

NAVAL EIGHT 208 NEWS 2014



The Annual Newsletter of the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association

Letter from the Squadron

Last time I was asked to write a letter to the Association, 208 Sqn was fresh from its reprieve. During the last twelve months we have been busy justifying that reprieve by rebuilding the Sqn's supply of aircraft and instructors, while continuing to turn out newly trained fast jet pilots. The Sqn has successfully delivered one UK and two RSAF students to the Typhoon OCU at Coningsby. We are currently training a course of four Kuwaiti Air Force students who, on completion of their time on 208, are due to return home for conversion to the F-18. 208 Sqn has also been able to support IV Sqn and the Hawk TMk2 by continuing to train UK students to OCU entry standard. In fact, in the last twelve months 208 Sqn has graduated four Ab Initio OCU students, two Joint Strike Fighter pilots, six QFIs, two foreign exchange familiarisation students and fifteen Hawk Refreshers. Incredibly, all of this training has been possible with a fleet of just twelve aircraft and fifteen instructors. In the same period, IV Sqn have graduated fourteen students from a unit with a fleet of twenty eight brand new aircraft and forty instructors. Although we have the advantage of operating a tried and tested aircraft we are justifiably proud of our achievement.

During the rebuilding process 208 Sqn was allocated a yearly flying limit of 2500 hours and although we were granted a 70 hour extension there was still a need to introduce some impromptu adventure training to ensure we didn't overfly the limit (actually, we did, but no-one seems to mind....). All in all,



over the last year we have completed 2583 hours over a roughly equal number of sorties. Fortunately our yearly hours allocation is due to increase to 3500 hours during this financial year and beyond. As part of the rebuilding process we have also welcomed four new members of staff consisting of three previous 208 Sqn instructors and one retired Air Cdre or Flt Lt 'Big Wham' as he is now known. Sqn Ldr Dan Arlett (*pictured left*) arrived from a ground tour at Boscombe Down, although he seemed to spend much of his time flying Hunters and grass landing Jet Provosts. Flt Lt Rich Frick has also joined us from a PC-7 tour in Brunei and Flt Lt Mostyn Payne has returned to the light after flying the C-17 for 2 Gp. All being well

the Sqn should reach a full complement of nineteen QFIs over the next six months.

In parallel with the gradual increase in staff levels, the Babcock engineering team at Valley have been working hard to ensure excellent serviceability from our limited fleet. It isn't uncommon to find ten aircraft on the line at the start of the flying day. In addition to maintaining an excellent level of serviceability the engineers have also been hard at work starting the Major Servicing programme, with the first aircraft recently delivered to the Sqn with the potential for another twelve years of service life. Over the next twelve months, this aircraft will be joined by another fourteen 'new' aircraft as the 208 fleet grows to twenty.

In my last letter to the Association I informed you about several of the Sqn's staff who had been selected for foreign exchange postings and as you can see from the photos, they are generally coping well with the hardships of life in North America flying the latest fast jets. In fact Lt Rob Hunt did so well during his USN Hawk training that he has been retained as a creamie instructor at NAS Meridian while Flt Lt Will Macdonald (*pictured right*) has recently flown his first solo on the Harrier AV8-B.



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Naval 8 – 208 Rumbings



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208

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The President's Foreword

It gave me great pleasure last October to welcome the new CO, Wing Commander Nick Gatenby, to the Annual Dinner at the RAF Club and to see the Squadron (and the Association) in such good form and in such good numbers. We thank you all for that commitment and spirit that has sustained 208 throughout its history. I am sure that our annual get togethers and our reflections on our history through the excellent tales of 'Life on 208' reinforce that continuity.

Of course we missed the latest Chapter in our story when Monty Christy had to pull out at the last minute. I shall not forget the look on the Chairman's face when, about ten minutes before the dinner, he received the e-mail apologising for the no show, but the assembled stalwarts more than made up for the lack of a speaker by filling the gap with some impromptu offerings!

Reflecting on the many changes to the Armed Forces during recent times we should be proud that our nameplate still survives and long may that continue in the Squadron's extended training role. Quality lasts.

Finally we look forward to normal service being restored on Saturday 18th October 2014 at the RAF Club. We are assured that Group Captain Neil Meadows will turn up to talk about life and times on 208 Squadron during the Hawk era and we will hear the latest update from the CO on how they continue to operate an aeroplane that has served the Squadron so well. In any event have your banter ready, and I look forward to meeting you all again.

Chairman's Chunter

I would like thank Gp Capt Tim Webb for the fantastic job he has done in creating and maintaining the Association website over the last few years. Tim has asked to stand down (although he will remain as the Hunter Chapter representative) and we are on the lookout for a suitable replacement and willing volunteer. If you are interested please get in contact with me. Wg Cdr Nick Gatenby stood up for the first time to deliver his state of the squadron address at the reunion dinner last year and was ably supported by a large and vocal contingent from the Squadron. We look forward to his presentation this year, especially how the steady influx of Saudi students is coping with the cold, wet and windy weather in Wales!

You will have not failed to notice that we always include an extract from the guest speaker's presentation in the Newsletter, but as the President has pointed out Monty Christy was unable to attend last year and thus we have a change in content. You will see a couple of anecdotal pieces that help to describe life on 208 Squadron in different times, which I hope you will enjoy. We are always in need of articles, short anecdotes, memorabilia or pictures so if you have anything please send your entry to Malcolm Ward. Likewise we always welcome contributions to the Association website: www.naval8-208-association.com. Please contact Tim Webb (for the moment) with any contributions you may have, especially any new photos and written pieces that will fill the gaps in a particular era.

