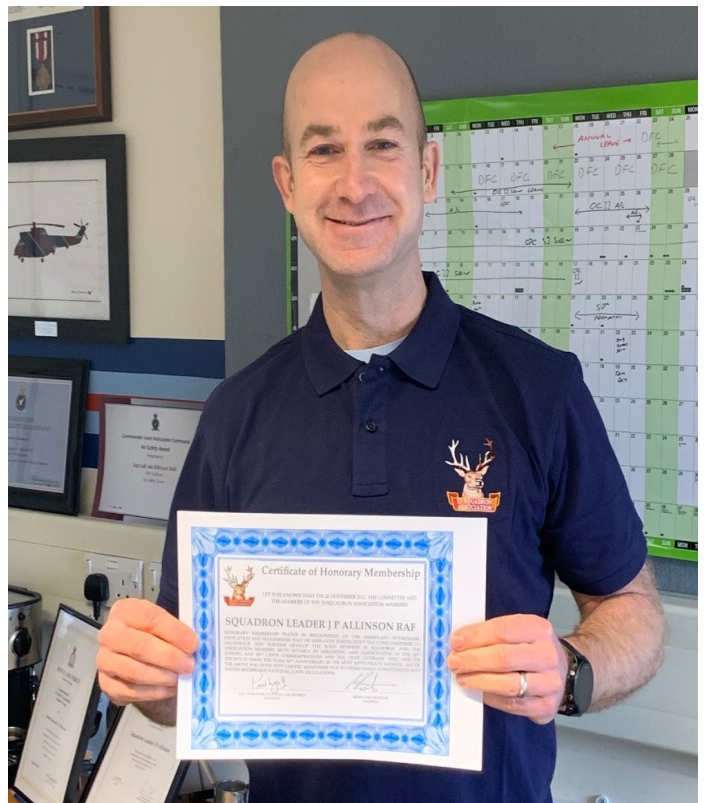




# The Force is strong in this one!

## The Association awards its third Honorary Membership to Stormtroopin' Jez Allinson



### RAF Benson, Friday 3 December 2021

After several aborted attempts to catch him in his office I was very pleased to finally meet up with Squadron Leader Jez Allinson on Friday morning to deliver a Letter of Appreciation from the Chairman and break the news that the 33 Squadron Association had awarded him Honorary Membership for his outstanding support to the Association throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Jez will be leaving the Squadron on Friday 10 December after a very busy tour as the 2IC, and what an excellent pair of hands 33 was in during his tenure. Often acting as a one man Squadron Executive, duty authoriser and duty crewman at the same time, with very limited resources and within the restrictive COVID measures that were imposed across the country, Jez ensured that all operational and peacetime tasks were met.

Without his enthusiasm and support, and constant liaison with the RAF Benson Executive, the commemorations that were arranged to mark the 20th anniversary of the Puma crash in in the Kacanik Defile on 9 April 2001, and the 80th Anniversary to remember the start of the German airborne invasion of Crete on 20 May 1941, Operation MERCURY, would never have got past the planning phase.

Even though the COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time meant that there were only seven Association members allowed to attend the memorial at the Kosovo memorial plinth in front of the Squadron, with Jez the senior officer present, the service led to the idea of a Crete commemoration service at the Squadron, as the commemorations in Crete had been cancelled due to the COVID travel restrictions.

Jez gave the Crete commemoration his full support again and was given permission to hold another service. This time he did an excellent job standing in for OC33, who was quarantining after returning from overseas. The commemoration service received full praise from the ten Association members on parade, especially for the fact that Jez had been given permission to open the Hart's Head for the first time in 18 months!

Despite a heavy work schedule, Jez also found time to ensure that the Puma 50th anniversary was marked with several functions and the very popular 12-ship flypast around the UK. He also found time to put together a Puma Force Brief for a large group of 33 Squadron and 230 Squadron veterans, including several ex-OCs, and everyone in attendance had a thoroughly enjoyable day.

As we have noted on various Facebook and Twitter



pages, this remarkable officer is well known to many people for his outstanding charity work, raising funds by running half and full marathons dressed as a Star Wars Stormtrooper. He is so well known around the world now that he receives assistance from Lucasfilm. Those of us who had to operate in Gulf War One wearing an AR5 and NBC suit can probably appreciate more than most what running a marathon in a Stormtrooper suit must feel like! So dedicated to his cause is Jez, he took his Stormtrooper suit with him to Afghanistan in 2020 and ran a marathon there. That's Jez celebrating in the photo below.

Honorary Membership is only awarded to people who have gone the extra mile to support and assist the Association in meeting its aims and benefitting others. Jez now becomes only the third person to receive such recognition since the Association formed in 2013, behind the first recipient, Jan Westhoeve, and Chris Perkins. For everything that Jez Allinson did for us during the exceptional circumstances we all found ourselves in during COVID, this award is fully deserved. We should be very proud to have such a man joining our ranks.

Jez now leaves 33 Squadron to begin a posting as Officer Commanding Centre of Air Safety Training (CoAST) at the Defence Academy. I hope you will all join me in wishing him the best of luck and we look forward to having him join us at one of our functions or Battlefield Tours in the future, resplendent in his new Association polo shirt!



Dave Stewart

## LOYALTY

