

NAVAL EIGHT 208 NEWS 2015



The Annual Newsletter of the Naval 8/208 Squadron Association

Letter from the Squadron



Above and below: 208 returns to its old stamping ground in Cyprus.

After taking command of 208 Sqn in Dec 2012, the unit has been through a period of growth and rejuvenation so it is with some sadness that I must move on to Staff College after handing over command to the new OC, Wg Cdr Chris Kidd. Wg Cdr Kidd arrived in January to begin his training and formally takes command in May.

Since my last letter to the Association, the Sqn has been hard at work completing 3350 flying hours over a roughly equal number of sorties. In order to achieve this total, we've had to work closely with our Sqn engineers and manage the hours and fatigue to obtain maximum utility from a limited fleet of the 'classic' Hawk T1. Despite low aircraft numbers the Sqn's output has again matched that of the RAF's flagship fast jet training system run by IV Sqn. Over the last twelve months, ten ab initio students have graduated from 208 Sqn.

The ten included six UK students and one Saudi student being role disposed to the Typhoon OCU, two UK students being role disposed to the Tornado GR4 OCU and one Royal Navy student being posted from the end of Advanced Flying Training (AFT) to complete Tactics and Weapons (TW) Training with the United States Navy at Meridian NAS in the USA. We currently have four Kuwaiti students and seven UK students on course, although by the time this newsletter is published the Kuwaiti students should have graduated to the F-18 OCU in Kuwait.

Along with the Sqn's core task of training ab initio students we've also refreshed four pilots for the Red Arrows, nine pilots for 100 Sqn, trained four AFT instructors and five TW instructors, introduced two foreign exchange pilots to UK procedures before sending them to the Tornado GR4 OCU, refreshed the new Stn Cdr of RAF Boscombe Down and refreshed a pilot destined for the F-35 programme in the USA. On top of all of this tasking there was also the need to refresh one of our creamie instructors. Flt Lt Kingman took a tumble off his bicycle on the way home from the pub and was grounded for six months due to concussion! Kingers swears he only had a couple, but either the bump on the head or the alcohol left him unconscious so the doctors were having none of it!

Despite a busy year there have been ample opportunities for fun with two overseas detachments. The Sqn conducted a two week air combat detachment to RAF Akrotiri in July 14 and a week of formation flying at Solenzara in Corsica during Mar 15. There have also been overseas training flights to Oulu in Finland, Ursel in Belgium, Laage in Germany, and a static display at the Malta International Airshow.



(Continued on back page)

Naval 8 – 208 Rumblings



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N Meadows MA BSc Esq

Newsletter Editor:

M M Ward MDA BSc Esq

Printed by: M&B Print,
9 Great Central Road
Loughborough, LE11 1RW
email: mandb@print.fsbusiness.co.uk

The President's Foreword

It was with great sadness that I heard the news that Dr David Styles passed away at the beginning of this year. David was a stalwart of the Association, having been both the Association Historian and Newsletter Editor for over 35 years; you will find an obituary later in the Newsletter. We will miss a faithful friend and colleague; on behalf of the whole Association I extend our condolences to his family.

It was only a short time ago that I was welcoming Wing Commander Nick Gatenby as the new Squadron CO, but by the time you receive this Newsletter the Squadron will have said goodbye to Nick and be welcoming the new CO, Wing Commander Chris Kidd. I wish Nick all the best in his next appointment and hope he will continue to play an active role in the Association.

It will not have escaped your notice that next year will see the 100th Anniversary of Naval Eight/208 Squadron and to celebrate the event our Association Historian, Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork, has kindly agreed to take on the momentous task of writing a book to commemorate the occasion. Graham is the author of a dozen or so books on military history, and in particular on Royal Air Force related subjects, and is eminently qualified to undertake this task. Also the Squadron is in the early stages of planning a suitable event next year to mark the 100th Anniversary; more details to follow in due course.

You will see in the Newsletter an extract from the enlightening speech given by Gp Capt Neil Meadows on the middle period of the Hawk era, that included some memorable tales from his meeting with Flight Lieutenant (rtd) Henry Botterell in Canada; the last surviving pilot from World War I and an ex member of Naval Eight/208 Squadron. This year we will have a final speech on the Hawk era from Gp Capt Jamie Hunter recalling life and times on 208 Squadron in the mid 2000s. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the RAF Club on Saturday 17th October 2015.

Chairman's Chunter

As noted by the President, we lost a great supporter of the Association when Dr David Styles passed away in January: David served the Association faithfully for very many years as both Newsletter Editor and Association Historian. I am sure you will join me in wishing his family our most sincere condolences.

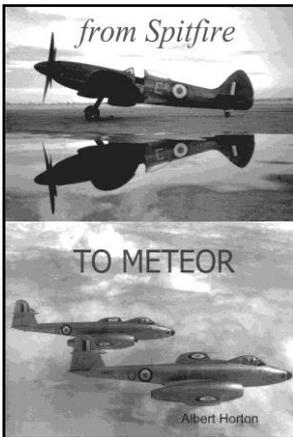
There are a number of Committee changes over the last year with Gp Capt Neil Meadows taking over as the Association Webmaster. Neil has refreshed the website and added new features: take a look and you will see a great product (www.naval8-208-association.com). Also, Gp Capt Tim Webb asked to stand down as the Hunter Chapter representative and I am very grateful that Iain Ross has offered to take up the role: welcome aboard. A big thank you to Tim for his work and the very significant contribution he has made to the Association, both as Hunter Chapter Rep and as Webmaster. Time seems to fly (no pun intended), but it hardly seems that we were welcoming Wg Cdr Nick Gatenby as the new Squadron boss, when it is time for him to hand over the reins to his successor, Wing Commander Chris Kidd. I wish Nick all the best of luck with his new appointment and I hope to see Nick and Janet at future Association events. I very much look forward to meeting the new CO and he will be made to feel very welcome at the next Reunion Dinner, where we will listen with great interest to his presentation on what has happened on the Squadron over the year.

I always make a plea for articles, short anecdotes, memorabilia or pictures so that we can capture the true life and spirit of 208 for posterity. The stories we tell of the people and places are the very essence of what makes this Squadron and Association such a tight community. If you have anything for the Newsletter please send your entry to Malcolm Ward. Contributions for the Website and the 100th anniversary history please send them to Gp Capt Neil Meadows or Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork respectively.

DONATIONS – The donations we receive from members are the life blood of the Association as they enable us to offer membership for free to all current and ex-serving members of 208 Squadron. The money we receive from members helps us to pay for the newsletter and postage, in particular. We have very few other costs and we plan to keep it that way. So my perennial plea: keep the donations rolling in!

208 Spitfire Pilots in Print and on Line

FROM SPITFIRE TO METEOR



Despite 208 Sqn's long and glorious history, first-hand accounts of life on the Sqn very seldom appear in print, so it is a particular pleasure to read Albert "Bert" Horton's memoirs: "From Spitfire to Meteor." As the title suggests, Bert served on 208 during the transition from the Spitfire era to the jet age.

