

**The Association of
No 43(F)
Fighter Squadron
RAF**



Newsletter March 2006

Squadron Reunion 20th May 2006

Venue: RAF Club, 128 Piccadilly

Date: Saturday 20th May 2006

Dinner: 1800 for 1930 with Ladies

Dress: Lounge Suit: Miniatures

Cost: £32.50 per head

Vegetarians: Please make your own arrangements with the club.

Make your cheques payable to: No. 43 (F) Squadron Association & send them to: **Bob Iles, 35 Hillside Road, Aldershot, GU11 3LX.**

Notice of attendance would be appreciated before 5th May.

Reunion 2005: Air Marshal Sir Peter Bairsto KBE CB AFC handed over the Presidency of the Association to Air Chief Marshal Sir Roger Palin KCB OBE MA, a former Squadron Boss.

Reunion 2004: In response to the wishes of some of our members the 2004 reunion was made a 'stag' event. Whilst those present had an enjoyable time, the number of people attending was less than half the usual number. So, with apologies to our 'stag' stalwarts, it has been decided that all future reunions will be with Ladies.

Absent Friends: Air Vice Marshal **Geoffrey Eveleigh.** On Squadron 1933/34, Died December 2005.



Eveleigh: flew Nimrod for George VI

Email Newsletter: We now have the Email addresses of just over a quarter of our members. As an

experiment and in an effort to reduce the administrative costs of the Association, this newsletter will be sent out to them electronically.

If you have an Email address that we do not know about, it would be an enormous help if you'd be kind enough inform us of it. Please send it to: robortiles@lineone.net

4 Presentations: Vic Vickers, as many of you will know was, the Association's Treasurer for a number of decades. He has presented the Association with a brace of 'Cappo di Monte' fighting cocks.



It is intended for them to grace the top table at future reunions.

During a visit by Sir Roger Palin (President) and Air Cdre Ian McBride (Committee Chairman), to the RAF Club just before Christmas, they were accepted into the Club's care. They are now on permanent show in the main display cabinet at the northern end of the First Floor corridor, on the middle (main) shelf, separated by a silver model of a 43 Squadron Fury A/C. So now we have a very visible presence in the RAF Club. Well done our leaders!

On that same visit the Association's duo presented the club with print number 128 of artist Ronald Wong's 'Freedom' painting. This was commissioned by a number of the honorary members of our squadron, together with your Association, for presentation to the City of Stirling to commemorate the granting of the Freedom of their city to 43 (F) Squadron. The following photograph shows the painting, (which depicts a four ship of 43's Tornados overflying Stirling

Castle), being accepted by Air Cdre Geoff Claridge (right) on behalf of the Club from Sir Roger Palin and Ian McBride.



'FREEDOM'

When in Stirling, Dr Katharine Campbell (daughter of Sholto Douglas), presented the Sqn with the '**Sholto Douglas Memorial Trophy**' (depicted below), to be awarded - for the 1st time at this year's reunion - to any rank, air or groundcrew for outstanding scientific or technical contribution. A fine and fitting way to provide a constant reminder of 43's 1st CO.



And last, but by no means least, the 'Gentlemen v Players', that is the Assn v Sqn '**Freedom Golf Trophy**' to be Contested as and when the opportunity arises.

The Sqn Update 'STOP PRESS' that follows outlines the plans to celebrate their 90th Anniversary in July. It is open to all Association members. So all who are interested please let me know so that I can pass on all the latest information to you when it's made known to me.

In closing, to all those who have so generously given donations to help our less fortunate friends. Please accept our deep gratitude and do remember, if the Association is to continue to thrive, we need your active help and support. We hope to see lots of you and your ladies at the May reunion.

Our Best wishes to you all:

Bob Iles: 01252 333386

Neil MacIndoe: 01252 792793

SQUADRON UPDATE

The Fighting Cocks activities over the past year have been wide-ranging and varied, involving such diverse travel to places such as Idaho and RAF St Mawgan. Training has been the main focus and a great deal of success has been achieved.

At the start of 2005, the Fighting Cocks began preparation for OPEVAL, which is a large NATO Exercise. Interspersed throughout the year were various Sector Level Training (SLT) events, which involved the Squadron operating out of more austere environments than normally accustomed to, and under the added pressure of various "injects" such as chemical or mortar attacks. The first of these SLTs in January were representative of what was to come later in the year.

