



Centenary Edition of the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association Newsletter

Letter from the Squadron



Since the last letter to the Association, 208(R) Squadron has been, as always, extremely busy. I manhandled the reins of the RAF's finest Sqn from Wg Cdr Gatenby and took command on 1 May 2015 and was quickly into the thick of the action with the graduation of TW 81 occurring on the same day. Unfortunately, the spectre of closure once again became more real, as the same week as taking command, the Sqn's flying task and consequently flying hours were cut back with an imposed training horizon of 31 Mar 16. The hours reduction from 3500 to 2200 came a few days later which had the consequent longer term knock-on effect of reducing the number of engineers from 78 to 43.

Not to be deterred, the Sqn set about the task and, over the course of the year, have graduated 13 pilots to Frontline

(Continued on back page)

Naval 8 – 208 Rumblings



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The President's Foreword

It is with great sadness that I inform you that 208(R) Squadron is scheduled for closure this year; news that we have been expecting for some time.

208(R) Squadron has survived much longer than many other illustrious squadrons, but with the move to the Hawk T2 and a much reduced front line it was inevitable that the Squadron was living on borrowed time. The Squadron will formally close by 1 July 2016, although flying has already ceased, with the final course finishing at the end of April. OC 208(R)'s last letter from the Squadron signs off with the details of the final days of the Squadron.

However, the Squadron is not going quietly with two major celebrations to mark the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the Squadron on 26th October 1916. Firstly, a large number of serving and past members gathered at RAF Valley on 1st April for an open day, flying display and graduation followed by a dining-in night. The second event is the Association Centenary Reunion Dinner that will be held at the RAF Club on Saturday 22 October 2016. We are planning to mark our 100th year of continuous service (less 3 years in the early 70s), with speakers covering specific events throughout the Squadron's history; it promises to be lively, informative - and not too long!

To mark the Centenary, Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork has written a superlative account of the history of Naval Eight/208 Squadron; he launched his book, *'Forever Vigilant'* at the open day at RAF Valley and it is now available from the publishers. Graham has accomplished this mammoth task in record time, helped by the flexibility of his publisher and prompt proof-reading by Committee members. As many of you know, Graham is the author of many books on military history and in particular on Royal Air Force related subjects; he has excelled in the writing of this book. The Committee must apologise for persuading him to take on this task which he accepted with his usual enthusiasm not appreciating (perhaps !) that it would take so much of his time over the past year. Your President and the Committee are forever grateful! *'Forever Vigilant'* is a fitting commemoration of the 100 years of Naval Eight/208, a squadron that the author has been more closely involved with than most.

In closing, it is worth noting that although the Squadron will fold, the Association will continue as strongly as ever. With over 400 members I look forward to future events where we can celebrate the very special memories of a very special squadron. I hope to see as many of you as possible at the RAF Club in October - it has been a fine 100 years!

Chairman's Chunter

I am sure that all Association Members will share the dismay with which the Committee learned that 208(R) Squadron is to disband this year. However, we can look back with great pride on 100 glorious years. The Squadron went out in style, with a superb open day, graduation, flying display and dining-in night at RAF Valley on 1st April. I was unable to attend, but I understand that I missed a great day. The laying-up of the Squadron Standard in St Clement Danes, the RAF Church in the Strand, on Sunday 22nd May was a solemn but very moving occasion.

As the President has already assured you, although the Squadron may be passing into history, the Association is going from strength to strength. For that we have to thank our Committee and Chapter representatives, who are very active - and proactive - on your behalf. I must give particular credit to our Membership Secretary, Air Cdre Ben Laite, who has done a sterling job of locating those members with whom we had lost contact. Many Association Members now receive the Newsletter in electronic form, which helps us to keep down the costs of producing and distributing the printed version. The hard-copy newsletter will continue to be sent, free of charge, to those who prefer the traditional format. However, the cost of doing so is considerable, so I make my perennial plea for donations, to ensure that the Association's finances remain sound.

The Centenary Dinner in the RAF Club on Saturday 22 October 2016 promises to be a splendid occasion this year, so do please make the effort to attend, even if you have a long way to travel. It will be worth it!

Wg Cdr Donald Perrens DSO

The following article is a shortened extract from the biography of Donald Perrens, written by Dennis Sawden, who kindly gave permission for it to be reproduced in the Association Newsletter. The photo (below) depicts Donald (on the right) with his Spitfire.



In October 1944 Donald Perrens was posted to join No 208 Squadron as a Sqn Ldr and flt cdr. The CO of the Sqn was Lt Col Blaauw of the South African Air Force. By this time, the Allied armies had advanced well up the leg of Italy and the Sqn was based at Peretola, on the northern outskirts of Florence, just to the south of the Apennine Mountains. He was by then one of the most experienced Army Co-op pilots in the wing and he was asked to organise a special artillery ranging mission. The target was to be a German ammunition dump about one mile SW of Bologna. Because the gun was sited in the mountains, it was essential that Donald should fly at a high enough altitude to maintain line-of-sight VHF radio contact with the gun battery - and also to avoid fire from four German flak positions known to be sited around the ammunition dump. Donald was told that the gun director would tell him via RT when the big gun was fired and that the shell's time of flight for the 15 miles would be 70 seconds. It was

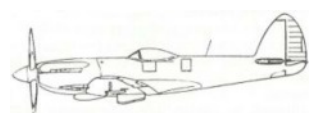
decided that Donald and his No 2 would fly at 8000 feet, to enable him to keep clear of the flak, but also so that he could observe the fall of shot, and then give corrections to the gun director.

