

Squadron Leader Eric Sharp 1932 - 2025

Squadron Leader Eric Sharp, who died on 22 November 2025 at the age of 92, was born in Nottingham in December 1932, ending up at High Pavement Grammar School from 1943 until 1948. His mother died in 1940, in an accident at a "tank trap" on a Nottingham City road.

At the time his father, who had been conscripted into the National Fire Service, was very busy working 48-hour shifts with a 24-hour break, leaving him very little time to look after Eric, and two elder sisters. Consequently, he had to learn to sew and cook which stood him in good stead when he joined the RAF in 1951.

On leaving school Eric was determined to apply for a Cranwell cadetship. In 1950, however, having attended selection Boards at RAF Hornchurch (Central Medical Establishment) the Air Ministry rejected his application, but suggested he try the alternative route to flying by applying for a Short Service Commission (8-12 years) as Pilot/Nav. Consequently, he went to RAF Bedford in March 1951 for enlistment, uniform and "haircut" before proceeding to RAF Driffield to awaiting Initial Training. Driffield was an Advanced Flying Training School (AFTS) flying the Meteor - with a disastrous death rate when practising single engine flying; every morning whilst there, they were awakened by the sound of rifle fire from the Station Parade Ground where funeral drill was practised. By mid-April he left for RAF Jurby on the Isle of Man for initial training. The instructors were all heavily decorated with DFCs and usually accompanied by a bar. Being a long-distance runner from school he came to the attention of the sqn CO Sqn Ldr Ivor Broome (later Air Cdre CMDT CFS) who apart from being DSO DFC was a true gentleman.

At the end of the course volunteers were sought to go to Southern Rhodesia for flying training. Having been lucky enough to be awarded a 10 day return trip to Nairobi in a York whilst an ATC Corporal, as an 'assistant' Air Quarter Master he had fallen in love with Africa and persuaded most of his course to volunteer.

No 5 Flying Training School (FTS) at RAF Thomhill was brilliant, despite still having Tiger Moths, and being in the "bundu" with no women; nevertheless, they survived.

AFTS RAF Full Sutton (Meteors) was followed by OCU at RAF Stradishall and then to:

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| 1953 | No 245 (F) Sqn at Horsham St. Faith. |
| 1955 | CFS RAF South Cerney then Little Rissington before posting to 5 FTS Oakington as a Vampire Instructor - achieved A2 cat 1956. |
| 1958 | Hunter OCU RAF Chivenor 45 Cse. |
| 1958 | No 2 Sqn RAF Jever, as OC "B" Flt flying the Swift FR5 then Hunter Mk10. |
| 1961 | RAF Tech Coll, Henlow Flt Cdr "B" Sqn. |

- 1964 No 208 Sqn RAF Muharraq on the Hunter as Flt Cdr and promoted to Sqn Ldr in Jul 1965.
- 1966 Sqn Ldr Fighter Tactics at HQ Fighter Command.
- 1968 OC No 234 Sqn Chivenor.
- 1971 Central Trials and Tactics Organisation RAF High Wycombe as Sqn Ldr Tactics (F) again!
- 1973 He retired from the RAF.

Eric was well respected and a regular attendee at the Annual No 234 Sqn Reunion up until a couple of years ago.



No 45 Hunter Conversion Course at RAF Chivenor in 1958