DONATIONS – we are always very grateful for the donations we receive from members, as these help to pay for the newsletter and postage, in particular. The Association has very few other costs and we plan to keep it that way. The general financial situation of the Association is sound, with a modest balance sheet sufficient for our immediate needs, but as always it would be comforting to have a small buffer to ensure that we can fund the cost of future printing of the Newsletter. However, we will only introduce membership subscriptions as a last resort, and we will keep the situation under constant review; I will inform the membership if we ever need to make any changes. In the meantime, please keep the donations rolling in!

Letter from the Squadron

(Continued from page 1)



Unfortunately, there was no Hawk display during 2013 and this will remain the case for 2014 due to the limited number of staff on the Sqn, but hopefully we may gain permission for a display during the 2015 season. Despite the lack of a display there were still plenty of opportunities to take jets away from Valley, with the creamie instructors regularly seen departing the MATZ on a Friday afternoon for some far flung holiday destination. Highlights of the 2013 season were Malta, Silac in Slovakia and the Phantom Phlyout at Wittmund in Germany. The Sqn has also detached to Aalborg in Denmark for staff training and Lecce in southern Italy for student close formation training. Along with all of this we are currently planning a Brandy Sours detachment to Cyprus for 2 weeks during July with some ACT thrown in for good measure.

With 2014 being the centenary of the start of the First World War, we are planning to apply a commemorative paint scheme to one of our aircraft which is due out of its major service in August. The paint scheme is based upon the colourings of the Shuttleworth Collection's ex 208 Sqn Bristol Fighter and will hopefully have the name Geoffrey Bromet painted on the side. If the Shuttleworth Collection are agreeable, we hope to briefly fly in formation with the Bristol Fighter to produce some memorable photos. This year also marks the 40th Anniversary of the Hawk TMk1 and the accomplishment of 1.1 million flying hours for this hard-working jet. In order to mark this occasion, we are planning to conduct a series of adventure training days with the intention of climbing and descending a total of 1.1 million feet within the Snowdonia Mountain Range over the course of the summer.



As you can see, the last 12 months has been crammed with activity on 208 Sqn and if our plans come to fruition, I should have plenty more to tell you about at the annual Dinner in October.

All the best until then.



Nick Gatenby
OC 208 Sqn

Birdstrike

Terry Heyes recounts an event that graphically demonstrated the resilience of the *Buccaneer* and its crews.



'Twas a bleak winter's day, 12th January 1981, and we'd been tasked on Exercise Mallet Blow. Our 'Cab' was the trusty XV352 - an excellent beast that had seen me through several 'notable' missions. John Plumb and I were No. 2 of a pair and were running in towards the coast near Amble to carry out a SAP, I seem to recall that the target was somewhere on the Otterburn range. We were doing 500 knots at 250 feet (er, yes Boss, I know that sounds a bit high for me, but that's what my copy of the report says!) I'd just started to ease up to get a bit of height to cross the coast when we went through a huge flock of seagulls. I only saw them at the last second and had no time to avoid them. Almost immediately there was a rapid series of loud bangs accompanied by much dust, debris, vibration and the loudest noise I had ever heard in my life. The noise was not John shouting out what an idiot he thought I was but, in fact, the sound of the heavens blowing directly past my ears at extremely high speed. I started to slow the Cab down and gain some more height. It was impossible to hear anything else and worryingly, at first, I couldn't get a response from John.

I put out a blind call to our lead ship to say what had happened and started to turn south towards Leeming. (Why Leeming and not Leuchars I cannot recall, but they were roughly equidistant and I suppose, psychologically, south was 'downhill!') I was aware of a large, gaping hole in the canopy just above my head and of the ejection seat top handle hanging loose and flapping about my right shoulder (I think that scared me more than all the rest of it put together!). I was not to know at the time, but it turned out that one of the birds had smashed through the canopy just above my head; it had then ricocheted off the blast screen and clouted John on the top of his helmet. The bird's remains took their final route to glory by smashing another hole through the canopy and exited above John's head!



Poor old John had taken quite a nasty knock and at first he couldn't see much because his vision was obscured by blood, guts and feathers. In addition, all his maps had got sucked out of the hole in the canopy above his head!

We got the speed right back to around 200 knots, whereupon finally we could just about manage to speak above the noise of the slipstream, and started to take stock. The ADD wasn't working anymore and there were several holes visible all over the airframe. They looked like pictures of classic World War 2 flak damage and there was quite a lot of it, with several holes in particular punched around the starboard engine intake. Looking around the cockpit all seemed well except I could see significant differences between the engine indications. This posed the time honoured twin engine dilemma - which one's the good'un? Being a bear of not too large a brain and who'd just had a very nasty surprise, I was blown if I knew! Logic said that the visible damage pointed to the starboard side being the poorly one and to shut it down; however, a few years of single engine flying teaches you that if the engine is sick but still running, don't mess with it. Set a reasonable power setting and leave well alone. Besides, doing nothing meant not having to make a decision - wonderful stuff when you have enough other things on your plate to worry about. After a brief, shouted chat with John he concurred so we left the Rolls Royce brothers to look after themselves.