On 22 January, the day dawned fine and clear, providing perfect conditions for the vital task. Donald had Fg Off "Digger" Alexander, an Australian, as his No 2. They made contact with the Sector Controller (callsign "Cooler") and climbed quickly, crossing the mountains at 10,000 feet, and map read their way to the Bologna area, arriving 15 minutes after take-off. Donald quickly identified the German ammunition dump target from the photos and noted that there was no movement at the site, although the tracks of vehicles could be seen in the snow. He identified as well the German 88 mm flak battery just to the north of the dump. Having made contact with the gun director, they were ready to start and the first shot was fired: Donald knew that spotting the first fall of shot was critical and the 70 seconds wait seemed interminable, but he saw the first shell strike. By now the Germans had twigged what the two Spitfires above them were doing and the flak batteries opened fire at Donald and his No 2. The flak became so intense that Donald and Alexander were forced to climb higher and by the time Donald called the Gun Director to tell him "Target Registered", they were holding at 12,000 feet. After 12 rounds had been fired, Donald reported two direct hits, a fire and destruction of the target.

Having completed the aim of the mission, Donald could have returned to base, but he called the Gun Director and asked if he was prepared to register onto the flak batteries? This was agreed and the second registration began, but, after observing the first two shots on the new target, the engine of Donald's Spitfire stopped suddenly. He was not aware that he had been hit by flak: there seemed to be no sign of fire in the Spitfire and the aircraft controls were responding normally, but on checking the fuel gauges, he realised that he was out of fuel. Looking down, he saw that he was over the outskirts of Bologna: to bail out would mean prisoner-of-war camp for him, at least, so as he had altitude on his side, he decided to try and glide back over allied lines, some 12 miles away. The problem for Donald was that the friendly lines were in the northern foothills of the Apennines, at a height of 700 to 1700 feet, with some parts a lot higher, so it would be touch-and-go whether he could glide that far. He knew too that he was committing himself to a forced landing in rocky terrain, unless he was exceptionally lucky. He tried to jettison his hood, but it would not release. After a further struggle, it came away, but by now he was down to 2000 feet and he could not see any sign of the front line. On reaching 1000 feet, and almost giving up hope, he saw a road ahead of him and that it was clear of snow: this could only mean that it was in Allied hands, as no roads on the German side would be as clear. As the Spitfire came down to a few hundred feet, Donald saw that he was heading for a farmhouse, so he pulled up slightly over the top of it and ahead appeared a large snow-covered field - but he does not remember anything of what happened next.

In fact, he had over-flown the Allied lines by about 3 miles and, by an amazing coincidence, he had crash-landed just outside Loiano, less than a mile from where the big gun was sited. It was their gunners who rescued him unconscious from the wrecked Spitfire. The aircraft had sustained flak damage in numerous places - in both the mainplane and the fuel tanks, so he had been leaking fuel that way. Donald was handed over to a medical unit of the United States Army and moved to a US Evacuation Hospital at Pietramala, 5 miles south of Loiano. He was unconscious for more than 24 hours. He was told later that he had got the Spitfire down safely but, towards the end of the wheels up landing run, hidden by the snow, was a large pile of stones which the aircraft had hit at some speed. He sustained compression fractures of the spine involving the sixth and seventh vertebrae (the so-called "Hurricane" fracture), but fortunately, the injury had not involved the spinal cord. He also had a fractured skull and multiple lacerations.

Remarkably, Donald was fit enough to return to No 208 Sqn in early April 1945 and he soon had his hand in again. The award of the DSO was promulgated in the London Gazette on 6 April 1945, which recorded that: *"his coolness and courage in the face of concentrated enemy fire set a fine example."*



Guest of Honour 2015

The guest of honour at the 2015 reunion dinner was Gp Capt Jamie Hunter. His presentation brought the series of "Bosses' Briefings" up to date, with a narrative of the later years of the Hawk era. Commendably, he spoke without a script, but has kindly provided the following summary of the topics covered in his presentation.

Sirs, ladies and gentlemen, good evening. It gives me great pleasure to talk to you this evening about the 'final' chapter of the Hawk on 208 Sqn, following on from Neil Meadows' talk to you last year covering his own command from 2001-2003. Well, I must confess to being tremendously grateful for the condition that Neil left the Sqn in before his own departure. The Sqn was clearly configured for a much higher output than was required during my tenure, with ops room and support staff all still in place as he had left them some five years earlier. And even the 208 history and RAF leadership boards were still on display and looking sharp throughout the building. Thank you Neil!

In the years between Neil's and my own command, with Nige Clifford and Garry Kelly at the helm, there had been a fairly constant reduction in the required output. The biggest change to the Sqn had been through the introduction of the Indian Advanced Flying Training task, whereby some 63 Indian students had successfully graduated from 208 Sqn by the end of the venture. The Indian Air Force Chief had also taken the opportunity to visit the Sqn before the last course was complete – this took place just shortly before my own arrival in 2008.

