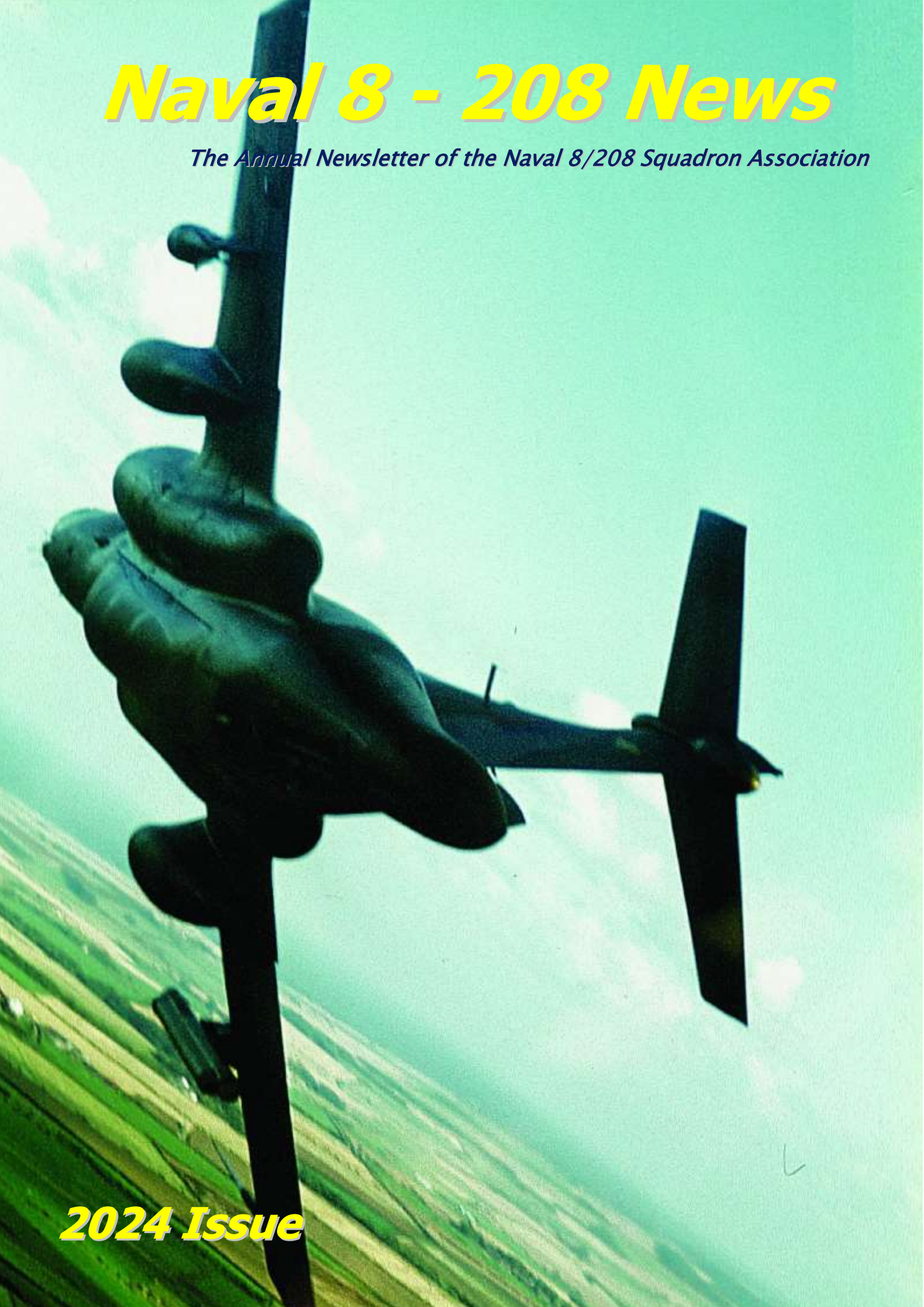


# ***Naval 8 - 208 News***

*The Annual Newsletter of the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association*



***2024 Issue***



## NAVAL EIGHT 208

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A Buccaneer of 208 Sqn in the overland role.  
Photograph by the late David Styles.





# Naval 8 - 208 Rumblings

## The President's Foreword

Four major defence reviews have been conducted since the end of the Cold War: the 1990 Options for Change, the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, the 2003 Delivering Security in a Changing World and the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). All four defence reviews have resulted in steady reductions in manpower and numbers of aircraft, especially combat aircraft. Other reductions saw total RAF manpower reduced to a trained strength of just 33,000, which is about 35% of the strength in the early 1970's. The announcement by the Prime Minister that the Defence Budget would increase to 2.5% of GDP by 2030 is welcome, but it will depend on the next government to implement, and I anticipate that another Review will be required before firm decisions are made. Sadly, and even with an uplift in the Defence Budget I must conclude that the chances of 208 Squadron re-forming are remote. But hope springs eternal!