By this point we were getting close to Newcastle and John "suggested" it would be a good idea to throw the thing on the ground there. Excellent idea Plumbo! The problem was getting the rest of the world to understand our intentions because not many people could comprehend our noisy, highly garbled RT transmissions. We could vaguely hear them trying to give us steers towards Leeming but we were now intent on securing a pint or two of Newcastle Brown ale! John was giving me excellent info' from the boot, running checklists and giving me directions, but heaven knows how because I believe all his 'gear' had gone out of the roof along with his maps. Perhaps he just couldn't resist the habit of always telling me what to do - I always said it was the nearest I have felt to being married to another bloke!

So finally, there we were - wheels and flaps down, 500 or 600 feet straight in to land, no ADD but the speed was about right and the thing was flying the right way up - what could go wrong? Well, at that point some kindly soul in a DC9/BAC111 or other suchlike contraption decided it was a good idea to line up and take off from the other end of the runway, that's what could go wrong! What else can you do? We put our faith in Mr. Rolls' and Mr. Royce's offspring and very gingerly overshot, made a gentle, low level orbit and managed to get it down second time round. At least, by that time Newcastle ATC definitely knew what our intentions were!

Having got clear of the runway we found somewhere quiet to shut the Cab down and have a look at the poor thing. As the starboard engine cowling was very badly damaged we had a good look down the intake at the engine. Actually, it looked pretty good - as indeed it should have done because it was in perfect, undamaged condition. OK then, what about the port side? The port cowling and intake didn't have a scratch - but I've seen Heinz spaghetti in better condition than that engine. A bird or two had gone straight through and wrecked most of the compressor assembly en route! Moral in the story? If in a twin and in doubt, never shut one down - something the poor British Midland guys did and sadly came to regret at Kegworth some years later!



I remember we walked in through the terminal in our sweaty flying gear, g-suits, etc, and saw all the holiday makers gazing at us. We made some comments about "Don't worry, it's much smoother down in Marbella", but I don't know whether it reassured them or not! I do know that the 'powers that be' got us back home the same day, but the 'ginger beers' who went up there took several weeks to fix the Cab! Perhaps it's because they got all our Newcastle Brown! They gave us a 'Good Show' but I have to confess that to me most of the event passed in a blur of noise and confusion. Fortunately, I was crewed with one of the finest navigators on the Buccaneer force, something for which I will be forever grateful.



Terry Heyes
208 Sqn 1980 - 1983

(Editor's note: The photographs accompanying this article do not depict the aftermath of Terry Heyes' and John Plumb's birdstrike and diversion to Newcastle, but a later event in Norway. Curiously, the cab, XV352, was the same one.)

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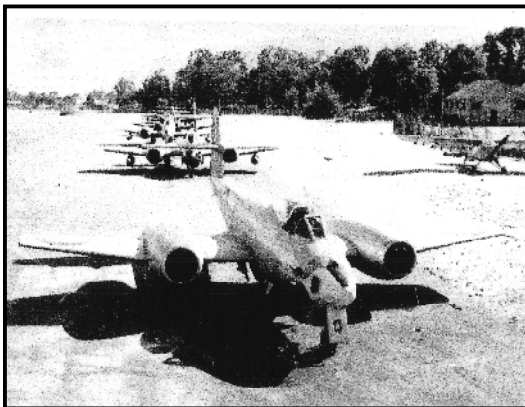
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That Bloody Corporal

I am an ex Trenchard Brat. When I first went to RAF Halton for the final selection board I told them I wanted to be an Armament Fitter. I was most emphatic about that. So it was that I found myself on 3 Apprentice Wing RAF Halton on 9th September 1952 at the tender age of 15 years and 9 months with a lot of other young lads who were to be collectively known as the 72nd Entry. Three years later I passed out at Halton as a Junior Technician, and was posted to the Aircraft Servicing Flight (ASF), RAF Nicosia, Cyprus in September 1955. Early in January 1956 No 26 Armament Practice Camp (26 APC) Unit (operating Meteor Mk 8 target towing aircraft together with a couple of T7 Vampires) were posted en bloc to RAF Takali, Malta. They required an armament fitter, so I was posted onto 26 APC, later to be renamed APC (Middle East), and found myself at Takali, which was to be our base while we travelled around the Middle East airfields towing glider and banner targets for the Fighter Squadrons to carry out their annual air to air firing exercises. Towards the end of 1956 APC(ME) was disbanded and I was cross-posted to 208 Squadron as the NCO i/c Armament Section (I was a Corporal by then), who were also at RAF Takali operating Meteor Mk9 Photo Reconnaissance aircraft.