So I was fortunate indeed to inherit a Sqn in really good shape from Sqn Ldr Simmons, who had been holding the reins for a couple of months after the departure of Gary Kelly. But not many months had passed before I could see storm clouds gathering on the North Welsh horizon, and from two directions. At the strategic level, the RAF was already looking ahead to the 2010 Strategic Security and Defence Review. Furthermore, the £38Bn hole in the Defence Budget had become the focus of attention with resultant pressure on the Front Line. Indeed, in 2009 the decision was made to close the Harrier Force the following year, naturally very disappointing to numerous talented students who had recently graduated from the Sqn. At the tactical level, there were also pressures increasing within 4 FTS itself. Much of this was due to the closure of the South Wales weapons detachment at St Athan, which elongated the weapons phase of the Tactical Weapons Course on 19 Sqn significantly. As a result, 19 Sqn was having great difficulty keeping students 'on the line' with the resultant impact that their own student refresher burden was increasing, as students now had to hold for significant periods between 208 Sqn and their own. On 208, we had also started to note an increase in student failure rate, particularly in the earlier stages of the course. So with all things considered, action became necessary.

My first task was to introduce what was known as 'Role Confirmation' at RAF Linton on Ouse, the Basic Flying Training station that fed students into 208 Sqn. This required my assessment of every student due to graduate from Linton to double check if they were indeed suitable to come to Valley. Understandably, this was not a popular measure, as several students who thought that they had finished their course were not able to progress in their chosen path. It did, however, ensure that 208's entry standards were maintained. My second task was to ensure that standards throughout the AFT Course were rigorously adhered to, in order to give students the very best chance once they graduated onto 19 Sqn and Tactical Weapons Training. This may have meant that students received potentially less benefit of the doubt on 208 when they encountered difficulties, but it was necessary at the time. Lastly, 208 Sqn took on a much greater burden of the supervisory duties around the Station, thus relieving 19 Sqn instructors to focus

on their own flying duties. Happily, the impact of all the above was successful; 19 Sqn was able to regain its output and the pool of holding students gradually reduced to almost zero. The down-side was that for around a year, the suspension rate on 208 Sqn was almost 25%. Most disappointingly, a 'bloody' axe mysteriously appeared beside my picture in the Sqn Photo Album I can't imagine why!

As well as the focus on flying standards, I was also very keen to maintain the Sqn's more 'enjoyable' activities such as 'Force Development' and overseas detachments with our wonderful and versatile aircraft. Moreover, I planned to maintain the Sqn as the 'owner' of the singleton Hawk display. I felt particularly well prepared for supervision of this latter activity due to my own experiences when preparing for the Hawk display, when I was first posted to Advanced Flying Training back in 1990. I vividly



Below: Graduation 9-Ship - August 2008.



recall the development of my own display, with which I planned to win the Sqn aerobatics competition and therefore display the aircraft for the remainder of the year. The competition was fierce, so in an attempt to keep my own display as punchy as possible, I elected to use some flap at certain points to tighten particular manoeuvres. Unfortunately, on one practice I became distracted and forgot to take the flap, with the consequence of significantly blowing through my base height of 1000 ft by several 'hundreds' of feet. This was a very sobering experience that taught me many valuable lessons that have remained with me for my whole flying career, including in my current role as Commandant of the Central Flying School, where one of my responsibilities is as the accountable risk holder for the Red Arrows. Suffice to say, I was not successful in the eventual fly-off, although I'm confident that others for whom I have had responsibility since that day may have benefited in some way.

So back on 208 Sqn for my two years in command, we did not actually have the display competitors flying aeros down to low level, but a very quick competition was flown at higher altitude, and the selection made from just the one sortie. Flt Lts Matt Barker and Tom Saunders were the two winners and I must say that both of their displays were absolutely superb, being innovative, dynamic and exciting (and not a hint of flap over the top of their loops in sight!). The two pilots also designed their own colour schemes for their aircraft; RAF Valley paint shops always looked forward to the challenge of realising the pilots' dreams and they always accomplished magical feats.



Above: The 2009 Hawk Display Colour Scheme, commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the RAF Benevolent Fund.

I was also most grateful for the opportunity to deploy the Sqn abroad on several occasions, the most notable of which was to Tours Air Base in the Loire Valley. This is where the French Air Force conducts its own advanced jet training on the Alpha Jet. The event became a regular Sqn exchange, with the French returning to RAF Valley to enjoy the challenges of flying around the valleys and mountains of north Wales. Invariably I would have to devote some hours to the numerous noise complaints once our French friends had departed, as it is probably fair to say that their idea of 250 feet, the minimum height permitted in our low flying system, was a 'little different' from our own. Nonetheless, all great for international relations and the benefits of deploying abroad can never be overstated, particularly for the less experienced 'Creamie' pilots on the staff.

Other trips abroad included visiting Tanagra Air Base in Greece and Batajnica Air Base in Serbia for their international air shows. The latter was particularly poignant as it was the first time that Serbia had hosted the event since the Kosovo Crisis of 1998. 208 Sqn pilots had to be careful, especially since some had not visited the country since that very time (without landing!) and the Air Base still bore the marks of the conflict as a reminder. Nonetheless, 208 Sqn pilots were made to feel truly welcome by our hosts, Serbia's Advanced Flying Training Sqn, enforcing the old mantra that fast jet pilots have plenty in common the world over. As the Sqn was fortunate to be reasonably well manned during my tenure, I was able to take the opportunity to take all the instructors abroad to Italy in 2008 to study 208 Sqn's support to the Italian Campaign (1943-45), including visits to Anzio, Monte Cassino and Rome. As always, such a trip was great for morale and the Sqn fully immersed itself into all aspects of Italian culture; quite how we all made it home I am not too sure....

Below: Wg Cdr Jamie Hunter hands over command to Sqn Ldr Al Dow (left) in August 2010.