Inevitably, and like many similar organisations we must move with the times and recognise when things must change. The Naval 8/208 Squadron Association has been organising annual reunions (and other events) for very many years, which were particularly well attended when there was an active squadron. Since the disbandment of the Squadron at RAF Valley in 2016 numbers attending reunions have been on a steady decline, somewhat precipitated by the restrictions during the Covid pandemic. The Reunion in 2019 at the Grimscote Manor attracted 38 attendees, whilst in 2022 at the Coombe Abbey Hotel there were only 15 attendees. The lunch at the RAF Club last year attracted 17 attendees, although we had 2 late cancellations due to illness and flooded train lines! As a result, at our last meeting in April the Association Committee discussed the future of our reunions and it was decided that with an ageing membership and steadily falling attendance the **2024 Reunion would be the last 'Formal' Association Reunion**. The Committee will review the situation again at our next Committee meeting and for the future may consider informal gatherings at a place and format to be decided. You can rest assured however, that the Association will continue to remain active as it has proved to be an excellent conduit for our members; we will be maintaining the excellent annual Newsletter and Website.

I hope to see as many of you as possible at the 2024 Reunion to be held at the RAF Club on **26 October and please note that this final formal Reunion will be for dinner** not lunch. Thank you all for your support - let us make the 26<sup>th</sup> a night to remember.

*Rob Wright*  
President

## Chairman's Chunter

The President has already reported on the decision by the Association Committee to make the next reunion the last 'formal' reunion, which was taken with great sadness. The writing has been on the wall for some time and so we must move on to taking a different approach. I trust I will see as many members as possible at the "Last Supper" on 26 October at the RAF Club.

Talking of reunions, it reminds me of the poster announcing the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary bash of Naval 8/208 Squadron, that appears in Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork's excellent 'Forever Vigilant' book commemorating 100 years of Naval 8/208 Squadron. It reads as follows:

### "1916 – 1937 Our Twenty First

*In 1916, someone thought it was a good idea.  
To form a squadron – Naval Eight – its purpose very clear.  
With 'Strutters', 'Pups' and 'Nieuport Scouts', the grand idea was born,  
But with it, something else began, that fine October morn.*

*Those seeds of friendship started there in France had taken hold,  
Each word within the Squadron log was based on solid gold.  
The job was done – we went our ways, but that was not the end,  
Old 'Naval Eight' would not lie down – we'd have a make and mend.*

*So through the years we've kept aloft,  
Tails up! And tanks atrim!  
The powers that be are well aware that "Eight's" still in the swim.  
The name is changed but that is nought, who will expostulate?  
For 208 is proud today to speak of 'Naval Eight'.*

*We've passed the torch to other hands we're proud to call our sons,  
But should the 'Stand-to' ever sound, then call on 'guts and guns'!  
The glass is full, then drink it up, let others do their worst,  
For we are now the 'watch ashore', and it's our twenty first!"*

Members can rest assured that the Newsletter and Website will continue in their current form for as long as possible. The current edition of the Newsletter focusses on the Buccaneer, but next year we will look again at the other eras. After that, we will find articles and photographs for the membership to enjoy. The Website has a total of 1249 pages to browse through, but we can always use more!

Association Website: <http://www.naval8-208-association.com>

*David Trembacowski-Ryder*  
Chairman

# Flt Cdr Colin R Mackenzie

For many years parties of Air Cadets have been visiting Achiet le Grand, France at the invitation of the local town Mayor to commemorate the Fallen. In the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery at Achiet there are 36 WWI airmen's graves, one of whom is Flt Cdr Colin R Mackenzie DSO of 8 Sqn RNAS, who was flying Sopwith Pup N5198 when he was killed on 24 January 1917.



Remembrance Day 2023 at Achiet le Grand.

The Naval 8/208 Squadron Association Chairman, Wg Cdr (rtd) David Trembaczowski-Ryder joined 45 staff and air cadets from Dorset and Wilts Wing to lay a wreath at the Altar of Sacrifice on behalf of the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association on 11 November 2023. The service was led by the Reverend Bernard Rumbold. By coincidence, Bernard served as a young ops clerk with 208 at Khormaksar during the early 60s.

When Naval 8 Squadron was formed at Le Vert Galant on 26 October 1916 Flight Lieutenant C.R. Mackenzie was appointed as 'A' Flight commander with six Nieuport 17 aircraft.

Mackenzie led the very first operational patrol on 3 November 1916, but without encountering any enemy aircraft. Flight Lieutenant, later Flight Commander, Mackenzie is described by Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork in his book *"Forever Vigilant"*, as follows:

"On 9 November 1916 the weather had finally cleared and it was a fine morning when Mackenzie and Flight Sub-Lieutenant the Hon A.C. Corbett took off at 0615 hours to fly a line patrol. Mackenzie got on the tail of a LVG two-seat reconnaissance aircraft, but his guns jammed, and he was denied the squadron's first success."

"On 10 November 1916 it was another clear frosty morning and Mackenzie was away first with his flight of Nieuport Scouts. He and his pilots had a number of engagements, but the squadron's first success eluded them."

"On 24 January 1917 Flight Commander Mackenzie was leading an offensive patrol when Compston saw him heading over the German lines. It was clear that Mackenzie was already dead, and his aircraft crashed. The following day Compston dropped a message over the lines asking for information. Some time later the German Air Service reported that he had been brought down in combat and buried with full military honours at Achiet-le-Grand near Bapaume."

