

A Short History of 208 Squadron

208 Squadron is indebted to the following authors for their works on the Squadron history, from which the following article has been compiled:

Dr D G Styles 'All the Eights - Eight Decades of Naval Eight / 208'

Mr J D R Rawlings 'History of 208 Squadron' Air Pictorial, March 1975.

The Air Historical Branch.



GENESIS



In the summer of 1915, the advantage in the air battles of the Great War was held by the Germans, with the **Fokker 'Eindekker.'** It was not a particularly outstanding aeroplane, but it did have one significant feature which caused it to be seen as the scourge of the Allies. That feature was a synchronised gun - one which could be fired through the blades of the propeller without cutting it in half. Two Fokker engineers, Heinrich Luebbe and Fritz Heber, devised a cam-operated mechanism that was connected to the oil pump of the E1's Oberursel rotary engine and the trigger of the Parabellum machine gun. The result was that when the pilot pulled the trigger on the gun, the oil pump, on the feed stroke, would actuate the cam and interrupt the firing mechanism of the gun. Small wonder then, for a while, that morale sank and some Allied pilots were heard to describe themselves as 'Fokker Fodder.'

With the aim of raising British and French morale, a plan was put in hand for a major offensive, aimed for the spring of 1916. At this same time, the summer of 1915, Wing Captain C L Lambe had been given command of the Naval Air Forces at Dover and Dunkirk and was in the process of reorganising and expanding in preparation for that spring offensive. Approval had been given for an expansion to 8 squadrons, each to have a complement of 18 aircraft, with a central repair depot to be located at Dunkirk, and a local defence and training squadron based in Dover. Sites for new aerodromes were located between Dunkirk and Bergues. By April 1916, No 1 Wing was positioned at St Pol, No 4 Wing at Petit-Synthe and No 5 Wing at Coudekerque. Wing Captain Lambe had also gained approval for a new organisational structure, wherein a Flight consisted of 6 aircraft, a Squadron would be made up of 2 or more flights, and a Wing of 2 or more squadrons. This brought the Royal Naval Air Service closer in structure to the Royal Flying Corps.

The 'Fokker Scourge' continued through the winter of 1915 /16 as the German Army battered the town of Verdun relentlessly in an effort to 'bleed France white.' Then, 2 things happened which turned the tide of Allied morale. Major General Sir Hugh Trenchard ordered his pilots to 'take the war to the enemy and keep it there' which, despite its initial high cost, seemed to work. The second factor was the inadvertent landing by a German pilot of a Fokker 'Eindekker' on an Allied airfield on 8th April 1916. The aircraft was captured intact and it was pitched against a Morane-Saulnier monoplane in a head-on air-to-air battle. To the surprise of the 2 pilots and most observers, the Fokker was found to be inferior to the Morane in level speed, manoeuvrability and rate of climb. The 'spectre was laid' and, as the news of the confrontation spread across the front, British and French pilots became ever bolder and the Fourth Army Commander, General Sir Henry Rawlinson, reported 'we have command of the air.'

FORMATION

During the summer of 1916, the major Allied offensive took place across the River Somme, aiming to divert German armour from Verdun, to the south. General Trenchard needed now to divert air activity from the Somme front and so arrangements were made with Wing Captain Lambe for the

Royal Naval Air Service to carry out bombing raids in the northern area. The Royal Naval Air Service was in the process of re-equipping with new aircraft, many of which came from the factories of Mr T O M Sopwith, and which were highly superior to those manufactured by the 'official' Aircraft Factory at Farnborough, in which the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had pinned its faith. In the autumn of 1916, the RFC was being heavily pressed by the Germans and the RNAS agreed to loan one scout squadron for work with the RFC on the Somme, with the specific task of supporting the Army in the field. A letter from the Admiralty to the Admiral commanding the Dover Patrol carried the news: 'The Admiralty have decided, on the urgent representation of the Army Council, to detach at once a



squadron of eighteen fighting aeroplanes from the Dunkirk Command for temporary duty with the British Expeditionary Force.' However, none of the Naval Wings 1, 4 and 5 (which were actually squadrons) had sufficient aircraft, so a new unit, numbered '8', was formed by taking a flight of aircraft from each of the existing wings. In early October, Wing Captain Lambe summoned a 25-year-old recently-promoted officer, one **Squadron Commander Geoffrey Rhodes Bromet**, to his office at Guston Road Aerodrome in Dover. Squadron Commander Bromet was offered command of this new Squadron, which was to be located at le Vert Galant, near Amiens on the western edge of the battle front, attached to the 22nd Wing, 5th Brigade Royal Flying Corps, a part of the 5th Army under the command of General Gough.

Geoffrey Bromet crossed the Channel to Dunkirk on board HMS Nubian on 25th October 1916 and reported for orders at Headquarters RNAS. He was sent to le Vert Galant airfield, which was vacated by 32 Squadron RFC, to receive his crews and aircraft, accompanied by his second-in-command, **Flight Commander B L Huskisson**; his Squadron Records Officer, Lieutenant J L d'Albiac; and the newly-appointed Equipment Officer, Second Lieutenant Spurway RFC. These four arrived with a small advance party of men to prepare for the main Squadron's arrival, only to find seven sheds, a farm owned by Monsieur Georges Bossu, and little else: no supplies, no spare parts, little ammunition and no bedding. It was also raining! However, by late afternoon,



the rain eased and the aircraft began to arrive. As previously mentioned, Naval 8 Squadron was to be formed from a flight from each of 3 existing wings (squadrons). No 1 Wing was equipped with the **Sopwith Scout** (or 'Pup' as it was affectionately known). No Type 9400 2-seater (or '1½-Strutter' as it was known because of the double-vee half-struts from the fuselage to the upper wings in addition to the main struts

between upper and lower wings). Thus Naval 8 was formed with 3 different types of aircraft. The Nieuports were first to arrive, 5 of which arrived safely before dark. A single Pup arrived a little later, but by then it was too dark to fly safely so the rest waited for the following day.

Unloading some 8 trucks, 5 tenders and a single trailer was left until the following morning, when it might be drier and the men would be less tired. So hammocks were slung in Monsieur Bossu's barn (this was the Royal Navy, after all!) and the vehicles parked up overnight as the new Squadron settled down for a wet night's sleep. The next morning proved that it might have been just as well to unload the trucks the previous day, as the rain was now driving down against the windows and dripping through the roof. The Squadron's first breakfast comprised dry bread and tea and it was decided that the first priority should be to organise a better supply of food. However, there was insufficient time to organise more supplies and equipment before more aircraft started to arrive, so the second day of Naval 8's existence was as busy as the first. This was also the day that the Squadron received its first official visit, by one Major-General Trenchard, who was concerned to know that the Squadron had settled in. Eventually, the Squadron would consist of 24 officers, one Warrant Officer and 120 Chief Petty Officers, Petty Officers and ratings.