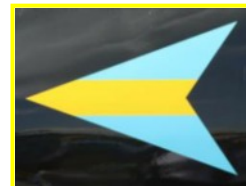
But as one would expect, it is not as much about the things that the Sqn did during my tenure as it was about the people who were on the Sqn at the time. The heart and soul of the Sqn was without doubt, in my view, the 'Creamie' fraternity. Around five new Creamies joined the Sqn each year and they never disappointed. Not only was the RAF able to capitalise on great talent at an early stage in their training, but it also proved to be a superb springboard for their careers after their short tours on the Sqn. Most made it to the Typhoon, and two of the team are serving on the Red Arrows today and performing brilliantly. Not all the pilots graduating from AFT were so fortunate though; in 2010 we were required to send the first two pilots direct from training to be posted to the Reaper, the RAF's unmanned aircraft. Although a bitter pill to swallow at first, the two selectees cracked on with the task and were ultimately most successful. One even came back from the USA with an American

bride! But of course, not all memories are good ones. In 2012, the news of a Tornado mid air collision in Scotland hit the Sqn hard as it became apparent that one of the pilots involved was Flt Lt Adam Sanders, a former 208 Creamie, and another was a recent 208 student, Hywel Poole. They will both always stay in our thoughts - perhaps we can raise a glass to them later on this evening...

You will have heard over the last few years from the Sqn Commanders regarding their own issues of the day, and I will not repeat them here, suffice to say that the challenges on the Sqn, much like across the RAF, continue to evolve and a steady state of flux appears quite commonplace. 208 Sqn has been fortunate to have some superb continuity over the last five years. Pilots such as 'Skids' Harrison and Tom Sawle, and indeed the Sqn Adjutant, Kev Brown, have all played key roles in the Sqn's development as it has transitioned through providing Tactical Weapons training following the demise of 19 Sqn, increasing its International Defence Training task and adjusting to a variable output requirement. This has all been taken very much in the Sqn's stride, and doubtless the year ahead, with rumours abounding, will be no different. The very gathering we see here tonight of such a healthy core of Association and Sqn members alike demonstrates that despite uncertainty, the spirit of the Sqn remains truly indefatigable. This has always been the case and there is nothing to suggest otherwise for the future. I thank you for the invitation to speak to you this evening and wish the Sqn and Association every success as we move towards the glorious 100th Anniversary in 2016.

Jamie Hunter

OC 208 Sqn 2008 – 2010



The Final Graduation

Tactical Weapons Course 84, the final course to be trained by 208(R) Sqn, graduated in style on 1 April 2016. Fittingly, for a Squadron that began its life as an RNAS unit, the last graduates were both naval officers: Lieutenant Nicholas Baker and Lieutenant Adam Vines; the Reviewing Officer was Rear Admiral Keith Blount OBE, the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Aviation, Amphibious Capability & Carriers).

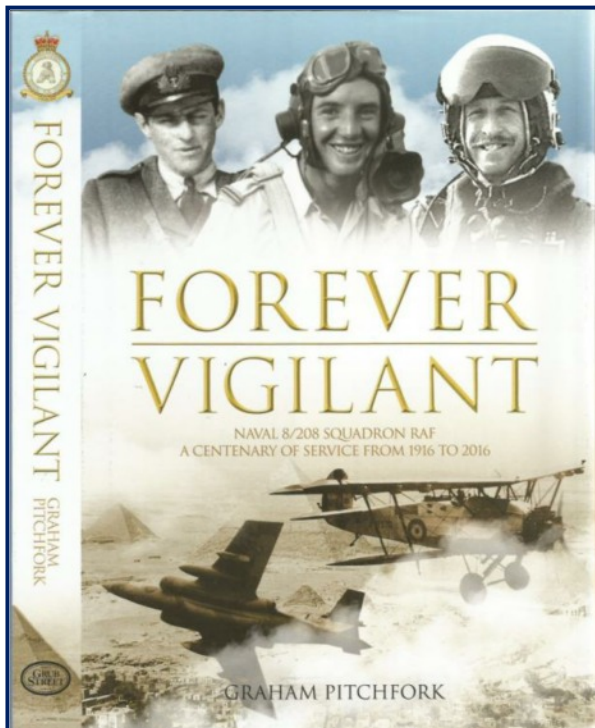


TW84 Graduation - 1 April 2016:

Standing: Gp Capt Brian Braid, OC RAF Valley and Wg Cdr C R Kidd, OC 208(R) Sqn.
Seated (L to R): Lt N Baker, RAdm K Blount, Lt A Vines.



Book Review - Forever Vigilant



In "Forever Vigilant," Graham Pitchfork has provided an exciting, factual history of No 8 Squadron RNAS, which formed in October 1916, then became No 208 Squadron RAF on 1 April 1918. Graham has clearly conducted a huge amount of research and consultation to be able to articulate such a detailed history covering every era of this distinguished Squadron's history. He has compiled this history from records and eye witness accounts in a powerful narrative style so that we are left in no doubt as to the spirit and achievements of the Squadron throughout that history, from 1916 right up until the present day. The records and personal accounts speak for themselves but Graham has harnessed and arranged them in such a way as to make the book a compelling read. At every stage of the Squadron's history, there is action and interest. In addition, the book is brilliantly illustrated with photos from every era. The colour photos from the Hawk era are particularly eye catching and the colour reproduction is extremely attractive. As well as the Spirit and achievements of the Squadron, another feature which Graham brings out with suitable emphasis is the recurring theme of the fine relationship on the Squadron between the Aviators and the Ground crew. While this feature was originally inspired and encouraged by the first Squadron Commander, Geoffrey Bromet, it has been a thread which continued to run through all the chapters of the Squadron. And that camaraderie is continued

today in the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association, a further inspiration of Geoffrey Bromet.