"Mackenzie had proved to be an outstanding flight commander. Bromet wrote of him:

*'I find it quite impossible to express adequately my admiration for this splendid officer and great gentleman. In the air, a fine pilot and a brainy and courageous leader who inspired immediate and lasting confidence, and whom the flight would follow anywhere. On the ground, a keen student of air tactics and fighting methods, a first-class organiser, a loyal and able officer and the life and soul of any Mess. Small wonder that he was a universal favourite and that we looked upon his loss as irreparable.'*"

As noted by Bromet, Mackenzie was a keen student of air tactics. So much so that at the end of 1916 he wrote notes on the *"Future Design of Scouts and Suitable Armament for Them"*, the *"Characteristics Desirable in a Scout Pilot"*, and *"Notes on Aerial Fighting in Formation"*. These are described in detail in the book *"Naval Eight: A history of No. 8 Squadron R.N.A.S. – afterwards No. 208 Squadron R.A.F – from its formation in 1916 until the Armistice in 1918."* The Notes on Aerial Fighting, in many cases, still resonate today. Mackenzie talks about constituted crews/formations, good formation keeping, good look-out, wing rocking to indicate a particular action, regularly checking of the six o'clock position, keeping the sun behind you, and attacking from behind. What foresight!



A Sopwith Pup, similar to that in which Flt Cdr Colin Mackenzie was killed.



David Trembaczowski-Ryder  
Chairman

# The Buccaneer Era

*This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Buccaneer entering service with 208 Squadron and the 30th anniversary of the mighty jet bowing out of service. Who will forget the unique occasion at Lossiemouth in March 1994 when, under the command of Wing Commander Nigel Huckins, the last generation of "Buccaneer Boys" put on a spectacular display and weekend to mark the end of the squadron's Buccaneer era. These two anniversaries provide an opportunity to reflect on the 20-year career on 208 Squadron of the 'Last all-British Bomber'.*

## The Honington Years



The First Buccaneer Boss, Wg Cdr Pete Rogers, flanked by his SEngO Sqn Ldr Sellars and the Sqn Warrant Officer, WO Hunter. Honington 1974.

It had all begun at RAF Honington on 1 June 1974 when the squadron reformed under the command of Wing Commander Pete Rogers. Not since the First World War had the squadron operated a two-seat aircraft and it was the first time navigators had served on the squadron. A message of greeting from our first commanding officer, Sir Geoffrey Bromet, and members of the Naval Eight/208 Squadron Association was greatly appreciated by the small nucleus of experienced air and ground crews who assembled that day with the task of setting up the squadron prior to the arrival of the aircraft.

It was not until 6 September that the first aircraft was collected from the maintenance unit at Sydenham, Belfast and, a few days later, the second arrived from Holme-on-Spalding Moor. Finally, on 1 October, the first sortie was flown, a NATO low-level air defence exercise over Denmark. This was appropriate as the squadron was to be assigned to the Northern Region of NATO (AFNORTH) in the

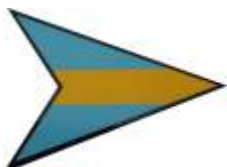
strike/attack role. In the years that followed, a great deal of the squadron's training would be over Denmark, and particularly Norway.

By the end of the year, the squadron had its full complement of twelve aircraft with a mixture of very experienced air and ground crew, many drawn from the RAF Germany squadrons, together with others who were new to the aircraft and had recently completed their training on 237 OCU.

In supporting AFNORTH, it was most likely that the squadron would operate in regions north of the Arctic Circle. This presented a very different challenge to the overland role practiced by the squadrons based in Germany. Tactics had to be modified considerably, and the terrain and the weather were completely different from those in the Central Region. Visits to Norway became routine and provided some very challenging flying.



The Scottish Highlands, 1982





## Red Flag

There were many highlights during the squadron's time at Honington: winning the Gilroy Trophy several times, some epic detachments to Decimomannu, but pride of place must surely be the participation in Exercise Red Flag in August 1977. This unique exercise, devised by the USAF because of the lessons learnt during the Vietnam War, gave crews experience of flying in an environment where the only aspect lacking was live firing by the 'enemy' air defences.



The First Red Flag Team - 208 Sqn Aircrew & Groundcrew, 1977.

The squadron had the unique distinction of being the very first non-US unit to be invited to participate in the exercise. Led by Wing Commander Phil Pinney, the squadron excelled and drew fulsome praise from USAF commanders and the military press. The US Defence and Foreign Affairs Daily captured the mood, commenting *"RAF Buccaneers have performed outstandingly well. Their crews have astounded the USAF."* This pioneering participation by 208 Squadron has led to RAF squadrons being invited to this prestigious exercise in every year since.

Exercises in the USA and Canada followed, together with the annual NATO exercises which saw the squadron deploying regularly to Denmark and Norway. Participation in Tactical Fighter Meets and a memorable appearance in the Tactical

Bombing Competition held at Lossiemouth in June 1981 were other highlights. When the RAF took delivery of the first Paveway laser guided bombs (LGB), the squadron pioneered its entry into service. Initially, three crews conducted trials at West Freugh and at Garvie Island. These were interrupted by the grounding of the Buccaneer after the tragic loss at Red Flag. On the resumption of flying, four aircraft were detached to CFB Cold Lake where the trial continued, culminating in the tossing of four Paveway 1,000lb bombs from two miles away resulting in a spectacular direct hit. The LGB had entered RAF service.

