in the sun, or exploring the coast. A special truck made the trip to the beach twice a day and anyone that was off duty could hop on and go along. One of the beauties of the climate there is that every day is hot and clear, even in the winter, and we lived very healthy outdoor lives. There were no women in the Western Desert so we all swam naked, then just lay in the sun to dry. At times the whole coastline must have looked like one long Coney Island.

My first job after this rest was as a solo escort to a Tac R Hurricane. Three of us were out on similar omissions but no enemy planes came around to disturb us and all the aircraft came home safely. By now September had rolled along and it was well into October. Our generals were planning a big push that was to carry the British Army to Tripoli and end the German and Italian rule in

North Africa. For this reason more and more recon flights were being made in order to keep tabs on the Hun. He seemed to realize that something was doing and there was more air activity on his part too. Soon we had to put heavier escorts on the Tac Rs. Those boys had to concentrate on the ground all the time and had no time to watch the sky at all. They depended entirely on us to warn them of any danger, or of an attack.

On the very next job six of us from 33 flew to Barrani in the evening in order to be ready at first light to escort a recon. We took off alright that morning but before we even reached the front lines we were jumped by six 109s. There is an old saying in the Air Force: "Beware of the Hun in the Sun!" and nothing could be more true. He was always above our planes and would work around to get between the sun and his victims. An aircraft is almost impossible to see if it is diving straight out of the sun and usually it is firing its guns before you realize there is anything near you. When you do have this advantage you have the 'jump' on your opponent.

We didn't even see the Jerries until their tracers started whipping past our wings. We were only about five thousand feet up so the Germans must have seen us long before and climbed around into the sun. Their first attack was from a screaming dive and it was all over in seconds. I just consider myself lucky that I wasn't picked as a target that first time. I pulled around in a tight steep turn to get out of the way of any following attackers and then tried to see what was happening.

The 109s shot past and I saw one of them pull up on the tail of one of our boys who had unfortunately turned in the wrong direction. By the time I could see this action the planes were about a mile away and the increased distance seemed to slow them down to a weird slow motion. I could see our Hurricane wheeling frantically to get away but the 109 had lost enough speed to be able to turn with him and in seconds white, then black, smoke began to pour out of the plane. I couldn't have taken my eyes off that Hurricane if my own wings were being shot off. It winged over in a graceful arc with the enemy still following, and then it plunged for the ground. About half way down it exploded into an orange ball of fire, then slowly fell away to crash and burn on the beach. My heart was in my boots wondering about the pilot, somebody I knew, when suddenly I saw a little puff of white and a parachute opened near the ground. The pilot, Sergeant Lowry, had bailed out before the explosion, but had delayed his drop to avoid being shot at. He finally pulled the ripcord when only about a thousand feet up.

Just as I spotted the chute I also spotted the nose of a 109 aimed straight at me. This sight broke the trance and I spiralled frantically, first in a complete turn to see if I could get on his tail, then towards the ground in tight turns, to get away. Once down on the deck I



Gerwala 1941.

Above: (l-r) 'Doc' Henderson and the Int O, Flying Officer Badcock.

Below (l-r): Don Edy (Can) Doug Davidson (Aus), Rusty Kierath (Aus), Mac MacKenzie





headed for home with full throttle.

Through the rear vision mirror I saw a plane directly behind but just too far way to shoot. There is a boost override button on the Hurricane that, when pulled, gives a great deal of added power to the engine. It was only to be used in emergencies but I figured that this was one and pulled it. The added thrust pressed me back against the head rest but my plane pulled away from the one behind and on reaching Barrani nothing was in sight so I landed.

Two of the boys were there by the time I arrived and in a few minutes all the rest arrived safely. Sergeant Lowry had landed on the beach in our territory and although he had been wounded and burned he was not too badly off and was sent south for a rest. Tiny Tofield landed directly after me and I found that it was his plane that had been on my tail on the way home. I guess I should have known this as the German tactics did not include chasing aircraft very far unless they happened to be heading for their own territory. The two recco planes returned safely as they had headed for They would then give us top cover avoid it. Their training made them more valuable than the odd plane they might shoot down.

Although the recco had been broken up almost before it started, Command deemed the required information important enough to call in the two fighter squadrons that were patrolling the front and have them refuel. They would then give us top cover for an afternoon recco. Everyone had lunch while waiting for the planes to be refuelled and re-armed. Just as we were heading for the field again two ME 109s appeared high in the sky. We could see them clearly although they were about twenty-five thousand feet up and they made a great circle, probably to make sure there were none of our fighters in the vicinity, and also to get into the sun in order to make a more difficult target for the ground defences. White puffs of smoke from the gun shells were already beginning to dot the sky behind them.

Suddenly the two of them peeled away and started a fast dive for our field. They opened up while still a good distance away and raked the landing ground with cannon shells and smaller machine gun bullets. Neither one of those pilots could have been much good. There were forty-some odd aircraft on the ground and they only damaged three, all of which were serviceable in a couple of days. No one was killed or wounded.

Just as the 109s pulled up, three of our Tommyhawks taxied out and started to take off in pursuit. I figured this was a pretty risky thing to do but their pilots had been right near their planes during the attack, and apparently figured they could get off the ground before the Germans came down again. They were mistaken in this because the 109s did a wing over and both of them

came down on our boys before they had their undercarriage up. The three Tommys were sitting targets and we on the ground watched with the most horrible feeling of helplessness. Perhaps the Germans were nervous at staying so long around a fighter drome and also at being fired at so heavily by the ground defences. By a miracle none of the Tommys was even hit and they soon chased the 109s away.

After that the British aircraft stayed in the air to cover our take off. We were one plane short now and had revised the escort plan. Tofield was to fly just above and behind the Tac R and keep a good eye on him. Our camouflaged Hurricanes were very hard to see against the desert and if the fellow below made a quick turn at the wrong moment we could easily lose sight of him. Two other boys were to fly about a thousand feet above Tiny to keep him in sight and also deter enemy planes. Bubbles and I were to weave around about a thousand feet higher still to try to keep the group from being jumped. Weaving was a standard practice on all patrols and usually two aircraft out of the squadron did so just above the rest of the boys. They would criss-cross back and forth, always arranging to be opposite each other so that the two pilots could see all the sky at one. I liked the job of weaving because I was alone and didn't have to depend on someone else to see the enemy or to stay with someone in an attack.

This arrangement worked fine for about an hour but then Tiny developed engine trouble and turned back. The RT wasn't any good as usual and we nearly lost our Tac R when Tiny broke off. However, the boys below managed to get back on his trail and we continued this way for a while. What happened next I don't know but I spotted some aircraft up above and pointed them out for Bubbles' benefit. While we kept an eye on the strangers, and tried to keep our friends in sight at the same time, the recco did take a sharp turn. Tommy Paterson and his mate followed along but Bubbles and I lost them all. Now we were alone in unfriendly skies and those strangers were still above us. After a while I got a good glimpse of them away from the sun and decided that they were our top cover. This was a break and we took advantage of it by climbing up and sitting just below them.

This seemed like a fine arrangement and we were happy. Suddenly, just as I glanced up to make sure the Tommys were still there, I saw the leader explode and disappear completely. Once again the Germans had jumped us out of the sun and in seconds the air was full of wheeling planes. Bubbles and I didn't stay long, just enough to see the 109s climbing for their second attack. We headed for the ground and Sidi Barrani. Later we found that the Germans had killed the leader in their first attack but the South Africans had managed to evade the second and had shot down a 109 in



Above (l-r): Sergeants Wooler, Inglesby and Stammers

Below: Down at the beach - Inglesby, Davidson, Wooler, Kierath, Kelsall, Genders



return.

I have said that the Germans were always above our planes and therefore had the advantage in a fight. This was true until the late Fall of 1941 when the later model Hurricanes and the new Kittyhawks arrived in the desert. The enemy was smart and never stayed around to fight. He would dive for the first attack and then pull up knowing full well that we could not follow all the way in our slower planes. This enabled him to wing over and come down again with little worry about anyone being on his tail. These tactics killed a good many Germans in the days to come. The newer Hurricanes looked exactly like its older brother, and the Kittyhawk looked like the Tommyhawk. One day a group of six 109s jumped a squadron of our boys, shooting one of the m down in the first dive. As usual the Huns climbed quickly for height but this time our boys pulled the 'tit' on their more powerful planes and climbed right up with them. When the Germans reached the top of their climbing turns they were close to stalling and were sitting targets for the Britishers. Four of them went down in flames and a fifth was claimed a probable. Three days later the Aussies in No.1 Squadron did the same thing with their Kittyhawks but they evaded the first attack and got three of the 109s on the climb. From then on things were a bit different and our boys had a great deal more confidence in their planes.

As all our own aircraft of 33 had returned safely to Barrani we wasted no time in taking off and heading back for Gerwala and a much needed drink. It had been the most exciting day of my life and I was worn out. The following day was a repetition of the day before but we didn't meet any of the enemy and the Tac Rs got all the information they wanted.

The day after that some of us patrolled the Bardia area with our recco planes. This time Don Lush and Sergeant Seymour followed a Tac R to Tobruk to report on the defences there. None of the three planes came back to Barrani and we had to presume that they were lost. It wasn't until months later that we found out through the Red Cross that Don and Seymour had bailed out when they were shot up by the 109s and both were taken prisoner. The Tac R pilot was killed. In nine days 33 Squadron had lost four pilots, two of them being very close friends of mine.

Tommy Paterson and I were pretty close friends by this time. One day, less than a week after Don had gone, we were talking in our tent and Tommy was showing me an expensive camera he had bought. He suggested that if anything happened to him perhaps I could take over the camera and eventually get it home for him. The very next night the camera was in the bottom of my kit bag. We went out to sea that day to patrol the fleet. There were ten of us and it was a long flight. Our squadron

leader had chosen the defensive circle as the best means of protecting the ships and I liked it. In a defensive circle each aircraft follows the one ahead all the time and in this way all the pilots can see all of the sky, above and below, all the time. Also, if the enemy comes in to attack one of the aircraft in the circle, the plane just behind him only has to lift his nose a bit to shoot at the attacker. We were there to protect the ships from the bombers, not the fighters. The Germans would have been only too pleased if we went after the fighters and allowed the bombers to come in unharmed.

After an hour's patrol I began counting our own planes in the circle in between sweeps of the sky above and below. Suddenly something seemed wrong and I could tell the rest of the boys sensed it too as the circle seemed to get tighter and circle faster. We were counting eleven Hurricanes instead of ten. I looked carefully at all of them but they seemed genuine enough. It turned out later that the wing commander in charge of Barrani had come out to see how things were going and joined the circles. Genders nearly shot him down until he recognized the plane as a Hurricane.