Bert's memoirs waited 10 years to find a publisher and the book only made its appearance in print via a self-publishing concern last year, sadly, some months after Bert's death in December 2013. It is a great read, with a real feel for the post-war era. Unsurprisingly for a self-published book, it lacks the gloss and crisp typeface of a more expensive publication, but that does not detract from what is a real gem of post-war Sqn history. Bert's description of his flying training and first solo will strike a chord with many, but for me the real interest comes in his depiction of daily life and incidents on the Sqn in Egypt. This was a different Air Force: lunchtime drinking, frequent accidents and not infrequent fatalities. One hilarious episode concerns the period referred to in the title, when the Sqn was being re-equipped with the Meteor. The drawdown of the Spitfire was going too slowly

for one of Bert's contemporaries, who hit upon the cunning plan of destroying Spitfires, in order to accelerate their replacement with Meteors! Bert recounts how the miscreant deliberately bailed out of a perfectly serviceable Spitfire, directly overhead the airfield, on the pretext of some incurable malfunction of the engine and this despite the fact that all and sundry could hear that the engine was performing normally! Surprisingly, the perpetrator was not court-martialled. Bert did not share this disdain for the, by then, ageing Spitfire and he continued to fly them at every opportunity, whilst also building up his hours on the Meteor. He was a member of the Sqn's Meteor formation aerobatic display team and he gives a hair-raising account of an uncontained engine failure in close formation: fortunately, without fatal consequences for any of the formation members. Bert's time on 208 ended in October 1952 and he left the RAF two years later, after a short tour in the UK, plus a brief spell of flying with the RAF Reserve. His memoirs are a fitting tribute to him and to his peers of the post-war 208 Sqn.



Albert "Bert" Horton in a Meteor

"From Spitfire to Meteor" is available from the [Lulu](http://www.lulu.com) self-publishing website, priced £10.50 plus p&p.

THE MEMORY PROJECT

With the end of the Second World War now 70 years ago, the numbers of surviving veterans of that era are inexorably dwindling. It is therefore encouraging to know that there are several schemes to collect and preserve their reminiscences before it is too late: one such initiative is the Memory Project, an on-line library of recordings of the verbal recollections of Canadian veterans. Amongst these is former Pilot Officer Robert Ellis Knowlton, who served as a photo-recce pilot on Spitfires with 208 Sqn in Italy during the closing stages of the war. Ellis' recording is accessible via the [Memory Project Website](http://www.memoryproject.ca), which also provides a transcript and several photographs to accompany the recording. Space does not permit the full transcript to be reproduced here, but the following extract should give a flavour of what is available via the Memory Project:

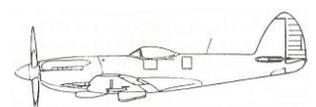
"We flew in pairs. One guy would actually shoot the mission looking at the ground and the other guy would look after him, he'd be watching the air and looking out for enemy fighters or even friendly aircraft because at times the skies were pretty full. ... Spitfires had a very short range: we only carried 85 gallons of fuel, so a lot of the missions were about an hour or so. And they'd go on from dawn until dusk. If you were on the first light of dawn, you'd be woken by somebody and you'd have a cup of tea and then you'd go off in your plane and take off into semi-darkness, so it would be about dawn by the time you arrived over the target. And this would continue until dark."



Plt Off Robert Ellis Knowlton

The Memory Project is a noble initiative, which will ensure that the voices of Ellis Knowlton and his contemporaries remain accessible to future generations.

Malcolm Ward
Editor

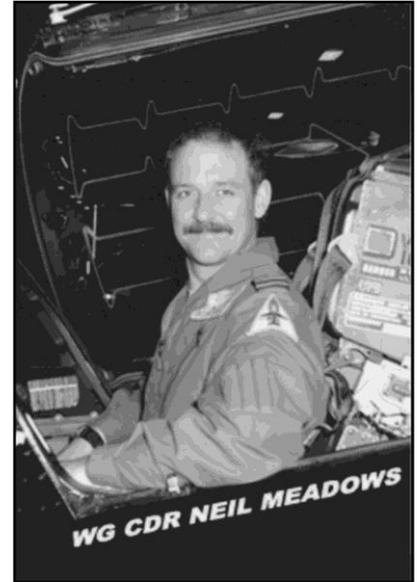


Guest of Honour 2014

The guest of honour at the 2014 reunion dinner was Gp Capt Neil Meadows. His presentation covered the middle years of the Hawk era, which saw the peak of the flying training task. Here is a slightly shortened version of his script.

I had the honour to take command of 208 Sqn on 5 March 2001, in what was a period of great change in its new role in Flying Training. It is a shame, therefore, that Monty Christy was unable to address last year's Reunion about the early years of the Sqn as a training unit, which would have nicely set the context for what I am about to say.

To set the scene, therefore, the RAF's pilot training system had undergone a series of severe cutbacks to match the reduction of the Defence Budget and the RAF front line: the 3 Basic Flying Training stations of Cranwell, Linton-on-Ouse and Church Fenton had been reduced to just one - RAF Linton-on-Ouse. The Advanced Flying Training combination of RAF Valley and the 2 Tactical Weapons Units at Brawdy and Chivenor had first been collapsed into the "Mirror Image" arrangement at Valley and Chivenor, and then just to RAF Valley on its own, where 19 Sqn took on the role of the Tactical Weapons Unit, and 208 Sqn the Advanced Flying Training School in a re-invented, but very much smaller wheel. That is perhaps all well and good in an Air Force of the size that it is now but, in 2001, the somewhat larger RAF was very short of fast jet pilots and, having severely reduced the training machine, had insufficient capacity to train them. What met me on my arrival at 208 was, therefore, a complete reorganisation of Flying Wing at RAF Valley (indeed, I was originally due to be posted in to be the Chief Instructor of No 4 Flying training School). There was to be a massive increase in the flying task, and an expansion of the Sqn to match the new 40-strong staff pilot establishment, with sqn ldr flight commanders and a new wg cdr boss (me). To illustrate the magnitude of the new requirement: when I arrived, the maximum daily flying programme comprised some 50 programmed sorties. To achieve the massive new training requirement, the Sqn would have to *average* 50 per day which, due to the prevailing Anglesey weather factor, meant programming an astonishing 84 sorties per day, every day. This equated to an annual task of some 11,500 sorties to train 83 RAF, 12 RN and 5 foreign ab-initio students, as well as 13 instructors and a brace of refresher courses.



