

# NAVAL EIGHT/208 NEWS

THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

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2003

2003

## 100 SORTIES IN A DAY - 85 YEARS ON

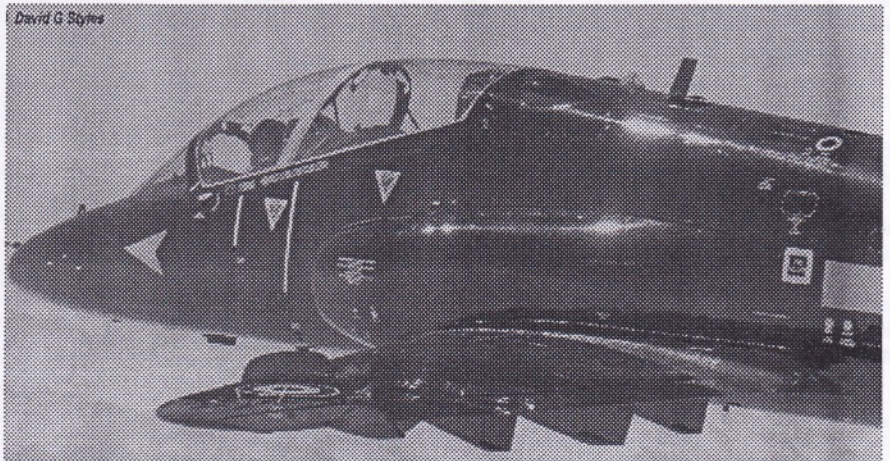
In this year, No 208 Squadron was eighty five years old, having been re-numbered from Eight Naval back in April 1918. In those eighty five years, neither this Squadron nor any other in the Royal Air Force has previously achieved 100 sorties in one day. Not until a few weeks ago, that is, when 208 Squadron actually did fly one hundred sorties on one Monday in July.

As Association members will have read in past Letters From the Squadron, the target number of sorties in a day was 85 as a standard. 330 Sorties in a week has been done before, but never one hundred in a day.

Air Historical Branch was consulted to see if there was any record of any squadron having flown 100 sorties in any other day in the ninety-odd years of heavier-than-air military aviation. But not even in the heat of battle of either of the two World Wars has any other RAF unit come even close to that magical 100 number.

Squadron boss Wg Cdr Neil Meadows reports that most of the sorties in that one day exercise were of a normal one hour duration. A few were of shorter duration, but it was clear that all could have been of normal length and the century would still have been achieved.

After hearing of this staggering achievement, the Editor reflected that he had heard of something similar in the Second World War in the Pacific. In that time, 1944, the largest naval battle in history took place - it was the Battle of Leyte Gulf and one of the aircraft carriers in that battle was the USS *Hornet*. It had on board a fighter squadron - VF12 - equipped with 30 Grumman Hellcats. VF12 flew a hundred sorties that day. The intensity of the battle and the very short flying distances made the average sortie length 20 minutes and many aircraft returned to the flight deck of the *Hornet* just to rearm, not refuel. In that battle, ten pilots became aces in a day. But compare the flying times and turn-round times and you'll see why the 208 Squadron Century is so significant. VF12's Hellcats flew a total of less than 34 hours in its 100 sorties and the 208 sorties amassed over ninety hours. So the record for our Squadron is all the more creditable.



David G Styles

## The 2002 Reunion Dinner



Flt Lt Rich Hillard stands proudly alongside one of the display panels with the Geoffrey Bromet Memorial Trophy.

The 2002 Naval Eight/208 Reunion was another success story. Having tried a new table layout in 2001, using a series of round tables instead of the more traditional top table and sprigs, members were able to talk to each other more easily and the general atmosphere was felt to be better. So we did it again and it worked again. It also enabled a magnificent display of reproductions of the panels which line the walls in the Squadron's HQ building at RAF Valley. These panels serve two purposes - they remind young trainees coming to the Squadron of their ultimate purpose in life - to defend our peace - and they also subtly remind those young people that this Squadron has a history of its own extending through the history of air warfare.