INTO ACTION - WORLD WAR I

Because of the primitive and makeshift conditions, it was several days before the Squadron began operations, but on 3rd November 1916, Naval 8 flew its first sortie of the war, a line patrol from Bouzincourt to Chateau-de-la-Haie by 4 **Nieuports**. On 6th November, the Squadron received another distinguished visitor when General Sir Douglas Haig and 2 staff officers arrived with a



mounted cavalcade of 4 lancers, keen to see the aircraft and to know that the Squadron was battle ready. His question was answered on 9th November when Naval 8 scored its first victory, as **Flight Sub-Lieutenant D M B Galbraith's** Sopwith Pup (N5193) brought down an enemy Roland over Bapaume. Unfortunately, before the month was out, Naval 8 had lost its first pilot, and mounting losses were made no easier to bear by the bitterly cold winter weather. However, in February 1917, the Squadron was pulled back to St Pol in the Dunkirk complex for a rest and to re-equip with the new Sopwith Triplane. As the Squadron left for Dunkirk, they had the comfort of a message from General Haig, which said: 'The care of machines has been above reproach and the discipline of the unit has been very good.' Praise of the best kind and straight from the top.

After reforming and re-equipping at Dunkirk, Naval 8 moved to Furness to defend the Dunkirk area, and then to Auchel to replace Naval 1 Squadron in support of the battle for Vimy Ridge. It was from Auchel that **Flight Lieutenant R A Little** came across the legendary 'Red Baron,' a story best told in the words of Squadron Commander Geoffrey Bromet, from the book 'Naval Eight:'



'The second combat concerned a crowd of Albatross Scouts and the incident, as related by eye-witnesses in the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group of the Third Army is: 'At 6:45 pm on the 7th April 1917, a Sopwith Triplane, working alone, attacked eleven hostile machines, almost all Albatross Scouts, north-east of Arras. He completely outclassed the whole patrol of hostile machines, diving through them and climbing above them. One Albatross Scout, painted red, which had been particularly noticed by this section, dived on to him and passed him. The Sopwith dived on him and then easily climbed again above the whole patrol, drawing them all the time towards the anti-aircraft guns. As soon as they were in range, the anti-aircraft guns opened fire on the patrol, which turned eastwards, and the Sopwith returned safely. The officers who witnessed the combat report that the manoeuvring of the **Sopwith Triplane** completely outclassed that of the Albatross Scout.'



Then, from the same diary, comes this amusing little story:

'On 23rd May, the day ended with a sporting attempt by a Hun to bomb our aerodrome. Booker's Flight had just landed when the shout went up: "Hun at 3000 feet approaching the aerodrome!" At the same time, all of the anti-aircraft for miles around (including our own Lewis guns) opened up on him and Booker, Soar and McCudden jumped in their machines and were away after him. The Hun turned for home as soon as he was spotted, but our fellows caught him over Souchez and gave him a hot time. in the failing light, he made good his escape and was last seen over Lens - a thrilling episode which did credit to both sides.'

Now Naval 8 Squadron moved to Mont St Eloi, where they supported the offensive at the Battle of Messines in the Ypres Campaign, and it was there that the Squadron reached its peak in World War I. Given the job of attacking the high-flying German artillery observation machines, it soon found that by sending up aircraft when the Germans were reported, it was too late. So Naval 8 had to maintain a standing patrol high over the Front, as most interceptions took place at upwards of 17,000 feet. This work was extremely successfully accomplished, but lacked the glamour of the big dogfights.



Whilst at Mont St Eloi, more re-equipment took place with **Sopwith Camels** succeeding the triplanes. Squadron aircrew carried over the names they had given to their original mounts to personalise the new 150 hp machines. Flight Commander Jenner-Parson took 'Angel' from his Triplane N5468, whilst Flight Commander Arnold transferred 'Dixie Lee' to his new Camel. Shortly after, Arnold left the Squadron in a time when several new faces arrived, including a prospective new Commanding Officer,



just one year and a day after the Squadron's formation. After a rest period in Eastchurch, **Flight Commander Christopher Draper** DSC reported to Wing Captain Lambe at Dunkirk Headquarters to be told: 'I'm sending you to Number 8 Squadron. It is my best Squadron. Bromet is in command and it will be a great opportunity for you.' As a flight commander, Draper and his counterpart Munday decided to find some more offensive activities and specialised in attacking kite-balloon sheds at night with bombs slung under their Camels' wings, registering some success in this original field of operations. As the year drew on, fighting flared up on the ground around Cambrai and Naval 8 transferred to Close Air Support duties, hedge hopping around on reconnaissance flights, low level strafing, bomber escort duties and 'interference flying,' preventing enemy aircraft from spotting artillery positions. Such was the danger to the pilots of Naval 8 that no fewer than 8 were decorated for gallantry in January 1918. At the end of October 1917, Christopher Draper succeeded Geoffrey Bromet as the Commanding Officer of Naval 8 and immediately built on the tradition that the Squadron had already established with an indomitable spirit (it was the same Draper that flew an Auster through Tower Bridge in 1954 'to liven things up a bit'). At the end of the year, the Squadron returned to its high-altitude work, achieving further victories, and then in the Spring of 1918 it was returned to Walmer in Kent for a well-deserved rest.

At the end of March 1918, however, things were so desperate in France that Naval 8 was rushed back to help stem the German advance. On 1st April, however, Naval 8 Squadron RNAS became No 208 Squadron in the newly-formed Royal Air Force with its Commanding Officer in the new rank of Major (the Squadron did not take kindly to the change at all and continued to call itself 'Naval 8' and, even when Major Draper left the Squadron in 1919, he and at least one other member of the Unit were **still wearing their naval uniforms!**). A change in the Squadron aircraft markings had also taken place. Until then, Naval 8 had been distinguished by a white disc on the fuselage side aft of the roundels, but from March 1918, its aircraft were painted with 2 vertical bars aft of the roundels, sloping in at the top. The newly-labelled 208 Squadron went first to Teteghem and then to La Gorgue, supporting the Portuguese defence of the line. It was a tragic time for 208 Squadron as it was there that the Portuguese line collapsed and 208 was overrun by the advancing Germans. Unable to fly its aircraft out due to fog, it had to burn them on the airfield and dash away in what transport it had. This abridged version of Major Draper's report tells the sorry tale:



'With reference to the destruction of the 16 machines of this Squadron, I have the honour to submit the following report: About 4:00 am on the morning of the 9th (April) we were aroused by the sound of very heavy gunfire, which increased in intensity towards dawn. There was considerable hostile shelling of Merville, La Gorgue and the surrounding districts. A large number of French civilians were passing west through our Camp, followed by considerable Portuguese troops in open disorder, without either rifles or equipment an apparently un-officered. I gave orders to have the machines removed from the hangars and spread out over the aerodrome in case of a concentrated shelling of the hangars. I ordered officers and men to pack all gear and stores as quickly as possible.