Ex MOUNTAIN VORTEX In April, 43(F) Sqn deployed to Idaho, USA, for Exercise Mountain Vortex. Mountain Home AFB is home to USAF F16s and F15s, and along with a contingent of Tornado GR4s from RAF Marham, the Sqn participated and impressed not only as Blue air, but also in providing a professional Red (opposition) force for the adversaries. Whilst on the Exercise, a number of advanced training qualifications were achieved, ranging from Pairs and 4s lead upgrades to mission commander status.

EX MAXEVAL On returning to the UK, the OPEVAL preparation continued at full tilt, this time with a deployment to RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall, for a practice exercise, MAXEVAL. The Squadron impressed once again, performing admirably in all respects, and helping to make the Exercise a success. Again, the training was beneficial to all involved, not only in the day-to-day operating respects, but also in exposing some of the more

junior members of the Sqn to flying on deployed operations and coordinating regularly with other agencies.

FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF STIRLING. The summer also saw the Sqn awarded the Freedom of the City of Stirling, an event that was long awaited, and celebrated with much ceremony. 43(F) Squadron paraded through the city, and Stirling was treated to 2 flypasts during the course of the day. The Association Dinner was held in Stirling Castle, which was a highly impressive venue, and the links with the city, birthplace of the Sqn's formation were further strengthened.

A period of night flying in the late summer saw the Sqn preparing for its role as NATO Reaction Force, providing a number of combat-ready crews at high readiness, ready to deploy for periods of up to 3 months. During this period, the Sqn became fully Electro Optically (EO) qualified, by completing the requisite sorties using Night Vision Goggles.

Ex OPEVAL Finally, 43(F) Squadron deployed to RAF St Mawgan for Exercise OPEVAL. After the experiences in the summer, all personnel were far more prepared for the technical side of the Ex, such as operating in less than ideal conditions, air attacks and respirators. Domestic issues such as keeping personal kit clean and dry, and sleeping through other peoples snoring also had to be overcome. The international assessors from NATO scrutinized, questioned and quizzed as many of the Sqn as they could manage, and after 2 weeks of hard work, it was finally over. Unsurprisingly, both the Fighting Cocks and the RAF performed above the required standard, and a pass was awarded.

Returning home once again, the Sqn participated in the Combined Qualified Weapons Instructor Course again, followed closely by Exercise Wycombe Warrior. Again, the ability to participate in large exercises was tested and not found wanting - a tribute to the hard work of both air and ground crews. The Sqn's hard work and commitment throughout the year was duly awarded with the presentations of both the Dacre Trophy and The Spitfire Trophy.

THE FUTURE The outlook is bright for the Fighting Cocks for the

foreseeable future. Several overseas detachments are planned for 2006, including an exercise in India, which is eagerly anticipated. As always, the Sqn will also continue to provide crews for Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) in both the UK and in the Falkland Islands at Mount Pleasant. 43(F) Squadron continues to be an energetic, busy and successful squadron. The investment in our weapons system and the continued professionalism of our people means that the Fighting Cocks will continue to be at the centre of Air Defence for the UK, NATO and our wider interests until the advent of Eurofighter Typhoon. Gloria Finis.

STOP PRESS: 43(F) Sqn 90th Anniversary Weekend. Preparations and planning have begun for 43(F) Sqn 90th Anniversary celebrations during the weekend of 28-30th July at RAF Leuchars. The weekend is beginning to take shape and an initial embryonic programme of events is as follows: Fri 28th July: Association & Sqn Golf Day at St Andrews Bay Hotel. Welcome Families Happy Hour/Disco in Officers' Mess. Sat 29th July, PM: Sqn 'Super-Families' Day featuring air displays, Sqn fly-by and role demo, static A/C display, Sqn presentations, Stn display teams, children's entertainers, food and drink etc. Evening: Black-Tie Dinner (Venue TBD) with bands/disco. Sun 30 July, AM: Church Service in local area An exact programme of events and timings will be circulated once details are confirmed. It is recommended that all Association members interested in attending the weekend celebrations begin thinking as soon as possible about their accommodation requirements. The Messes will have some, though not many rooms available, and, as it will be the beginning of the holiday season local hotel rooms / B & B may be at a premium.

Peter Cunningham (on Sqn 1943/44) represented the Spitfire Society at the Commemoration Service marking the 60th anniversary of the end of WW2 in Westminster Abbey on 10 July 2005. His description of this historic event appears as follows:

COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WW2 AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

"My wife, who had joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1940 'to do her bit for the war effort' died a few years ago and so my daughter Patricia came with me to the Abbey.

We were ushered to VIP seats in the North Lantern, just three rows from the central aisle and opposite where Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family would be seated. I considered this to be an honour for the Spitfire Society.