Shortly after that three 109s came along to investigate us. They kept the whole squadron in the circle for over half an hour. Every once in a while one of them would make a quick attack like a jackal after a pack of deer, but each time one of the Hurries behind succeeded in scaring him off. By the time the Germans left us our tanks were nearly empty so we headed for Barrani in a fast dive. I could only count ten planes on the way but presumed that the wing commander had left us earlier. It was a shock to me to find that Tommy was missing when we landed. Nobody saw him leave the circle at any time, nor had anyone seen an aircraft crash into the sea. His disappearance seemed to be a complete mystery. Just before heading home for Gerwala that evening the whole squadron searched the coastal area for miles in search of the missing Hurricane. We went quite far out to sea, hoping to spot something floating on the water as we all had yellow dinghies attached to the parachutes, but there was no sign. I think Tommy must have been a little late in the dive for home and one of the 109s must have circled back for one last look at us before going to his base. Perhaps he caught Tommy unawares and all alone and shot him down while we were far ahead.

That night I felt pretty lonely in the tent all by myself. I had lost three friends in three weeks with the Squadron. Marsden knew the answer to a situation like that and just before he retired for the night he came to my tent and told me to take a week off for a rest.

## **Chapter 8**

Generally when a pilot went on leave in the desert



there was an aircraft that needed a new camouflage job, or a new engine, or some such thing and he could fly it back to Alexandria. This time there was nothing that had to be done to any of our planes so I decided to hitch hike. In the long run this proved to be more interesting than flying as it enabled me to see something of our ground forces.

The morning truck to the beach dropped me off at the coast road with my little bag, and the first car that came along was a staff car. It stopped to see if there was anything wrong, maybe it looked silly for an officer to be standing on the side of the road, so I told the major inside that I was headed for Alexandria. That was exactly where he was heading so I piled in beside him and off we went. He was in charge of the NAAFI in that sector and had to stop at various places along the way, but I didn't mind as each stop was interesting enough. The NAAFI was the Navy, Army, Air Force Institute and it kept the fighting forces supplied with all the necessities of life not included in the regular army issue. They carried chocolate, beer, needles, thread, cigarettes, writing materials etc and a NAAFI depot could always be found even during the thick of battle up in the front lines.

The major told me a great deal about the desert as we went along. What with listening to his stories and watching the never-ending parade of war materials, the hot trip passed quickly. I saw things I had never seen before, such as tanks, artillery guns and gun carriers, troops from all over the world, and a bit of life of the poor Egyptian people. Occasionally we were held up for long periods by the traffic jams. It certainly took a lot of control on the part of the MPs to keep those thousands of vehicles on the move.

It was dark by the time we reached Alexandria and as I didn't know my way around the major had his driver take me to my destination. This was Blenheim House, an old home turned into a leave residence for junior Air Force officers. The rates were quite reasonable, being about a dollar a day including one meal, and the place was clean, quiet and comfortable. When I arrived there were three South Africans from a bomber squadron in the room to which I was allotted. Each room had half a dozen beds. These boys had been on the Bardia raid so I spent a very pleasant first evening of my leave talking to them about the raid, and the desert in general.

Bright sunlight was streaming in the window when I awakened the next morning and I stepped out of the large French window onto a balcony. Below me was one of the most beautiful gardens I have ever seen. It was well laid out and absolutely full of a great variety of lovely flowers and shrubs. After three weeks in the desert it was the most pleasant sight imaginable. After breakfast the young pilot officer in charge of the house showed me his pet chameleon that lived in the garden.

What weird creatures they are. They look like lizards and the two eyes, which bulge a way out, operate independently. The darn thing can look backwards with one eye and still keep a lookout ahead with the other. If he's on the grass his whole body turns green to match. Put him on a branch and he changes to a brownish colour. In the garden with the flowers his body becomes mottled and you can hardly see him.

Lunch at Blenheim House was a quiet affair, with our host presiding and perhaps half a dozen young POs from the squadrons sitting around the table. I left shortly after to see the sights of the town. It didn't really matter to me which direction I went so the first trolley that came along was good enough. It was apparently going away from the heart of the city and it took several hours of rough but interesting riding before it arrived downtown. The first place I visited was the Grand Trianon and, to my surprise, Nick the Greek came over to say hello, called me by name and enquired about the other boys. We had only met him that first night in Alex. He was genuinely upset when he heard that Tommy, Don and Crabby were gone and wouldn't let me pay for any drinks that night.

After leaving Nick I went over to the Cecil Hotel Bar. If there were any of the boys in from the 'Blue' this was where they would most likely be some time during the evening. Sure enough, as I entered the room, there was Wally Conrad and George Keefer sitting at the bar looking rather forlorn. They greeted me warmly but when I enquired about Johnny Gain they said that he had been shot down and killed just a few days before. We had a drink for Johnny, then I told them about Crabby Lowther. We had another drink for Crabby, then one for Don, and one for Tommy. By the time we had drunk to all our missing friends we were pretty high and the party changed from a sad meeting to a rousing 'What the Hell' session. We all felt badly about the other boys, naturally, but as I said before, it didn't pay to brood over the friends that were gone and we tried to forget them as quickly as possible.

After a while one of the famous Gilli Gilli boys came in and gave us a wonderful show of sleight of hand work. A fairly large crowd gathered around and after the hat had been passed three or four times we found that two South African officers had more or less joined our party. They were Doc Bird, the MO of the Dukes, and his Quartermaster, Johnny House. They too were on their first leave in Alex and we five really painted the town red that night. We visited practically every night club that was well known, and a few that weren't so good, then ended up at the Anglo Hellenic, an eatery that specialised in steak and eggs.

On this leave, and on almost every leave I had out there, the entertainment in the evening became pretty routine. If there were any friends in town we'd meet at



Above - left: Wally Conrad (274 Sqn, above, left) and George Keefer (274 Sqn, centre).  
 Above - right: Don with 'Doc' Bird, MO of The Dukers. When Don met up with Wally and George in Alexandria in December 1941, they had lost four of the friends who sailed from Canada with them 6 months earlier.  
 Below-Back Row L-R: Bill Swindon, Wally Conrad, Creighton 'Crabby' Lowther (33 Sqn-KiA), Don Edy, Roy Ahult, Frank "Stuffy" Sutton, Joe Creighton, Tommy Paterson (33 Sqn-MiA).  
 Front Row L-R: Bert Houle, George Keefer, Don Lush (33 Sqn-PoW), 'Johnny' Gain (274 Sqn-MiA), Harry Cleary, Ian Ormston.



the Trianon for a drink and swap stories and news, drift over to the Fatima Club for the first show, stop at the Cecil Bar to see if any new friends were there, and then go to the Carlton Club for the last show. Always we ended up at the Anglo Hellenic for steak and eggs. If there wasn't anyone in town I usually went to a good movie, then to the Anglo to eat.

That was a very pleasant leave in Alex, mainly because I did very little. There was lots to see but I figured that the sightseeing could wait for another time. During the day it was nice to loaf around the gardens, or stroll through the streets. Quite often I sat for hours on the beach and watched the people swimming and playing. Wally and George had gone back to the 'Blue' the day after our meeting and the only other friend I met was Don McGill, from London. At the time Don was Sports officer for the Navy in Alex, and we had some good times together. He had been on Destroyer 33 on the Tobruk run when Marsden was shot down, and it was Don who pulled him out of the water.

I was quite ready to get back to the squadron when word arrived that there was an aircraft at Aboukir to be flown to 33. It was always a most enjoyable trip, flying up the coastline, and we were fairly free to do just what we wanted to do. Sometimes I flew low, below the level of the coast and just skimming the water. At other times it was fun to fly at a few hundred feet and watch all the activity below. On these flights any stray aircraft flying around was fair game for a practice fight, and we would try to jump each other. It kept us on our toes as it was very annoying to be flying along quietly, then all of a sudden have a Kittyhawk zoom by with a grinning pilot thumbing his nose at you for being jumped.

### **Historical Notes**

Don Edy stated at the beginning of Chapter 5 that he joined 33 Squadron on 16 September 1941, just four months after the Squadron had participated in the ill fated Greece and Crete campaign. Once again back in North Africa the remnants of 33 Squadron, on 1 June 1941, consisted of just seven pilots and no aircraft. Attached to No.30 Squadron at Amriya, they were part of a badly depleted air force supporting the armies of General Wavell, armies that had been pushed back by Rommel to the Egyptian-Libyan border and with the forces holding Tobruk under siege.

With preparations commencing for Operation BATTLEAXE, the British offensive along the Libyan border, 33 Squadron received seven Hurricanes on 13 June 1941 and was detached as a Flight to 274 Squadron at Gerwala. 33 resumed operations on 15 June, led by their Canadian ace, Flight Lieutenant Vernon 'Woody' Woodward DFC. They were in contact with the enemy on 17 June, claiming three enemy shot down and three damaged, but lost Flying Officer E J

'Chico' Woods who, like Woodward, had joined 33 on 1 June 1939 and had survived Greece and Crete. Chico's brother, Steve, would also join 33 Squadron in Egypt, and go on to serve with Lance Wade and Sandy Kallio in Italy. (See Loyalty Issue 10 Summer 2019).

Operation BATTLEAXE achieved little success, and by 2-3 July 33 found itself back at Heliopolis, almost at full squadron strength. After a period of training in aerial interceptions using the latest techniques of radar detection and radio direction from the ground, 33 was sent to Port Said (4-5 July) and Amriya (10-11 July). Most historians writing of the Desert campaign describe the summer of 1941 as 'uneventful'. By September 1941 33 Squadron had moved to Sidi Haneish and Flight Lieutenant Vernon Woodward, with somewhere between 19-23 victories to his credit, was posted to Southern Rhodesia on the 11th to serve as an instructor. He would return to North Africa in January 1943 to command No.213 Squadron, a Hurricane squadron.



*“It was an RAF squadron but international, there were more Americans and Canadians than there were English..”*

**Squadron Leader Oliver Charles ‘Sandy’ Kallio DSO DFC RCAF , an American in the RCAF who started his flying with 33 Squadron in the Western Desert, recalls his time with the RAF**

Oliver Charles ‘Sandy’ Kallio was born in Ironwood, Michigan, on 25 June 1911, the son of Charles and Adolfin Kallio. Having graduated from A.D. Johnston High School in 1927 he served in the US Army Air Corps as a mechanic with the 52nd School Squadron from 1934 until 1938. He then enlisted in the RCAF as an Aero Engine Mechanic at Fort William on 17 June 1940. He was sent to Technical Training School at St. Thomas, Ontario on 7 August 1940 and was promoted AC1 on 14 December 1940. Sandy then remustered to aircrew on 8 February 1941 and was posted to No.1 ITS in Toronto that day.