For all Military Aviation enthusiasts, "Forever Vigilant" will be a valuable addition to their library. For all ex-Members of No 208 Squadron and of No 208(R) Squadron, the book is an essential acquisition, a store of memories and recollections, and a source of great pride.

Ben Laite

OC 208 Squadron 1981 - 1984



Book Offer - Forever Vigilant

Naval 8/208 Squadron RAF - A Centenary of Service
by Graham Pitchfork

£20 to Association Members

(A discount of £5 on the cover price - free p&p to UK addresses)

Signed copies also available!

Use code '208FV' at checkout on www.grubstreet.co.uk or call 0207 924 3966 to place your order direct.



Above: Hunter, Meteor and Hawk (L to R). These 3 aircraft types represent almost half of the Sqn's 100 years of service.

Below: The wind-swept flight line at Valley on 1st April 2016.



Above
OC 208 and his team working hard
in the gusty conditions on 1st April 2016.

Below
100 Years Vigilant - the Centenary markings.



Right:

Not *The Ten Commandments*, but
Ten of the Sqn's
Commanders.

(From L to R: Ben Laite,
Phil Pinney, Eugene Moriarty,
Graham Pitchfork, Chris Kidd,
Brian "Boots" Mahaffey,
Neil Meadows, John Ford,
Gary Brough and
Paul "Skids" Harrison.)



Left:

OC 208, Wg Cdr Chris Kidd, shares a joke with Mrs Braid, the
Stn Cdr's wife.

Right:

"... and the Sphinx's inscrutable smile."
The Bromet Trophy took pride of place
on the top table during the dinner
in the Officers' Mess.



Below:

OC 208, Wg Cdr Chris Kidd, his pilots, support staff and
engineers assembled to commemorate the Sqn centenary.



Committee & Chapter News

NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE - CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIRMAN	D J Trembaczowski-Ryder.
HURRICANE/SPITFIRE	S E Jefford.
METEOR	J D Penrose.
HUNTER	I C Ross.
BUCCANEER	Sqn Ldr P Harrison, OC A Flt, 208 Sqn, RAF Valley, Holyhead, Anglesey, LL65 3NY.
HAWK	Flt Lt K Brown, Sqn Adm Off, 208 Sqn, RAF Valley, Holyhead, Anglesey, LL65 3NY.
GROUNDCREW	D Gill.
HON SEC	M W Brown.
HISTORIAN	Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork.
TREASURER	Paul Smith.
WEBMASTER	N Meadows.
EDITOR	M M Ward.
MEMBERSHIP SEC	Air Cdre Ben Laite. <i>(Information on potential new members and enquiries from existing members seeking contacts should be addressed to the Membership Secretary)</i>



COMMITTEE/CHAPTER NEWS:

Meteor. The Meteor Chapter held its annual gathering at the Coach and Horses in Soho on Wednesday, 4th May 2016. The gathering was well supported, although time takes its toll on the numbers fit and able to attend.

The first Old Comrades gathering of Naval 8/208 took place in 1919 in a pub in Soho. The Meteor Chapter continues that tradition on the first Wednesday of May each year, with an all ranks get together where old comrades can recall their time on the Squadron. If you wish to join us on Wednesday 3rd May 2017, please get in touch with Desmond Penrose. Desmond hopes that as many Old Comrades as possible will join him and relive a part of your time with Glorious 208.



In Memoriam

The Association records with regret the passing away of the following members:

Maurice Bishop	Spitfire	Eric Garland	Hurricane/Spitfire
Ken Lambden	Spitfire	Arnold Cutt	Hurricane
Mike Kemp	Meteor	Ron Wood	Meteor
Bob Hutt	Hunter	John Swain	Hunter
Terry Thornton	Hunter		

John Swain, a Hunter pilot on 208 Sqn in Aden until 1964, passed away in October 2015. He is shown here as the 1971 Chivenor display pilot on the Hunter (*right*).



Flt Lt Eric "Judy" Garland

MBE, MC & Bar (*left*), a former 208 Sqn flight commander on Spitfires in Italy, died on 17 January 2016, aged 95. He was shot down on 4 May 1944 but despite being wounded, he managed to escape from captivity at the fourth attempt. A former commando, he joined up with the partisans and fought with them until he finally got



back to US lines in early 1945. A full [obituary](#) was published in the Daily Telegraph.

Squadron Standard Laid Up

The Standard of 208 Sqn was laid up in St Clement Danes, the RAF Church in the Strand, on Sunday 22nd May 2016. OC 208 Sqn, Wg Cdr Chris Kidd, formally handed over the Sqn Standard to the Rev David Osborn, the resident chaplain at St Clements, for safe-keeping. The Standard Bearer was Flt Lt Kevin Brown, the Sqn Adjutant. AOC 22 (Training) Gp, AVM Andrew Turner, and the Stn Cdr of RAF Valley, Gp Capt Brian Braid, were also there to commemorate the passing of the Sqn into history. The Association was represented by our President, Air Marshal Sir Rob Wright, supported by a strong turnout of Association Members, including no fewer than six former OCs 208. Padre Osborn did his best to put a positive tone on what was a solemn and sad day for the Sqn, with a witty and well-researched sermon. The otherwise subdued atmosphere was lifted by the superb voices of the Choir. The spirits of those attending were further lightened by a splendid lunch at the RAF Club, where forty seven Association Members and guests sat down to reflect on the end of an era. After the meal, OC 208 returned the Bromet Trophy to our President, so the silver Sphinx will continue to grace the top table at our gatherings in October each year.