**2003 REUNION DINNER**

**OCTOBER 25th  
6.30 FOR 7.30 PM - RAF CLUB**



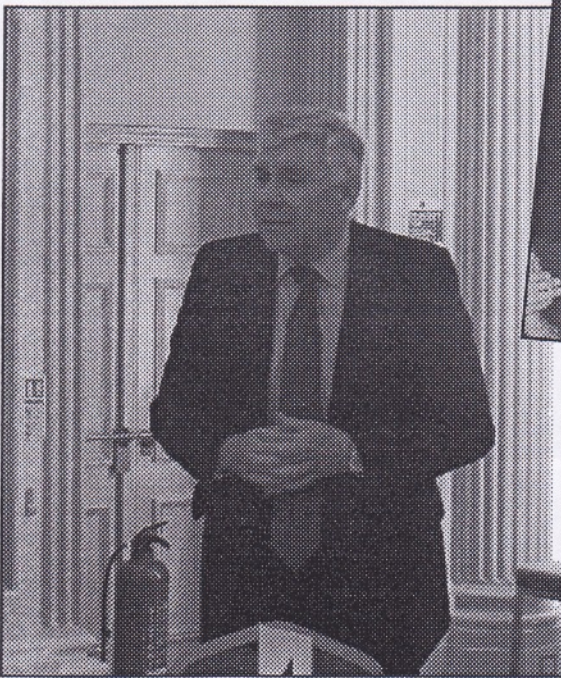
# Naval Eight - 208 in pictures



On the left: Retiring Association President ACM Sir Mike Stear addresses the gathering for the last time before handing over the Presidency to Air Marshal Rob Wright. Below, past Guest of Honour and now regular attendant at reunions, Professor Gordon Hodson in animated conversation: next to him is Sara Huckins, Wg Cdr Neil Meadows (OC 208) and Lady Lizzie Stear enjoying the atmosphere. This was also the last reunion for Neil Meadows as Squadron Boss. His successor, Wg Cdr Nigel Clifford, will be with us this year.



On the far right, Wg Cdr Neil Meadows delivers his "State of the Squadron" address for the last time. Next to him is Flt Lt Rich Hillard, receiving the Bromet Trophy from Air Marshal Day. Below, Air Marshal Nigel Day, Guest of Honour, addresses an enthusiastic group.



Above: The Group Spot this year is taken by another motley crew gathered for a mixed picture, with members from the Hurricane/Spitfire Chapter, the Meteor and Buccaneer Chapters. On the left is your editor (right) handing over to Neil Meadows one of the 300 copies of "All the Eights" he has given to the Squadron. The objective is to give a copy to each student passing through 208 Squadron's hands as a reminder of the true heritage of not just this fine Squadron, but of the Royal Air Force itself, which celebrates its 85th Birthday this year.



3 / 208 R U M B L I N G S :

## 208 HAS A NEW BOSS

WING COMMANDER  
NIGEL CLIFFORD  
MA LLB RAF

Wing Commander Nigel Clifford took over the command of No 208 Squadron on 8th August.

Nigel was born in 1962 in Ipswich. His father served in the RAF as an Education Officer, his mother a teacher. He is the second eldest of 4 children, lived in various UK and European locations as a child before the family settled in Wiltshire in 1974.

Educated at King Edward's School, Bath and then Exeter University where he studied law, Nigel joined the RAF in 1981 as a University Cadet. His initial Officer Training was in 1983, followed by the Jet Provost course at Linton On Ouse, then Hawk at Valley and Brawdy. He was posted to Tornado GR1, XV Sqn at RAF Laarbruch, arriving in Apr 1987. Nigel served 3 years covering Cold War ops and the fall of the Berlin Wall then was posted to RAF Valley to be a QFI on Hawk in Sep 1990.

At RAF Valley, he completed Hawk QFI training then flew on 1 Sqn, 4 FTS before early posting to CFS Hawk Flight in late 1991. He completed his RAF Valley tour as deputy Flight Commander on CFS and was posted on exchange duties to New Zealand in 1993.

In New Zealand, Nigel flew the Aermacchi MB 399 in the fast jet training role and then the A4K Skyhawk on a single seat multi-role squadron. Promoted to Sqn Ldr in 1994, he returned to UK in 1995; posted to Tornado GR1 17(F) Sqn at RAF Bruggen as a Flight Commander. He served at Bruggen from 1995 to 1998 finishing his tour



as Squadron Executive Officer and Deputy OC.