He was promoted LAC on 16 March 1941 and posted to No.7 EFTS in Windsor, Ontario. The course may have ended 4 May 1941 but Sandy was not posted to No.1 SFTS at Camp Borden, Ontario until 16 May 1941. He graduated and was commissioned on 30 July 1941. The following day he was posted to ‘Y’ Depot and was sent overseas to join the RAF on 16 August 1941. He was sent out to the Middle East to join 33 Squadron, being promoted to Flying Officer on 31 July 1942 and Flight Lieutenant on 2 September 1942. After a ‘rest’ tour Sandy joined No.601 Squadron, where he became a Flight commander on 15 September 1943. He was promoted to Squadron Leader on 25 November 1943 and given command of No.145 Squadron after his friend Lance Wade left. Unfortunately Sandy broke his leg in a flying accident on 19 February 1944. Once recovered he was given command of No. 417 Squadron from 24 June to November 1944. Sandy was repatriated to Canada on 10 February 1945 but went overseas with the RAF again on 24 March 1945.

After hostilities had ceased he was repatriated again on 5 August 1945 and released from the RCAF on 14 September 1945. Following his discharge Sandy worked in the US Navy Docks and Yards Division at Point Barrow, Alaska, and then he contracted with Alaska Airlines to fly the Arctic slopes on oil explorations from 1946-1948. He also worked for a while mine surveying and then as a mechanic with the White Pine Copper Company until 1974. Oliver Charles Kallio died at his home in Ironwood on Monday, 24 March 2003, where



he had been cared for by his sister.

At some point Sandy was interviewed about his time with the RCAF by a Dr Charles Johnson, and three of the interviews are available to listen to online. I have transcribed what Sandy said during these interviews and what follows is a version which I have had to alter in many places in order to make the interview flow and make sense:

#### **Part Two: 33 Squadron, RAF, Western Desert.**

“...and they sent us out to the Middle East, to all places, to Cairo, Alexandria, and then

from there we went to Gunnery School for the final last bits of polishing off. Then I was posted to 33 Squadron, part of the Desert Air Force, with old Hurricanes. There were four of us Americans in the Squadron and about eight Canadians. There were more Americans and Canadians than there were English; there were four Englishmen. So it was an RAF squadron but international. In the evenings in the Mess we used to gang up together just for the fun of it, drinking beer and singing national anthems. We drank Canadian beer especially and whisky, scotch. All the pilots were issued a bottle of VAT 69 a week. Yes, living wasn't tough!

Maybe I should mention one of my combat efforts in my early days. I was in a climb, a shallow flying climb behind an ME 109, and I was firing at it. Just as I realised that I had him another 109 was coming down on me, firing at me from high up above. He fired six rounds that went between me and the gas tank in my left wing, which was less than a yard from my head. When I got home I figured that I had done the wrong thing and was flying too slow in a climb after the Me109. Anyway, the other one made a mistake in coming too close to me because he turned left just after he passed me so I turned to the left after him and I shot him down too. So I had two confirmed kills, it was at the south end of the Gazala Line at a place they call Bir Hakeim. We got into combat in March and I had had been out there quite a few times before that, so maybe it was around June?

On another occasion there were four ME 109s, four abreast, and I was within fifty yards of their tails and I couldn't get a round out of the guns. We were at about 18 000 feet so I just squealed on home. The guns were a big problem, they often used to misfire or not fire at all. Sand was a big buggerboo and then there was air firing. Pneumatic firing , in my estimation, wasn't the best thing either. American aircraft always used electrical firing systems for their .50 cal machine guns, they didn't use 303's like we did, which had to be synchronised ,of course, to fire at 200 yards and the density had to be right - three feet high and three feet wide sort of thing. That was part of the maintenance effort, to bring them up to that lethal density at 200 yards. They had to bring the guns in, turn them in.

By 2 September I was the leader; they found I was adept at leading so they made me a flight commander. El Alamein sparked up and we started pushing Rommel out of Africa. The missions piled up, the sorties piled up, and by the end of November we were up at Bengazi. In December of 42 they gave me a Distinguished Flying Cross.

**KALLIO, F/L Oliver Charles (J6494) No. 33 Squadron  
Distinguished Flying Cross**

An immediate award of the Distinguished Flying Cross has been made to Acting Flight Lieutenant Oliver Charles Kallio, J6496 of No.33 Squadron. On October 27 whilst leading the squadron Flight Lieutenant Kallio was ordered to intercept a Stuka raid which was heavily escorted by Messerschmitt 109s. Although greatly outnumbered Flight Lieutenant Kallio attacked with such determination and skill that the raid was completely split up causing the enemy to drop its bombs on its own lines. Flight Lieutenant Kallio himself destroyed one Junkers 87 and probably destroyed another. Again on November 3 when leading the squadron he attacked a force which heavily outnumbered his own formation and by his courage, determination and fine leadership succeeded in turning back the enemy causing premature bombing. Flight Lieutenant Kallio destroyed one Junkers 87. At all times this officer has shown a fine fighting spirit which has inspired the whole squadron. His courage and fine leadership have been of the highest order.

( Public Record Office Air 2/4922: Message from Headquarters, Royal Air Force, Middle East to Air Ministry, sent 21 December 1942. )

**Part Three.**

Some of the Americans transferred from the RAF to the Eagle Squadron in Britain when we were with 33 Squadron. We went to see them about it and they said

we could transfer now. They were telling fellows who already had a hundred to a hundred fifty missions under their belts that if they transferred they could stay back here and fly DC3s or go back to the States and become a fighter pilot instructor. Well, to a fighter pilot that would be a slap in the face, so why transfer? I was with the Canadians so I said I'll stick with them. It was very much the same as our Air Corps was before when I was training over there. Anyway, by the time we reached Benghazi we were getting a few Spitfires on the Squadron. I remember a night mission... I was sent out as the sun was already going down as there were some bombers attacking a convoy, a ship cpnvoy that was going to Tripoli. German bombers had been shadowing them all day long and they began to attack them. I got up there after I was given different vectors by the Sector Radar Control, "...so and so vector to this course and arrive over the convoy at 10 000 feet ." I followed their instructions up to 10 000 feet to fly over the convoy and lo and behold, I see the flak firing at the aircraft in front of me. Sector Control told me that I should be able to see the aircraft in front of me and I said, "Sure enough. They're right here!" I arrived with them and almost immediately I began firing at one. I was on his tail and started firing and they all baled out and I saw their parachutes. The aircraft was going down. Then I saw another one and went after it. Although I was firing at it I never knew if I got it or not, it could have been a probable, as I was recalled and told to go home. By then it was pretty dark and I didn't have that much gas left in the tank. I barely made it home.

From Bengazi I was posted back to Helwan, a maintenance base just outside of Cairo. I tested aircraft there: Hurricanes, Spitfires, Baltimores, a few Bristol Blenheims. There was one old Vickers Valentia, a big old twin engine biplane bomber and that was my favourite aircraft. I used to get a kick out of flying it, it was like the Keystones we had at Luke Field in Hawaii quite a few years before, and they flew just like Piper Cubs. I should say at the maintenance base they were testing aircraft mainly to see that they ran OK. The Baltimores were light-medium bombers. The South Africans used them quite a lot, I don't know if the RAF had some squadrons of them too. That's what we were mainly there for, testing those aircraft.

But come September 43 and I'm requesting combat again. I got loose and sent up to Sicily and caught up with a squadron. I was assigned to 601 Squadron as a flight commander. We didn't stay in Sicily very long, we moved up into Italy to Gioia and then Foggia . We were there for all of 43 and we had Spitfire VIII's then, good aircraft, as good as anything that flew there at Foggia. We did a lot of strafing. We flew up the coast, along and over the Adriatic up to Ancona and points north, made landfall and came down the coast road to

strafe everything you could find, then go deeper in and strafe some more. Sometimes we'd go up into Aquila and Avezzano, a big reclaimed marsh area with a big railroad yard up there. I remember one Sunday morning we crossed four trains in that railroad yard. We clobbered them, of course. On another occasion a whole bunch of us, I don't know who was leader then, caught a train up there - a fuel train, seventeen tankers and a loco at each end, and we set all that on fire, over 100 000 gallons of fuel. Later we were told that it was aircraft fuel.

#### **Part Four: 145 Squadron and 417 Squadron.**

We moved from the east coast from Foggia in January up to Marcianese, just north of Naples and we were going to cover the Anzio landings. We covered Anzio the first day. In January of 44 I was commanding 145 Squadron when we were out there so, come to think of it, I had become a squadron leader by then. I had commanded 33 Squadron and had also commanded 601 Squadron and then I became squadron leader with 145 Squadron and that's the one we took to cover Anzio. February comes along, February the twentieth and I come home one day and I had shot down an FW 190 outside of Roma as I remember. Just as soon as those rounds of ammunition hit him he baled out. He was landing on our side of the lines so we didn't bother him. I don't know why that 109 was by himself, stooging around like that. Anyway, we were still at Anzio and I had a crash there. I ended up in hospital for four months with a broken knee. My undercarriage didn't stay down, even though the lights showed green to indicate both wheels were down in place, but the left wheel wasn't. I went to go around again and I shouldn't have, I should have just let her stay down but I went to go around again at about fifty feet when she spun in on me. She couldn't take it as I didn't have flying speed anymore. That's what happens when you don't have flying speed. So, I ended up in hospital for four months. I finally got to bending the knee and then started to get back into combat. Somebody thought I was crazy but that's the only way I could see it, you know. And, lo and behold, come June it's my birthday, and just about that time I'm posted to take over 417 Squadron, a Canadian squadron which, along with 92, 145 and 601, had been together in the same wing - 244 Wing - since El Alamein.

We started dive bombing. The first target was a little north east of Florence, a little red barn. First bomb I ever dropped smashed that barn to kindling. I remember my wingman telling me, he was looking at the red barn and pretty soon it just splattered all over the horizon. My wingman that day was a New Yorker, he was in the RCAF too. One fellow was from Green Bay actually, one from Cleveland, couple of them from Cleveland come to think of it, but I knew we were all in

the RCAF then. One fellow I knew quite well, I met him later in Europe too as a wing commander, and he was attending Princeton University when he went up and joined the RCAF. We had quite a few crashes shortly after I took over, nobody had done any amount of dive bombing. The Spitfire was a manoeuvrable aircraft, the ideal altitude was anywhere from 7 500 to 8 000 feet, sort of, go into a vertical dive, drop your bomb at 1 500 and pull out, and always do that parallel to the line. When you are coming out you are coming over your own lines. By that time there were former fighter pilots up there for forward control, they were designating targets and they'd ask us can you see that so and so at designation so and so. If we saw the target they'd say go down on it. You'd go out there and sometimes you had to wait for a target for a little while.