Right:
OC 208 Sqn receives the Standard from the Adjutant,
prior to handing it to the Padre for safe-keeping.

Catching up With Comrades



On 16th July 2015, our esteemed Meteor Chapter Representative, **Desmond Penrose**, was recognised by the University of Loughborough with the award of an honorary degree of Doctor of Technology (DTech), in recognition of his significant contribution to air safety and support of the University. Loughborough University records that:

"Royal Air Force test pilot and aircraft engineer Desmond Penrose has dedicated his life to the aviation industry. He achieved an Aeronautical Engineering degree from Loughborough in 1951 and was the first ever student to receive a Direct Entry Permanent Commission."

Congratulations, **Doctor** Penrose!

Left:
Desmond Penrose,
DTech

Right:
Doug Johns renews
his acquaintance
with the Meteor
(here in T7
"Queenie" at
Coventry)

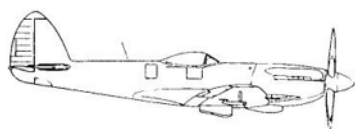


Doug Johns of the Meteor Chapter, was recently "found" again by our resourceful Membership Secretary, Ben Laite. Doug recalls:

"After leaving the Service, when Duncan Sandys decided rockets should replace pilots, I flew on the Vampire/Mosquito CAACU units at Langham, Norfolk and Exeter (1958 and '59). At Exeter, I lived in a Farmer's field in a caravan, just off the peri' track, walking across in the morning picking mushrooms and flying on the CAACU or instructing on the Flying Club. Some years later, returning from 5 years with Aden Airways, flying the dear old Dakota, I joined British Westpoint flying Daks (1965) and bought one of the first Strand Court Flats in Topsham, looking down river where I had a small sailing boat. With Westpoint about to go 'broke, I flew Britannias with British Eagle commuting from Topsham to Heathrow, but it proved too much, as I was passing lorries, thro' lights and over bridges - waking up on the other side."

Association Member **John Clark**, who served on 208 Sqn as Hunter Groundcrew, has generously placed his Jordan Commemorative Medal into the Association Collection. Thank you John!

Association Members will recall the short article in the 2015 newsletter, about the exploits of Plt Off **Ellis Knowlton**, a 208 Sqn Spitfire pilot in Italy during the closing stages of WWII. This prompted one of his comrades, **E A (Ted) Thompson**, to get in touch. Ted and Ellis shared operations between them in Italy in March/April 1945. They took it in turns to fly No 1 or No 2 on Tactical, Artillery and Photo-Reconnaissance sweeps (Tac/R, Arty/R & Photo/R), completing over 20 ops. During a recent visit to the Abbotsford Air Show, the largest annual air show in Canada, Ellis took the opportunity to try out the cockpit of a Spitfire for the first time in almost 70 years.



Right:
Ellis Knowlton
back in the Spitfire.



Membership News

The Association welcomes the following new members:

Jerry Pook	Hunter	Robin Scott	Hunter
R E Wholey	Hunter	Dave Ainge	Buccaneer
George Bowie	Buccaneer	Roger Carr	Buccaneer
Mike Byrne	Buccaneer	Tom King	Buccaneer
Gary Brough	Hawk	Ian Russell	Hawk

Members Lost Contact:

R A Burden	Hurricane	Don Dewhurst	Hunter
J Simcox	Hawk		

Members Found Again:

Douglas Johns	Meteor	Ron Anstead	Hunter
Jim Burford	Hunter	Pete Day	Hunter
Dick Catterall	Buccaneer	John Deane	Buccaneer
David Gaskin	Buccaneer	Martin Sidgreaves	Buccaneer
Peter Wright-Gardner	Buccaneer		

Current Membership:

Full (in contact)	369	Honorary	3
Lost contact	66	Associate	1
Total Full Members	435	Family	5



Ben Laite
Membership Secretary

Keeping in Touch

The Squadron Association is always striving to update its records of former members of 208 Squadron. If you know of anyone who served with the Squadron and is not in touch with the Association, please let us know. It would help if you would take a moment to enter the details below. We will do the rest.

I believe that the following person served with No. 208 Squadron in (approximate year)

at RAF: The Squadron was flying.....

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone: eMail:.....

Please forward to the Membership Secretary.