What this all meant, however, was that for the first time in RAF history, every future RAF combat pilot would have to pass through a single training sqn. Therefore, although 208 Sqn was no longer "operational," it had, perhaps, its most critical role of all time in safeguarding the very future of the RAF. So, regretfully, mine is not a tale of derring do, no operations, no overseas deployment and certainly no sunny days on the beach with a beer in hand (although Trearddur Bay does have its attractions!). Instead, it is a story of how 208 Sqn achieved that massive flying task. However, having assumed the responsibility of training every single future RAF combat pilot, I was determined that the Sqn's illustrious history, ethos and spirit would play a very big part in their education, both as pilots and as junior officers and I am extremely grateful for all of the wisdom and advice that I received from Association members during my time in command. The historic theme was pursued in as many ways as we could. For example, as part of the changes to the administration of RAF flying training, we were required to give each student a written arrival brief about the Sqn, its current operations and what was expected of them. I saw that it would be a vital part of that brief to give them a comprehensive Sqn history to encourage and reinforce the ethos of the service. I managed to obtain a few hundred copies of David Styles' Book "*All the Eights*" and I hope that at least a few have been kept and treasured.



Thanks to the outstanding efforts of Simon Stocker, my predecessor (and now OC A Flight), the new Sqn markings were approved in April 2001. The new scheme was intended to reflect the whole history of the Sqn within the overall effort to inculcate a sense of historical pride in the student population. They comprised of 3 elements. Firstly, the Eye of Horus emblazoned on the fin to reflect the Sqn's heritage as a desert reconnaissance unit. Secondly, a new set of horizontal blue and yellow bands was added to either side of the fuselage roundel to reflect the "sky and the sand" of the Meteor and Hunter chapters. Lastly, the Buccaneer era was also represented by the blue and yellow chevron painted on the nose.

Although a modern building, the walls of the Sqn accommodation at Valley were drab and uninspiring so, with the help of Keith Hildred and the Command Graphics Department, I set about creating a set of educational wall displays that would illustrate the air power doctrine of the time with examples from 208 Sqn's historic past. No-one walking through the building could fail to notice these high-quality graphic displays, and it was my hope that everyone would draw lessons on Air Power Doctrine and 208 Sqn history, just by absorption, if nothing else. The educational wall display

project was a ground-breaking idea amongst RAF sqns and has since been copied by many other units and organisations as an extremely effective way of using high-impact graphics to deliver educational output.

My efforts to engage the students to design an appropriate replacement for the Naked Lady 208 "Penetrate" badge of the Buccaneer era, to fully reflect the Sqn history, to reinforce their sense of pride and to properly reflect the Sqn's training role, was less well received by the national press! My Andy Warhol 15 Minutes of Fame was a 4-day personal attack by The Sun newspaper over my "bombshell decision" to "ban" the badge on the grounds of Political Correctness. Naturally the article had little basis in fact, but I suppose that you should not let fact get in the way of a good story! I only regret that Miss Jacqui Degg (the model who posed on Page 3) did not actually visit the Sqn at the time. In the words of the late Rik Mayall, I am sure that one of the young pilots would have liked to have taken her to heaven and back.

My second appearance in the Sun marked what was the most memorable event of my time in command. This time, however, it was the Toronto Sun, which reported our visit to meet Flt Lt Henry Botterell who, at 104, was the last surviving pilot from WWI and a former member of 208 Sqn. Finding Henry was the most remarkable coincidence. I am an avid aviation art collector, and by accident, I found the print of Robert Taylor's painting "Balloon Buster", which depicts Flt Lt Henry Botterell of 208 Sqn shooting down a German observation balloon. I brought the print to the Sqn, who were unaware of its existence and, through the outstanding research efforts of Keith Hildred, we discovered that



Henry was still alive and living in a nursing home in Toronto. Of course, we had to pay Henry a visit, so Keith, I and Simon Batt (our youngest pilot and, at 24, some 80 years younger than Henry) flew out to Toronto to meet this remarkable man. This visit itself would require a whole lecture to describe and, perhaps in this centenary commemoration of WWI, I ought to do so, but unfortunately we have not got time here. However, here is Henry on the Sqn at the time, on the left in his Naval uniform. We made a recording at the time of Henry reading a citation (the original of which is held on the Sqn), which mentions his part in a Sqn engagement with the enemy.

In August 2001 there was another change in RAF policy that marked the end of an era for 208 Sqn. Up to this point, RAF fast-jet pilots had been awarded their wings at the end of their course on 208 Sqn. However, from then onwards, they were to be awarded their wings at the end of Basic Fast Jet Training at RAF Linton-on-Ouse, before arriving at RAF Valley. Thus 208 Sqn lost the traditional Wings Ceremony. However, in true Sqn style, the Sqn went out with a bang, holding a "SuperGrad" at which wings were awarded to some 60 trainee pilots on 5 concurrent courses – the biggest graduation of fast-jet pilots in the history of the RAF! The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire, officiated at the ceremony, with the blessing conducted by the Chaplain-in-Chief. The mother of all graduation parties followed! Undoubtedly, the removal of the Graduation Ceremony threatened the Sqn ethos, but we made sure that the traditional end-of-course celebrations continued, with a 9-ship flypast and dining-in night with the Sqn Standard displayed.

August 2001 also saw RAF Valley's 60th Anniversary celebrations, which were opened by a formation of 16 Hawks in the form of the number "60". In the lead was, of course, 208 Sqn in the shape of the "6". Regrettably, the weather was awful, which made the flypast somewhat sporty and spoilt many of the pictures, but it did not dampen the enthusiasm of some 30,000 spectators, including some Association members, who were estimated to have watched.



On Thursday 25 October 2001, some 104 Sqn members, associate members and guests gathered in the Officers' Mess at RAF Valley to celebrate the 85th Anniversary of the Sqn's formation. At this event we were extremely honoured to be joined by Mr George Fortune, the brother of Flying Officer John Fortune, a pilot of the Sqn who was shot down and killed in North Africa in January 1942. After the meal, Mr Fortune read notes on the career of his brother, who was awarded a posthumous Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions whilst flying Lysanders and Hurricanes in the reconnaissance role during WWII. You could have heard a pin drop during his speech, which was followed by a spontaneous standing ovation by the trainee pilots. It was never more appropriate for me to end the evening with the words of Sir Geoffrey Bromet: *"Whenever you, and those who follow after, salute this Standard, you as they will recall brave names and great occasions and be resolved by your actions and example always to maintain the old tradition."*

2001 ended with a visit by RAF Valley's Honorary Air Commodore, His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of RAF Valley. Although this was not a dedicated 208 Sqn event, His Royal Highness was gracious enough to present the Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy to the 2001 winner, Flt Lt Peter Sharpe, for his

excellent performance as the 2001 RAF Hawk display pilot.

In 2002, the Sqn was host to a BBC documentary team for almost a year as they followed the progress of one of our courses from Groundschool through to the end of the Tactical Weapons training on 19 Sqn. Mindful of the memories of "Fighter Pilot" in the 1980s (and also having served with John McRea), we worked very carefully with the 'Beeb' to ensure what they produced was a completely accurate reflection of the Sqn and its work. Nonetheless, it was a fascinating year, which resulted in the 6-part BBC2 series "Combat Pilot", which was broadcast nationally in early 2004, to very favourable reviews. Certainly, it gives a detailed insight into the Sqn's activities at the time and, I hope, will be a valuable historic record.