I decided I was not justified in risking personnel by flying away in fog, though a majority volunteered to try. We collected the machines in one bunch in the middle of the aerodrome, the idea being for everyone to clear out and leave one officer with a cycle and sidecar to stand by until the last moment with orders to destroy the machines if necessary. I was unable to get in touch with XV Corps, so I ordered the telephone exchange and compass station to pack up.

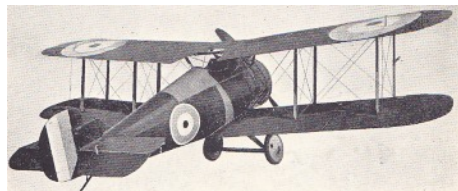
The ammunition supply column which had been parked on the road alongside the hangars had gone, their guns having been captured. The machines were then burnt and everyone cleared out by 11:30.'

Back at Serny aerodrome, Major Draper and his Squadron were re-united, re-equipped and ready for action again within 48 hours. In May 1918, they were joined by **Flight Lieutenant Henry Botterell** and, in the 5 months that followed, 208 Squadron engaged the enemy 103 times and brought down 86 aircraft with only 6 casualties of their own. So Major Draper was heartened, and much relieved no doubt, by a letter from Air Commodore Lambe that arrived after one of the Squadron's better days, just less than 2 weeks after La Gorgue, which read:



'Dear Draper, Hearty congratulations to you and the Squadron on the success of yesterday. I hope you will keep it up. I am glad that the Squadron is doing so well. Yours sincerely, C L Lambe.'

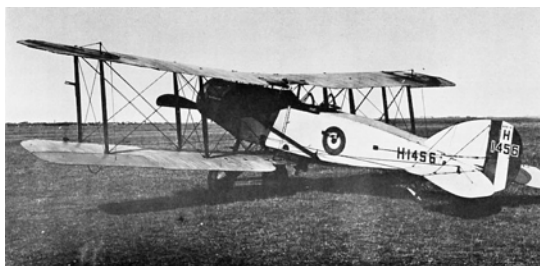
In July 1918, 208 Squadron moved to Tramecourt, where one of its defence responsibilities was HM King George V, who was then residing in a nearby chateau. In September, however, it returned to its original 22 Wing and moved to the bleak airfield at Foucacourt, right on the Somme. From there, it fought on until October, when signs of the final German collapse were showing. It then moved to Estree-en-Chaussee, where the Squadron stayed for only 17 days before moving on to Moritz where it was re-equipped with the Camel's successor, the **Sopwith Snipe**. Before 208 Squadron could fly



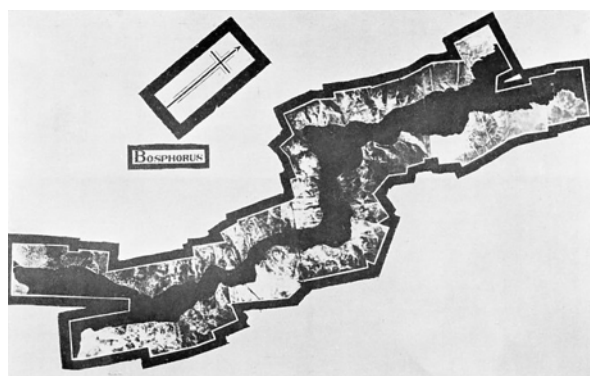
the Snipe in action, however, the action ceased and the Squadron carried out its last line patrol at 10:00 am on Armistice Day, 11th November 1918. Immediately following the Armistice, 208 Squadron became part of the Army of Occupation, where it spent 10 months between Stree, Heumar and Eil, defending the peace in Belgium and Germany. In December 1918, Major Draper handed over command to Major Smart, who eventually brought the Squadron home to Netheravon in England where it was disbanded on 7th November 1919.

A RETURN TO PEACE - THE 1920s

Immediately after the war, however, it was decided by 'those on high' that the exemplary record of No 208 Squadron justified it being amongst the squadrons to survive the massive demobilisation of the armed forces after the Great War. Consequently, No 113 Squadron, stationed in Ismalia and still equipped with the RE8s it flew in the Palestine Campaign of the Great War against the Turkish 7th and 8th Armies, was renumbered as No 208. The new 'Naval 8' was commanded by Squadron Leader W J Y Guilfoyle and flew in the Army Cooperation role. The RE8 was, however, immediately due for replacement and, during October and November 1919, the Squadron was re-equipped with the **Bristol Fighter**, or 'Brisfit' as it was affectionately known (incidentally, 208 Squadron was the last RAF unit to operate the RE8 before it was finally scrapped in November 1919). The 'Brisfit, however, would remain in service with 208 Squadron for a whole decade, in the general purpose as well as the army cooperation role.



Barely had the Squadron settled in at Ismalia when Kemal Ataturk, the Turkish dissident, drove the Greeks into the sea as he advanced on Constantinople in his drive to establish the republic of Turkey. So began the Chanak Crisis, in which the RAF formed an Air Arm to help the Greeks stem the Turkish advance. No 208 Squadron became part of this Air Arm, setting up base in San Stefano in September 1922, where it shared facilities with Nos 1, 4, 25 and 207 Squadrons. On 5 October, the Squadron began its reconnaissance work and there were times that the mud at San Stefano was said to be so dangerous that the only aircraft able to operate were the 'Brisfits' of Nos 4 and 208 Squadrons. Strategic and photo reconnaissances were made of the forward Turkish positions and messages were dropped to the British Cavalry Corps. This was continued until hostilities ceased, by which time the Turkish General Ismet admitted that the British knew more about the **disposition of Turkish troops** than he did. During this period in Turkey, 208 Squadron also carried out further experiments, one of which was a naval idea, which involved trying to bomb a running torpedo. However, with the signing of the Armistice in Switzerland in August 1923, 208's stay in Turkey came to an end and, on 26th September 1923, the Squadron returned to Ismalia. It is perhaps of interest to note that one of 208 Squadron's Bristol Fighters at this time was D8096, which is the last remaining 'Brisfit' to fly and is now part of the Shuttleworth Collection.