## Maritime Mastery on the Moray Firth

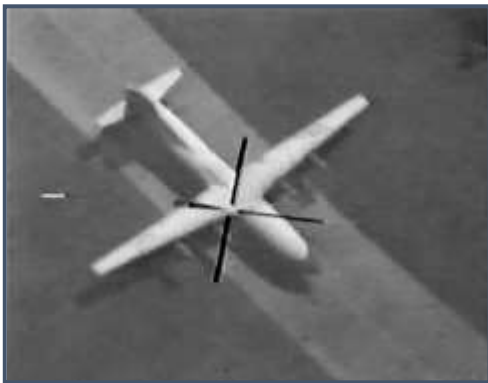
Lossiemouth had always been the spiritual home of the Buccaneer and, in July 1983, 208 headed north to join 12 Squadron to form the Lossiemouth Maritime Wing. New tactics and new weapons were the order of the day as the squadron re-adjusted to a new environment. Within a few weeks, the squadron provided part of a detachment deployed to Akrotiri for Operation Pulsator, support for the British forces based in Lebanon.

By July 1984, the squadron was declared combat ready to SACLAN. Laser-guided bombs and Anti-Radiation (AR) Martel missiles now provided the offensive power of the force. The long-overdue avionics update materialised with secure radios, a much-improved passive and active electronic warfare suite, plus modifications to carry the Sidewinder air-to-air missile being embodied. However, the central element was the fitting of the inertial navigation platform for use in conjunction with the Sea Eagle anti-shiping missile destined to replace Martel.



In its element: a 208 Sqn Buccaneer over the North Sea.

## The First Gulf War



In the crosshairs: Iraqi transport aircraft, Shayka Mazar airfield, 27 Feb 1991.

Having converted to the maritime role, it was ironical that the squadron's only appearance in combat should be overland, at medium height and over the desert! The First Gulf War. Much has been written about the crucial role played by the squadron under Wing Commander Bill Cope. Using its Pavespoke laser-designator pod, the aircraft became a game changer as it marked targets for Tornados dropping Paveway laser-guided bombs (LGB). Not content with helping the Tornado force, squadron crews dropped their own LGBs destroying hardened aircraft shelters, fuel storage facilities, damaging runways and achieving the rare distinction of destroying an Iraqi transport aircraft as it taxied for take-off.

The Buccaneers of 208 Squadron 'spiked' 169 bombs and dropped 40 LGBs. The role of the ground crew during this period of spectacular success was beyond praise. Working long hours, in uncomfortable temperatures and surroundings, they worked wonders and much of the success of the Buccaneer force was due to their untiring efforts.

For its outstanding involvement in the First Gulf War, the squadron received the battle honour "*Gulf – 1991*."

## A Fitting Finale

The squadron returned to the routine of maritime exercise and deployments. There was, however, to be one last hurrah. To mark its impending retirement, the Buccaneer force was given the honour of leading the Queen's Birthday flypast over Buckingham Palace on 12 June 1993. The squadron provided half the aircraft for the 'Diamond Sixteen' and, with immaculate timing, the formation flew over the palace.

After a final detachment to Gibraltar, which had seen so many other squadron visits over the years, preparations for the final weekend began. Over the weekend of 26/27 March 1994, what has been described as the "*mother of all parties*" was



Nigel Maddox and Rick Phillips lead the Buccaneer boys, ready for Queen's Birthday Flypast, June 1993.



The last Buccaneer Boss, Nigel Huckins, with his aircrew. Lossiemouth 1994.

experienced by hundreds of the Buccaneer mafia who travelled from many parts of the globe. At 1400 on the Saturday afternoon, Nigel Huckins led nine Buccaneers in a diamond formation flypast before the aircraft broke away to provide their own spectacular farewells followed by a simulated airfield attack from every direction, and at extremely low-level. After a final flypast, the aircraft taxied in and, on the command of the leader, folded wings in unison, lined up and then the eighteen engines fell silent. It was the end of an era.

*Graham Pitchfork*

Naval Eight/208 Sqn Association Historian





Loaded with Paveway LGBs and an ECM pod, "Sea Witch" (XV863) awaits her crew. Muharraq 1991.



The view from the back seat. This photo was taken on 8 April 1990 on the way home from Exercise Nile 90, when the Sqn visited the Sphinx and the pyramids.





The first RAF participation in Red Flag: a 208 Sqn Buccaneer makes a sharp departure from Nellis AFB, 1977.



The last word: 208 says farewell to the Buccaneer era. Lossiemouth, 1994.

# *A Stag Night in Volkel*

*Damien D'Lima recounts a tale of some bad behaviour, deception and a one-sided station commander's interview, all in the space of 24 hours. It also goes some way to answering the question, 'How many navigators does it take to fly a Buccaneer?' The article has previously appeared in the Buccaneer Aircrew Association Newsletter and is reprinted here in slightly truncated form.*

It was late Oct 92, the weather in northern Scotland was fine and the remaining 208 Sqn junta were restless. I say remaining, because most of the Sqn were away on exchange with the Dutch F16s at Volkel. There was one impending event that would need some junta enterprise; Rodders was getting married at the end of the week and we needed a stag night. Whilst Rodders was well aware that something would happen, and feared it might culminate in him being handcuffed naked inside a departing sleeper train from Inverness, the truth of the matter was, no plans had been made. Sadly, with only half the junta available, any stag night was going to be muted. In a moment of inspiration, Tommy Tackle, who was to be best man, announced that we should kidnap Rodders and take him to Volkel for a full team stag night. With the Boss away and DT left in charge, approval was forthcoming - provided we flew a training sortie both ways, and that no rules were broken. A pair of Buccaneers was duly programmed for a night stop at Volkel. Crews would be D'LIMA / DAVIES and MACKLE / RODDEN.