Inevitably, in 1998 Nigel finally caught for a ground tour and was sent to MOD Abbey Wood as part of the Operational Requirements team on the Eurofighter Typhoon project. He spent 3 years looking after Typhoon flight control systems, general systems and all aspects of aircrew equipment before attending the Joint Services Command and Staff Course in 2001. He was promoted to Wing Commander while on the course and returned to Abbey Wood to run the Operational Requirements team. After only 8 months he was short toured to take command of 208 Sqn.

Nigel has a total of 3500 hrs in fast jet aircraft with 1000 hrs Hawk and 1500 hrs on Tornado GR1. He was married in 1986 to Rachel (an Occupational Therapist) and has 3 children; Luke (16), Libby (14) and Jack (10). The family has moved to Valley with the older 2 children at boarding school. He is a keen water skier, snow skier and house restorer.

### ..... AND OF OTHER FOLK:

**Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Stear** has retired from the Presidency of the Association and handed over the mantle to **Air Marshal Rob Wright**. Air Marshal Wright has recently taken up his new appointment as UK MILREP at NATO HQ.

**Group Captain Nigel Huckins** has stood down from the Chairmanship of the Association, as he has moved to the United States.

**Wing Commander Neil Meadows** has now left No 208 Squadron and taken up his new post on the Directing Staff at the Joint Staff College Shrivenham.

Congratulations to **Flight Lieutenant Steve Kenworthy**, who has been selected from No 208 Squadron's team to fly as RAF Valley's Hawk Aerobatic Pilot this year.

Newsletter editor **David Styles** joined a very small band (of five) this year when he won a third-in-a-row Gold Medal from the International Automotive Media Conference. He also won two Silver medals and a Bronze for his design and editorial work.



Watched by part of "the Team", Wing Commander Neil Meadows hands over command of No 208 Squadron to Wing Commander Nigel Clifford.



# LETTER FROM THE SQUADRON:

Wg Cdr Neil Meadows

It is with great sadness that I write this, my third and last Annual Report for the Association Newsletter. It hardly seems a moment since I assumed command of the Squadron in March 2001, but the arrival of my successor (Wing Commander Nigel Clifford) this week for his conversion training to the Hawk is a stark reminder that our handover on 8th August is only a few weeks away. After 2 1/2 years of outstanding professional reward, it is time (as my new Commanding Officer has succinctly put it) 'for The Queen to get her own back.'

Before I look at some of the highlights of this tour, it would be worth summarising the events of the last year. At time of writing my previous report, the Squadron was just about to implement major organisational and operational changes to increase the daily sortie rate from 68 to 84 to allow us, finally, to achieve the student throughput required to meet the target of 60 RAF fast-jet pilots into productive service each year. With everything in place and ready to go, it has been extremely frustrating that contractual issues have delayed implementation for nearly 15 months. We are now eagerly awaiting an increase in resources in July to enable us to mount this extraordinarily large number of sorties per day, and to finally prove all the hard theoretical work done in the last 3 years. This remains my one outstanding operational goal before I leave in August.

But the Squadron has not stood still in the intervening period. The leap of faith we took last year to employ Operations Support NCOs (instead of aircrew) to write the daily flying programme has reaped enormous rewards and has increased the efficiency of our operations, in my view, by at least 5% as well as improving the continuity of training. I was pleased to report at last year's Reunion that we had achieved more than 300 sorties (actually 301) in a single working week. At the time, this had been a huge effort, which we had only just managed. Just a few weeks ago, however, we flew a colossal 330 sorties in a similar period, almost as a matter of routine. This itself was in a month in which we flew some 1292 sorties in all. Such has been the impact of the new support staff, which gives me great confidence for the future of the Squadron (and perhaps the achievement of 400 sorties in one week?). This and other improvements have allowed the Squadron to maintain its task line despite the shortage of resources and, for the first time in recent memory, we have been 'on the line' coming out of winter. This exceptional achievement is testament to the enormous dedication of all of the 208 Squadron staff.