The rest of the 1920s were relatively peaceful for 208 Squadron, although there was the occasional detachment to deal with minor, local troubles. For example, a flight of 'Brisfits' was sent to Khartoum in 1924 to help stabilise political unrest there. For the most part, however, peacetime flying involved the maintenance of a high standard of training and involvement in regular exercises. In October 1927, the Squadron moved to Heliopolis near Cairo and took part in experiments with airborne radio that helped bring this new technological development into operational service. In 1929, 208 Squadron moved to Palestine and was based at Ramleh for policing operations during the Arab-Jewish disturbances of the time. During this time, the Squadron's aircraft were decorated with the 4 different suits of playing cards, usually on the fin.



The arrival of a new Squadron commander, Squadron Leader Maurice Moore OBE heralded the last days of the Bristol F2B Fighter in 208 Squadron service and, less than a month after he took over, 208 began to re-equip with the **Armstrong-Whitworth Atlas**. With the change in 14 Squadron's role, 208 became the only remaining Army Cooperation Squadron in Egypt, despite which it won the Middle East Bombing Competition twice, the Headquarters Musketry and Pistol Cups and the Armament General Proficiency Cup. Its training duties took it as far afield as Baghdad and Khartoum and Squadron Leader Moore's tenure in command ended with great praise

from the General Officer Commanding British Troops in Egypt for the Squadron's close cooperation with the Army.

THE 1930s - FACING ANOTHER WAR

It was at this time that a Squadron badge was introduced for use on the Squadron aircraft. In the early 1930s, the RAF began to mark all of its aircraft with a badge on the fin that denoted to which squadron the aircraft belonged. Each badge was set inside a frame which identified the role of the particular squadron. Fighters used an arrowhead, bombers used a symbolic round bomb with a fuse head, whilst Army Cooperation squadrons used a 6-pointed star. Whilst many RAF squadrons in the Middle East used the 6-pointed star, the connotations of the Star of David were thought too much of a risk for squadrons plying routes between Egypt and Palestine so 208, being one of those squadrons, chose to use a disc instead. Remembering that Army Cooperation and reconnaissance were the Squadron's duties in those days, it was logical that they should try to find an emblem that was appropriate to the task. Horus was a hawk-headed god of Egyptian mythology, the son of Isis and Osiris, and a guardian against evil spirits. The Eye of Horus was a symbol often used to protect the dead and many ancient Egyptian artefacts carry an image of the winged eye upon them. Since 208 Squadron was stationed in Egypt and since observation was its primary task, it was reasoned that the **Eye of Horus** should be adopted as the 208 Sqn emblem. The badge had everything to recommend its use by 208 Squadron, as it represented reconnaissance, it had clear links with Egypt (which had been the Squadron's home for 10 years), the wings denoted flight and, of single importance at the time, nobody else had come up with the suggestion for use elsewhere. 'Vigilant' was the motto adopted from the outset. The 208 Squadron colours, too, seem to have originated in that time, for the wings on the badge were yellow and the background disc was pale blue. Seven years later, however, it was discovered that the use of an eye in English heraldry was not acceptable, as it seemingly had connotations of evil spirits, and so the **Gizah Sphinx** became the official emblem on the approved Squadron badge in 1936, although the old motto remained. To complete the story of the badge, it is only necessary to know that the verb 'to look' in Arabic is 'shouf,' corrupted into the commonly-used expression 'shufti' by English speakers. So, in the manner of time, it is not difficult to imagine how 208 Squadron came to be known as 'The Flying Shuftis.' On the **Hawk of today**, the badge, and thus the legend, has endured.



In April 1933, Squadron Leader John Whitworth Jones took over command of 208 and, during his period of command, the Squadron exchanged its Atlases for the Hawker Audax, the Army Cooperation variant of the famous Hart bomber. During this time, the Squadron expanded its ideas as an instantly mobile unit and was prepared to go (almost) anywhere at (almost) a moment's notice. Thus 208 Squadron was fully involved in the development of modern expeditionary doctrine. By August 1935, the conversion to **Audaxes** was complete and the Squadron was expanded to 4 flights, with 'D' Flight equipped with another variant of the Hart - the Demon twin-seat fighter. The new Flight was formed as a result of Mussolini's expanded ambitions in North Africa, which caused him to build a wire fence along the length of the border between Libya and Egypt. The British response was to build a base at Mersa Matruh and expand the scope of 208 Squadron's task. Initially, 'C' Flight was detached to Mersa Matruh in October 1935, followed by 'A' Flight in December. 'D' Flight was detached to No 29 Squadron at Amariya in January 1936 and was eventually absorbed by No 64 Squadron. In the rising political tension, the whole Squadron was deployed to Mersa Matruh until July 1936 when, with Palestine in turmoil again, 208 was returned to Heliopolis but immediately detached to Ramleh for active operations. 'A' Flight was detached to Jerusalem and 'C' Flight to Haifa. However, by the end of the year, the Squadron was reunited in Heliopolis where it became ever more active in desert exercises to improve its operational readiness for whatever might occur in the ever-more volatile world of the late 1930s. October 1937 brought some light relief, however, as both the Squadron and Old Comrades celebrated 208's 'coming of age,' both in Heliopolis and in London.



In February 1938, His Majesty King George VI approved the official badge of No 208 Squadron, which now bore the image of the Giza Sphinx shown head-on and carrying the motto 'Vigilant.' The motto was the only item of the original, unofficial badge used up until that time, since the Chester Herald could not accept the 'Flying Shufti' as the heraldic symbol of the Squadron. But, like the old one, the new badge had strong associations with Egypt, where the Squadron had now spent almost 20 years. The badge was presented to the Squadron Commander at the time, Squadron Leader W A D Brook, by Air Vice-Marshal C T McLean CB DSO MC.

As Hitler and Mussolini expanded their power base in Europe, the Axis powers closed ranks and tension increased, both in Europe and in North Africa. January 1939 was a historic milestone in the history of 208 Squadron, as this was when it converted to its first ever monoplane - the **Westland Lysander**. By the time the Second World War started in September 1939, the Squadron had completed its operational work up on the Lysander and had moved to Qasaba in a state of full readiness. No longer was the 'Flying Shufti' seen on 208 Squadron's aircraft, with its identity now proclaimed by the anonymous fuselage code 'GA.'



BATTLES ACROSS THE DESERT - THE SECOND WORLD WAR

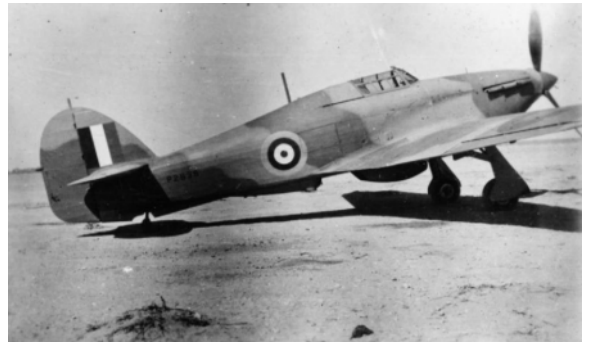
At the outbreak of World War II, however, little happened for 208 Squadron until Italy entered the war in June 1940. This delay gave the Squadron valuable time to establish itself more fully as a mobile unit - a feature that stood it in good stead when the fighting began. Early wartime sorties involved patrols along the border wire from Sollum to Maddalena, occasional artillery shoots on Bardia and light bombing of transport convoys. However, the 'Lizzie' was very slow and a sitting target for enemy fighters, 3 of which picked off 208's first casualty of the war on 15th October 1940 when a Lysander was pursued to the ground and shot up, killing both of the aircraft's occupants.