I was also privileged to lead a 4-ship flypast of Perth to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of El-Alamein on 26 October 2002, thus linking the exploits of the Sqn of the past with the training task of the present. At the time, there were only 4 sqns still flying that had served in the battles of El-Alamein. Launching out of RAF Leuchars, a Dominie of 55 Sqn and a Hercules of 70 Sqn were followed by a box-4 of Jaguars from 6 Sqn (the Flying Can-Openers) and a box-4 from 208 Sqn (the Flying Shuftis). All aircraft flew down the main parade line, after which both the 6 Sqn and 208 Sqn elements returned to fly a "missing man" finger-4 formation over the saluting base to honour fallen comrades. This was also the day of the Association reunion so, following the flypasts, in one of the longest Hawk sorties I have ever flown (1:40) I flew on to RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire and then onwards by train to London to the RAF Club, where I was also honoured to meet 2 former members of the Sqn who had served at the time of the Battle of El-Alamein.



But 2002 was predominantly a hectic flying year as we chased our target of 84 sorties per day. Fun was officially banned by the Air Staff at Headquarters as they removed anything that could possibly distract us from the task, to squeeze yet another quart out of a pint pot that had already produced gallons! So, how did we achieve a more than 50% increase in our flying rate (within existing resources, of course...)? Basically, it involved an analysis of everything that the Sqn did to determine how we could make things more efficient. We questioned everything, and led many "sacred cows" to slaughter as we implemented the necessary changes. Examples of what we did include the following:

- We redesigned the ops room to provide a one-way flow system to ensure that incoming and outgoing crews would not interfere with each other, and that supervision of this massive new task could be maximised.
- Flying 9 sorties per hour (each with a half-hour brief and debrief) required 9 briefing rooms in constant use. We only had 6, so we replaced the traditional 4-coloured CFS board brief with standardised PowerPoint slides delivered on Smart boards. This upset the veteran QFIs, but provided greater standardisation and cut the briefing times by half.
- We followed up on a bright idea by one of our junior pilots and installed closed-circuit cameras in the Ops Room, with remote control to monitors in the crewroom. Therefore, not only did we invent a new video game of "spot the Auth's bald patch", but we removed the congestion from the Ops Room and kept everyone better informed.
- We analysed the weather, to find that the weather factor at Valley is the same in any 6-month period throughout the year. Summer really is as bad as winter in Anglesey. Scratching our heads further, we realised that the reason every course is behind the line in winter is not because of the weather, but because of the lack of daylight. So, we reduced student numbers on winter courses and increased them on summer courses, and programmed some sorties, such as instrument flying, to take place at night. As a result, we came out of winter "on the line" for 2 years running. It did, however, upset the Headquarters programmers because having variable numbers of students on our courses spoiled their nice, neat progress charts.
- Astonishingly, because it was a training unit, 208 Sqn had no adjutant or ops support staff. All admin was done by the Sqn pilots, thus taking them away from their primary task. We therefore introduced an adjutant and an ops support staff, much to the delight of the instructors. We even employed an ops sgt to write the flying programme, which was a huge leap of faith, but which was extremely successful and released the duty programmer to fly up to 2 additional sorties per day.
- We re-negotiated the engineering contract. Historically, rectification had been done at night to provide 18 aircraft serviceable at 08:00 for a 5-wave day. However, unserviceabilities reduced the availability throughout the day, so we rarely were able to fly the 84 sortie target. Changing the rectification pattern to provide a steady flow of aircraft at a rate of 9 per hour solved this issue.
- Most significantly, we looked at the flying programme which, with 84 sorties, thus 168 pairings of over 100 aircrew, plus simulators and supervisory duties, had become too much for the human brain to encapsulate, and we were losing a number of sorties because of the inevitable errors that crept in. For example: pilots were programmed to fly when they were absent and often too close to the previous sortie so that they could not make the next take-off time. We searched for a computer-based solution, but realised that it was impossible, because most of our variables are infinitely variable. What we did find, however, was a programme called "Flight Pro" that could easily identify and show us where the errors were, thus allowing us quickly to rectify them. My estimate was that this one factor alone saved us approximately 5 sorties per day that would otherwise have been lost.

So, as a result of these and many other improvements, in early 2003, we managed our first 84 sortie day. To put this into perspective: in 2002, we had mounted a huge effort in a fine summer's week and had flown 300 sorties in that

week. In 2003, we were flying an average of 330 sorties per week as a matter of routine. When I arrived in 2001, maximum effort was a 50 sortie day. In 2003, we were averaging 50 sorties per day. And, for the same reason that you might climb Everest - because the challenge was there - in order to prove the robustness of our new system of operations, the Sqn flew 100 sorties in a single day on 21 July 2003: a feat unsurpassed by any other sqn in the history of the RAF and a record which seems unlikely ever to be challenged. What was remarkable above all else is that it seemed to be just a normal working day (although the crewroom was unusually quiet!). The Flight Pro software had ensured that no-one had been obliged to exceed fatigue limits, and several of the Sqn pilots commented that they felt they could have flown more. Only one person did more than the norm, and that was me. I saw the first sortie off in the morning and flew the last - the hundredth one.

So, 208 Sqn achieved its colossal task and, in doing so, safeguarded the very future of the RAF in providing sufficient future combat pilots for the front-line requirement. Ironically, very shortly after my handover to Wg Cdr Nigel Clifford, further cuts to the front line reduced that task markedly, and the Sqn was never again required to fly as intensively as it had during my time in command. But that, I hope, is another story.



That we achieved so much is due, of course, to the pilots of 208 Sqn and their dedication, professionalism, indomitable spirit and overwhelming enthusiasm for flying: I would suggest that the qualities of the young pilots in 2003 were as high as they have ever been in the Sqn's history. I had the pride and the privilege in commanding 208 Sqn, but I am left with the words of our very first Sqn Commander, Sir Geoffrey Bromet, whose words of 1918 I dedicate to the Sqn of 2003:

"The pilots needed a rest, it is true, but it is to their everlasting credit that they got through without loss of keenness or morale, and it was more apparent than ever to me that I had the support of the finest crowd of fellows ever."

Neil Meadows

OC 208 Sqn 2001 – 2003



OC 208 Squadron

Wing Commander Chris Kidd was commissioned into the RAF in 1998 after studying Mechanical Engineering at the Nottingham Trent University and completing EFT as a member of East Midlands UAS. Following Officer training, he completed flying training on the Tucano and Hawk aircraft, before being selected to fly the Tornado GR4. His first frontline tour was on 14 Squadron at RAF Lossiemouth, during which he completed operational deployments to the Middle East, flying combat sorties over Iraq in support of Operation RESINATE (South) and Operation TELIC.