On a Monday morning, in late 1956, dressed in my best uniform, I reported to the 208 Squadron Headquarters building and was shown into the Squadron Commander's office where I was duly welcomed and briefed on the role of the Squadron, what was expected of me etc. (The usual stuff). On leaving the Boss's office I walked down the corridor of the HQ and on a table in an alcove were all the Aircraft F700s (the servicing history of each individual aircraft). I picked up a F700 at random and proceeded to examine the records especially those relating to the armament systems. I soon noticed that the Ejection Seat Cartridges (ESCs) were out of date. In those days the Martin Baker Mk 2 Ejection Seat Cartridges were given a finite life of two years from the date of manufacture or six months from the date of first fitment to an aircraft seat. They became unserviceable (U/S) at that time, whichever was the earlier of the two dates. Borrowing a red pen from the Line Chief, I made a red ink entry on the appropriate page of the F700, effectively grounding that aircraft until such time as the ESCs were replaced. Having checked that F700, and remembering that I had chosen it at random, I then decided that I should check all the others. To cut a long story short, within half an hour of first joining the Squadron, I effectively grounded ten (maybe it was twelve) of the Squadron's aircraft leaving just two or three Mk 9s serviceable to fly seat wise and one T7 Meteor (not fitted with ejection seats.) After frantic enquiries to the Station Armoury and the Fort (the main Explosive Storage Unit of Malta), I ascertained that there were no replacement seat cartridges on the island. As it turned out, it took almost a month before the replacement ESCs arrived. Meantime, pilots were fighting each other to fly the remaining aircraft, I was the most unpopular man on the Squadron, and even the other ground crew members were referring to me as "that bloody Corporal". My life on the Squadron during that first month was not the most pleasant, to say the least. I got a lot of stick from all concerned. I could understand the pressures and frustration grounding all those aircraft caused, but the consequences of failing to do so do not bear thinking about. I pointed out that the Station Senior Engineering Officer could authorise flights with U/S ESCs, but of course he would not do so.



When the new ESCs finally arrived, my workload was, to say the least, hectic. As I completed my final checks on the first plane on the line (it was before vital and independent checks were introduced) and left the cockpit, the F700 was thrust at me to sign clearing the red line, the Line Chief signed the fit to fly entry, the pilot signed accepting the aircraft, and before I reached the next "kite" on the line, the engines had been started and it was taxiing out. And so it continued until all the aircraft were finally airborne. Whew! Certainly a day to remember.

Obviously, guns had to be serviced, release slips had to be checked etc, so when I asked to have access to an aircraft to carry out some routine servicing the cry went up "that bloody Corporal is at it again." Ha ha.

I finally became "tour ex" in January 1958, returning to the UK and I think 208 Squadron heaved a sigh of relief. At last they had got rid of "*That Bloody Corporal.*"



Norman (Big Norm) Haffenden
NCO i/c 208 Squadron Armoury (Ret'd)

Overseas Training Flights

In 1984 I was posted to HQ 18 Group at Northwood kicking and screaming; there were only one or two junior officer aircrew staff posts in the whole of the Royal Air Force and I had one of them! After the initial shock of not flying or being in the crew room enjoying the banter I settled in to the work. It helped that I had two great bosses – Sqn Ldr Rob “Fatty” Williams (ex 12 Sqn and 15 Sqn) and our very own Air Cdre (then Wg Cdr) Ben Laite (as Wg Cdr Recce Strike Attack) who guided me through my introduction to staff work. One of the duties of a good staff officer is to make sure that the Group Air staff Orders are up-to-date and fit-for-purpose and thus I was given the job of reviewing and updating the 18 Gp ASOs. There were amendments, inter alia, on maximum windspeeds for peacetime low level flying and joint operations with maritime patrol aircraft. Whilst going through the document I came across the basic training requirement for OTFs, along with a list of destination airfields. The list of airfields included places like RAF Laarbruch, RAF Gibraltar, Aalborg, Stavanger, Bodo, Keflavik and RAF Akrotiri. Most were in colder climes, with only Gibraltar and Akrotiri offering the possibility of some sun, but inevitably meant staying in the Officers’ Mess with a distinct lack of allowances. Thus, I got out my Red and Green en-route supplements to get some inspiration! Did I get some inspiration or what? Having checked that the potential destinations were military (and often civilian) airbases and that they had suitable support facilities I decided to add Lajes (Azores), Gran Canaria (Canary Islands), Palma de Mallorca (Balearic Islands), Hyères (S of France), Zaragoza (northern Spain) to name a few. So in typical staff officer fashion I added the new destinations to the amendment list and as neither Sqn Ldr Buccs nor Wg Cdr RSA seemed to object (or maybe notice!) I sent the GASOs to the typing pool (before the time of PCs!) to type up the amendments.

Wg Cdr Brian Mahaffey –
A look over the shoulder!
On the way to Hyères on 5 May 1989.



By the time I returned to 208 Squadron in 1988, the new version of GASOs had been published and the new OTF destinations were well and truly established. Now it was my chance to benefit from my foresight! So on 5 May 1989 a pair of Buccaneers headed for the French Navy base at Hyères in the south of France. I flew with the boss (Wg Cdr Brian “Boots” Mahaffey) and the second aircraft was crewed by Flt Lt Mike “Spike” Varney and Flt Lt Rob McCormick. This OTF was a little more challenging than usual, as we had to use some basic French to organise ourselves, but between simple French, shouting louder and hand signals we managed to arrange for some fuel and to put the aircraft to bed for the weekend. The French Navy had booked us into a very nice little hotel (Auberge de la Calanque - it would be called a boutique hotel now) overlooking the marina in Le Lavandou – we each had a room with a terrace and a great view. Besides relaxing on the beach and enjoying the restaurants, we took a boat across to Port-Cros, a small island in the Ile du Levant group of islands. On Monday morning we returned to

Hyères Naval Air Station to fly back to Lossiemouth. All was going well until Spike got a nasty gash on his forehead from bumping into the flaps (or something) on his walk round. With blood streaming from his head he was clearly in no fit state to fly! So the Boss and I left Spike and Rob behind to catch up another day!