The best way was to fly over the bomb line vertical at ninety degrees and then turn around and come back and when you came back, why then, come to our side of the bomb line and then approach it another time and by then they had a target for you. That's what cab rank was all about, you waited your turn. You were usually in formations of either four or six, never more than six in a flight, and as soon as they had finished their run you went down and dive bombed your target. Evidently we were pretty good, they liked the way we were doing it so we kept at it. For a while we moved over to the Adriatic side again for a change and on one occasion dive bombed both ends of a tunnel to trap the train in the tunnel. The railroad yards outside of Bologna was one of the main targets, heavily guarded by flak, of course. On twelve November...(break, lot of talk about bombing U Boat pens until 10 min 13 secs).

10:13 - I'd promised I would visit the family of a friend of mine who got shot down in Italy, Lance Wade, who got killed in Italy I should say. He was another American, he was with the squadron, he was like an older brother when I first went to the squadron. He'd coach along, do this, don't do that, that sort of thing and we used to talk, once in a while, between us. After the war he was going to be a sheriff in his county and I and was going to be a sheriff in Gogebic County in Michigan and we were going to fly back and forth to visit each other occasionally. I know we had flown in Arizona in the Tucson area, he and another fellow who had joined up with him actually. So I flew to Tucson and, sure enough, I found a newspaper man there who knew Lance Wade and the other fellow who got killed in the Western Desert earlier on who had flown with Lance. So I found out where his folks were from, they were just below Jacksonville in East Texas, in pine country, at Walker, Texas. Reklaw was the name of the town, Walker I called it first but Walker turned backwards is Reklaw. Anyway, I met Lance's folks out there, father and mother, a sister and a brother, and they had gotten his log book already but his body had



not been returned yet. This was in February of 46, but then the daughter and I wrote to each other for a while afterwards and she notified me when I was up in Alaska later that summer they had sent Lance's body back and buried him in their local cemetery at home. So that worked out OK.

### **Award of the Distinguished Service Order**

Public Records Office Air 2/9043, dated 20 November 1944, is the Distinguished Service Order recommendation for Sandy Kallio from Group Captain H.S.L. Dundas, Officer Commanding No.244 Wing, Desert Air Force. Dundas described Kallio as having flown a total of 1,007 hours, of which 447 were operational and 132 has been in the previous six months. His sorties totalled 398, and since the award of the DFC he had flown 98 sorties or 345 operational hours. Dundas wrote:

Squadron Leader Kallio has flown 340 operational hours with Desert Air Force since being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. During this period he has flown with consistent success and gallantry as a leader, and has commanded a Flight and two Squadrons in the field.

On 15th September 1943 he took command of a Flight in No.601 Squadron, and between that time and 23rd November, when he was posted to command No.145 Squadron, he flew 33 operational sorties, destroying one enemy aircraft and damaging a further six on the ground, destroying two locomotives and damaging three, destroying five freight cars and 37 mechanical enemy transport, with a further ten and twelve of each damaged.

While commanding No.145 Squadron in the winter 1943-1944 he introduced this squadron to ground attack and flew a great many sorties as leader, showing fine qualities of leadership and judgement combined with dash and gallantry; his personal example was high inspiration to all pilots serving under him, and was in great part responsible for the excellent results achieved by his unit. Squadron Leader Kallio also destroyed one enemy aircraft and damaged one while flying with No.145 Squadron.

In June 1944, Squadron Leader Kallio took command of No.417 Squadron, RCAF, and it was at this time that the squadrons converted to fighter-bomber work. Once again he set a magnificent example, and his squadron has produced consistently successful results under his leadership.

Both in tactical and close support work, Squadron Leader Kallio has invariably pressed home his attacks with great skill and courage, very often in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire. For his high courage and excellent leadership in action against the enemy, I strongly recommend Squadron Leader Kallio for the

award of the Distinguished Service Order.

**KALLIO, S/L Oliver Charles, DFC (J6494)  
No. 417 Squadron  
Distinguished Service Order**

Since the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross, Squadron Leader Kallio has flown on operations against the enemy with consistent success and gallantry. He has commanded a flight and two squadrons during his operational career, at all times showing fine qualities of leadership and judgement. Under his command his present squadron has produced excellent results. He has personally destroyed two enemy aircraft and damaged or destroyed much enemy road and rail transport.

Award effective 13 January 1945 as per London Gazette dated 23 January 1945 & AFRO 471/45 dated 16 March 1945.



# What did 33 do Post-War?

## 33 Squadron and the Cold War Period

### Introduction

I have to admit that my love of aircraft jumps from the end of World War Two to my arrival in the SH world and the Puma Force, and thumbing through the back copies of 'Loyalty' as I prepare the November issue it is quite evident that I have focussed heavily on 33 Squadron's First and Second World War experiences, with a few articles here and there that cover the other periods. I hope to focus on the Puma years during 2021, assuming that the membership will put pen to paper in 2020 and recount their stories for posterity while they can still remember them, hold a pen or type! I have compiled the ORBs that cover our reformation in 1929 to September 1939, so I have some knowledge of our time in Britain as a bomber squadron, and the move out to the Middle East where we changed from a bomber to a fighter squadron. But I admit to knowing very little about the immediate post-war and Malaya years, with the Tempest Vs, Hornet F3s and Bloodhound SAMs, and even less about the jets we flew during the Cold War period. A quick search on the internet about 33 Squadron's post war history provided me with a brief summary, which I have 'corrected' with some help from Wing Commander C G Jefford's wonderful book, 'RAF Squadrons':

*No 33 Squadron remained in Germany after the war as part of the occupation forces. From 1949 to 1970, 33 Squadron spent much of its time in the Far East, based at Changi, Tengah, Butterworth and Kuala Lumpur in Malaya, flying their Tempests in ground attack missions*

*against Communist guerrillas during the Malayan Emergency. It re-equipped with twin-engined de Havilland Hornets in May 1951, disbanding in March 1955, having flown 6 150 sorties during its stay in Malaya.*

*In October 1955 33 Squadron reformed as a night fighter squadron, flying two-seat de Havilland Venom NF.2s from RAF Driffield, before being disbanded at the end of July 1957. The Squadron reformed on 30 September by renumbering No 264 Squadron, another night fighter squadron operating Gloster Meteor NF.14s at RAF Leeming. 33 Squadron re-equipped with Gloster Javelin FAW 7s in July 1958 and moved to RAF Middleton St George on 30 September. They exchanged their Javelin FAW 7s for FAW 9s in October 1960, and disbanded on 31 December 1962. In April 1965, 33 Squadron became a Bloodhound surface-to-air missile unit based once again at Butterworth in Malaya, and were disbanded on 31 January 1970. The Squadron returned to Britain and reformed on 14 June 1971 at RAF Odiham, the first RAF squadron to be equipped with the new Aerospatiale Puma HC Mk1.*

### The Stations

So now I know that 33 Squadron came back from Malaya in 1955, were based at Driffield, Leeming and Middleton St George and then returned to Malaya in 1965. In the ten years that the Squadron was back in Britain it flew Venoms, Meteors and Javelins. From Butterworth to RAF Driffield? Back to the internet...



## **RAF Driffield**

RAF Driffield is a former Royal Air Force station 1.7 miles (2.7 km) south west of Driffield in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The 'Hull and East Riding at War' website states that the site was first used by 'C' Flight of 33 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, whilst on home defence duties, a statement backed up by the uk airfield guide site, which states that Driffield was an RFC landing ground used by 33 Squadron's B.E.2s in 1916, and later F.E.2s, which 33 did not receive until June 1917. Driffield is north of Beverley, which was one of 33's known landing grounds in 1916. Driffield was never developed as a permanent aerodrome until 1918, it was first opened as RAF Eastburn in 1918, before closing in early 1920.

In 1935 a new airfield was built for the RAF, first for training bomber crews then taking a very active part in World War Two. After being badly damaged by a huge German bombing raid during the Battle of Britain on 15 August 1940 it was closed for repairs, reopening in early 1941, with fighters replacing bombers for a short period as Spitfires and Hurricanes from No.13 Group Fighter Command moved in. Bomber Command returned in April 1941, with Halifaxes from No.4 Group taking to the skies on an almost nightly basis to attack mainland Europe, inevitably suffering heavy losses.

The 'Hull and East Riding at War' site tells us that the jet age reached Yorkshire in 1949, when No.203 Advanced Flying School formed at Driffield. There were two sections within the school: No.1 Squadron operated the Gloster Meteor, Britain's first operational jet fighter, while No.2 Squadron flew the de Havilland Vampire. No. 203 AFS became No.8 Flying Training School in June 1954, the unit continued at Driffield before moving to Lincolnshire in July 1955.

Two months later, in September, RAF Driffield reverted to the role of a fighter station, when No.13 Group Fighter Command again took control of the airfield. During this period, No. 219 and No. 33 Squadron, equipped with the de Havilland Venom NF2A night fighter, occupied the base until June-July 1957, when both units were disbanded. In October the Fighter Weapons School arrived from RAF Leconfield, but departed in March 1958.

In 1957, the British Government had announced that the RAF would deploy 60 nuclear intermediate range ballistic missiles. From November 1958, Driffield housed No.98 Squadron, equipped with three Douglas Thor missiles, each with a range of 1 750 miles and capable of reaching Moscow. Thor missiles were 60 ft long and stored horizontally on the ground, only being erected when ready for firing or during training exercises. Although the missiles were British owned, the nuclear warheads were still under American

ownership. Accordingly, the USAF maintained a large presence at Driffield. In good bureaucratic fashion, the RAF Launch Officer was expected to sign for the warhead after it had been launched, because technically it was then under British control. The missiles at Driffield were never used and the system was dismantled in 1963. The base eventually closed in 1977, after which the British Army made use of the old runways as a driving school.

## **RAF Leeming**

The 1950-1990 period at RAF Leeming receives very little coverage in Wikiworld, just a few sentences saying that following the war, the station became a night-fighter base, equipped initially with Mosquito and then Meteor and Javelin aircraft before becoming a Training Command airfield in 1961. The station was then home to No. 3 Flying Training School, equipped with the Jet Provost aircraft. No. 264 Squadron was renumbered as No.33 Squadron in 30 September 1957. 264 had flown Mosquitos from May 1942 to November 1951, then Meteor NF11, 12 and 14s, and had moved from Middleton St George to Leeming in February 1957.

