

# Wittering View

Autumn 09 \ \ The official magazine for RAF Wittering and Stamford



## Special Harrier Edition

Celebrating 40 Years of Service



Features : Harrier Special | Force Development Day | Families Day







## Editor

\\ Flt Lt Kerry Shardlow  
OC Wks Svcs Flt

Finally I feel like we are having a bit of our deserved British Summer, although I am not sure how long it will last. I feel like I am cursed sometimes. When I am here working at Wittering during the week, the weather is glorious, but as soon as I step foot on home soil on the other side of the country at the weekend, the weather turns foul. My living room ends up looking like a detachment laundry with all the uniform hanging up because I can't put it outside. I am sure there are many of you who travel home at weekends who can sympathise with this.

Weekend travelling is something I am going to have to put up with for a while longer. On 28 September, I will be transferring over to PSF and, unfortunately readers, you are going to have to continue to put up with me as the Editor. I'm looking forward to the change and a new challenge, but will miss my colleagues in SSS who have been a great support to me over the last couple of years. Speaking of change we are losing a member of the Wittering View Team and gaining 2 more. Sgt Annette Ashwell is leaving us as Deputy Editor and being replaced by Sgt 'Fritz' Hodgson. Cpl Mel Reynolds will be joining the team to assist with the distribution of the magazine. I look forward to working with our new team members, but wish Annette a fond farewell as she was a dedicated and valuable member of our editorial team.

We have some new features in this edition; the padres, chefs and gym staff are all going to make regular contributions to the magazine. Please let me know if you think these regular features are a good addition to the magazine or if you would like to see any other features that you think would be of interest to our readership. Maybe you would like to make a contribution; I welcome all ideas.

*Enjoy the sunshine while you can!*

## Autumn Foreword

\\ Wg Cdr Bradshaw, Chief of Staff.

The Station Commander's busy schedule has presented me with the opportunity to open this edition of the Wittering View. Having been Chief-of-Staff for the last 9 months, I am still amazed by the amount of diverse activity here at Wittering. Indeed I was rather surprised when a departing Sergeant commented that, while he would miss Wittering, he was looking forward to going to a 'proper' RAF station. With roughly 10% of Wittering personnel deployed on operations at any one time, our Air Combat Service Support Units providing essential enabling capabilities throughout the world, 3 Squadron RAF Regiment preparing for their imminent return to Helmand and 20(R) Squadron as busy as ever training Harrier pilots and engineers, I question his use of the word 'proper'. We should be proud of our rather unusual status and the eclectic mix of squadrons, trades and personnel. I hope you will see that pride coming to life in pictures and print throughout this issue.

And what an incredibly busy summer it has been. Notable events covered in this edition include: the enormously successful Families' Day, with a spectacular air display that most major airshows would be proud of (it was also quite breezy as you can no doubt see from the picture of my son and me!); the Harrier 40th Anniversary Gala Dinner (which Wittering, as 'Home of the Harrier' for those 40 years, hosted in style); and an exhausting Force Development day at Rutland Water which appeared to involve the Station Execs walking their dogs while everyone else got down and dirty...

Talking of dogs, I must take this opportunity to highlight the vast array of activities that happen across the airfield both in the week, but more particularly in the evenings and during the weekend: gliding, light and model aircraft flying, motorcycle and moped track

days, rough shooting, fire training, cadet camps, airfield maintenance work, the allotment club, RAF Police dog patrols and bicycle racing. I encourage you to join in where possible; most of the aforementioned club activities are advertised in the following pages. However, if you want to just enjoy the space for walking or cycling, please visit the Guardroom first - the duty staff will let you know what's going on and, more importantly, when and where potentially dangerous activities are occurring.

While it has been a pleasure writing these few lines, Group Captain Higgins will resume his rightful position forwarding the next edition of the Wittering View. Expected features include the first visit of our Honorary Air Commodore, Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex, on 24 September, and the long-awaited start to building works for the new Junior Ranks' Mess (best not put a date on it just yet!). In the meantime, please enjoy this edition along with the tale-end of the much promised 'barbecue' summer.

*Wing Commander David Bradshaw, Chief of Staff with his son Alexander on Families Day.*



## Submissions

Please direct all submissions for Wittering View Magazine to

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Please try to ensure that images are in .jpeg format and as large as possible. Text should be supplied in Microsoft Word .doc format or plain text if possible.

# Autumn 09

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# Lance

# Padres' Corner



“Isn't it time you put yourselves and your family first?”

**It's no great secret that service life can put an added strain on relationships, with regular deployments and the geographical mobility that means up-rooting every few years and often being a long way from family, friends and established support networks. Not surprisingly this can take its toll on even the strongest relationships with spouses, partners and even kids.**

## **Building Stronger Families**

Statistics show that the stronger a relationship is the better the chance it has of surviving times of prolonged detachment and separation. And let's face it who wouldn't want a stronger marriage?

In the military we do a lot of training and maintaining but how often do we apply this 'further education' thinking to our own personal relationships with our spouses, partners and children?