Whilst Rodders remained blissfully ignorant of what was afoot, the remaining 3 members of the posse set to organising the land away. There was one complication; every officer needed a wedding honour guard and, as few modern officers possessed their own sword, these would need to be borrowed. Rodders had made arrangements to hire 6 swords from the ceremonial store at High Wycombe and, as one of the sword party, I was due to fly south on a Dan Air flight to collect them. Not wishing to miss out on the Volkel extravaganza, I obtained additional approval to bend one of the returning Buccaneers into a southern airfield to collect the swords prior to returning to Lossiemouth. From conception to execution, the plan to kidnap Rodders for his stag night had taken just 48 hrs, so it was that on Wed 28 Oct 92, a pair of Buccaneers taxied for a mid-morning routine MARTAC sortie. A second set of auth sheets had been signed without Rodders' knowledge and the remaining 3 crew members had fully briefed a LO-HIGH recovery to Volkel. So as not to arouse Rodders' suspicion, no overnight bags were carried by any of the crews – after all we would be there for less than 24 hours – a single flying suit would have to suffice.

For 3 out of the 4 of us, the sortie proceeded like a dream. A couple of Echo tactics and then a few Deltas against unsuspecting ships in the southern North Sea was the prelude to a chicken recovery. After a few moments in the climb, Rodders as number 2 nav, questioned our heading. In order to prevent a 7500 squawk, Tommy felt obliged to enlighten the Groom that his stag night had indeed started! A short time later, we arrived at Volkel to be met by our Dutch hosts armed with copious rounds of roll mops and Aquavit. I have to say at this stage, that I had no intention of getting pissed....after all, I had a booked take off of 1000 local the next morning for a transit home via Lyneham for sword collection duties. Rodders and Tommy we had planned for a late afternoon high transit back to Lossiemouth. After all, the Groom and Best Man could not be expected to stay tee total on a stag night, could they?

Things deteriorated from then on. Given the hour we had lost landing in Holland, we found that at 1500 local, we were the last aircraft down. Our Dutch hosts, and the already established 208 away team, were fully in on Rodders being the unexpected star of the show and the bar was declared open! Amstel flowed freely, Rodders gave up telling us what gits we were. The Dutch introduced us to a new drinking game called air to air refuelling, with a mock tandem cockpit in which one sat as a crew whilst the hosts held a header tank of several litres of beer and, via a funnel, each crew shared a forced delivery of ale. Rodders and Tommy had the first go...and then Fatboy and I went next ...it would have been rude not to. Kim Smith was struggling with the 'no right-handed drinking' rule and decided to tie a knot in the sleeve of his flying suit as a coping strategy. Whizbang cut off his sleeve with some scissors and because I happened to have my flying suit arms tied around my waist, decided to cut mine off too. Thanks Whizbang.

After many hours of drinking and piano burning, the sqn bar was closed and we repaired to the hotel in Volkel. Those that could changed into civilian attire for part 2 of the stag night. Memories of the rest of the evening are now somewhat blurred after 28 plus years, but I have visions of a stage with a pole, Wingnut appearing from below the stage dressed as a magician and a late night kebab van. The only sensible thing I did that night was to have a 'go to bed' caption. I found Fatboy as I left and agreed we would meet in hotel reception at 0730 local the next morning.

When the radio alarm went off, packing was easy...I had nothing but a toothbrush and disposable razor. I didn't feel too shabby, but looking in the mirror, it was not a pretty sight. My flying suit had only one arm, I was sporting a bandolier or two of dried mayonnaise, and some bastard appeared to have vomited down my front (I blame the roll mops). Having no choice of alternative attire, after showering my tatty flying suit, I wandered down to breakfast. The rest of 208 had wisely been stood down from flying for the morning, so bodies were thin on the ground. However, Sandman our gentleman navigator, chose that moment to appear and, after laughing at me, very kindly offered to lend me his spare flying suit. These were the days before velcro badges and all brevets and insignia were firmly sewn in place. Normally, as a proud member of the 2 winged master race, I would not dare to be seen wearing a navigator's brevet, but these were desperate times and I accepted gladly. Soon I was joined by Fatboy, who was dressed impeccably....that's all I shall say. Next followed a discussion about who was fit to drive the allotted VW Combi the short distance to Volkel airbase. Neither Fatboy or I felt fit to do so, which should have been the catalyst to say, delay the flight, go later.....but the swords needed collecting. Rodders was getting married in 2 days, we had to fly to





Above:

An earlier Squadron exchange: not Volkel, but Rimini in April 1989.

Lyneham, drive to High Wycombe and get back up to Lossiemouth all in a day. The last chance to break the flight safety chain fell to Giselle, our ATC liaison officer - who kindly offered to drive us to the base. It was a very simple medium level transit from Volkel to Lyneham. I have to say, I felt OK, but the same did not apply to my back seater. Soon after we had the Palouste started, in a tone that any father will recognise from their young offspring on a long car journey, there was a call on the intercom of *'I don't feel very well'*. I thought briefly about crewing out, but decided Fatboy would feel better soon. As we approached the holding point it was apparent that he wouldn't.