In 2005 he was posted to 19 Squadron at RAF Valley where he became both a Qualified Flying and Tactics Instructor, and a Qualified Weapons Instructor on the Hawk T1, completing this tour as OC Weapons Instructor Flight. Posted back to the frontline in 2008, he was appointed as the Training Officer and IRE for 31 Squadron at RAF Marham. During this tour he flew combat sorties over Iraq, in support of Operation TELIC, and Afghanistan, in support of Operation HERRICK before posting, on promotion to XIII Squadron as OC Training. However, as part of the 2010 SDSR, XIII Squadron was scheduled for closure, and in 2011 he was posted to IX(B) Squadron. Whilst serving on IX(B) Squadron Wing Commander Kidd again flew on operations, this time over Libya in support of Operation ELLAMY.



In 2012, Wing Commander Kidd was posted to HQ Air Command, RAF High Wycombe, where he served as the A3 Operations Attack Desk Officer. Promoted to Wing Commander in 2014, he deployed to ISAF Joint Command, Kabul, where he served for 6 months as the NATO Deputy Chief of Fixed Wing Plans. Wing Commander Kidd is married to Elise, an RAF Logistics Squadron Leader and they have two sons, Jack and Oliver.



Left:
Kenya 1959:
Somebody drove the Boss's Venom into a storm drain at Eastleigh one night during night flying practice. Nobody was hurt, but the Boss was none too pleased.

Below:
Replenishing fuel and oxygen during a turn-round.



Right:
Venoms armed and ready to fly air to ground 20 mm cannon firing exercises on Kutanga Range.



Left:
Re-arming a Venom: the armorer lying down is reaching up to the four 20 mm Hispano cannons above him.

Right:
A Venom makes a low pass over the range before returning to base.



Left:
"Mac" McLeland in nonchalant pose.

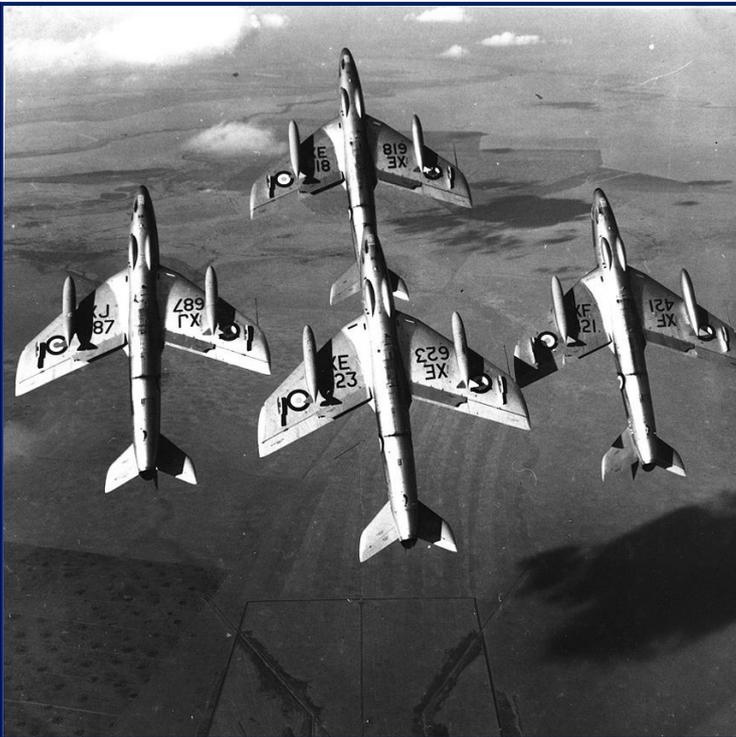


Left and below:
Kenya 1960:

The Venoms reached the end of their fatigue life and were scrapped. The Sqn flew home to England in a Britannia and collected a full set of new Hunter FGA9s. A Masai welcoming committee assembled to greet the 208 Sqn Hunters on arrival at Nairobi on 3 June 1960.



Below:
Formation loop over Embakasi Airport, Nairobi.



Below:
208 Sqn crewroom at Nairobi airport.



Left:
"Delta" on arrival at Nairobi.

Right:
"Mac" McLeland in 1960.



All of these pictures are taken from Peter "Mac" McLeland's collection, which is accessible via the Sqn Association [Website](#).

Squadron & Association News

SQUADRON COMINGS AND GOINGS April 2014 – March 2015

Arrivals:

Wg Cdr Chris Kidd
Sqn Ldr Wes Wesley
Flt Lt Darren French
Flt Lt Paddy Kershaw

Flt Lt James Mander
Flt Lt Trigger Rigg
Flt Lt David Stark

Departures:

Flt Lt Neil Battersby
Flt Lt Rich Bradley
Flt Lt Charlie Butterfield
Flt Lt Mostyn Payne

NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE - CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES

CHAIRMAN	D J Trembaczowski-Ryder.
HURRICANE/SPITFIRE	S E Jefford.
METEOR	J D Penrose.
HUNTER	I C Ross.
BUCCANEER	Sqn Ldr P Harrison, OC A Flt, 208 Sqn, RAF Valley.
HAWK	Flt Lt T Sawle, c/o 208 Sqn, RAF Valley.
GROUNDCREW	D Gill, Drakemyre Croft.
HON SEC	M W Brown.
HISTORIAN	Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork.
WEBMASTER	N Meadows.
EDITOR	M M Ward.
MEMBERSHIP SEC	Air Cdre Ben Laite.

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

COMMITTEE/CHAPTER NEWS:

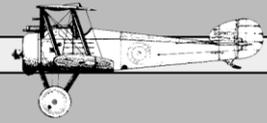
Meteor. The Meteor Chapter held its annual gathering at the Coach and Horses in Soho on Wednesday, 6th May 2015. The gathering was a great success, with numbers attending the same as last year - a good sign!

The first Old Comrades gathering of Naval 8/208 took place in 1919 in a pub in Soho. The Meteor Chapter continues that tradition on the first Wednesday of May each year, with an all ranks get together where old comrades can recall their time on the Squadron. If you wish to join us on Wednesday 4th May 2016, give Desmond Penrose a call. Desmond hopes that as many Old Comrades as possible will join him and relive a part of your time with Glorious 208.





In Memoriam



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

Harold Barber	Spitfire	Air Cdre Geoff Cooper	Spitfire
Ken Lambden	Spitfire	Dougie Mee	Meteor
L K (Ken) Richards	Meteor	Jack Gregg	Hunter
G H W Slaney	Hunter	Dr David Styles	Hunter
Ian Tite	Hunter		

The Association deeply regrets that an error in the original 2015 Newsletter listed Barry Wakling of the Hunter Chapter as having passed away. Barry is, in fact, very much alive and well, and the Association would like to apologise to Barry and his wife for any distress that might have been caused.