Other notable events this year have included an outstanding display season by Flight Lieutenant Rich Hillard, who was a worthy winner of both the Bromet Trophy and a Commander-in-Chief's Commendation for his excellence in the air. I am also pleased to announce that this year's RAF Hawk Display Pilot will be another member of 208 Squadron: Flight Lieutenant Steve Kenworthy (another 'creamie') who begins his season at Duxford on 4th May. Throughout the summer Steve will be displaying in a 'standard' 208 Squadron aircraft, emblazoned with the Eye of Horus on the tail, Blue and Yellow fuselage bands and the Buccaneer arrowhead on the nose. Further details of Steve's season may be found on the growing 208 Squadron Internet Website at [www.rafvalley.org](http://www.rafvalley.org).

Speaking of 'corporate communications,' the Squadron has been very active in support of 2 major BBC programmes. The first is an episode of 'Wildlife on One' that compares the 'air combat training' of peregrine falcons with that of their human counterparts. This is due to be screened in the summer as part of the BBC's celebration of 100 years of powered flight. The second project is for BBC Wales (hopefully, it will be screened nationally) who are compiling a 6-part documentary about RAF Valley and its role in training future combat pilots. Entitled 'Life in the Fast Lane,' it is due to be screened in early 2004 and, naturally, 208 Squadron plays a prominent role. Lastly, on matters of publicity, I have given the Squadron diaries for the Buccaneer era on extended loan to the Buccaneer Association for its museum at Elvington. Hopefully, it will allow many more people to enjoy them than would be the case in their cupboard at RAF Valley!

I was deeply honoured to lead a 4-ship flypast of Perth to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of El-Alamein on 26th October, thus linking the exploits of the Squadron of the past with the training task of the present. Flying from RAF Leuchars, a Dominie of 55 Squadron and a Hercules of 70 Squadron were followed by a 'box-4' of Jaguars from 6 Squadron (the Flying

Canopeners) and a 'box-4' from 208 Squadron (the Flying Shuftis). All aircraft flew down the main parade line, after which both the 6 Squadron and 208 Squadron elements returned to fly a 'missing man' finger-4 formation over the saluting base to honour fallen comrades. Following the flypasts, I flew to RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire and then onwards by train to London to attend the Annual Reunion Dinner in the RAF Club, where I was delighted to meet 2 former members of the Squadron who had served at the time of the El-Alamein battle. It was a rare privilege to share in the tales of their exploits which, I hope, will add in no small part to the sense of ethos and history amongst the trainee pilots of the modern Squadron.

I was also greatly saddened to learn of the death on 3rd January of Flight Lieutenant Henry Botterell (Ret'd) who, at the age of 106, was believed to be the only surviving WWI fighter pilot and a member of 208 Squadron at its inception in 1918. Henry's exploits were captured in the famous aviation painting 'Balloon Buster' by Robert Taylor, which depicts Henry shooting down a German observation balloon near Arras on 29th August 1918. As Association members will know, I had the great honour to lead a visit to meet Henry in the Veterans' Hospital in Toronto in 2001 but, regrettably, the news of his death reached us too late for anyone from the Squadron to attend his Memorial Service on 13th January. Our thoughts are with his family; his courage and dedication to duty continue to be an inspiration to all of us.

And so to my reflections of 2 1/2 years in command of this historic Squadron. Undoubtedly, the highlight was my visit to meet Henry Botterell and share in the history represented by that remarkable man. However, I am most intensely proud of the Squadron's achievements during the period. Whilst it is perhaps disappointing that 208 is no longer operational, I do not look upon this in a negative sense. Far from it - 208 Squadron still has a vital role to play in the modern era, not just in training the quantity of fast-jet pilots required by the front line, but also in ensuring that the quality of those pilots is as good as it can be, both in terms of their flying skill and in the way in which they attack their professional duties. What better Squadron than 208, therefore, to imbue the combat pilots of the future with the right ethos and fighting spirit. I am therefore very pleased to have raised the profile of the Squadron history in the modern training syllabus in many ways, including the comprehensive suite of markings on our aircraft and the inclusion of 208 Squadron's historic exploits as examples in modern air power doctrine.