Naval 8/208 Association 2015 Dinner

A record 97 members and guests attended the Naval 8/208 Sqn Association Dinner at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, on Saturday 17th October 2015:

Mrs J Abell, Mr M Bradley, Mrs T Bradley, Flt Lt K Brown, Mr M W Brown, Mrs H Brown, Sqn Ldr J Buckle, Mrs C Buckle, Miss M Burgess, Mr C Bush, Mr C Buxton, Mrs Buxton, Cpl S Casey, Mr N Champness, Miss K Clegg, Mr S Colman, Mrs A Colman, Mr A W Cope, Flt Lt R Curran, Mr G Davies, Mrs M Davies, Mr D Drake, Flt Lt P Dudley, Mr H Field, Mrs J Field, Miss S Firth, Flt Lt D French, Mrs P Friar, Flt Lt R Frick, Mr G Goodman, Mrs S Goodman, Sqn Ldr B Goodwin, Mr K Griffin, Mrs S Griffin, Miss S Hosking, Mrs E Kidd, Ms L Hansen, Gp Capt J Hunter, Mr I Johnston, Mrs J Johnston, Fg Off M Jones, Mrs V Jones, Flt Lt P Kershaw, Mrs K Kershaw, Flt Lt T Le Lohe, Flt Lt G Kingman, Gp Capt N Meadows, Sqn Ldr P Harrison, Mrs T Harrison, Miss C Holgate, Lt Cdr R Jameson, Mrs S Jameson, Wg Cdr C Kidd, Air Cdre B C Laite, Mrs H Laite, Sgt C Loughran, Flt Lt M Newsome, Mr B Mahaffey, Mrs J Mahaffey, Gp Capt E Moriarty, Mr F J Nicoll, SAC R Northedge, Fg Off A O'Hare, Miss C O'Neill, Mr J D Penrose, Air Cdre G Pitchfork, Flt Lt J Rigg, Mr I Ross, Mrs J Ross, Flt Lt T Sawle, Mr P Sharp, Mrs D Sharp, Mr E Sharp, Mrs C Sharp, Mr K Smith, Mrs E Smith, Flt Lt N Staite, Mr D Stanley, Mrs J Stanley, ACM Sir Michael Stear, Mr J Sweetman, Mrs J Sweetman, Flt Lt C Tagg, Sqn Ldr J Taylor-Head, Mrs E Taylor-Head, Mr D Trembaczowski-Ryder, Mr M M Ward, Mrs L Ward, Sqn Ldr N Wesley, Mrs D Wesley, Flt Lt N Wharmby, Mrs M Wharmby, Mr K M Whiley, Mr J White, AM Sir Robert Wright, Lady Wright, Fg Off G Young.

24 members were unable to attend, but sent their best wishes:

J Abbott, K Allen, P W Armstrong, M Asher, J Babbington, J Broadbent, J Clark, C M Draper, J A Ford, J Frazer, G Green, M McGrogan, S Jefford, D Johns, L Phipps, B C Robinson, A G Smith, M Telford, E A Thompson, G E Townsend, P Pinney, D Perrens, T Thompson, K Trow.

Below:

The record turnout at the 2015 dinner included no fewer than eight Squadron Commanders.

From left to right: Bill Cope (1989-92), Ben Laite (1981-84), Neil Meadows (2001-03), Chris Kidd (Current OC 208), Brian "Boots" Mahaffey (1987-89), Graham Pitchfork (1979-81), Eugene Moriarty (2010-12) and Jamie Hunter (2008-10).



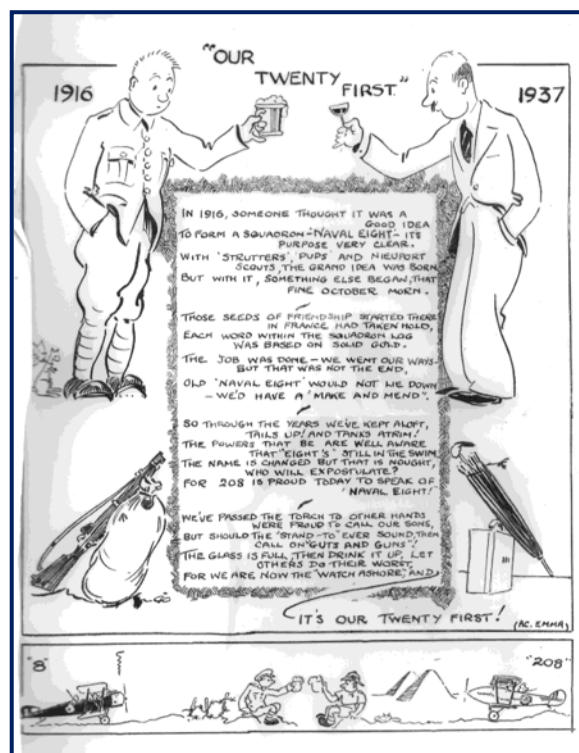
Above:
The Association President, Air Marshal Sir Rob Wright, presented the Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy to the 2015 winner, Flt Lt Paddy Kershaw.



Centenary Dinner - 22 October 2016



Left:
The Menu
from the
50th Anniversary
dinner in 1966.



Right:
The frontispiece
of the 1937
menu, on the
occasion of the
21st Anniversary
of the Squadron.

The 2016 Reunion Dinner will be held at the RAF Club at 6.00 for 7:00 pm on Saturday 22nd October 2016, where we will of course be continuing the celebrations of the Centenary Year of Naval 8/208. The ticket price has been held at £50 per head for the three course dinner, including port and coffee. Dress code, as usual, is lounge suits. We hope to see a strong turnout for this unique celebration, so please reserve your place via the [Association Website](#) or by using the booking form below.

Naval 8/208 Squadron Association – Centenary Reunion Dinner Booking

Please return slip to: M W Brown:

From (Name)Chapter/Period with 208.....

Full Address.....

Telephone: eMail:.....

I will / will* not be attending the Centenary Reunion Dinner on Saturday 22nd October 2016.

Please reserve places.

Names of guests:

Special dietary requirements (if any):

Payment: Reunion Dinner (£50.00 each) £.....

I also wish to make a donation to the Squadron Association Funds: £.....