On another occasion (22 June 1990) a pair of Buccaneers set off for Zaragoza in northern Spain. We were looked after by the USAF contingent at the airfield and set off for a hotel in the city. Zaragoza is a big university city of over 500,000 people, situated on the Ebro River and not far from the Pyrenees, with almost no tourists. On Friday evening we sampled a few tapas bars – one that sticks in my memory had a tradition of customers disposing of their glasses on the floor rather than handing them back to be washed! Or perhaps most of the customers were just a little bit the worse for wear! Anyway the floor was very crunchy with broken glass!

On Sunday we hired a car and drove to the Pyrenees – marvellous views and a little cooler than in the city – a great road trip. On Monday morning we had an uneventful trip back to Lossiemouth, having experienced a new culture and learned some useful lessons in operating in Spanish airspace and from a Spanish (US) airbase.



Wg Cdr Brian “Boots” Mahaffey and Flt Lt Mike “Spike” Varney
hard at work on the beach at Le Lavandou –
Overseas Training Flight May 1989.

The moral of the story! OTFs were great fun and we had some great places to go, but in the end we all learned something about operating out of foreign airbases through foreign airspace, which was the whole reason for OTFs in the first place! But it was much better when we had some very interesting places to visit!



The Missing Years

The End of a Buccaneera?



At the 208 Sqn Association Dinner in 2011, a decision was made for the guest speaker to move forward from the Sqn's involvement in the First Gulf War to Hawk T1 training at Valley. On reflection, this created an impression that little happened on the Sqn at that time: as the following paragraphs show, nothing could be further from the truth. Or at least one version of the truth, as these memories are being reassembled after twenty years from the Sqn diaries, the F540 and a few fuzzy recollections following too many happy hours. Yes, the end of the war brought a bit of an anti-climax; the demise of the Buccaneer seemed to have been put on hold, she even received a face-lift in the form of a Sky Guard Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) and an attempt

at integrating the nav system and new GPS (despite the threat of strike action by the nav union). However, savings had to be made and there was little real chance that the old girl would be extended beyond 1994.

With Bill Cope still at the helm, the Sqn had its 75th Anniversary - it was a tense affair with 12 Sqn almost spoiling the party; thankfully the execs took a tactful retreat leaving the Junta to accelerate (for the benefit of the gathered guests), the demise of another musical masterpiece and some serious carpet time with the Stn Cdr (John Ford). The highlight was a call from 24 Sqn SAAF wishing us well! After many years of Tactical Leadership Programme (TLP) drought, 208 Sqn were invited back to Belgium to take part in course 91-6, unfortunately we had to take a 12 Sqn crew with us. This was ostensibly a short-range course with the addition of two F111s (only one ever got airborne) and all the other roles (including Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD) and Recce) being completed by the Buccs. Back in the UK, the usual competition between the Sqns went on. In the game of screw up tennis, 12 Sqn took an early lead after Bill took a wrong turning on Bristol's runway: the 'Dogs' were quick to add a new verse to an old song about runways, but honour was quickly restored after a 12 Sqn wheels up. With the Gulf War honours list out and favouring 12, it looked like they had won the first set, but we know we would be back.

208 Sqn had already taken over the RAF laser designation commitment from the Thermal Imaging Airborne Laser Designation (TIALD) equipped Tornado aircraft of 617 Sqn. This involved the extensive modification of several aircraft and the training of eight crews. Despite our best pleas and the sacrifice of several 12 Sqn virgins, our aspiration to get Tony Lunnon-Wood (TLW) to be the last boss didn't work out. Instead, Nige Huckins took the reins in March 1992. He had the benefit of doing his work up on the Buccaneer Training Unit (BTU), following the demise of 237 OCU, which gave him the ideal opportunity to see how the Sqn was running and canvass opinions from the 'shop floor' - obviously there were many of those. Some of the best suggestions of how to end in a blaze of glory included: Las Vegas, to take part in a final Red Flag (which didn't happen) and South Africa to visit 24 Sqn (which didn't happen either). Of note Phil O'Dell did manage to get there on his own with XW986 but that's his story to tell.

In the spring, the Sqn spent two weeks flying long distance sorties against targets well inside the Arctic Circle. If memory serves, on at least one of the sorties we launched off runway 28 with 48 Kts blowing across the airfield. There were also OTFs to Rimini (twice - it must have been good), Baden Solingen and Montijo. In May, we had a visit from RAF Cranwell to carry out our annual spin currency, this being the first time we were to fly in the Tucano, not the Jet Provost (JP). Let's just say the initial results weren't that promising, although it did prompt Kim Smith's funniest ever line: sic "Skids will do anything to get home earlier". More successfully, we managed to get four aircraft involved with the Tactical Leadership Training (TLT) 92/1.



Later that month we deployed to Cyprus for the usual two-week, mid-summer night flying (kokinelli swigging) detachment. How the taste buds have improved! Undoubtedly, the single most significant event of this period happened shortly after. On 9 July 1992, on a routine training sortie, Flt Lts Jim Henderson and Clive 'the Bone' Lamborne tragically died whilst flying XN976 over the Firth of Forth. The Board of Inquiry concluded that the rudder Powered Flying Control Unit (PFCU) had failed, causing a full-scale deflection, which in turn led to the aircraft being uncontrollable at 100ft. A heartfelt loss, particularly for Jan and Ruth: their deaths left an emotional hole for many months and they will always be deeply missed.