Dr David Styles



We do not normally print obituaries in the Association Newsletter, but without David Styles, there would be no Newsletter. David edited the Newsletter for an incredible 35 years and also served as the Association Historian and as Vice-President. Additionally, he was instrumental in assembling the collection of medals awarded to members of 208 Sqn, which the Association presented to the Sqn in 2011. David served on 208 Sqn in Cyprus and Jordan in 1958 and 1959: many of his photographs from that time and later periods have been widely used to illustrate 208 Sqn's long history. After leaving the RAF, David had a long and successful career in the automotive industry for more than 25 years, during which he specialized in heavy vehicles and was the youngest regional manager for the York Trailer Company. He subsequently moved to academe, becoming program leader for the BTEC Motor Vehicle National Diploma course: he achieved a 100% pass rate amongst his students. At Loughborough College he continued his work on the National Diploma program, including the creation of workbooks for students and he coached 70% of his final-year students to Distinction Level scores.

David Styles started writing whilst still in the automotive industry: his first major work "*Riley - As Old as the Industry*" appeared in 1982 to great acclaim. This was to be the first of 22 books to his name. David had recently moved to California to focus on lecturing and writing on automotive technology and to conduct historical research for the Jimmy Doolittle Air and Space Museum. His 2011 work, "*Two Flights to Victory*" examined Doolittle's raid on Tokyo in 1942 and formed the basis for a series of lectures. David's final book "*The Tuskegee Airmen and Beyond*" traced the influence of the famous all-black fighter squadron as the catalyst for political action to bring desegregation to the US Armed Forces. Closer to home, David also produced the short history "*All the Eights*" two decades ago, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of 208/Naval 8.

David died suddenly on 5 January and a service celebrating his life was held at St John the Baptist Church, Belton on Monday 19 January 2015. More than 60 of David's family, friends and former colleagues attended, including Phil Pinney, Graham Pitchfork, Ben & Helen Laite and Neil Meadows of the Naval 8/208 Sqn Association; 208 Sqn was represented by Flight Lieutenant Kevin Brown. The Service was conducted by the Reverend Tony Edmonds. In his moving eulogy, David's son Phil described his father's larger-than-life character that all Association members who knew him will remember, and his real presence that gave him a natural air of strength and authority. David was a proud man with many stories to tell and an almost boy-like passion for planes, trains, cars and motorcycles, and he gave himself to these interests wholeheartedly as an historian, author and teacher.

Dr David G Styles MBA PhD FBIM FInstSMM FIMI
23 April 1939 - 5 January 2015



Reminiscences of a 208 Electrician

Doing guard duty about once a week at RAF Nicosia. The issue of tropical kit at RAF Tangmere, then we had a fashion show. Flt Lt Sheppard coming into the electrical section and asking what spares we would need for 1, 2 and 3 month detachments. Later we found out why. A very early call out. A long wait at the dispersal, then boarding Hastings and Beverleys for the trip to Jordan, once Israel had given us permission to over fly its air space. We arrived in Amman, a rifle in one hand and a suitcase in the other. Not having a clue what to do with compo rations. Our makeshift kitchen where the electricians and armourers cooked for the Squadron. Dave Dorward driving the King's Mini. Ray Herrington stabbing an Arab hand that came under the wall of the tent.

Below: Flightline at Nicosia.



The day the CO came into land with his port wheel locked up. The boring Sunday afternoon when the duty crew sprayed all the tool boxes in bright colours. The Engineering Officer certifying an aircraft fit to fly after sticking sellotape over cracks in an aileron. Flt Lt King was unable to show King Hussein live air to ground firing because he couldn't get his wheels up. Sundays out with families to Kyrenia or Famagusta where it was too hot to walk barefoot on the sand. A cool trip to the mountains. The joys of KEO and Kebabs in Metaxas Square, Nicosia. The day the Squadron was grounded when someone filled the paraffin stove with petrol and set fire to the 700 office. It was a bit of a panic. The day a Chipmunk aircraft with a length of telephone cable and an insulator snagged around its wheels flew passed Nicosia control tower for a damage inspection, and in doing so managed to hit the tailplanes of

all our aircraft parked on the line. Going up the coast with Flt Lt Melaniphy to a bombing range where we set up a large canvas target of a tank. All afternoon the Fleet Air Arm attacked the target with rockets from Seahawks. When we took the target down at the end of the day there wasn't a single hole in it.

The BBQ at Fisherman's Cove, Akrotiri. The punch the aircrew made. It must have had Avpin (Starter Fuel) in it. It was a good night. The SWO at RAF Nicosia who went into orbit when one of our 3 ton trucks broke down. We all got out wearing flip-flops and shorts. Nobody was in uniform. Two SPs who when driving through our dispersal arrested two of our lads for being improperly dressed. They took them to the CO. He certainly gave the SPs a blasting. They left with very red faces. Flt Lt Sheppard, early one Sunday morning, giving a fantastic flying display in a Meteor, climbing vertically then closing the throttles and cartwheeling the aircraft. At Akrotiri, the whole Squadron was up and came in across the airfield playing follow my leader. Another fantastic flying display. "Moose" David helping the armourers to belt up with painted ammunition ready for air to air firing. In Amman, Don Brimms crushing his bone dome by using it as a chock when trying to stop a runaway aircraft. Someone did a cartoon of Brimms wearing a chock on his head. The disbandment fly past at RAF Nicosia, Flt Lt King flew past inverted and put his wheels down or up, so to speak.

Below:

The Instrument/Electrical Section at Nicosia, made from a packing case.

In Amman the CO give a party. Some of the lads were detailed as car park attendants. But they had the last laugh; they parked the cars in such a way that it took hours to get them out after the party. I think Ray Herrington was involved. At Nicosia the Instrument/ Electrical section was made out of a helicopter packing case. A cut-price building. In Amman when they had a press day, a squadron scramble was ordered for the cameras. We stood to one side, the press got in close, and then the aircraft turned and we lost the press in a sandstorm. I was on the second flight from RAF Tangmere to Istris, then on through Malta to Nicosia. All the way in a Beverley, what luxury. I can't remember how many hours we were airborne. The guard duties with the sodium lights that shone onto the dispersal so that you couldn't see the other side of the barbed wire but EOKA could see us. The tea from the urns, the taste was unbelievable. The sandwiches and meals kept warm is something I will never forget. At Akrotiri, the day that F/O Brims leapt from his aircraft after a dogfight with the US Navy "I got one, I got one," he shouted. The instrument guy pointed to the G meter. "Oh my God" said Brims and quickly zeroed it.



Hope my memory is not too far gone.