It became essential, therefore, for the Lysanders to have a fighter escort whenever enemy fighters were about.

The diary notes of one of 208's Flight Commanders, Flight Lieutenant E H I Webber, tell us a little about how the Squadron tried to make the Lysander a little more effective:

'June 1940 - 208 Squadron was then at Qasaba, having moved from its permanent base at Heliopolis. 'B' Flight was detached to Sidi Barrani and carried out the first reconnaissance of the war with Italy. We experimented with 2 40mm canon, but they were not successful owing to the sandy conditions. During this period, we flew with and without fighter protection, doing tactical, photographic and artillery reconnaissances before and during the first capture of Tobruk.'

In November 1940, the Squadron received the welcome news that one of its Flights would be replaced by **Hurricanes**. Henceforth, 208 would operate Hurricanes in the visual reconnaissance role, whilst providing fighter cover for the Lysanders providing close support tactical reconnaissance. After a 2-week conversion course, 208's pilots began to produce photo mosaics of Bardia, Tobruk and el Adem in readiness for the Australian assault on Bardia in January 1941. Such was the excellence of their work, that General Wavell, the General Officer Commanding Western Desert, praised the Squadron for its contribution to the success of that attack.



In January 1941, 208 Squadron moved up to Gambur and a month later to Barce, where it was relieved on 28th February by No 6 Squadron before moving back to Heliopolis on 3rd March. The intention was to re-equip the Squadron entirely with Hurricanes and to update its ground transport. However, the invasion of Greece forced other plans. The Squadron was immediately sent to Greece in support of the Australians and the Black Watch. A succession of moves followed, all the while looking for a safe base from which to operate. However, 208 was hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned, and many aircraft were lost until 208 eventually set up a base at Amphiklia with just 2 serviceable Hurricanes to its name. From there it moved back to Hassani, where the Hurricanes were absorbed into 80 Squadron. The Lysanders continued to operate from Argos, until they were shot up by Messerschmitt BF 110s and destroyed. Squadron Leader Bill Weeks (then a sergeant) takes up the story:

'That was when the skies above us were never clear of German bombers and fighters; when German troops were racing towards Athens after the battle of Larissa and smashed the Expeditionary Force's air power.

The last of 208's aircraft were destroyed at Argos and the men marched, under Warrant Officer Taplin's leadership, undisturbed during the night, but harried throughout the day, dispersing among trees, diving into ditches and snatching small arms shots as we could. Then we watched Air Commodore d'Albiac (ex-Naval 8) standing in the open, calmly and contemptuously firing a revolver at the hunting Messerschmitt 110s.

We gathered at a beach that evening and were led to boats which took us to a Royal Navy vessel which had ventured into these hostile waters in darkness. That was when an unlit boatload of troops was mown down by a blacked-out warship, so near to safety. Then the packed ship took us to Crete - and later still escorted us from that island while men we knew stood to face the German paratroops with dwindling ammunition and, finally, bayonets.

Then, there will be no record of the farmer and his wife above Suda Bay, who filled an empty water bottle for a battered sergeant fitter - with brandy. Splendid, kind people.'

Such was the reputation of 208 Squadron in the region, that the German High Command had broadcast on radio that 'No 208 Squadron, that invaluable link between Army and Air Force in Greece, has been destroyed and all personnel killed, seriously wounded or captured.' Squadron Leader Weeks, and others, have had much to say about that!

No 208 Squadron revived itself at Gaza in Palestine in May 1941 and, next on the calendar of major events, was the invasion of Syria, when a Flight was sent in under the command of the 7th Australian Brigade. From Gaza, 208 Squadron sent detachments of Hurricanes and Lysanders to Habbaniya in Iraq and Amman in Transjordan, the latter attacking enemy aircraft at Damascus. In preparation for the invasion, the Squadron sent detachments of long-range Hurricanes to Haifa and Aqir and, when the invasion began on 8th June, 208 Squadron went in immediately with the Army. Three pilots were killed in low level work: 2 by Allied troops. Under Australian command, the Squadron concentrated on the taking of Damascus, picking up reconnaissance information that the enemy was moving out, enabling the town to be quickly taken. Squadron Leader Bill Weeks notes:

'The invasion of Syria was to aid our French allies in their mandated territory, who were being over-run by the Germans. They had already attacked us, causing some damage. We pushed up to Palmyra, only to find that the French did not welcome us at all! Our aircraft losses and casualty list continued to mount. We ,we got there, and I remembered the Sergeant who happily drank some of General Auchinleck's gin while the big man inspected a parade of troops. Then our little detachment flew Glubb Pasha back to his base in a Lysander.'

With Syria subdued, 208 Squadron concentrated at Ramleh but, in October 1941, it was sent back to the Western Desert, to Gerawls, to join 30 Corps. November 18th saw the start of a new Libyan offensive and 208 went out ahead to locate the enemy positions. From then on, the battle was fierce and confused, raging back and forth across the desert. The Squadron was engaged in many fights with German fighters, predominantly Messerschmitt BF 109s, and 2 pilots, Flying Officer Cotton and Pilot Officer Moss were awarded the DFC for their actions. At the end of March 1942, 208 was relieved by No 40 Squadron RAAF and returned to Moascar in Egypt for a rest. During this heavy fighting, the outclassed Lysander had faded from the scene and 208 Squadron re-equipped again with some Mk II Hurricanes and a Flight of **Curtiss Tomahawks**.



On 15th May 1942, the Squadron returned to the main desert war at Sidi Azeiz and in June, Squadron Leader Burnand DFC, who had led the Squadron through the last hectic fighting, handed over to Wing Commander J K Rogers. Shortly thereafter, the enemy once again regained the initiative and 208, like the other forward squadrons, had to fly its daily sorties while retiring from airfield to airfield, always moving slowly backwards. During this period of intense operations, one Hurricane TacR 1 (T9536) was seen in both British and German markings and changed hands at least twice! However, it was a tough and dispiriting period and, by the end of June, the Squadron had suffered its heaviest casualties yet in the desert fighting. This toll continued, and by the end of September 1942, a high proportion of 208's experienced core had been killed. Therefore, with a lull in operations, a training flight was established to bring the new pilots up to full operational capability, and also to practice the new technique of oblique photography.