However, life and the Sqn went on, with crews taking part in the Gilroy Trophy. Although 208 won the individual event, 12 Sqn won the overall competition. More overseas travel followed with Scandinavia featuring heavily during Ex Bright Horizon and an OTF to RNoAF Andoya's northern reaches. In the opposite direction, crews deployed to RAF St Mawgan, or for those young, gullible new boys, Santa Magwan (it always sounded a little bit more exotic) for TLT. It was also the season for Joint Maritime Courses (JMCs) – more opportunities to fly in really strong winds, appalling rain and poor visibility, just to say hello to the RN. At least we were only there for a few minutes rather than days! Despite only having eighteen months to run, 208 Sqn welcomed its final student (on the Buccaneer anyway). A willing volunteer, Ned Cullen would see out his time with 208 before a posting to the Harrier ruined his character forever. 1992 finished with a double whammy of dets to Volkell – the first on Sqn exchange with 311 Sqn (in those days you were expected to drink and be able to fly the next day); this was followed by Ex Volkell, which was pretty much the same thing.

1993 started in the same manner through Ex Triplex (bombing at Wiley Sike v F3s), JMC, Ex Northern Banner and another TLT at St Mawgan (everyone knew the joke now). Two more lucky crews took part in TLP in March, deploying to BAF Florennes. Those of you who have read Graham Pitchfork's excellent book "The Buccaneer Boys" will realise that despite everyone's predictions, the Bucc Force were allowed to display in 1993. Not one but two crews, one from each sqn, were selected. Neil 'Benny' Benson and Gary 'Fat Boy' Davies were the chosen men from 208 Sqn. They completed a very tidy season (despite Benny's head nearly exploding after an allergic reaction to sun cream – it just goes to show you that Scots shouldn't be exposed to too much sun, they can't cope with it).



Probably the highlight of the year was the Queen's Birthday Fly Past (QBFP). To honour the Buccaneer, a diamond sixteen led by Rich Philips was chosen to lead, ahead of formations of Harriers, Hawks and Jaguars. In between practices, which required pretty much both Sqns' full strength of aircraft and crews, 208 took a short trip to Norway in support of Ex Bold Game, once again those pesky Fast Patrol Boats (FPBs) were on the receiving end of some D3 (short range Laser-Guided Bomb (LGB)) tactics. We also managed to fit in a detachment to IAB Decimomannu in Sardinia – normally the playground for RAFG Tornados. Whilst there, we conducted an Armament Practice Camp (APC) and made use of the Air Combat Manoeuvring Instrumentation (ACMI) facility

against Italian F104s. It was a great opportunity for the Sardi to see what the mighty Banana jet was capable of, although the final fly past was not up to our usual standard. On our return, it was all hands to the pumps in preparation for the QBFP, eleven aircraft from 208 deployed to RAF Manston and the joys and delights of Ramsgate. The locals didn't know what had hit them and with eight Buccs lining up on the runway at the same time, the noise was awesome. Needless to say the fly-past was a great success, although Rich's guarantee not to take the sixteen IMC was perhaps misguided.

Another milestone was completed later that month, when we managed to get our hands on four AIM 9G missiles. Despite not having a QWI(P) left, due to early postings, and not having had anyone fire a missile other than on a QWI course, we managed to hack together the profiles, deploy to Valley and successfully fire all four missiles without a glitch. Now in her final year, we still were conducting trials: one involved testing the Electronic Counter-Counter Measures (ECCM) capabilities of Sea Eagle, and another proved the effectiveness of the Blue Parrot versus the Tornado. All came up with the same conclusion: 'The Buccaneer was Best'. In many ways, business continued as normal: in July we deployed for the final time to Cyprus for the usual night flying, we then sent five Buccs (and thankfully a Hunter) to Aalborg for TFW 93. Having to find Jon Parker on the final morning and then having to do some crew changes to get him home, proved highly memorable. We also got involved in Ex Solid Stance in September. This saw us operating





in the South - Western Approaches, beyond Western Ireland and up to the South Norwegian Sea. It was during this exercise, that the old girl started to show her age. Having just come off the tanker and brimming with fuel, XX867 entered low-level and during the first part of an S1 (long range Sea Eagle) tactic, at around 500kts, the undercarriage door cracked open. This led to the gear coming down and over extending, which in turn damaged the drop tanks. 19,000lbs of fuel suddenly dropped to internals, normally plenty but the nearest base with a cable and better than yellow weather conditions was RAF Leeming – one hour away! The eventual landing was uneventful (despite coincidentally making the News at Ten). Sadly, XX867 was never to be flown again.

This was closely followed by an even more telling failure. Two crews had flown to Schiphol for the exercise debrief. At the last minute, Stevie Tait (the back-seater on the previous incident) had asked to swap crews so that he could fly his last trip (the RTB) with Fras. This was to prove an exciting change; after an uneventful departure and transit, on selecting the airbrake on the break at Lossie, a disturbing noise was heard (not Stevie for once). Fras landed and was surprised to be met by the Sqn WO suggesting that he shut down rather sharpish. The crack turned out to be the airbrake mount, with nearly a tonne of airbrake now being held on by the actuator, had that failed it is unlikely that the aircraft could have been flown. Steve was now running out of clean flying suits and departed for the A6 with all haste. (Amazingly, none of this seems to have made it into the F540). We weren't grounded, which seems to happen an awful lot twenty years on – however, they now call it 'a pause in operations', so we continued to support Ex Elder Joust, Ex Falcon Nut (not Wing Nut, one of the remaining pilots) and another JMC. By this time, 12 Sqn had folded, with many of the remaining crews coming to 208 for the last six months. Despite previous bar room hostilities, the Sqn remained a happy place.