## **Time for Families**

That's why in the autumn we're going to be offering support for couples in the form of 3 x one day training workshops. These will be run during the working week (during

school hours) and will offer couples some quality time together to reflect on how they communicate and relate to one another. The lessons learned from this will help enhance both their marriage and parenting skills, there'll also be some info and tips thrown in on management of finance for good measure.

## **Top -Tips**

Admittedly there can be quite a stigma attached to what can be perceived as attending courses on 'marriage guidance' and 'the pink and fluffy stuff' (in fact my wife once observed that it's easier to get the average airman to go to Iraq than it is to get him to sit down and talk with his wife for a couple of hours..!). Which is the scarier prospect?

But we can learn a great deal from the hard earned wisdom of others and to use a well know medical maxim "prevention is always better than cure".

## **The 5 Love Languages...**

For example recent studies have shown that different people have different 'love languages' or modes which they respond to. For some it's 'words of affirmation' eg "have I ever told you you're a great mother..?" or perhaps 'quality time' - e.g. going for a long walk together and having a meaningful conversation about plans and hopes for the future. For others it

maybe 'acts of service' eg doing the ironing unexpectedly or making an evening meal or 'gifts', which speaks for itself! The fifth you've guessed it is 'physical touch' - very important..!

These so called 'love languages' work for kids as well, I know my kids appreciate quality time spent playing games or reading with them and would much prefer this to a bag of sweets or the latest toy (although clearly they'd have all 3 if they could - but time costs nothing). Often people will give you a clue as to their love language by modeling it themselves - one of my daughters when she was younger was always wrapping up her toys and giving them to me as pretend presents..! Not surprisingly when she gets a wrapped up present it's guaranteed to make me the world's number one Dad.

## **Want to find Out More?**

So there's lots of things we can learn about one another and our kids, even if we've been married for a while and the Building Stronger Families days we'll be running soon will be a great way to have some fun together with our partners, grow closer together and hopefully build more robust relationships with firm foundations for the future. If you would like to know more then please contact me Padre Pete Tollerson on ext 7430 or by e-mail or just look out for the advertising and flyers which you'll find dotted around the unit.





## Medals Boost Help For Heroes

**W**arrant Officer Sandra Flatt has raised over £1000 for 'Help For Heroes' by court-mounting operational-service medals for Station personnel. As the home of the RAF A4 Logistics Hub, RAF Wittering can have up to fifteen percent of its personnel deployed OOA on non-formed unit operations at any time, in addition to formed-unit deployments by No 1 RAF Force Protection Wing HQ and No 3 Sqn RAF Regt.

Sandra, who is the Force Headquarters WO said: "In September last year, I needed my miniatures updated for the Battle of Britain Ball in the Mess but I had left it too late for the tailors. I decided to do it myself, after all how difficult could it be? I managed to complete the medals successfully and then had a go at court mounting my normal medals, which turned out just fine. Soon I was inundated with requests from around the Station to court mount medals and I saw this as an opportunity to make some money for charity. I decided that I should at least give it a go and set myself a target to raise £200 for Help for Heroes. However, with the return of No 3 Sqn RAF Regiment from their post operational deployment (Afghanistan) leave, the demand for court mounting picked up so I raised the target to £500. So far I have court-mounted 474 medals for 133 people raising £1103".

However, although she had well exceeded her original target, she is determined to continue for now to raise money for this very worthy charity. She explained:

"Personnel from No IV (AC) Sqn at RAF Cottesmore, who have recently returned from Afghanistan, are aiming to raise £10,000 for Help for Heroes through sponsorship for 4 men from the Sqn running 4 marathons over 4 weekends. I have promised help with their fundraising although not through running marathons, I might add, but it is through court mounting medals for their Squadron personnel!"

# NETTLE WARRIOR 09

On Sunday 26 July at 1100 (ish), to the sounds of the weak being shot and cheats being thrown into the stocks to be flogged by pirates, the 2009 Nettle Warrior got under way.



**F**or those who have not yet had the pleasure of experiencing a Tough Guy or Nettle Warrior, a slightly deranged eccentric called Mr Mouse has devised a race that is internationally known as the safest most dangerous race in the world. Literally thousands of potential Tough Guys from around the world take part and The Flying Elephants of 2 MT Sqn were once again in the middle of it all.

Morale was high but there were a few nervous faces as we waited in our holding pen ready for the off. Almost immediately we were getting involved with Mr Mouse's first obstacles; a series of tank ditches and horizontal beams blocking our path. While putting the team together, we had been met with many raised eyebrows that questioned the team building benefits of completing the Tough Guy, but standing in water at the bottom of a slimy 6 foot muddy ditch you quickly realise that without the help of your team you're in for a long and painful day. Climbing, crawling, stumbling and running through woods, across fields, up and down a particularly steep hill lots of times and through more ditches and cargo nets than we can

remember, we arrived at "The Killing Fields."