The one hour transit to Lyneham was uneventful for me, ATC were very helpful and my log book says we landed off a PAR. Fats didn't enjoy the trip very much. Soon the jet was refuelled and readied for a quick getaway. I asked VASS to drop us at the MT Section, to collect the car which I had pre-booked for the trip to High Wycombe. Now is when the master plan started to

unravel and I started to tell some fibs. The Warrant Officer in charge of MT took great delight in telling me that he had no spare vehicles available, the only one he had was the saloon allocated for VIP use. I thought we were important, he thought we weren't. We had come too far to fail now, so it was time for some bullshit in the form of *'we have some operational material to deliver to Group HQ - why else would we have brought a Buccaneer here?'* The WO was not happy, but was clearly unwilling to have an argument on the spot, and reluctantly agreed to let us have his only car and driver for the round trip to High Wycombe. Before we could leave Lyneham, Fatboy made a very good decision and told some lies of his own. Realising that the last thing he needed was over 2 hours in a car, he announced that he was going to find a bed to get some sleep. *'Good Luck with that'*, I thought. But I was left most impressed when he asked the driver to stop at the Officers' Mess. Not wishing to risk the possible disappointment of no room available, Fatboy announced that he was the SDO and wanted his room key. With just the MT driver, I made the journey to High Wycombe, successfully collected 6 ceremonial swords and was back at Lyneham by mid-afternoon. I was not perturbed when on showing his pass at the gate, the MT driver was instructed to park up and make a phone call in the Guardroom. I was very perturbed when the MT driver returned and told me he had been ordered to take me directly to see the Stn Cdr! My MT driver disappeared to collect Fatboy and explain my predicament whilst dropping him and the swords at the jet. I was left in an outer office, where the OC's PA was not giving much away.

On being shown into the Stn Cdr's office, any faint hopes I had that this was going to be sociable chat with an ex-Buccaneer pilot were soon dashed. I was left standing to attention for a very long time. I had long enough to assess that I was facing a Wg Cdr navigator, probably OC Ops, or a sqn boss as acting Staish. However, what followed was one of the better bollockings I received during my RAF career, along the lines of misappropriation of HM's aircraft, airfields, fuel, MT and drivers. Collecting swords for a mate's wedding was NOT a valid Service reason for abuse of RAF Lyneham! After a good dressing down, the Wg Cdr mellowed and invited me to sit down. His opening line of the second part of our meeting was *'So what's happening to all the navs when the Buccaneer force folds?'* Interesting, question, I thought, but did my best to explain what I knew about the opportunities available to back seaters once we disbanded. There followed a whole conversation about navigators, which puzzled me... until the penny dropped. A furtive glance at my left breast showed a navigator's brevet! I could have come clean about my crew position at this stage, but as we were now on friendly terms, I elected not to. I just wanted the interview to end. Eventually we were done and to my horror, the Wg Cdr said he would drive me to VASS. I had to endure a drive around Lyneham as personnel saluted the pennant flying car. Fatboy was already at dispersal, looking much better and fully kitted for flight, he clearly wasn't volunteering to be sociable and made himself look busy aligning the IN. I grabbed the F700 and willed the wg cdr to disappear, but he was bored and wanted to see a fast jet see off. Finally, there was no more delaying, I shook hands with my new found navigator friend and climbed the steps into the Buccaneer's front cockpit. My last view of the wg cdr was as we taxied out of dispersal; he gave just a half-hearted wave with a clear look of puzzlement on his face.

The journey back to Lossiemouth was all flown at low level....no SAPs, just in case I inadvertently rolled the bomb door and harpooned somebody with the swords. A faultless navigation service from Fatboy, who was now back on top form and highly amused that he had missed a good bollocking. We even arrived back in the Lossiemouth circuit at the same time as Tommy and Rodders. Groom, Best Man and swords all where they should be with less than 48 hours to go to the wedding. A great result....maybe a few porky pies and some inadvertent deception, but not too many rules broken! If I thought that was the last I would hear about our day trip to Volkel, I was to be disappointed. The inevitable message, *'DT wants to see you in the Boss's office'* came my way. A quick shuffle next door and I was in the first office on the right. After a while, DT looked at my face, looked at me still wearing Sandman's flying suit and sighed. *'I think I can answer the question I've just had from Lyneham's Stn Cdr asking why one of my navigators has just piloted a Buccaneer flying from his station'*. I did consider explaining that the complainant was only the ACTING Staish .... but decided not to; it had been a busy day.

Damien D'Lima

208 Sqn 1990-1994





# In Memoriam



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

\* Albert Livick – Hurricane/Spitfire

John Edmonds – Hunter

\* Chris Osborne - Hunter

John Pearce - Hunter

Peter Sweet - Hunter

Alastair MacNab - Hunter

Chris Draper - Family (*Chris was the nephew of the eponymous "Mad Major", Naval 8's second CO.*)

Brian Robinson – Meteor

Roger Hymans – Hunter

\* Rex Pancott - Hunter

Terry Smart – Hunter

Lewis Wedlock – Hunter

Sqn Ldr Mark Long - Hawk

*\* We understand that Albert Livick, Chris Osborne and Rex Pancott all passed away several years ago. However, the Association has only recently learned of their demise and they are therefore recorded here.*

## Naval 8/208 Reunion - 2023

Following its travels to the Midlands in the previous year, the reunion of the Naval Eight / 208 Squadron Association returned to London on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023. Despite torrential rain, floods and a 100,000-strong protest march in Piccadilly, some seventeen members and guests attended the Annual Reunion lunch at the RAF Club:

Air Mshl Sir Rob and Lady Maggie Wright; Sebastien Colmant, Nigel and Sarah Huckins, Iain and Jane Johnston, Neil and Cathy Meadows, Eugene Moriarty, Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork, Iain and June Ross, Mike and Mary Snelling, David Trembaczowski-Ryder and Keith Whiley.