I enclose a cheque/postal order for £.....

* Please delete as appropriate

Please make cheques payable to: 208 Squadron Association

Letter from the Squadron

(Continued from page 1)

OCUs, trained 6 international student pilots and graduated a total of 12 refresher pilots to 100 Squadron, 736 Naval Air Squadron and the Red Arrows. We flew over 2500 hours (despite the initial hours 'cap' of 2200) utilising only 10 aircraft to do so.

On the people front, it has mainly been outflow rather than influx. Prior to the mass exodus in April 2016 due to disbandment, we lost two aircrew to the draw of IV(R) Sqn, our sister sqn across the pan flying the Hawk T2. Flt Lts Bruce Poole and Simon Greenhalgh left from A and B Flt respectively before Sqn Ldr Buckle, OC B Flt, left for a job in Air Manning at RAF High Wycombe. Finally, Flt Lt Tom Sawle left in early 2016 to join the RN. But it wasn't all a downward vector, we trained a much needed additional QFI, Sqn Ldr James Taylor-Head, who arrived from 41(TES) Sqn to take command of B Flt. To make the most of this small team, we have reaped the rewards of a reinvigorated entertainments and Force Development programme. This resulted in 208(R) Sqn winning the RAF Valley CO's Cup for 2015, undertaking Force Development at the RAF Museum and Duxford ahead of the Association Dinner and finally, participating in a 380 mile cycle ride around the WW1 airfields where 208 Sqn grew up, finishing at Le Vert Galant. The Squadron also hosted a Swiss Air Force Detachment of PC21s in August and dined together on several occasions.

Despite the reduction in manpower and flying hours, we still managed to undertake several detachments, airshows and Overseas Training Flights. July saw the whole Squadron detach to RAF Lossiemouth for 10 days to conduct AFT flying for V152 course and TW flying for TW83. The flying was excellent and of course, so was the social! The airshow season was ably supported by 208(R) Squadron with aircraft and pilots attending several UK and overseas airshows throughout July and August. November saw a detachment to FAF Solenzara to conduct Basic Fighter Manoeuvre and Air Combat Manoeuvring Training for TW84. This was a hugely successful detachment where the Sqn flew over 90 hours in a mere 8 day period, more than had been flown in the previous month. Finally, to round the overseas training off, 2 Overseas Training Flights were conducted, one to Aalborg and the other to Emmen Airbase, Switzerland by way of a reciprocal visit to see our Swiss friends that we had hosted over the summer.

With disbandment now confirmed as no later than 1 July 16, our previously prudent planning to hold the 208(R) Squadron Centenary on 1 April had paid off and it was full steam ahead to make the day not only a fitting tribute to 100 years of flying operations, but also to ensure the day appropriately marked the end of 208(R) Sqn and the end of RAF Hawk T1 flying training. As part of the Centenary, 2 aircraft, XX188 and XX256, had their tails painted in the traditional 208(R) Sqn yellow and blue and had the Giza Sphinx added to pay homage to our history and provide a visual spectacle to commemorate our 100 years. These aircraft were photographed extensively as soon as they were rolled out of the paintshop and form the centrepiece for an article about the Centenary published in Combat Air magazine in May.

Many of you reading this will have enjoyed the 100th Anniversary and closing celebrations, the big 208(R) Squadron event of the last year which went so very well on 1 April. The Valley wind, as always featured heavily in the day's events, fortunately it was just in limits to allow the 6 aircraft flypast to go ahead, however it did put an end to the parade. It was great to see so many people on the Squadron and at the lunch, and great to have support from many of the Association such as Graham Pitchfork launching his *'Forever Vigilant'* Book, Colin Buxton providing presentations and of course Sir Rob providing excellent stewardship throughout. Of the day's events however, the dining-in night was simply superb. Sitting a grand total of 143 guests, the Officers' Mess was packed. The staff did an outstanding job with the service and food and the dinner provided a most fitting culmination to an excellent day. The event was but one part of the celebrations, shiny new 208(R) Squadron watches were produced along with Squadron beer, commemorative glassware, t-shirts, keyrings, badges, the list goes on and on. All of this would not have been possible without the hard work of Sqn Ldr 'Skids' Harrison and his Centenary team. They worked on the event for 8 months and produced a simply outstanding event, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. I would like to thank him and his team again for organising such a fitting and memorable event as well as thanking all the guests for coming to help celebrate with us here at RAF Valley.

With our final course now complete, the Sqn flew one final sortie on 13 April taking a 3 ship which included XX188 and XX256 around the traditional Hawk T1 and 208(R) Sqn stomping grounds of North Devon and Wales for one final time. I led it with the Stn Cdr, Gp Capt Braid in the backseat and having led the formation back to RAF Valley, I performed the final 208(R) Sqn landing, a poignant and admittedly, very sad moment.

With flying complete, all the QFIs have now moved into other jobs around the RAF ranging from 100 Sqn to RAF Linton on Ouse to desk jobs in Bristol. All the aircraft have been redistributed to the other Hawk T1 users, mainly 100 Squadron and 736 Naval Air Sqn although interestingly, they will still bear 208(R) Squadron markings for some time to come. The Laying-Up of the Sqn Standard at St Clement Danes on 22 May followed by Luncheon in the RAF Club was the final Squadron event. It was sad to see the standard finally lodged but great that so many people attended.

I look forward to seeing you all at the next Association Dinner.

Chris Kidd
OC 208 (R) Sqn