Having arrived in very good time, we took the opportunity for some quiet reflection, each of us deep in our own thoughts. I remembered many pilots and others who had lost their lives during the war. At the time, I had accepted their deaths as inevitable and just carried on with what I was doing, glad that it hadn't been me. It wasn't until some years later that the emotional impact of these tragedies came home to me.

During our time of quiet contemplation, we read a poem that had been written by an unknown 12-year-old girl in 1966. It was called: 'Who Are These Men'. Here are the first three verses:

**1. Who are these men who march
so proud**

**Who quietly weep, eyes closed,
head bowed?**

**These are the men who once were
boys,**

**Who missed out on youth and all
its joys.**

**2. Who are these men with aged
faces**

**Who silently count the empty
spaces?**

**These are the men who gave their
all,**

**Who fought for their country, for
freedom, for all.**

**3. Who are these men with
sorrowful look,**

**Who can still remember the lives
that were took?**

**These are the men who saw
young men die.**

The price of peace is always high.

The Dean, the Very Reverend Dr Wesley Carr, opened the formal proceedings by recalling the terrible consequences of war throughout the ages, and how air power had changed the arena, bringing war to the Home Front. He referred to the gravestones

at home and abroad which memorialised those who had died. He prayed that world leaders would make peace their common endeavour throughout the world and he called upon each one of us today to dedicate our lives to the ideals of love and justice, wisdom and duty.

Her Majesty, aided by two youngsters whose grandparents were WW2 veterans, laid floral tributes on a stone at the high altar in memory of all those who had died during the war, not only the armed forces but equally the civilians, "in thanksgiving for our past and in hope for generations to come".

Books of Remembrance containing the names of all British civilians killed in WW2 were then carried through the Abbey by members of the civilian services: an ambulance driver, a fireman, a nurse, a police officer, a railwayman, a school mistress and a St. John's ambulance representative. They were each escorted by a young man or woman from the four countries of the United Kingdom.

Andrea Catherwood read a passage from the Old Testament. This was the story of the 12 stones that were carried by men from the 12 tribes of the Israelites to mark the miraculous crossing of the river Jordan. The Dean added this quotation: These stones shall be a memorial forever' and said, "you are the stones that commemorate our deliverance from evil; your freedom is the memorial to those who have died".

Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, continued on the same theme. He referred to the carved stone figures of twentieth century martyrs above the West Door of the Abbey and to the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem.

He said that this century had witnessed two of the greatest tyrannies that humanity had ever endured: the terrible regimes of Nazism and Communism. Their defeat had been achieved by people who had committed themselves, risking their lives, to resisting oppression. WW2, he said, had been a people's war involving the whole nation. He concluded by paying tribute to that generation of soldiers and civilians and prayed that God would help present and future generations to act with the same faithfulness against the powers of darkness - to be living stones. The Duke of Edinburgh read an encouraging lesson from the New Testament and Annette Crosbie recited

T.S. Eliot's memorable 'Defence of the Islands'. He wrote this in 1940 after the evacuation of Dunkirk.

The Prayers and Thanksgiving were led by the seven young men and women who had earlier escorted the bearers of the Books of Remembrance to the high altar. One of these, which was read by Nikunj Davda, seemed to me to be especially relevant to the theme of the service:

***"For the young people of our
present generation, and for all
who will influence the future of
this country, that our gratitude to
those who have gone before us
may inspire us to build for those
who come after, let us pray to the
Lord."***

At the end of the service, the first procession was led by Wanda and Joss Criswell and the seven young people who had escorted the Books of Remembrance. Here was youth leading the way into the future.

Other small processions followed them through the South Lantern and then Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family were escorted down the aisle by the Dean, accompanied by the traditional banners.

The whole occasion had been marked by classical organ music supported by the Abbey Choir, and some magnificent fanfares played by the Blues and Royals, and the Royal Marines. The congregation participated in the spirit of the occasion by singing several well-chosen hymns. Altogether this was a rousing celebration in a magnificent church.

My overall impression of the service was very upbeat. It was not only a great commemoration for those who lost their lives during WW2, service men and women, the civil defence and the civilian population as a whole, young and old, male and female, but also a positive look towards the future. I felt that the contributions made by the younger people had been very significant as it was for them and the youth of this great country that the congregation, which consisted mainly of veterans, had offered their prayers for a better world.

It was an honour for me to represent the Spitfire Society on this wonderful occasion. My daughter Patricia joins me in thanking you, the members of the Society, for having given us this great privilege."