January 93 saw the final Bucc detachments, RNLAf Volkel was the chosen destination for Northern Europe but we still managed to get away to Gibraltar one final time to assist with the work-up of our sister ship, HMS Liverpool. In the background, plans were being drawn up: these including the Endex celebrations and the possibility of extending the Sqn's life by retaining six aircraft in the tactical tanker role, which was dismissed, to the relief of almost everyone. At last, 31 March 94 was upon us. For those of you who can remember the Endex, well done (you obviously weren't there or drinking enough). The final fly-past was worthy of the event, though Russ Hall's time hack (sic: "hack, hack, now, hack") retains the prize for most noteworthy (or was that, not worthy!) time check ever. The visitors from 234 Sqn, arriving in a C130, added massively to the event, with the new boss, Sqn Ldr Gary Brough, delivering a welcome change to the after dinner speeches. In the days before Facebook, we have photographic evidence of much of the event, courtesy of Andy Brooks.



A small number of crews remained and after they finally sobered up, spent the first three days of April delivering the remaining aircraft to St Athan, via every conceivable RAF station, airport and landing strip. Both Ian 'Spoffer' Morrison and Carl 'PORG' Wilson deserve special mention for their roles in 'Departuregate'! It really was now the 'End of a Buccanera', though the Sqn got to live on with the reins being passed over to a different kind of boss, doing a different kind a job (pilot training), at a different kind of station (RAF Valley). Once again, this is another story.

Thanks to the Air Historical Branch for the timeline, the diarists (Woody, in particular) and you, the reader for forgiving my errors or omissions. Please feel free to write to the editor with any corrections or additions: that way we keep the story going!



Sir Nik Sod Rash

Squadron & Association News

SQUADRON COMINGS AND GOINGS April 2013 – March 2014

Arrivals:

Sqn Ldr Dan Arlett
Flt Lt Rich Frick
Flt Lt Mostyn Payne
Flt Lt Wam Wharmby

Departures:

Sqn Ldr Gary Brough
Flt Lt Roger Cruickshank
Flt Lt Benedict Goodwin

Flt Lt Will MacDonald
Flt Lt Ian Russell
Flt Lt JT Turner

NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE - CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES'

CHAIRMAN	D J Trembaczowski-Ryder.
HURRICANE/SPITFIRE	S E Jefford.
METEOR	J D Penrose.
HUNTER	T M Webb.
BUCCANEER	Sqn Ldr P Harrison, OC A Flt, 208 Sqn, RAF Valley.
HAWK	Flt Lt T Sawle, c/o 208 Sqn, RAF Valley.
GROUNDCREW	D Gill.
EDITOR	M M Ward.
HISTORIAN	Dr D G Styles.
HON SEC	M W Brown.
MEMBERSHIP SEC	Air Cdre Ben Laite.

(Information on potential new members and enquiries from existing members seeking contacts should be addressed to the Membership Secretary)

COMMITTEE/CHAPTER NEWS:

Meteor. The Meteor Chapter met at the 'Coach and Horses', 1 Great Marlborough Street, Soho on Wednesday, 7th May 2014. Attendance was depleted from previous years, though not enthusiasm. Of 17 invites only two non-replies with nine regrets, so we had a table for seven (including one wife). A good time to reminisce, remember old comrades and, of course, raise a glass to Glorious 208.

If you wish to join the gathering on the first Wednesday in May 2015, please contact Desmond Penrose.

The first Old Comrades gathering of Naval 8/208 took place in 1919 in a pub in Soho. The Meteor Chapter continues that tradition of an all ranks get together where old comrades can recall their time on the Squadron. The Meteor Chapter meets on the first Wednesday in May, no longer in the original pub (where you might have been propositioned or, now, receive a marriage proposal!) but in an equally salubrious establishment!



Membership News

The Association welcomes the following new members:

Rob Gittins	Associate		
Jamie Buckle	Hawk	Dan Granger	Hawk
Dan Arlett	Hawk	Andy Green	Hawk
Glen Beresford	Hawk	Tats Greenhalgh	Hawk
Phil Chalkley	Hawk	Mike Highmoor	Hawk
Chris Deen	Hawk	Mostyn Payne	Hawk
Jules Fleming	Hawk	Neil Staite	Hawk
Rich Frick	Hawk	Piers Dudley	Hawk

Members Found Again:

Mike Shaw Hunter

Current Membership:

Full (in contact)	357	Honorary	3
Lost contact	66	Associate	1
Total Full Members	423	Family	4



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.....

.....

.....

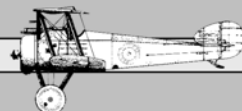
.....

Telephone: eMail:.....

Please forward to the Membership Secretary: Air Cdre Ben Laite.