It was while 33 Squadron was at Leeming that it was awarded the Royal Standard for 50 years of service, the Standard being presented by 33 Squadron's first commanding officer, Philip Joubert de la Ferté.

## **RAF Middleton St George**

RAF Middleton St George, now Teeside Airport, is five miles east of Darlington in County Durham and started life as RAF Goosepool in 1941 under Bomber Command. Allocated to No 6 Group, RCAF, the station housed Halifaxes, Whitleys, Wellingtons and Lancasters. 33 Squadron moved their new Javelin FAW 7s from Leeming to Middleton St George on 30 September 1958, and reequipped with Javelin FAW 9s in October 1960. As part of the chaotic RAF policy of the time, 33 Squadron had to hand over their aircraft to No. 5 Squadron in October-November 1962 as 5 Squadron prepared to move to Germany, and then disbanded on 31 December.

## **The Aircraft**

### **de Havilland DH 112 Venom**

The de Havilland DH 112 Venom was a British post-war single-engined jet aircraft developed and manufactured by the de Havilland Aircraft Company.

Much of its design was derived from the de Havilland Vampire, the firm's first jet-powered combat aircraft. The Venom was destined to have a relatively short service life in the RAF, being withdrawn from frontline operations in 1962 as a result of the introduction of more capable designs.

The Venom entered service with the RAF in August



1952 as a single-seat fighter-bomber and two-seat night fighter and it functioned as an interim stage between the first generation of British jet fighters – straight-wing aircraft powered by centrifugal flow engines such as the Gloster Meteor and the Vampire – and later swept wing, axial flow-engined combat aircraft, such as the Hawker Hunter and de Havilland Sea Vixen.

The NF.2 was a two-seat night fighter, an interim night fighter developed from a planned export for Egypt, and 91 were produced. On 6 May 1953, the first of the Venom night fighters was delivered to the RAF. From 1955 onwards, an improved model of the night fighter, the Venom NF.3, was introduced to squadron service. However, the night fighter Venom had only a relatively brief career with the RAF, having been procured to serve as an interim solution while more capable designs were developed. Accordingly, in 1957, the RAF's night fighter Venoms began to be withdrawn in favour of the newly introduced Gloster Javelin twin-engined all-weather fighter.

### **Gloster Meteor**

Between October 1957 and April 1958 33 Squadron operated the Gloster Meteor NF 14 at RAF Leeming. The first Meteor F.1, serial EE210/G, had taken to the air from Moreton Valance in Gloucestershire on 12 January 1944. The aircraft was almost identical to the F9/40 prototypes except for the addition of four nose-mounted 20 mm (.79 in) Hispano Mk V cannons and some changes to the canopy to improve all-round visibility. On 17 July 1944, the Meteor F.1 was cleared for service use and, shortly afterwards, elements of the Tactical Flight (at Farnborough?) and their aircraft were transferred to operational RAF squadrons. The first deliveries to No. 616 Squadron RAF, the first operational squadron to receive the Meteor, began in July 1944.

Post war, to replace the increasingly obsolete de Havilland Mosquito as a night fighter, the Meteor was adapted to serve in the role as an interim aircraft. Gloster had initially proposed a night fighter design to meet the Air Ministry specification for the Mosquito replacement, based on the two seater trainer variant of the Meteor, with the pilot in the front seat and the navigator in the rear. Once accepted however, work on the project was swiftly transferred to Armstrong Whitworth to perform both the detailed design process and production of the type; the first prototype flew on 31 May 1950. Although based on the T.7 twin seater, it used the fuselage and tail of the F.8, and the longer wings of the F.3. An extended nose contained the AI Mk 10 (the 1940s Westinghouse SCR-720) Air Intercept radar. As a consequence the 20 mm cannons were moved into the wings, outboard of the engines. A ventral fuel tank and wing mounted drop tanks

completed the Armstrong Whitworth Meteor NF.11. As radar technology developed, a new Meteor night fighter was developed to use the improved US-built APS-21 system. The NF.12 first flew on 21 April 1953. It was similar to the NF 11 but had a nose section 17 inches (43 cm) longer; the fin was enlarged to compensate for the greater keel area of the enlarged nose and to counter the airframe reaction to the "wig-wag" scan of the radar which affected the gunsighting, an anti-tramp motor operating on the rudder was fitted midway up the front leading edge of the fin. The NF.12 also had the new Rolls-Royce Derwent 9 engines and the wings were reinforced to handle the new engine. Deliveries of the NF.12 started in 1953, with the type entering squadron service in early 1954, equipping seven squadrons (Nos 85, 25, 152, 46, 72, 153 and 64); the aircraft was replaced over 1958–1959.

The final Meteor night fighter was the NF.14. First flown on 23 October 1953, the NF.14 was based on the NF.12 but had an even longer nose, extended by a further 17 inches to accommodate new equipment, increasing the total length to 51 ft 4 in (15.65 m) and a larger bubble canopy to replace the framed T.7 version. Just 100 NF.14s were built; they first entered service in February 1954 beginning with No. 25 Squadron and were being replaced as early as 1956 with the Gloster Javelin. In 1951 No. 264 Squadron was based at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, and in November of that year its Mosquitos were replaced by the Gloster Meteor NF11; in October 1954 the NF11s were replaced by NF14s. From February 1957 the squadron was based at RAF Middleton St George until 30 September 1957, when it was disbanded after being re-numbered 33 Squadron at RAF Leeming.

Overseas, the NF14s remained in service a little longer than in the UK, serving with No. 60 Squadron at Tengah, Singapore until 1961. As the NF.14 was replaced, some 14 were converted to training aircraft as the NF(T).14 and given to No. 2 Air Navigation School on RAF Thorney Island until transferring to No. 1 Air Navigation School at RAF Stradishall where they served until 1965.



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Above: De Havilland Venom.

Centre: Gloster Meteor NF14 of No.264 Squadron at Middleton St George.

Bottom: Gloster Meteor NF14.



Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection

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# *Flat Iron? Drag Queen? Blow Lamp?*

The all weather, high performance Gloster Javelin night fighter

by Ian Smith Watson

## Introduction

Unlike the Spitfire, Hurricane, Phantom, Harrier or Tornado, the Gloster Javelin is not one of the RAF's aircraft that is instantly recognized by the general public, despite it having significance as being the first of a kind - the first wholly, from the drawing board up, long-range, all-weather fighter and the first in the RAF to be missile armed, eventually. It was born to meet the ever-increasing demands of the Cold War, to stay a step or two ahead of Soviet arms technology and be ready to defend British airspace against the long range supersonic bomber threat at high altitude.

The Javelin would see operational service with eighteen operational squadrons in four operational RAF commands between 1956 and 1968, yet the peak of Javelin operations was reached around 1960, with squadrons forming and disbanding before full deployment as politicians, struggling to balance the burgeoning costs of defence against the increased costs of maintaining a peacetime Britain to which so many aspired, became convinced of the rationale of a futuristic, less costly all missile defence force. Although the decision to pursue this doctrine, made in the 1957 'Sandys Review', lost momentum through the early 1960s, Fighter Command and Royal Air Force Germany had been decimated, cutting short the development and full potential of the Javelin.

## Post-War to Cold War

In 1944, planning for the post-war world and its impact on national defence was occupying political and military minds even before the invasion of Europe. On 25 May, two weeks before D-Day, the British Chiefs of Staff had already approved and issued a paper outlining the threat of air attack to which the United Kingdom was likely to be exposed during the ten years following the defeat of Germany and proposed a policy that would govern the air defence of the country during that period. The following year Prime Minister Attlee set about the task of determining the size, shape and purpose of post-war British defence requirements and on 24 July 1945 a Chiefs of Staff committee meeting was convened to address the future shape of the air defence of Great Britain for the decade ahead. In 1946, at the 160th Chiefs of Staff meeting on this subject, an assumption was endorsed that said, 'There will be no appreciable period of warning of attack.' This was explained as needing to design UK air defence forces that could expand rapidly and deploy in full strength on a war footing to meet any definable threat. In terms of

threat for that period, Germany had no Air Force, the French had a weak Air Force, while the Russians were rebuilding their military and industrial bases in a series of 'five year plans' and could become a threat from 1956 onwards.

In 1947 the Air Ministry issued the following design specifications: F43/46 for a single seat highly manoeuvrable day fighter and F44/46, a two-seat type able to reach 45 000 feet in under 10 minutes. From designs to meet these requirements would come the English Electric Lightning and the Hawker Hunter, both of which would leave a lasting impression on aviation history, media and the enthusiast. F44/46 would see the Gloster Javelin produced for the RAF and the de Havilland Sea Vixen for the FAA, with the Ministry of Supply issuing instructions to both manufacturers to start work on their designs on 13 April 1949. It is interesting to note that when the first Gloster Javelin prototype flew, on 26 November 1951, the Vampire and Meteor were replacing the last of the de Havilland Mosquito Night Fighters.

The first production Mark I Javelin made its maiden flight on 22 July 1954, and by 29 February 1956 fifty-six aircraft had been produced, some being used for further trials as all weather night fighters with the latest Gee nav/ref equipment. By this stage Gloster were also working on projects to meet two new Operational Requirements (ORs): OR39 - an aircraft able to intercept and engage an enemy aircraft as far out from UK shores as the extent of control and reporting technology would allow; OR 234 - an aircraft that could act as a long range bomber escort.

## Cold War Night Fighter

In 1954, ministers examined the defence programme in light of the detonation of the hydrogen bomb. At that time, Fighter Command was expecting, by 1956, to have twelve squadrons equipped with the Gloster Javelin, totalling 264 aircraft, with twenty-four day fighter squadrons, totalling 528 aircraft, of which twelve units would be Supermarine's chief competitor to the Hunter, the Swift. The remaining units would be four squadrons with Sapphire-engine Hunter F2 and F5s, with eight squadrons operating the Hunter F6. Following the 1954 Defence Review it was decided, on recommendation from the air defence committee, to have a smaller fighter force composed of eighteen all-weather squadrons (288 aircraft) and eighteen day fighter squadrons (288 aircraft).





33 Squadron's Javelins in formation.



The Javelin's story begins similarly to that of many RAF aircraft - a succession of requirements accompanied by a succession of ever-changing designs to match. In 1947 the Air Ministry had seen the need for a high performance interceptor to challenge the increasingly modern bomber designs being produced. Two separate aircraft were envisaged; one for day and for night fighting. While the day fighter eventually led to the Hunter, the night/all-weather fighter requirement was down to a fight between Gloster and de Havilland (the latter submitting their DH.110, later to become the Sea Vixen). The specification was numbered F.44/46, and three each of the de Havilland DH.110 and the Gloster GA.5 were ordered. The F.44/46 specification matured to become F.4/48, covered by operational requirement OR.227, which called for a fighter capable of 525 knots at 40,000, armed with 4 30mm cannon and 4 AAMs with a powerful radar.