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

Nigel Champness; Ian Dick; Dave "Ducky" Drake; Air Cdre Ben Laite, Desmond Penrose; Gordon Reekie; Dave Southwood and Malcolm Ward.

Sadly, one of the casualties of the execrable weather was Ben Laite, whose train had been cancelled due to flooding. The grace was therefore read by Eugene Moriarty. After the lunch, the Chairman proposed two loyal toasts: the first to His Majesty The King, followed by a second to His Majesty King Philippe, The King of the Belgians, to mark the welcome attendance of the Association's Belgian guest, Sebastien Colmant. Following the toasts, the Chairman updated the attendees on the status of the Association, before thanking Malcolm Ward (in absentia) and Neil Meadows for their exceptional efforts in producing an excellent Newsletter and Website respectively.



The President thanked the Chairman for his speech and noted that it was some 43 years since he had stood at the Naval 8/208 reunion top table for the first time. On that occasion, he had been the Deputy Squadron Commander, and he recalled the trepidation he felt in coming to speak that night to talk about what the Squadron had done that year, sitting next to Humphrey Edwardes-Jones, with Sir Geoffrey Bromet on the other side. There had been 120 people at that dinner, in the Sovereign's Room at the RAF Club, and it had been the most sensational but awe-inspiring night. As a result of a really excellent team effort, and in the absolutely superb way the room had been set up, notwithstanding the fact that there were not 120 people at this gathering, there was exactly the same atmosphere. Lastly, the President asked everyone to join him in a toast to: **"Forever Vigilant: 208."**



# Pictures from the 2023 Reunion



Left:  
The Chairman addresses  
the guests.



Right:  
Outside, the Palestinian  
peace protesters surge  
along Piccadilly,  
whilst inside, the  
Sphinx wears an  
inscrutable smile.



Below: The dining room decorated with Sqn paintings  
and memorabilia, courtesy of Neil Meadows.



Below: Association members and guests at the table.



Below: The President reflects on past gatherings.



# Membership News

The Association welcomes the following new members:

Tony Gunning	Family	(George) Trevor Clarkson	Meteor
Simon Smith	Buccaneer	Nigel Clifford	Hawk

Members Lost Contact:

W T King	Spitfire	J Strachan	Spitfire
Ron Brown	Hunter	Ron Campbell	Hunter
Whitney Griffiths	Hunter	Barry Wakling	Hunter
Steve Privett	Buccaneer		

In addition: Alan Meadows (Hunter) is in intermittent contact.

Members Found Again:

Jim Babbington	Buccaneer
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Current Membership:

Full (in contact)	273	Honorary	1
Lost contact	100	Associate	4
Total Full Members	373	Family	7



*Nigel Huckins*  
Membership Secretary

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## Letter to the Editor

I write to use the publicity afforded by your wonderful and much-appreciated Newsletter to claim my unpaid dues from my time in Cyprus. When the Squadron was in Nicosia before the families came out, the pilots decided to have a moustache-growing competition with a difference. Not the usual 'who grows the best one in the shortest time', no immature nonsense like that. For our competition we declared that the winner would be the person who kept his for the longest time. Well, I grew a decent one, as you can see in the attached photo, and as I thought it suited me - or perhaps more importantly, although my late wife hated both my moustache and my crew cut, to her credit she tolerated them (young love has strong bonds!) - I kept it until well into my second tour on Britannias. I'm pretty sure that this entitles me to have been declared the winner. We had all pledged the mighty sum of 5 shillings a head, but so far not a penny has come my way. I wait to hear from those who survive!



Yours sincerely,

*Malcolm Fraser*

208 Sqn 1958-1959



**Editor:** Come on chaps, pay up!



# The Final Formal Reunion

As already noted by the President and Chairman, the Association Committee has reluctantly decided that the 2024 reunion will be the final formal gathering. It will take the form of a dinner (*not a lunch as in recent years*) and will be held in the traditional venue of the RAF Club. Fittingly, the final fling will take place on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024, which is the 108<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Squadron. We will assemble for drinks in the bar adjacent to the President's Room at 1730, before sitting down for dinner at 1830. The menu is: lobster & crab cocktail starter; roast cutlet of pork main course and crème brûlée dessert. Vegetarian options will be available on request. Wine and other drinks will be available for purchase at normal RAF Club prices. The ticket price this year is £60 per head for the three-course dinner: this is less than the actual cost of the meal, as your committee have agreed to use some of the Association's funds to keep the price down and, thereby, to encourage as many members as possible to attend the "last hurrah!" The dress code, as usual, is jacket and tie. Please reserve your place via the Association Website or by using the booking form below. The preferred method of payment is by bank transfer, but cheques are also acceptable. Please book promptly and not later than one month before the dinner (*i.e. no later than 26<sup>th</sup> September.*)



## Naval 8/208 Squadron Association – Final Formal Reunion Dinner Booking

Please send your booking to: Eugene Moriarty,  
eMail: [208secretary@gmail.com](mailto:208secretary@gmail.com)

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

Full Address.....