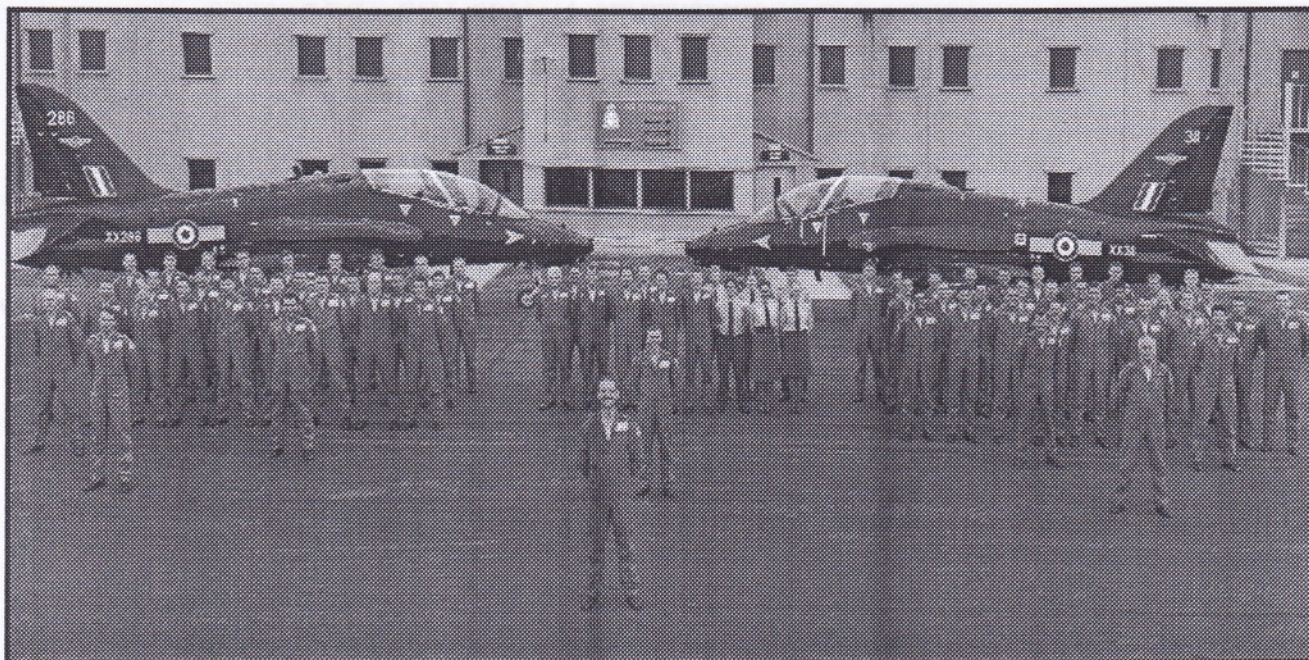
I am also very proud of the improvements we have made in the flying training process. Naval 8 / 208 Squadron has always been synonymous with excellence, from its inception on the Western Front to its final combat operations in the Gulf. Nothing of that spirit has changed: we are indisputably the biggest and the busiest fast-jet unit in the RAF and, I would suggest, the most efficient and successful Flying Training unit of the modern era as well. Long may that continue! However, whilst I have endeavoured to provide a firm hand at the tiller, I cannot take the credit for these achievements. That belongs to the pilots of the Squadron and their dedication, professionalism, indomitable spirit and overwhelming enthusiasm for flying. The experience levels on the Squadron might be at their lowest ever ebb (nearly 50% of the current staff are first-tourists) but the qualities of my young pilots are as high as they have ever been throughout the Squadron's illustrious history.

That will be my abiding memory of 208 Squadron, which it has been a privilege and an honour to command and to share, in some small part, the pride of our first Squadron Commander, Sir Geoffrey Bromet, whose words in 1918 I dedicate with thanks to the Squadron of today:

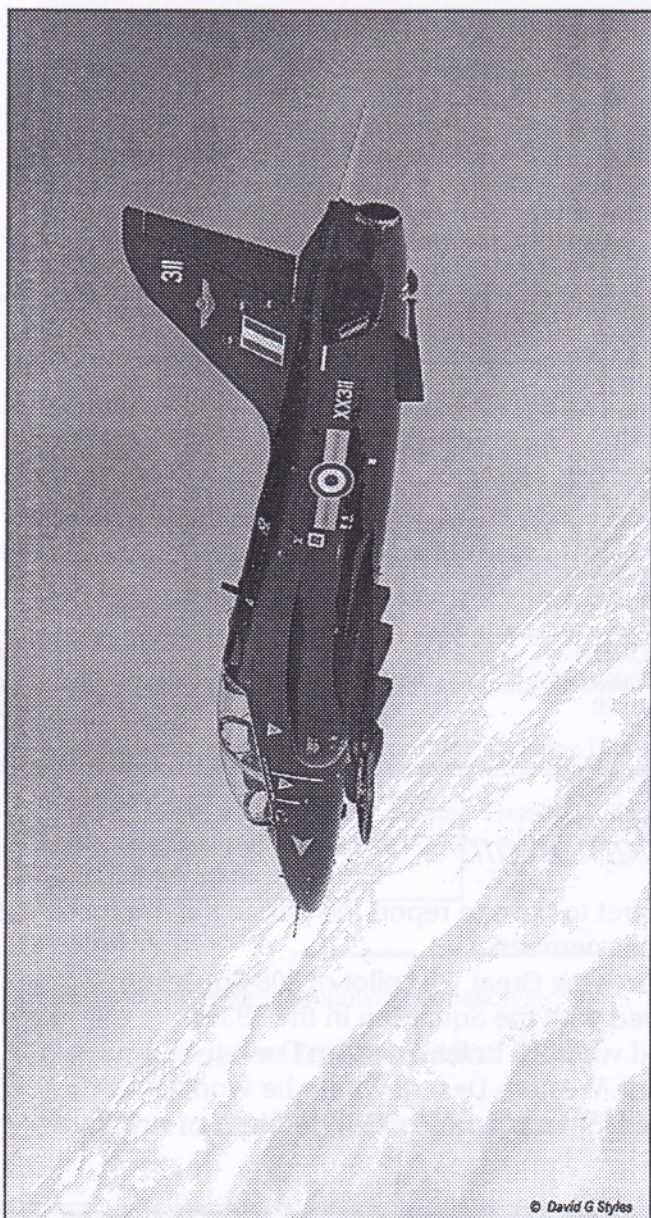
'The pilots needed a rest, it is true, but ..... it is to their everlasting credit that they got through without loss of keenness or morale, and it was more apparent than ever to me that I had the support of the finest crowd of fellows ever.'







Above: Number 208 Squadron on parade, with a pair (or should it be a brace?) of Hawks behind them. Wg Cdr Neil Meadows stands proudly before his Squadron. Below, left and right, a couple of shots from the Editor's camera of part of the Squadron at work. There are more elsewhere.



© David G Styles



## 2004 REUNION

30TH OCTOBER - RAF CLUB  
6.30 FOR 7.30



## CHAPTER REPRESENTATIVES' NAMES AND ADDRESSES NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION

**HURRICANE/ SPITFIRE** : **SE Jefford BSc,**  
**METEOR** : **JD Penrose;**  
**HUNTER** : **TM Webb AFC,**  
**BUCCANEER** : **AW Cope AFC MBE,**  
**HAWK** : **Wg Cdr PK Comer, OC 19 Squadron,**  
**GROUNDCREW** : **P Steele Esq,**  
**HISTORIAN /EDITOR** : **Dr DG Styles MBA PhD FBIM FinstSMM FIMI,**  
**MEMBERSHIP SEC** : **Wg Cdr DJ Trembaczowski-Ryder RAF,**

(information on potential new members and existing members seeking to renew contacts should be addressed to the Membership Secretary)

## 2002 NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION REUNION DINNER RESPONSES FROM MEMBERS

The following Members and their Guests were present at the 2002 Reunion Dinner:

AV-M NJ DAY	ED MEE	L SCHWAIGER	MRS E WHITE
MRS G DAY	MRS J MEE	MRS P SCHWAIGER	
G GOODMAN	FJ NICOLL	JE SHAW	<b>FROM No 208 SQUADRON</b>
KG HODSON	MRS J O'GORMAN	SIR MICHAEL STEAR	
MRS T HODSON	JJ PARKER	LADY STEAR	WG CDR N MEADOWS
NM HUCKINS	JD PASCOE-WATSON	GJ STOREY	FLT LT CRUTCHLOW
MRS S HUCKINS	JD PENROSE	MRS STOREY	FLT LT KILLERBY
PHD JAMES	AR PRATT	DR DG STYLES	FLT LT HILLARD
SE JEFFORD	J PRATT	MRS A STYLES	
M KEMP	J PURDIE	RJ WHITE	