The front opened up again in October but, before the big Alamein battles, 208 Squadron was withdrawn from operations for a rest. For this, the Squadron retired to Aqsa in Iraq and was, in effect, non-operational for a whole year. In November 1942, thoroughly despondent, 208 moved across to Palestine where it was cheered by the news that **Spitfire IXs** would arrive soon to replace the Hurricanes. These arrived at the end of the year and were operational by February 1944, but only to fly shipping patrols off Cyrenaica. By March, however, the Squadron was on its way to Italy.

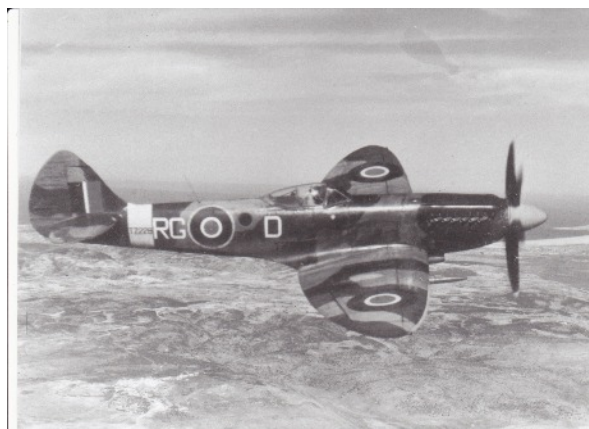
April 1944 saw 208 back in action once again, now officially tasked as a Fighter Reconnaissance Squadron, with its Spitfire IXs based with No 285 Wing at **Trigno**. It also had a SAAF Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Blaauw, formerly of No 40 Squadron SAAF, which was itself part of 285 Wing. No 208 went immediately into action, flying with 40 Squadron until familiar with the area, and they were there just in time for the assault on the Gustav Line. With the attack on Rome in May 1944, 208's attempt to provide continuous artillery observations was hampered by bad weather.



However, with the Line broken, 208 went over to tactical reconnaissance, following the German motorised columns. At this time, the Squadron was flying about 20 sorties a day. Moves were the order of the day also, and it was not until July that 208 really settled again, this time at Castiglione, where it was visited by His Majesty The King. At this time, the Germans had established the 'Gothic Line' and this was fully photographed by 285 Wing before the offensive. Unfortunately for 208, the offensive began in the east, whilst the Squadron was based in the west. However, September was a very heavy month, during which the Squadron flew an average of 36 sorties per day. At the end of September, 208 moved again to Pererola, where it operated under the 22nd American Tactical Air Command. However, the weather took over and for the next few months, precluded much of 208's planned flying task. January 1945 saw 208 directing artillery shoots on Bologna, and things proceeded in this desultory fashion until the final offensive was launched. This was quickly completed and, after several more moves, 208 Squadron returned to Ramat David in Palestine in June 1945, the only Squadron of 285 Wing not to be disbanded when hostilities ceased. Some 78 awards and distinctions had been conferred on personnel of 208 Squadron during the war.

RETURN TO PEACE - AND TO THE DESERT

Palestine was, however, not a peaceful place in the immediate post-war period and 208 Squadron's policing task was not an easy one. In August 1945, the Squadron moved to Petah Tiqvah, into a rapidly worsening political situation with riots and sabotage growing. Whilst stationed at Petah Tiqvah,



12 aircraft of the Squadron flew to Alexandria to take part in the Battle of Britain flypast on 16th September and, during the riots in Tel Aviv in November 1945, the Squadron cooperated with the Armed Police making some very useful tactical reconnaissances over the area of disturbance. In February 1946, seven of the Squadron's aircraft were blown up by terrorists, depleting 208's patrols in the search for illegal immigrants. The gallant Spitfire IXs were replaced by **Griffon-engined FR18s** in August 1946 and, in early 1947, the Squadron had a welcome break with a goodwill mission to East Africa, putting on flying displays as they went.

After another year of shipping patrols, 208 moved to Nicosia in Cyprus in March 1948, with a detachment back at Ramat David. In April, this detachment was operational once more to attack a terrorist hideout in a brewery in Jaffa: their cannon and machine guns drove the terrorists straight out. The Squadron was also involved in continuous reconnaissance duties for the Army, reminiscent of the wartime days in Italy. On 22nd May 1948, early in the morning, an Egyptian Air Force Spitfire appeared over Ramat David and bombed and strafed 7 of 208's aircraft. A couple of hours later, 3 more Egyptian aircraft bombed the airfield, but this time there were 2 Squadron Spitfires airborne, which quickly destroyed 5 Egyptian machines. The Egyptians apologised and explained that it was all a 'navigational error.' The following day, the 208 Squadron detachment left Palestine.

In November 1948, the Squadron returned to Egypt, being based at Fayid, and was used to report on the Jewish incursions into Egypt. On 8th January 1949, four 208 Squadron Spitfires were sent from Fayid to the area of the al Auja-Rafah road to update information on extensive military activity, in which it had been reported that an Egyptian Spitfire had been seen being towed by road across the border into Israel. Warned not to cross the border in their reconnaissance, the 4 pilots took off at 11:15, flying a route to Abu Ageila, splitting now into 2 sections, the top pair acting as cover from 1500 feet, whilst the other pair went down to 500 feet to survey the area. Their route was to take them east to al Auja from Abu Ageila, then north to Rafah along the border and west to return to base. They were unaware that there were 5 Egyptian Spitfires in the area, which would almost certainly attract Israeli aircraft. During the reconnaissance, the 4 Spitfires had 'strayed' across the Israeli border to examine a smoke plume. Ground fire ripped into one of the Spitfires and as the other 3 watched the pilot (Flight Sergeant Frank Close) parachute to the ground, they were jumped by Israeli aircraft and shot down before they had any chance of defending themselves. Of the four, one pilot was killed, 2 were captured and one was returned by Bedouins. There were stories that the four 208 Squadron Spitfires were unarmed, though one of the pilots involved in the incident insists that they were. However, it was an attack that brought the Israelis no credit at all, especially as the international ceasefire was timed to take place at 16:00 on that same day.