Telephone: ..... eMail:.....

**I will / will\* not be attending the Final Reunion Dinner on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2024.**

Please reserve ..... places.

Names of guests: .....

Special dietary requirements (if any): .....

Payment: Reunion Dinner (£60.00 each) £.....

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

Total £.....

\* I enclose a cheque payable to "208 Squadron Association."

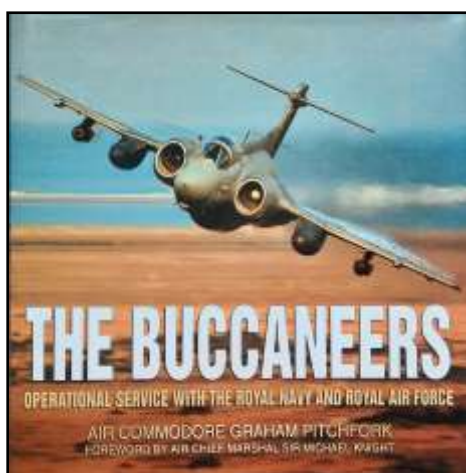
\* I have paid by bank transfer.

*Please use your name as the reference, so that we know who has paid.*

*Please contact the Secretary at his email address above for the Association's new bank details. Please do not use the previous account!*

\* Delete as appropriate.

# A Buccaneer Bibliography

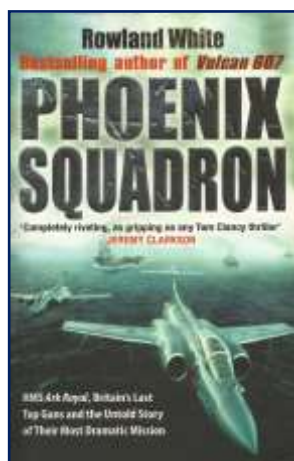


Those who look back with pride on the glory days of the last all-British bomber will no doubt have Graham Pitchfork's superb trio of books on their bookshelf. **"The Buccaneers"**, published in 2002, focusses on the operational history of the aircraft in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, whereas **"Buccaneer Boys"** and **"Buccaneer Boys 2"**, published in 2013 and 2021 respectively, tell the tales of those who flew them or, in my case, maintained them. But there are many other literary works that help to complete the picture. Here are a few of them.

**"From Spitfire to Eurofighter"** (Airlife, 1990) is the story of Roy Boot's career, from an aircraft engineering apprenticeship in Southampton in the 1940s to an executive director's post at Warton in the 1980s. Boot was, of course, the chief designer of the Buccaneer and his book contains not only a detailed description of the genesis of the aircraft and its evolution from a carrier-borne strike aircraft to a land-based bomber, but also tells the story of many related designs and Buccaneer variants that failed to leave the drawing board, let alone leave the ground. As an engineer, I found it a fascinating tale. However, a respected friend of mine described Boot's book

as *"dull as ditchwater."* So, unless detailed technical descriptions of what might have been with a supersonic Buccaneer float your boat, perhaps look elsewhere.

Bill Gunston's **"Attack Aircraft of the West"** (Ian Allan, 1974) devotes just 20 of its 274 pages to the Buccaneer, but it does set the design and development of the aircraft into the political and economic context of the time, as well as comparing the Buccaneer with 10 other attack aircraft projects from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Gunston concludes that the Bucc was *"what everyone wanted and nobody else built."*



**"Phoenix Squadron"** by Rowland White (Bantam Press, 2009) tells the true story of a show of force over Belize in 1972 and how this led to a change in the hitherto aggressive stance of Belize's neighbour, Guatemala. White is a professional journalist and he gives the reader a blow-by-blow account of the background, execution and aftermath of a long-range sortie from the Ark Royal. Drawing on impeccable sources, including several of the crews involved, he has produced a book described by Jeremy Clarkson as *"as gripping as any Tom Clancy thriller."*

Those of us old enough to remember the days when cars were cheap but garage bills were unaffordable on an RAF salary will be familiar with the series of DIY mechanics' books published as Haynes Manuals. Now that cars are designed to baffle even the expert DIY-er, Haynes have branched out into a series of **"Owners Workshop Manuals"** on diverse topics, including one on the Buccaneer (Haynes, 2018). Despite the title of a

workshop manual, the Haynes publication is far more than an extract from the Air Publications: it gives a comprehensive and well-illustrated history of the design, operation and support of the mighty Buccaneer. In addition to background information for the layman, Haynes have included two chapters with stirring tales from Bucc pilots, navigators and groundcrew. The book also includes a comprehensive list of the surviving airframes, whether complete or just cockpit sections.



**The Buccaneer Aviation Group** (TBAG) have produced an eponymously titled and superbly illustrated record of their work in restoring, ground-running and taxiing two complete aircraft, initially at Bruntingthorpe and more recently at Kemble. The TBAG airframes include ex-208 "cab" XX894, which was flown by OC 208, Nigel Huckins in the farewell flypast 30 years ago. The T-Baggers have been maintaining and running the aircraft for longer than it was in RAF service: a remarkable achievement. The 140-page softback book, published in 2021, deserves a place on every Buccaneer Boy's bookshelf: it is available direct from The Buccaneer Aviation Group, which can be found via the usual internet search engines.

*Malcolm Ward*

208 Sqn, 1981-1983