The following Members sent their greetings to the 2002 Reunion, as they were unable to attend:

J BABBINGTON	R DENNETT	S L HAMMETT	L W PHIPPS	J N TOMES
HW BARBER	J H DENT	R A HARPER	G R PITCHFORK	G E TOWNSEND
R BOWIE	C A F DENTON	J M HENSON	W F PLUMPTON	K L TROW
LF BOYCE	A B DICKEN	R HILLS	J K T PUGH	R TURNER
M G BRADLEY	C M DRAPER	C B HOLROYD	G L REEKIE	P E TURVILLE
N BRIND	TH DUDLEY	P H D JAMES	I C ROSS	R J VINCENT
RE G BRITTAIN	J A F FORD	G C W JONES	E SHARP	R WALSH
W G BROOKS	G P FRANKCOM	A R KING	K W SMITH	T M WEBB
F BROWN	J C A FRASER	K LAMBDEN	A H SMITH	R B WEEKS
RA BURDEN	J A FRYER	H LARKMAN	A G SMITH	R B WHITE
J W BURTON	P GALLAGHER	D S B MARR	T A SMITH	R A WRIGHT
CK BUSHE	E GARLAND	J M MASON	D R SOUTHWOOD	
R CALVERT	D GILL	J D MCCONNACHIE	D SPONG	
NS CHAMPNESS	G B GRAY	M MCGROGAN	H H TAPNER	
J R J CLARK	G GREEN	G R MUST	A L THOMAS	
J W COULSON	D GROOM	I A W NORMAN	E A THOMPSON	
J B CRAIG	E R GWILLIAM	P J O'DONOHUE	I D C TITE	
A F CUTT	J R HALLAS	K P OLIVER	L D TODD	



### *In Memoriam*

Since the last Newsletter and Reunion, we regret to have to report the passing of the following Association members:-

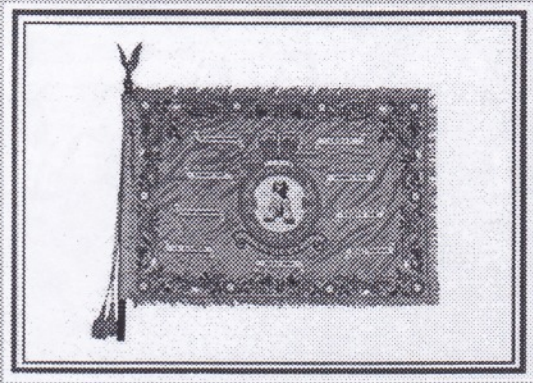
Henry Botterell, aged 106, the last surviving Great War pilot of 208 Squadron  
Gp Capt REG Brittain, who served with the Squadron in the 1930s.

Dr Ian A Bremner, who served with 208 in the Western Desert.

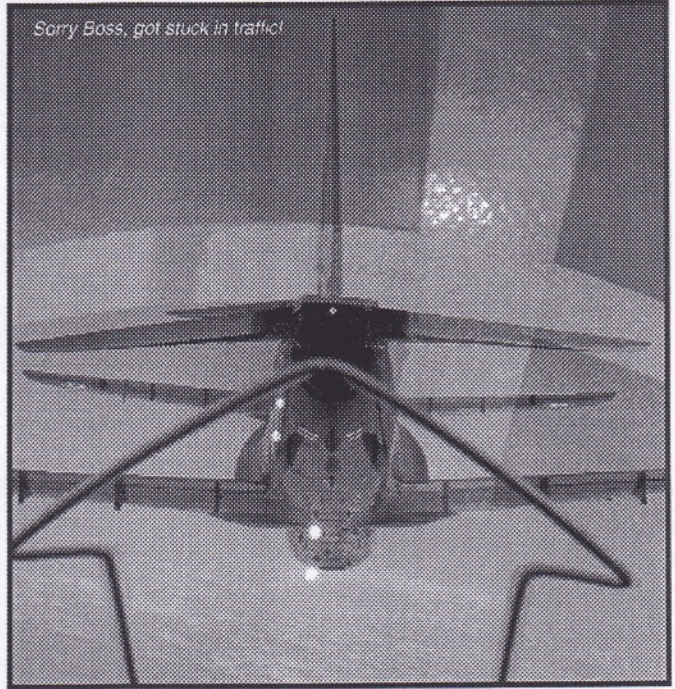
Peter Perry, who also was with 208 in the Western Desert, where he won his DFC  
Stuart Eastwood, who was a Hunter man with the Squadron