In Memoriam



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

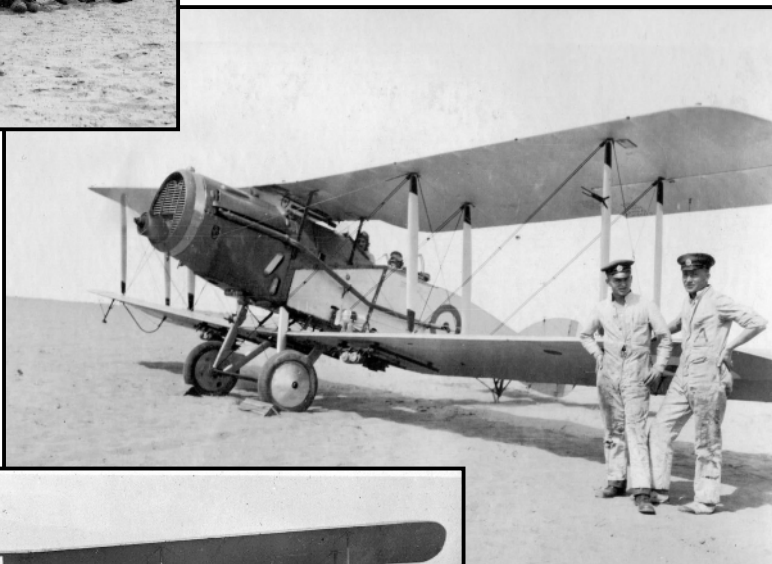
L F Boyce
Don Groom
Ron Howland
G Finlayson
Mike Corner
Len Schwaiger

Hurricane/Spitfire
Hurricane/Spitfire
Hunter Ground Crew
Hunter Ground Crew
Meteor
Meteor



Left: 208 Sqn at Khartoum 1924.

Below: 208 Sqn at Khartoum, 1925



Left:
HQ Flt, 208 Sqn
San Stefano,
Christmas 1922

Below:
The Sqn Standard in the Dining Room at the RAF Club on the occasion of the Annual Dinner on Saturday 19th October 2013.



Right:
The President's Table

Below:
The Meteor Table



Right:
In the absence of the guest speaker, the Meteor Chapter Representative, Desmond Penrose, stepped in to regale the diners with a tale, which would have been worthy of the Egyptian Order of Stella.



Above:
The Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy for 2013 was presented to Flt Lt Tom Sawle by Air Marshal Sir Rob Wright, The President of the Association.

Right:
The Egyptian Order of Stella, as awarded in 1957. The inscription on the reverse is hilarious, but unprintable!



First Jet Solo

As one half of the latest Ab Initio course on 208 Sqn I have been asked to write a short article to give a student's perspective of their first solo trip in a Hawk. I think the best way to start is by giving a short history of my RAF career to date. Having joined a 'surge' course of 150 students on IOT in 2009, a significant percentage of which were recruited as pilots, all was looking good for my chosen profession. Approaching five years later I have completed elementary flying training at RAF Cranwell on the Tutor and basic fast jet training on the Tucano at RAF Linton-on-Ouse. With the operational delays on the Hawk T2 and 4 Sqn, my course mate and I jumped at the opportunity to join a Hawk T1 course and arrived on the Isle of Dreams to start with 208 Sqn in late January 2014.

Being on ground school as a course of two has benefits and drawbacks: on the plus side it guarantees focused tuition however, it does also guarantee you getting asked at least 50% of the questions, so there really is nowhere to hide! Following five weeks of tech lectures, introductory sims, advanced aerodynamics and being unceremoniously dumped in Holyhead harbour, Flt Lt Steve Iwanek and I left the classroom and moved over to the Sqn. Day one on 208 we got kitted up in our immersion suits for the first time and clambered into the back of the jet for our familiarisation trip around North Wales including low level battle turns and formation aeros. After an hour of being baggage we both arrived back hot, sweaty, slightly nauseous and under no illusions as to what we faced before completing the course.

Following our rather leisurely progress through flying training so far, we were slightly shocked to arrive on Monday morning to find ourselves feature for three sorties in a day. This tempo turned out to be the norm and after four sims and five flights during our first four flying days on the Squadron we found ourselves prepping for our first solo flights! Now comes the slightly awkward sortie brief where the same QFI who so confidently cleared you solo on the previous sortie has to put his career on the line and actually stick his initials in the authorisation sheets to clear you off on your own. With a gin clear February afternoon waiting for us (a precious rarity in North Wales) and having warned the other Squadrons at Valley, we crewed in for our first solos.



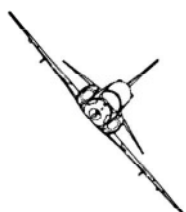
The Author, prior to his first jet solo.



Fast Jet Soloists: Flt Lt Steve Iwanek (left) and Flt Lt Stu Roberts (right).

We taxied out and set off in ten minute trail for the obligatory high speed trip around the island followed by climbing for some aeros in the local area. Once clear of GA traffic in the Menai Straights there was a quick chance to fully take in your new surroundings and you suddenly realise the jet is eerily quiet without a QFI onboard. Luckily the rest of the Station got the memo and had the good sense to stay on the ground as the two of us recovered to terrorise the circuit. Following demonstrations of our best Ryanair style landings we taxied back in after our first solo jet flights. The experience was well worth five years in the RAF along with a considerable amount of hard work and it won't be something either of us will forget in a hurry. We count ourselves lucky to have been given

the opportunity to join 208 Sqn and train on the 'Classic' Hawk. After chatting with some Hawk T2 students who had been on course for almost a year, we worked out we achieved nearly 20% of their total trips in just one week on the Squadron!



Stu Roberts

Flt Lt
V147 AFT
208 Sqn