THE 1950s - THE JET AGE



By the summer of 1950, 208 Squadron was back at Fayid in Egypt, and receiving its first jet aircraft in the form of the Gloster Meteor. With a couple of T7s and 2 experienced pilots, conversion was carried out on location and, in January 1951, the first **Meteor FR9s** arrived. being the only FR Squadron in the region, 208 was the only Middle East unit to receive Meteors of this variety, and 208 celebrated the Coronation of Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II with an aerobatic display. The Squadron

Commanding Officer at the time was Squadron Leader Morello, and he oversaw the beginning of a period of stability, during which 208 maintained its FR task until the Canal Zone was abandoned. It was during this time, on 18th November 1955, at Abu Sueir, that the **Squadron's Standard** was presented by its original Commanding Officer, now Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet KBE CB DSO. The Standard Bearer on that day was a young Flying Officer named Laurie Jones, who rose to the rank of Air Marshal and followed in Sir Geoffrey Bromet's footsteps by being appointed as Governor of the Isle of Man. Three months later, in January 1956, 208 Squadron left Egypt forever, ending a 36-year association as it withdrew to Malta.



The Squadron's new base was Hal Far, a naval base, but the Squadron was soon on the move again to a trouble spot. In March 1956, it went to Nicosia where it mounted patrols to seek out terrorists in Cyprus. In August, however, it was back in Malta, this time at Ta Kali, although there had been a 208 Squadron detachment in Aden since March, operating against the Yemeni rebels. During the Suez crisis, 208 patrolled Malta, identifying all incoming aircraft. The following year, a detachment went to Bahrain to assist the Sultan of Muscat and Oman against his rebels, after which the Squadron began running down. The Aden detachment joined No 8 Squadron, and the Ta Kali Headquarters was wound up in 1958.

In the meantime, however, a new 208 Squadron was being created from the existing 34 Squadron at Tangmere in England, and 208 Squadron appeared on British soil for the first time since 1919: a period of some 39 years unbroken service in the Middle East and a record unmatched by any other badged RAF flying unit. The new Squadron was equipped with **Hunter F6s**, which arrived in February 1958, and which were immediately emblazoned with 208's official markings. For most of World War II, 208's aircraft had carried no Squadron identity markings but, from the Italian period onwards, its Spitfires carried the code 'RG' (along with the callsign 'ROGAT') that had previously been used on Hurricanes. This was dropped with the arrival of the Meteors, which eventually carried officially approved markings of sky blue and yellow horizontal bands, to signify 'the sky and the desert.' These markings are also reproduced on the fuselages of the Squadrons current Hawk aircraft, in honour of the Squadron's unique history as a desert reconnaissance unit.



Thus painted, the new Squadron Commander, Squadron Leader J H Granville-White took the Squadron and its Hunters to Nicosia on 21st March 1958 and, within a month, the new Commanding Officer's shiny new Hunter had a hole blown in its nose by a terrorist's pipe bomb. Barely had 208 arrived in Nicosia, however, when the United States Sixth Fleet was called upon to bolster the Government of Lebanon, which resulted in a series of combined training exercises with the United States Navy, as well as a detachment to Akrotiri. Shortly after returning to Nicosia, one Flight of Hunters was detached to Amman, in support of British Forces Jordan, to uphold the Government and the Monarchy of King Hussein against a threat from Iraq. For this detachment, 208 began to develop tactics for the use of **under-wing rockets**. As the Flight returned to Nicosia in October 1958, the Squadron entered a quiet phase during which came the news that 208 was to be disbanded and re-formed in Kenya out of No 142 Squadron, which also sported a Sphinx as its badge, but in profile rather than head on.



THE 1960s - OUT OF AFRICA

The new Squadron was equipped with **Venoms**, which it operated for a year, flying out of Eastleigh in Kenya. During that time, the Squadron maintained a presence in central Africa, in a more peaceful mode than for a long time, whilst also maintaining a detachment in the Persian Gulf. In March 1960, however, 208 flew back to Stradishall, where it re-equipped completely with Hunter FGA9s, thus extending its mobility. On return to Nairobi, Squadron aircraft were detached to Khormaksar, Sharjah and Bahrain.





In June 1961, when Kuwait was threatened by Iraq, 208 Squadron was ready to respond and on 2nd July, moved into Kuwait at the Sheik's request to maintain defensive patrols. It remained there until October, and 208 Squadron was the last British unit to leave Kuwait, returning to Khormaksar alongside No 43 Squadron, which was providing air support to British troops in the **Radfan**, as Aden's political issues came to the boil. 208's pilots endeared themselves to the ground troops by carrying out rocket strikes as close as 25 yards from our own ground positions and hitting the right spot. The Squadron's back-and-forth life continued with periodic detachments to Bahrain, and operations against the Yemeni rebels in Aden continued until June 1964 when 208 Squadron moved permanently to Muharraq, although the Squadron continued to detach flights to Aden right up to Independence Day.

In October 1966, at Muharraq, a profound event in the life of the Squadron took place with the celebrations of 208 Squadron's 50th Birthday, which was attended by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet, by Major Christopher Draper and by many other distinguished names of the Royal Air Force. Many more detachments and Armament Practice Camps occupied 208's time over the next 5 years, but there was a certain inevitability about the outcome of all these practices, as the British Government told the world that it no longer intended to maintain a presence east of Suez, so the British Forces in the Gulf were to be disbanded in 1971.

208 Squadron was amongst that number and, on 10th September 1971, it was disbanded at Muharraq. As there were no immediate plans to reform the Squadron, its Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Ian Dick, brought home the Standard and laid it up at the Royal Air Force College Cranwell until it was to be required again. No 208 Squadron had established a record that has not yet been beaten, and is unlikely ever to be beaten - it served in the Middle East for almost 52 years, longer than any other numbered Squadron in the Royal Air Force.

THE 1970s - 208 BECOMES A HOME BASED SQUADRON



Thankfully, the Squadron Standard was required again for, in 1974, it was announced that 208 Squadron was to reform with **Buccaneer** aircraft as the Royal Navy began to lose its fixed-wing capability (the Buccaneer being, of course, originally built to a Royal Navy requirement). The Squadron's new home was to be RAF Honington in Suffolk and, for the first time in its history, its aircrew complement was to include navigators as well as pilots (although observers had been used in its Army cooperation days). As part of No 1 Group of Strike Command, 208 was to serve in the overland strike role as part of Britain's NATO

commitment. Wing Commander Peter Rogers re-established 208's reputation for winning by securing the Gilroy Trophy in 1976 as the Squadron built up to the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in October. Again, Sir Geoffrey Bromet was the Reviewing Officer, and one of the first ever aircraft of Naval Eight (a Sopwith Pup, N5182) was brought to the gathering.