We continue to promote the sale of the full colour reproduction in A3 size, of the magnificent Blazon of Arms painted a few years ago by Mrs Mary Denton for the Heraldic Trust. The print is on high quality heavy weight art paper, priced at £9.00 a copy, post-free in UK. Postage and packing overseas will cost £4.00. The prints are despatched in sturdy card-board tubes, for the best possible chance of reaching you in pristine condition. In addition to the prints, you can also buy Association Christmas cards, featuring the Squadron Standard. Printed in landscape format, the picture on the Christmas card is bordered in blue and gold. An order form is included in the tear-off Reunion booking slip in this Newsletter. The price is £3.50 for a pack of 10 cards with envelopes, including inland or BFPO postage and packing. Postage to overseas members is £4.00.



This is the picture on the Association Christmas card. You will be able to see the real thing at the Reunion Dinner.



## ANNUAL REUNION DINNER 2003, SATURDAY 25th OCTOBER

It is imperative that you send back the reply slip below if you wish to attend the 2003 Naval Eight/208 Squadron Association Annual Reunion Dinner at the Royal Air Force Club, 128 Piccadilly, London W1V 0PY on Saturday 25th October. Dress is lounge suits and Members may bring male or female guests. It is important that you name your guest/s on the booking slip and that you indicate your period of service with the Squadron for the seating plan. Timing is 6.30pm for 7.30pm and the cost this year is £30.00 per head, including a glass of port. Please complete the booking slip as early as possible and return to: MW Brown MRAeS, Hon Secretary, Naval Eight/208 Squadron Association, Even if you are unable to attend, please return the reply slip, as it is our only way of ensuring continuing contact with you.

**NAVAL EIGHT/208 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION - REUNION BOOKING SLIP - 2003**

From (Name): \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter/Period with 208: \_\_\_\_\_

Full address : \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 same? or: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will/will not\* be attending the 2003 Reunion Dinner on Saturday 25th October and require \_\_\_\_\_ places at £30.00 per head.

I enclose my cheque/postal order\* for: Reunion Dinner (£30 each) : £ \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please delete as necessary. Please make cheques etc payable to "208 Squadron Association"

Heraldic Prints/Christmas Cards : £ \_\_\_\_\_ Qty: \_\_\_\_\_

Total : £ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME/S OF GUEST/S: \_\_\_\_\_

I also wish to make the following donation/s:-

**General donation to Association Funds:** £ \_\_\_\_\_

**Donation to the Medal Display Appeal Fund:** £ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Donation** : £ \_\_\_\_\_



## 208 FROM THE PAST



This picture came to the Editor from Association member Geoffrey Parker Watling. It was given to him by a Mrs Lillian Bradley, whose husband is somewhere in the photo, though she did not indicate just where. The aircraft are Hurricane Mk I (Trop) and are equipped with a variety of accessories. The first aircraft is the only one to have wing tanks to extend its range, but it isn't clear whether it has a camera pack fairing or not (because the camera housing is positioned behind the under-belly radiator). The second aircraft has a camera fairing, but no long-range tanks. The others all seem to be devoid of either camera pack or long-range tanks, but it is impossible to see underneath the last two aircraft. The location is Kirkuk and the year is 1942, so it seems topical to include it here, especially as the Squadron's last Battle Honour is for the Gulf 1991 and we're all looking at what is happening in Iraq today. Geoffrey, thank you for the picture - we're now looking for photos of 208 Squadron Tomahawks in the Western Desert. Can anybody help?

## KEEPING IN TOUCH

The Association is always trying to update its records of former members of 208 Squadron, as many people leave the Squadron without making contact with the Association as they move on. For this reason, 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 take a moment to enter details below. We'll do the rest:-

I BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL SERVED WITH No 208 SQUADRON IN: \_\_\_\_\_

AT RAF: \_\_\_\_\_ THE SQUADRON WAS FLYING: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_