Gloster settled on a design (based on proposal P280) for a huge delta-winged aircraft with two RR Avon engines before rising weight forced them into selecting higher-thrust Sapphire engines instead. In the meantime a further two DH.110s were ordered, but the order for Gloster's submission was cut to two, the thinking being that the DH.110 was more likely to succeed. Gloster were not overjoyed at this; two prototypes were going to make slow going if the aircraft was chosen for service, and in 1951 a change of thinking at the Air Ministry finally persuaded them to order three more GA.5s. Later in the year the first prototype flew, on 26th November. WD804 was the aircraft in question and was a bare shell - no radar, no weapons.

Serious vibration problems linked to the exhaust and airflow over the rear fuselage meant several redesigns of this area were called for. In June 1952 WD804 lost both elevators on a high speed run and the pilot, Sqn Ldr Bill Waterton (Gloster's chief test pilot) managed to land at Boscombe Down using the electrically-operated tailplane trimmer for pitch control - a very tricky bit of flying, for which he received the George Medal. The first production order had arrived, and with it the name of Javelin. The second prototype, WD808, flew in August but then stayed on the ground until January 1953 while research went on to determine the cause of the aileron loss. Tests throughout the first half of the year resulted in a number of changes to the design, including a cranked wing and beefed-up fuselage, fin and control surfaces.

However it was at this point the Javelin's high T-tail cost the life of pilot Peter Lawrence - such designs are susceptible to a condition known as a deep stall, where the wing blankets airflow over the tail assembly at high angles of attack, rendering the aircraft uncontrollable. At some point in the flight the nose had been pulled

past 45 degrees and as the stall came on forward airspeed reduced to zero - the aircraft simply fell out of the sky. In March 1953 a third prototype (WT827) flew, being the first one to carry guns and radar. A number of differing radome designs were tried before they settled on the familiar pointed design. Large belly tanks were also fitted, as it was recognised the Javelin was lacking on fuel.

A fourth prototype (WT830) flew in January 1954 and though lacking guns and radar, it did incorporate all the improvements made to the ill-fated second prototype, including powered ailerons. It soon passed to the A&AEE at Boscombe Down to be assessed by RAF pilots. The fifth and final prototype, WT836, joined the flying programme in July, the same month in which one of the earlier prototypes was flown at through the sound barrier over London, the ensuing sonic boom causing a hell of a lot of fuss. Gloster's official position was that this was an accident, but it was widely believed to be a demonstration that the aircraft could go supersonic - much press criticism, including from Bill Waterton (who had quit Gloster and was now a newspaper correspondent), had said it could not.

While possible export customers settled down to watch the progress of the programme before expressing any real interest (and soon losing any they had), by mid-1956 over 20 FAW.Mk.1s were engaged in trials work - the type of development batch arrangement later formalised for production of later types such as the Lightning. Despite the designation of FAW.1, none of these aircraft were ready for real service - while 46 and later 87 Squadrons played with their new toys, they were covered by many limitations on the flight envelope and they were not missile armed. The FAW.2 introduced a new American radar (the APQ.43, instead of the FAW.1's AI.17), with a larger radome, and went into service with 46 and later 89 Squadrons. The next variant was a trainer, the T.3, with tandem seating to avoid major changes to the design, all-moving tailplane but no radar. The change in centre of gravity meant a small fuselage extension was required, and this was used to house extra fuel (and make the aircraft substantially better looking in the process!). 228 OCU at Leeming received most of the T.3s but they were also spread around the various Javelin squadrons.

The FAW.4 was similar to the FAW.1 but had the T.3's all-moving tailplane and vortex generators on the wings and entered service with 141 Squadron at RAF Horsham St. Faith, and later with 3, 11, 23, 41, 72 and 87 Squadrons (though not all simultaneously). The FAW.5 was externally similar to the FAW.4 but had a redesigned wing interior in order to make room for more fuel, and provision for the full total of four Firestreak AAMs - though in the end the mark never

carried them. The wing improvement of the FAW.5 was soon applied to the FAW.2, thus producing the FAW.6.

In November 1956 the FAW.7, the first mark to actually carry the four missiles specified in the original requirement, first flew. Basically an FAW.5 but with uprated Sapphire Sa.7 engines and powered rudder and extended rear fuselage. By this time so many different marks of the Javelin were in the air it was a wonder anybody had any idea what was happening. A larger number of each mark were being used in various trials on such basic items as the weapons and engine fits, leading one to believe the Air Ministry had handed the RAF over to Gloster as one big Guinea Pig. The FAW.8, an FAW.7 with reheat, appeared so quickly that a full 80 FAW.7s never even saw service, being delivered straight into storage at RAF Kemble, and later converted to FAW.9s.

It was not until June 1960 that an RAF Javelin - an FAW.7 - finally fired a Firestreak missile, successfully downing a Meteor drone. The reheat-capable FAW.8 was limited to using reheat only at a minimum altitude; below that point engaging the reheat actually caused a loss of thrust (to the point where take-off could not be safely accomplished with reheat engaged). This was down to the engine's fuel pump - it fed fuel at a constant rate and only at high altitude was there sufficient excess capacity to allow fuel to be burned directly without causing a loss of cold thrust at the same time. However the FAW.8 did have an improved, drooped, wing leading edge and autostabiliser to improve handling. The FAW.9 was basically an FAW.7 incorporating the FAW.8 improvements, and lastly there was the FAW.9R, equipped with a fantastically ugly and massive refuelling probe, obviously designed by somebody who took the name of the aircraft a little too literally.

In service the Javelin had settled down to do a steady, unspectacular job of guarding the nation against the expected Soviet bomber fleets - and while designed as a medium range bomber destroyer, and subject to many restrictions on how it was flown, could put up a creditable performance against other aircraft of the same time - no contest against the upstart Lightning, but a fairly even match for a Hunter. Ironically the Sea Vixen could outperform the Javelin, having none of the latter's restrictions, but lacked guns so by the time it came to a close-in dogfight, the Sea Vixen pilot would have been helpless to do anything other than try the rarely used rocket pack, or hurl abuse over the radio.

The Lightning replaced the Javelin in the UK and Germany in short order with most being gone by 1965, but the Javelin held on for a few years longer in the Far East, where it gained its only air to air victory - an Indonesian C-130 which crashed while trying to avoid a Javelin that had been sent to intercept it during the

Malayan crisis in 1964. But with the increasing success of the Lightning, the Javelin's days even in hotter climes were numbered, and the last Javelin squadron was 60 Squadron, disbanding at RAF Tengah on Singapore, at the end of April 1968.

Ironically, while the Javelin had been preferred over the DH.110 because it was considered to offer more potential to develop further variants, all of the really interesting proposals fell by the wayside and were never to see daylight. These included reconnaissance variants with extended noses and/or a greater wingspan, an attack version to carry bombs in under-fuselage panniers and most significantly a supersonic version with area-ruled fuselage, thinner wings and redesigned tail unit. This was being seriously explored when it was cancelled, and soon after Duncan Sandys' infamous Defence White Paper was published, cancelling most advanced aircraft projects. Gloster spent the years between this point and their absorption by BAC desperately trying to get back into the game, but never succeeded, and the Javelin was the final production type that Gloster produced.

The Javelin's protracted development period and lack of opportunity to prove itself in combat have led to it being described in scathing terms by many people, and its reputation was not helped by logistical and servicing mishaps in deployments overseas, but it was well liked by its pilots who appreciated the amount of weaponry available to them (far exceeding other types of the day), its stability (within the proscribed guidelines) and its roomy cockpit. Any shortcomings it had in dogfighting ability were more than outweighed by its ability to stop the fight before the proverbial 'knife fight' began, and its airbrakes were incredibly effective - enough to force an attacker to overshoot before they realised what was happening, and often used to permit impressively steep descents to landing.

A single Javelin continued to fly with the RAE until 1976, when it was delivered to the Imperial War Museum's care at Duxford airfield, where it remains to this day. Lacking in any real popularity with the public, the large production run has sadly not been reflected in numbers of preserved examples, and a mere 10 complete Javelins now remain in various states of preservation, none of which will ever fly again.



## 33 Squadron welcomes back former Javelin pilot, Mr Ron Lloyd



**Flight Lieutenant Niall Davidson welcomes Mr Ron Lloyd back to 33 Squadron.**

Some recent research for a book on my RAF flying experiences led me via the internet to the 33 Squadron Association and an invitation from the Chairman, Dave Stewart, to visit the Squadron at Benson on the 6th of June. Quite apart from a fascinating day learning about the Puma the visit to 33 Squadron's 'History Room' brought back many fond memories of people, aircraft and the lifestyle of a twenty one year old joining his first operational Squadron. I served with 33 in 1961 when they were equipped with the mighty Gloster Javelin Mk 9, the first delta winged fighter to enter RAF service.

In July 1960 I graduated from RAF College Cranwell clutching my posting notice to Night All Weather Fighters, in other words the Javelin. The Lightning, in which I flew a few sorties, came later. MOD boffins were nervous about sending tender young pilots, fresh from flying just the Percival piston engine Provost and De Havilland Vampire, to fly the Javelin and survive. To bring us up to speed we were sent to Chivenor in Devon for three months to fly the most famous RAF fighter of its time since the Spitfire – the Hawker Hunter. The Javelin weighed more than 40,000 lbs, had a 52ft wingspan, two Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire engines of 11,000 pounds of thrust each, and could reach 610kts at sea level and Mach 0.93 at altitude. And it came with a navigator - or 'Navrad' since he operated the radar. Quite a package? Not by modern standards, of course, yet pilots converting direct from the Jet Provost to the much higher performance Lightning, which arrived shortly after, seemed to find little difficulty.

But in November 1960 I had to fly 40 hours (57 sorties) in the two seat Mk7 Hunter and the sleek and powerful Hunter F 4. I made the best of it and have vivid recollections of dinghy drills off the Devon coast when we were winched up from our dinghies into Whirlwind Helicopters. It was during these sorties that I developed a sceptical approach to ever flying helicopters, since my abiding impression was that the designer wished to limit in-service life (to sell more helicopters) by having several thousand rivets try hard to shake themselves free by constant vibration. This was, of course, the sheer imagination, even prejudice, of someone infected with single seat fighter aspirations yet harbouring a secret admiration for the versatility of the helicopter and the crews that flew in them. Today they occupy a vital slot in the line-up of any military force and my scepticism has morphed into a curiosity about how they fly and how they are flown.