Herby Larkman

208 Electrician



Membership News

The Association welcomes the following new members:

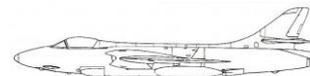
Ellis Knowlton	Spitfire	Charles Wavell	Spitfire
Chris Bolton	Hunter	Ian (Min) Brown	Hunter
Tom Buckland	Hunter	Glyn Davies	Hunter
Rod Dean	Hunter	Roy Harrison	Hunter
Dick Northcote	Hunter	Bob Partridge	Hunter
Paul Lee-Preston	Hunter	John Thompson	Hunter
Jim Uprichard	Hunter	John Broadbent	Buccaneer
Iain and Jane Johnston	Family		

Members Lost Contact:

R C Hooper	Hurricane	J Storey	Spitfire/Hurricane
P Belt	Hunter Groundcrew	Jeremy Fradgley	Buccaneer

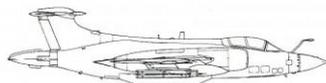
Members Found Again:

Redvers Laverick	Meteor	
<i>(Sincere apologies to Redvers for mistakenly recording in the 2014 Newsletter that he had passed away.)</i>		
Doug Johns	Meteor	
John Sweetman	Hunter	
<i>(For several years, John had mistakenly been recorded as "Passed Away.")</i>		
Ron Campbell	Hunter	
Ian Dick	Hunter	
Dave Stanley	Hunter	



Current Membership:

Full (in contact)	359	Honorary	3
Lost contact	70	Associate	1
Total Full Members	429	Family	5



Ben Laite
Membership Secretary

Keeping in Touch

The Squadron Association is always striving to update its records of former members of 208 Squadron. If you know of anyone who served with the Squadron and is not in touch with the Association, please let us know. It would help if you would take a moment to enter the details below. We will do the rest.

I believe that the following person served with No. 208 Squadron in (approximate year)

at RAF: The Squadron was flying.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Telephone: eMail:.....

Please forward to the Membership Secretary.

Naval 8/208 Association Annual Dinner

61 Members and guests attended the Naval 8/208 Sqn Association Dinner at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, on Saturday 18th October 2014:

Mrs J Abell, Mr M Bradley, Mrs T Bradley, Mr J Broadbent, Mrs S Broadbent, Mr M W Brown, Mrs H Brown, Sqn Ldr J Buckle, Mrs C Buckle, Mr S Colmant, Mrs A Colmant, Mr D Drake, Mr H Field, Mrs J Field, Wg Cdr N Gatenby, Mrs J Gatenby, Mrs L Hansen, Miss C Holgate, Mr N Huckins, Mrs S Huckins, Mr I Johnston, Mrs J Johnston, Fg Off A King-Adams, Flt Lt G Kingman, Air Cdre B Laite, Mrs H Laite, Flt Lt A McEwen, Gp Capt N Meadows, Mrs C Meadows, Mr J Müller, Mrs L Müller, Mr F J Nicoll, Flt Lt M Payne, Mr J D Penrose, Air Cdre G Pitchfork, Flt Lt S Polwin, Flt Lt B Polwin, Flt Lt B Poole, Mrs A Poole, Lt T Preece, Flt Lt S Roberts, Mr I Ross, Mrs J Ross, Flt Lt T Sawle, Mrs S Sawle, Mr P Sharp, Mrs D Sharp, Mr E Sharp, Mrs C Sharp, Mr P Smith, Mrs A Smith, Flt Lt N Staite, ACM Sir Mike Stear, Lady Stear, Mr J Swain, Mr D Trembaczowski-Ryder, Mr M M Ward, Mrs L Ward, Mr K M Whiley, AM Sir Rob Wright and Lady Wright.



Above: Déjà vu! Flt Lt Neil Battersby, the 2014 winner of the Sir Geoffrey Bromet Trophy, was unable to attend, so the President, Air Marshal Sir Rob Wright, asked Flt Lt Tom Sawle, the 2013 winner, to accept it on Neil's behalf.

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

K Allen, P W Armstrong, M Asher, R Calvert, N Champness, A W Cope, C M Draper, J A Ford, G Green, T Heyes, R Hills, S Jefford, J Manley, B Mahaffey, J Parker, L Phipps, P Pinney, B C Robinson, A G Smith, K Smith, D Styles, E A Thompson, K Trow, P J Vicary and J White.

The 2015 Reunion Dinner will be held at the RAF Club at 6.00 for 7:00 pm on Saturday 17th October 2015. Tickets this year will cost £50 per head for the three course dinner, including port and coffee. Dress is lounge suits. Please reserve your place via the Association Website or by using the booking form below.

Naval 8/208 Squadron Association – Reunion Dinner Booking Slip – 2015

Please return slip to: M W Brown:

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

Full Address.....

.....

Telephone: eMail:.....

I will / will* not be attending the reunion dinner on Saturday 17th October 2015.

Please reserve places.

Names of guests:

Special dietary requirements (if any):

Payment: Reunion Dinner (£50.00 each) £.....

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

I enclose a cheque/postal order for £.....

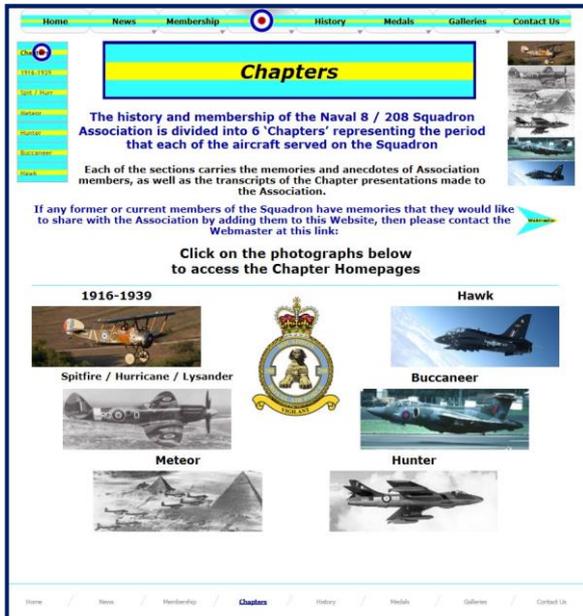
* Please delete as appropriate

Please make cheques payable to: 208 Squadron Association

Association Website Re-launched

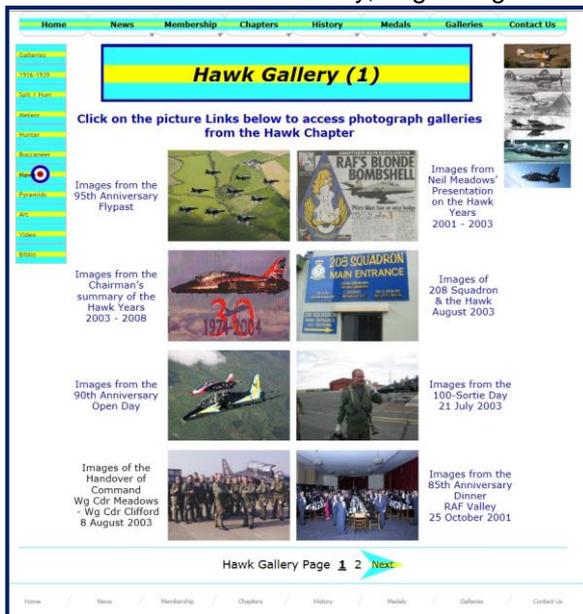
Following Tim Webb's outstanding work in setting up the Naval Eight / 208 Squadron Association Website, the site was re-launched in January by our new Webmaster – Neil Meadows (OC 208 Squadron between 2001 and 2003).