In 1977, 208 was selected to be the first British Squadron to take part in the United States Air Force's **Exercise Red Flag**, a permanent exercise scenario covering a thousand square



miles of the Nevada Desert, centred on Nellis Air Force Base. Such was 208's performance that the Aggressor Squadrons scored only one 'kill' in the 2 weeks of the detachment. One USAF pilot was overheard to say: 'if we can't see 'em, we can't kill 'em and they're flying at 50 feet flat out. The Squadron turned in a similar performance a year later in 1978. Canada held Exercise Maple Flag in 1978, a similar concept to that of Red Flag, but over the flat frozen wastes of Alberta. It was a huge area and as flat as a billiard table, the perfect place to be caught. However, when the Canadian F15 Eagle pilots were asked how they found the Buccaneers on their magic state-of-the-art radar, they replied: 'It's simple: if it flies lower than anyone else and faster than anyone else, then it's a Buccaneer.'

THE 1980s - A PULSATING DECADE

Another peaceful phase followed as 208 settled down to a programme of routine training, trophy winning and the odd detachment to Gibraltar and Decimommanu. In 1982, No 12 Squadron, 208's neighbour at Honington, moved to RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland to take up the task of Maritime Support. By 1983, it was decided that 208 would join 12 and make way for Tornado squadrons at RAF Honington.

So, in July 1983, 208 moved up to Scotland to make its new home at Lossiemouth and become another Maritime Support squadron. September, however, saw more strife in Lebanon, where civil war in one form or another had raged for many years. Now **Operation Pulsator** called for the deployment of 6 Buccaneers to Cyprus, where they would provide support for the British contingent of the International Peacekeeping Force in the Lebanon. In true 28 tradition, the Squadron made the headlines, as a newspaper reporter sent back this dispatch under the by line: 'Buccaneers flew the Flag at 50 feet:'



'To the second, the planes, 2 each time, screamed in from the sea at 500 knots to pass directly over the British base at Hadith before turning on their wing tips to head north for a sweep over the Lebanese capital.

Then, as we waited on the rooftop for the aircraft to complete their steep turns and come back over the hills in contour-hugging formation, the desultory shelling in the hills above the British position was joined by bursts of machine gun fire. After their second run, the planes passed no more than 50 feet above a pylon in front of the British base, then dipped down to fly out to sea at minimum altitude. The 2 did a great deal for the morale of the British troops.'



At the end of their detachment to old haunts, all of the 208 Squadron aircraft and their crews returned safely to Lossiemouth in March 1984. Now the Squadron could settle down to some peaceable flying for a while, though another event of major note was to take place in 1984, when Air Marshal Sir Humphrey Edwardes Jones presented Wing Commander Ben Laite, then the Squadron's Commanding Officer, with a **new Standard** to replace that presented by Air Vice-Marshal Sir Geoffrey Bromet nearly 30 years before.

During 1985, 208 Squadron took possession of its new Hardened Aircraft Shelters (or HAS) and continued training with all sorts of weapons, including the Sea Eagle missile. It was said at the time that 208 was familiar with every oil rig in the North Sea. One thing was certain, the Northern Approaches were certainly secure. As history now tells us, the Naval 8 / 208 Squadron reunion dinner of 1990 was a notable one, for its Guest of Honour was Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, who happened also to be Commander-in-Chief of British Forces in the Gulf whilst Saddam Hussein was staking yet another of Iraq's claims to possession of Kuwait. A few comments were made about the Gulf, over which there was much natural curiosity, but little more.

THE SQUADRON'S 75TH YEAR

On a not-so-sunny day in 1991, 208 Squadron was minding its own business on exercise out of St Mawgan with the Navy, when the Western Coalition went to war over Kuwait, part of 208's old stamping ground. Everyone was glued to the television sets and then, on 23rd January, the Squadron was called back to Lossiemouth and ordered to deploy to Muharraq, where it had spent its last days as part of Air Forces Gulf just 20 years earlier. Now, the task was to support Operation Granby, an element of Operation Desert Storm. All this after a press statement had been released the day before saying: 'I can tell you it is extremely unlikely that the Buccaneers will be sent to the Gulf.'



The Royal Air Force moved with a speed of decision and action not witnessed since World War II as 2 '**desert pink**' **Buccaneers** flew out to Muharraq on 26th January, followed by 2 more the next day and 2 more on the 28th. finally, 12 aircraft and 18 crews were located in Bahrain. They flew with such aircraft names as 'Glenfiddich,' 'The Macallan,' 'Glen Elgin,' 'Famous Grouse,' and 'Tamnavoulin.' During February, 107 sorties were flown without a single mechanical mishap. Initially, the Buccaneers provided laser designation for the Tornados, amongst which their targets were

bridges, fuel / oil depots, then airfields, hardened aircraft shelters, silos and storage bunkers. Interestingly, the Buccaneer flew higher, faster and further than its counterpart and ultimate successor, the Tornado GR1. The laser designation of targets worked perfectly, and not one sortie was lost. Then 208 came into its own, carrying its own laser guided bombs as well as the laser designator to take out its own targets, including Iraqi aircraft left out in the open. In a press conference before the Buccaneers arrived in the Gulf, it was asked of the Defence Minister, Tom King: 'Why are we sending a 30-year-old aeroplane to a high-tech war?' The answer came back: 'to increase the accuracy of the precision bombing,' which is exactly what it did. But the best quote of all was Wing Commander Bill Cope's: 'I compare the Buccaneer with my Grandmother: old, but formidable.'



As the ceasefire was declared, so activities closed down and the Squadron prepared to head for home. On 17th March, a tanker connection was organised across the return route and all 12 'Buccs' were flown home safely. After a total of 33 years of service, 17 of them with 208 Squadron, the Buccaneer had well and truly proved its worth. To quote the Squadron's own notes: 'Now, with a couple of years left to run, the old lady of Brough will be able to retire content.' And retire she did, but not for another 3 years as the Buccaneer Wing at RAF Lossiemouth was to continue in operation until April 1994, when its squadrons would be replaced with Tornados. There was a period of deep apprehension as the news came out that 208 was unlikely to be

converted to the Tornado; disbandment being the more likely fate of one of the RAF's longest-serving squadrons, with a substantial history, a fine record in battle, and a deep tradition.

ADVANCED FLYING TRAINING - INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

The gloom was finally lifted, however, as it was announced that the RAF's fast jet training system was to be revised and the numbers of several distinguished squadrons were to be allocated to Hawk units, which would now be Reserve squadrons, having a full battle role in the event of any major emergency. They would be known as (R) Squadrons, rather than just 'shadow' squadrons, as had been the practice in many operational conversion units previously. Each squadron would have its own aircraft and its own Commanding Officer, carrying on the traditions of the former units. So it was that No 208 Squadron became 208(R) Squadron and was established with Hawk jet trainers at RAF Valley in Anglesey.

Today, 208 continues its traditions and has built up a proud record in its short existence as a Reserve training squadron. All trainee pilots destined for the front line units of both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force can look back on the Squadron's highly creditable past and know that they will take a part of that spirit and ethos forward with them in their role as the combat pilots of the future.