In early May 1961, pumped up with confidence after successfully passing the Hunter OCU and emerging unscathed from the Javelin course at RAF Leeming, together with my Scottish navigator, I checked into 33 Squadron and looked around. Most crews were some ten years older than me with many hours on Meteor night fighters and a knowing look that I later came to know as caution regarding the hurried introduction of new types into RAF service before all their bugs had been ironed out. But with no awareness of that I breezed confidently (probably over confidently) into the crew room as experienced crews eyed the new arrival - from Cranwell of all places - expecting the





snootiness of someone bound for the dizzy heights of Air Marshall and beyond. While this was not my aspiration or experience I felt obliged to play up to the image on arrival just for fun. Flushed with the idea I took off in my jet accompanied by an unknown navigator, my own crewman being away, did some intercepting and decided to 'beat up' the Squadron with a noisy low pass that rattled the windows of the crew room and blew papers off desks. The impudence of a new arrival having the temerity to subject experienced pilots to such *panache* (my word) became more than evident in a surprisingly serious, door-closed, debrief by my Flight Commander in which such topics as discipline, the taxpayers' money, irresponsibility, example to others etc etc came up. But I swear I detected a faint grin at the corner of his mouth as I retreated through the door that compromised a suitably stern expression.

My memories of the people were repeatedly jogged while looking through the archive pictures at Benson. Those with groups of aircrew and their names were very nostalgic, even close to sixty years later as I recalled many of them personally, but the names would, of course, be recognised by ever fewer people today. Life in the RAF was tremendous fun, albeit with a very serious underlying task of avoiding and, if necessary, confronting the threat from the Soviet Union. This combination seemed to enliven social life perhaps with a theme of 'We might not be here tomorrow so let's have some fun now'. Perhaps it also shaped social life beyond the Services to become known as 'The Swinging Sixties' with the Beatles, the

Rolling Stones, Bill Haley and the dancing and other mischief that went with them. My memories are happy ones and everyone on the Squadron from memory - aircrew and ground crew - seemed content. But I was young and it is a long time ago so rose-tinted spectacles are a risk.

There were still non-commissioned pilots and navigators on the Squadron back then, doing exactly the same jobs, but due to separate Messes my connections were mainly with officer aircrew. However, I do recall that the ground crews in the hangar and on the flight line seemed a lively bunch of guys doing a job they enjoyed, including occasional detachments to Cyprus for a change of scenery. I had nothing but admiration for the line crews who, after helping us strap in, monitored each engine start before closing up the starter bay panel. This was potentially hazardous since the starter used a volatile fuel called Avpin to run up the starter which ran up the engine. This had some sort of bladed rotor which had a habit of shedding blades and over-revving itself to destruction with a banshee scream which meant 'Run away very quickly' whilst waving at the aircrew en route for them to do the same. Starter bay fires were also a common hazard for the intrepid crews to deal with. It was very much a team effort to survive engine starts. This camaraderie came out even more during Squadron parties held in the Sergeants' or Airmens' Mess when, unlike older, wiser aircrew, I succumbed to generous offers of drinks from ground crew which brought curious beams of satisfaction in helping young pilots to make fools of themselves. I quickly learned



my alcohol limits and observed the 'Eight hours bottle to throttle' rule which dealt, however, rather more with recovery than avoidance.

The introduction of the Javelin into service was a chequered affair with many limitations, many modifications and many Marks. Incidents did occur to remind us of its limitations and, years later, realise that it did not have the sensors to forewarn of problems that modern aircraft have, as one incident was to illustrate. The large heavy canopies, one for the pilot one for the navigator, slid in rails on either side of the cockpit with (as I recall) eight separate latches that were inspected by the navigator before flight, his responsibility being topside and the pilot's the walk around checks. I was again flying with another navigator, my own crewman being on leave. My brief was to fly in echelon starboard for a formation take off. Brakes off, up with the power and we were rolling. At around 130kts, just before lift-off, I saw out the corner of my eye (the leader was on my left) that the right hand side of my canopy was lifting. It ripped off and disappeared into the breeze, which was pretty stiff as we accelerated through 150 kts, unable to abort, striking the tail on the way. A cloud of assorted detritus was sucked from every crevice of the front cockpit, filling my eyes with dust as I peeled away from the formation leader. The navigator's canopy remained in

place. After flying by the control tower to check for damage, with the wind in my hair, eyes, ears and everywhere else, I burned off fuel and landed, throwing a bloodshot glare at the navigator to motivate him to buy me the appropriate number of beers in remorse. The latches were not easy to see and he looked harder next time – with some other pilot. Today this would be a rare and serious occurrence. In 1961 it was pretty much a run of the mill example and the sort of event that aircrew and ground crew treated as a hazard of the job which you just dealt with.

In the company of 92 Squadron flying their Hunters, and with the introduction of the Lightning, demonstrated energetically and noisily at Middleton-Saint-George, 1961 was perhaps the height of RAF Cold War prowess before rising costs, changes in defence policy and tightening budgets progressively reduced numbers of aircraft and crews. 33 Squadron was a great place to be at twenty one years old, not yet married and amongst a great bunch of guys. Memories fade but the positive impact remains.

(Editor's Note: Ron's book has gone off to the publishers and he hopes to see it published next summer.)



Ron Lloyd at the Gloucester Staverton Museum, standing in front of the Javelin FAW 9 which is painted in 33 Squadron colours. Ron's logbook records four flights in XH 903 during his short time with 33 Squadron in 1961.

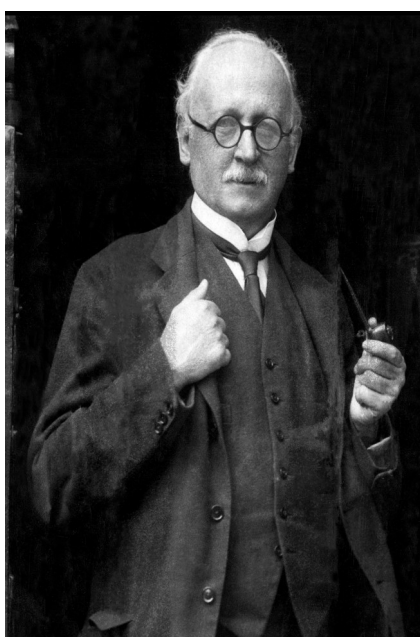


## 100 Years on from the first Victory Parade.....

### 33 Squadron Association at the 2019 Remembrance Day Parade

Most people today are well aware that the First World War produced casualties on a previously unseen scale. Over 1.1 million men from the British Empire were killed. In its aftermath, thousands of war memorials were built across Britain, the Empire, and the former battlefields. Amongst the most prominent designers of war memorials was Sir Edwin Lutyens, described by Historic England as "the foremost architect of his day". Lutyens had become a public figure as the designer of much of New Delhi, the new capital of British India. The war had a profound effect on Lutyens and following it he devoted much of his time to the commemoration of casualties. By the time he was commissioned for the Cenotaph, he was already acting as an adviser to the Imperial War Graves Commission, better known today as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Although the fighting had ceased with the Armistice on 11 November 1918, the First World War did not formally end until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on 28 June 1919. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, learned that a Victory Parade was going to be held in Paris on 14 July with a saluting point for the marching troops, and he was keen to replicate the idea for the British parade in London on 19 July, when troops would be marching through London before being received at Buckingham Palace. As a close friend of Sir Alfred Mond and Sir Lionel Earle, respectively the government minister and senior civil servant at the Office of Works, Lutyens was summoned to meet Lloyd



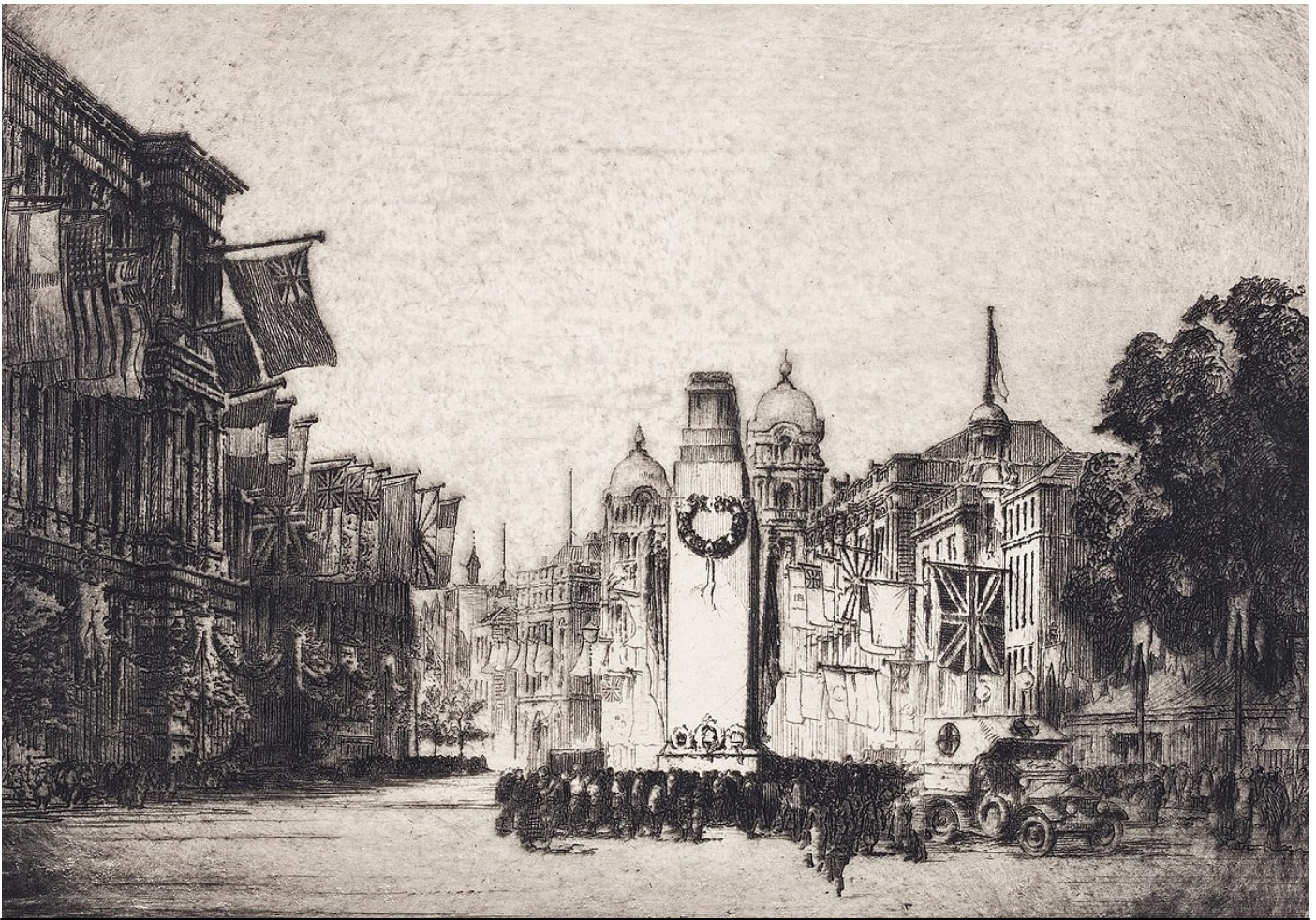
Sir Edwin Lutyens

George and asked to design something suitable for the occasion. Lutyens very quickly came up with sketches for his cenotaph, one of a number of temporary structures erected for the parade, which was erected in Whitehall. It was initially built from wood and plaster and the unveiling, described in 'The Times' as a "quiet" and "unofficial" ceremony, took place on 18 July 1919, the day before the Victory Parade. Lutyens was not invited.