Neil has refreshed the appearance of the site to match the crisp look and feel of the annual Newsletter, as the following screenshots of the Website illustrate. New to the site is a regularly-updated news facility that can be used by all Association members to keep up to date with happenings in the Association and on the current Squadron at RAF Valley.

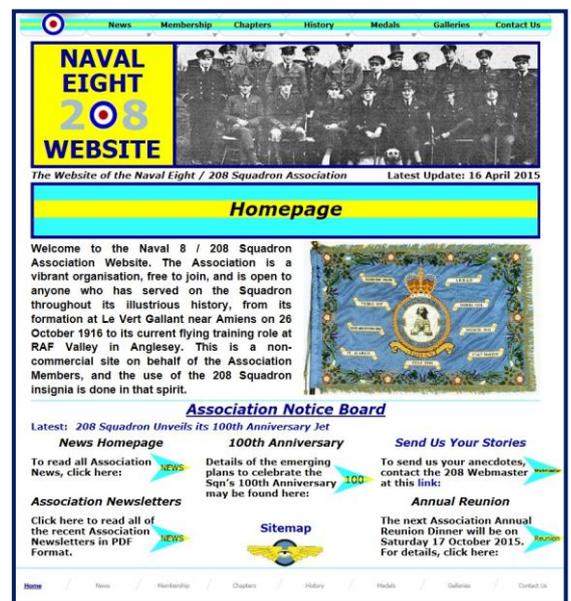


The site is organised into the 6 Chapters of the Association, each of which contains details of the Squadron Commanders and Locations. Updated Membership records are included in close liaison with the Membership Secretary. There is a link to a Photo Gallery for each chapter and a facility to contact the Association Chapter Representative, either directly or via the Webmaster. The main feature of each Chapter is, of course, the members' anecdotes, and Neil has faithfully recorded all of the recent presentations to the Annual Reunions, and the articles that have appeared in the last 15 years of Newsletters.

Neil has transferred all of the material on the original site, including the Medals Collection and Dougie Marr's History, all of which is now presented in a larger, clearer font size with a multitude of moving slide shows and pop-up photographs. The Photo Gallery section has been considerable expanded and includes all of Dave Gill's collection from the Hunter period 1958-59 in Nicosia, Akrotiri and Jordan. Neil has also included a Video Gallery, a growing Bibliography and even an Art Gallery to display 208 Squadron related aviation artwork. There are PDF



Neil is, however, running out of material, and would like to expand the site further. Therefore, please have a look in your own collection of 208 memorabilia and send in some additional stories. All Neil needs is text and photos – electronic would be preferable, but he has the facility to scan photos and OCR text if necessary. He may be contacted via the new Website's 'Contact Us' facility.

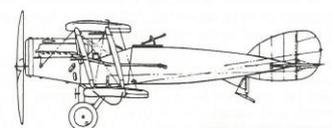


copies of the annual Newsletter available back as far as 1999, and there are records of the winners of the Geoffrey Bromet Memorial Trophy. Even Ben Laite's 'Graces of Yesteryear' have been recorded. The site includes details of the forthcoming Annual Reunion Dinner, and there is a facility to book your place online via email to Malcolm Brown.

The Site is now considerably larger than the original, and should be interesting to all Association members. Please, therefore, take a look at:

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

Association members who frequented the original site are advised to 'refresh' the Homepage if the old site is retained in the memory cache of your PC.



Letter from the Squadron

(Continued from page 1)



Above: Hawk XX350 wearing the WWI Commemorative Paint Scheme.

which certainly gained the attention of the IV Sqn Junta, given that their only detachment last year was to RAF Leuchars!

Of course we've also said goodbye to a few instructors over the last year with Flt Lt Charlie Butterfield moving to Ops Wing at RAF Valley to form part of the new 4 Flying Training School HQ, Flt Lt Rich Bradley taking up a NATO post in Madrid and a pair that shall not be named who decided to join 'Happy' IV.

With the extension of 208 Sqn there was a need to restart the Hawk major service programme and so it is that this year we've received newly refurbished aircraft from our own engineers at RAF Valley along with aircraft serviced at RAF Marham and BAE Warton. The 'new' aircraft have performed very well but all too often we find them being poached by another Hawk unit who insist on having at least nine serviceable aircraft every day! When they are returned they tend to be in rather gaudy colours!

One product of the major service programme here at Valley was XX350 which has been painted in a special paint scheme to commemorate both the centenary of the First World War and the centenary of 208 Sqn. The paint scheme is based upon that worn by the Bristol Fighter of the Shuttleworth Collection, which is an ex 208 Sqn airframe. The first flight of XX350 in her new livery took place in February and no time was lost in arranging an air-to-air photographic session with the Bristol Fighter. Of course, it is also hoped that XX350 can form a central part of the Sqn's centenary celebrations in Oct 2016.

I've very much enjoyed my time as the CO of the finest Hawk Sqn in the RAF and I hope I leave the Sqn stronger and with a brighter future than on my arrival. I wish the Sqn and the Association the very best of luck for the future and I look forward to seeing you all at the annual dinners.

All the best.

Nick Gatenby
OC 208 Sqn

While back in the UK, members of the Sqn continued the challenge of climbing 1.1 million feet in the Snowdon National Park with the final footage being completed in Nov 14. The final total didn't include climbing and descending the water park slides in Cyprus, which some members of the Sqn volunteered as their contribution!

Since the last newsletter the Sqn has been joined by six new QFIs plus the new OC. We've seen the return of Sqn Ldr 'Wes' Wesley from a tour with the Gliding School at RAF Syerston, Flt Lt James Mander following the closure of 617 Sqn and Flt Lt David Stark from IX Sqn. We've also welcomed Flt Lt Paddy Kershaw as a brand new B2 QFI, Flt Lt Darren French who has a background as a Sea King pilot and Tucano QFI and Flt Lt 'Trigger' Rigg, who threatened to leave the RAF if he wasn't allowed to abandon IV Sqn to join 208! Trigger's first two weeks on 208 Sqn were spent in Cyprus



Above: Time Flies! Wg Cdr Nick Gatenby and Flt Lt Tom Sawle fly XX350 in formation with the Shuttleworth Bristol Fighter, flown by Paul Shakespeare.

(Photo courtesy of Darren Harbar and the Shuttleworth Trust)