During the parade, 15,000 soldiers and 1,500 officers marched past and saluted the Cenotaph; among them were General John J. Pershing (United States) and Marshal Ferdinand Foch (France), as well as the British officers Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and Admiral of the Fleet Sir David Beatty, and it quickly captured the public imagination. Repatriation of the dead had been forbidden since the early days of the war, so the Cenotaph came to represent the absent dead and served as a substitute for a tomb, becoming the central image of the event and a focus for public expressions of grief. Beginning almost immediately after the Victory Parade and continuing for days afterwards, members of the public began laying flowers and wreaths around the Cenotaph's base. Within a week, an estimated 1.2 million people came to the cenotaph to pay their respects to the dead, and huge quantities of flowers were laid at the base of the monument. According to 'The Times', "no feature of the victory march in London made a deeper impression than the Cenotaph".

Press commentators lobbied for a permanent replacement and four days after the parade, William Ormsby-Gore, Member of Parliament for Stafford and an army officer who fought in the war and was part of the British delegation at Versailles, questioned Mond about the Cenotaph in the House of Commons, and asked whether a permanent replacement was planned. Ormsby-Gore was supported by multiple other members; Mond announced that the decision rested with the cabinet, but promised to pass on the house's support. The following week, 'The Times' published an editorial calling for a permanent replacement, though it felt that there was a risk of vehicles crashing into the Cenotaph in its original location and suggested it be built on nearby Horse Guards Parade; multiple letters to London and national newspapers followed. The cabinet sought Lutyens' opinion, which was that the original site had "...been





**The temporary cenotaph, in an etching by William Monk, published in 1920.**

qualified by the salutes of Foch and the allied armies" and "no other site would give this pertinence". The cabinet bowed to public pressure, approving the re-building in stone at its Whitehall site at its meeting on 30 July. The Cenotaph is 35 feet (11 m) tall and weighs 120 tonnes (120 000 kg). The architects waived their fee for designing the Cenotaph, meaning that it cost £7 325 (equivalent to £289 000 in 2018) to build. Construction began on 19 January 1920, and the original flags were sent to the Imperial War Museum.

The Cenotaph is flanked on each side by flags of the United Kingdom, which Lutyens had wanted to be carved in stone. Although he was overruled and cloth flags were used, Lutyens went on to use stone flags on several of his other war memorials, painted on Rochdale Cenotaph and Northampton War Memorial (among others), and unpainted at Étapes and Villers-Bretonneux IWC cemeteries. In the years following 1919, the Cenotaph displayed a Union Flag, a White Ensign and a Red Ensign on one side and a Union Flag, a White Ensign, and a Blue Ensign on the other side. On 1 April 1943, an RAF Ensign was substituted for the White Ensign on the west side. The flags displayed as of 2007 represent the Royal Navy, the British Army, the Royal Air Force and the Merchant Navy. The Blue Ensign represents the Royal Naval Reserve, the Royal

Fleet Auxiliary, and other government services; it is possible that it was also intended to represent Dominion forces.

Initially the flags were changed for cleaning every six to eight weeks, but between 1922 and 1923 the practice gradually stopped until letters to the media led to its reintroduction. The initial lifespan of a flag was set at five periods of three months. By 1939, they were changed ten times a year, each flag washed twice before being disposed of. By 1924, it was decided that all discarded flags would be sent to the Imperial War Museum who could redistribute them to properly accredited organisations.

No date was announced for the completion of the Cenotaph at first, but the government were keen to have it completed in time for Remembrance Day on the second anniversary of the armistice. In September 1920, the announcement came that the Cenotaph would indeed be unveiled on 11 November, and that the act would be performed by the king. At a late stage in the planning, the government decided to hold a funeral for an unidentified soldier exhumed from a grave in France, known as the Unknown Warrior, and inter him in Westminster Abbey, and the decision was taken to make the unveiling part of the funeral procession. George V unveiled the Cenotaph at 11 am



11 November 1920: The coffin bearing the Unknown Warrior arrives at the Cenotaph, draped in huge Union flags as shown in the bottom photograph, en route to Westminster Abbey.



IWM





on 11 November, this time with Lutyens in attendance, before proceeding to the abbey. The unveiling ceremony was part of a larger procession bringing the Unknown Warrior to be laid to rest in his tomb nearby in Westminster Abbey. The funeral procession route passed the Cenotaph, where the waiting King laid a wreath on the Unknown Warrior's gun-carriage before proceeding to unveil the memorial which was draped in large Union Flags. The public response to the newly unveiled memorial exceeded even that to the temporary Cenotaph in the aftermath of the armistice. Whitehall was closed to traffic for several days after the ceremony and members of the public began to file past the Cenotaph and lay flowers at its base. Within a week, it was 10 feet (3 metres) deep in flowers and an estimated 1.25 million people had visited it so far.

Lutyens designed 44 World War One cemeteries in France and 18 in Belgium, including Thiepval and the one we visited last month, Railway Dugout Cemetery, where Lieutenant Colonel Birch is buried.

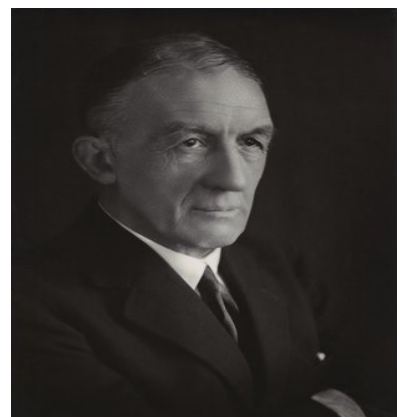
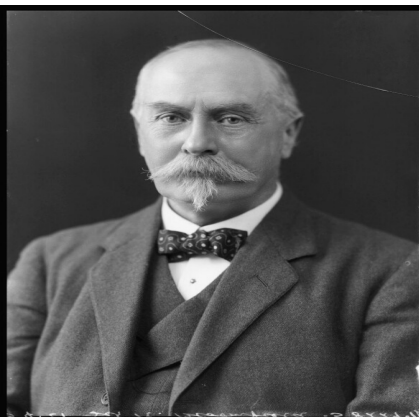
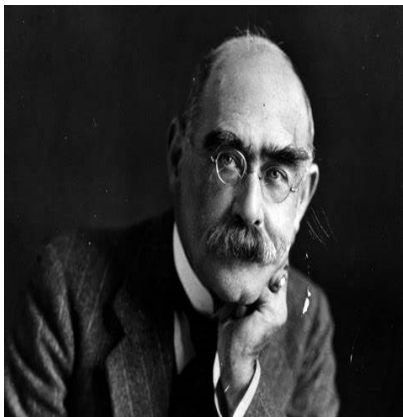
He also designed the Stone of Remembrance that is present in all CWGC sites. The Stone is compared to a sarcophagus and an altar, in Lutyens's view it was secular architecture and demonstrated the equality of remembrance. Rudyard Kipling proposed the phrase inscribed on the Stone, a quote from the 'Wisdom of Sirach' and the inscription on top of the Arch of the Menin Gate.

The lack of Christian symbolism did not sit well with some of the IWGC hierarchy and many Anglican bishops, who thought the Stone had pagan overtones which a cross would counter. One of the other three principal architects, Sir Reginald Blomfield, who designed the Menin Gate, designed the Cross of Sacrifice that is present in CWGC cemeteries.

The third principal architect was Sir Herbert Baker, who designed Tyne Cot, Loos, Adanac and Neuve Chapelle Memorials and cemeteries.

## The CENOTAPH UNVEILED : Each Moment Pictured.

		
<p><b>The Cenotaph Shrouded by Two Great Flags</b>          Before the unveiling, the Cenotaph was shrouded by two great flags. Between these, however, could clearly be seen the three ensigns of the Navy and Naval Reserve and the Union Jack, on golden staves</p>	<p><b>The King Unveiling the Monument</b>          On the King's right is the huge wreath which his Majesty placed at the foot of the monument, whilst the Prince of Wales's wreath is just seen on the Duke of Connaught's left</p>	<p><b>The Two Flags Falling to the Ground</b>          Just as the Westminster chimes ceased ringing the King leaned forward to the little pillar in front of him; the two great flags trembled and fluttered down to the ground. Then the Great Silence fell</p>



**L-R: Rudyard Kipling, Sir Reginald Blomfield, Sir Herbert Baker.**



With the Unknown Warrior's gun carriage in position, King George V unveils the new Cenotaph, releasing the two flags. The King can be seen on the far right of the bottom photograph, standing in front of a small pillar.









The 33 Squadron Association members begin marching towards the Cenotaph, blessed with good weather yet again, and with 'Pancho' Keates proudly carrying the wreath. Fine moustache, Jerry, but I am biased, of course!









## Kev's Labour of Love: XW208, a Work in Progress at Newark Air Museum



Update: Kev Graham's efforts to rebuild XW 208 up at the Newark Air Museum (NAM) are going really well and, as you can see by the photo, Kev is a happy man. The photo below shows 208's arrival last February, and since then Kev and his team have made remarkable progress. Follow the rebuild on the NAM website ( <https://twitter.com/hashtag/PumaXW208rebuild?src=hash>), or catch up with him at the Reunion. The link includes information about Kev's 'shopping list' for parts, so if the missus is telling you to get rid of those bits you 'salvaged / rescued/ nicked' as you left the Force, there's a man who would probably take them off your hands, no questions asked! Kev has extended a welcome to anyone passing by the Museum, just give him plenty of warning that you are inbound. The Museum is well worth a visit, check out the Battlefield Tour 2018 Report for more information.