"The Killing Fields" houses the type of assault course that any PTI would build if Health and Safety legislation didn't exist; high scramble nets, rope traverses, real barbed wire in the low wire entanglement, fire, lots of deep water and more knee-deep, cloying, energy-sapping mud than you can throw a team of SACs at. And you get to go around it twice. The Elephants pulled together and overcame claustrophobia (not good in the confined pitch-black of the Viet Cong Tunnels), a fear of being immersed in water (a slight drawback for the high water entry and the underwater tunnel) and a lot of cramp brought on by constant immersion in cold water. But with determination and morale supplied by our support crew who constantly appeared with an endless source of jelly babies the team pushed through to the end.

After over 3 hours of exhausting but enjoyable, rewarding and muddy fun, The Flying Elephants of 2 MT Sqn were greeted by the finishing line, medals and plenty of tea and biscuits. All of us will be back to do it again next year and if you want to join us go to [www.toughguy.co.uk](http://www.toughguy.co.uk) for more details.





## The Brady Trophy

The Brady Trophy is the premier dinghy sailing prize for the Royal Air Force. This year, the Trophy celebrates its 60th Anniversary, having been first won in 1949 by Sqn Ldr W.H. CAULEY.

Traditionally, the event has been sailed in the RAF's own fleet of two-man dinghies. For many years this was the Enterprise, with its distinctive blue sails. A number of clubs have hosted the Championship; in the 1980s, the RAF settled on the use of the new reservoir at Rutland Water, which had become a principal RAF sailing centre, with local bases of Wittering, Cottesmore and North Luffenham providing a healthy membership. A move to Grafham Water, home of RAF Stations Brampton and Wyton then followed.

By the 1980s, it was not unusual to have 50 entries for the event, and the competition to win was intense. Over the past decade, the reduced size of the RAF combined with the significant level of operations of those remaining has reduced the number of entries. Nevertheless, the standard of sailors

means the Trophy is still competitively fought for. In this 60th anniversary year, we are hoping to attract back some of the former winners for a special competition integrated with this year's championship. With 5 former winning helmsmen still in the RAF, hopefully, 2009 could be a fantastic celebration of the Trophy, with sailing at the highest levels. The event will be held during the week of 26 Oct and, fittingly, returns to RAF Rutland.

If you have competed for the Brady Trophy some time during the last 60 years and would like to celebrate this anniversary or you are a serving member of the RAF and would like to compete, more details of the event and entry forms can be found in DIN 2009DIN 10-18, alternatively information can be obtained from FS Laurie Dengate at RAF Wittering 01780 783838 ext 7773 or the RAFSA WEB page <http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafsailing/dinghy/>.

## Charity Fishing Competition

Lovell's Carp Lakes (Tallington) held a charity fishing match in aid of Help For Heroes, on Sunday 2nd August 2009. The match was a complete success with 40 entrants battling it out to win this prestigious event (well sat eating sarnies and getting a tan). It was fantastic to see such support for our armed forces from civilians as far away as Spalding. The total amount raised was £940, this is a testament to how hard Jimmy (Lake bailiff) worked to organise this event. The match was won by none other than our very own Paul Atkinson, member of the RAF Wittering Carpers (I got your name right this time). On behalf of the Wittering Carpers and the Station I would like to thank Jimmy for all his hard work and time to personally organise this match. To all match attendees I extend the same gratitude for the immense support you have shown our Armed Forces, in raising such a large sum of money. Lovell's carp lakes offer a £2 discount for each fishing session, to all members of the Armed Forces to show their continued support.

**Results: 1st Paul Atkinson 21lb 2oz, 2nd Brian Cannon 17lb 9oz, 3rd Lee Biggadike 13lb 4oz. Junior Winner: Lewis Betts 2lb 8oz 2nd, 1lb 3oz**



## Royal International Air Tattoo July 2009

Once again crowds turned out in force to welcome a large variety of aircraft from around the world to the Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford. RIAT is without question the largest event of its kind anywhere, but was marred last year by near monsoon conditions in the days leading up to the show and as a result the organisers were forced to cancel.

Fortunately this year's event was not beset with such problems although once again the inclement weather played its part and did offer some challenges to the organising committee and display pilots alike. RAF Wittering was of course well represented in the form of the Harrier with the crew and support technicians being introduced to HRH Prince Michael Of Kent on the Sunday!



## Royal Air Force Road Relay Championships

By kind permission of Group Captain P Higgins, the Royal Air Force Road Relay Championships took place At Royal Air Force Wittering on Wednesday 8 Jul 09.

A total of 84 runners, 14 male teams and 9 female teams attended the Championships held for the second time here at RAF Wittering. The male competition (4 x 5 km) looked to be a competition between last year's winners RAF Waddington, RAF Wittering and RAF Benson. The ladies team race (3 x 5km) RAF Wittering were favoured to win. The race held in warm but overcast and slightly breezy conditions on an accurate 5 km route using an "out around a loop and back" format taking in a circuit of Vigo Woods was started by Wg Cdr Simon. The opening leg for the ladies saw Cpl Tamsin Rutter 19 min 10 sec the fastest female time on the day and Ladies course record secure a good lead for Wittering, second leg Cpl Sarah Perkins 23 min 24 sec and third leg Fg Off Stacey Kirby 19 min 41 sec ensured an overwhelming victory for the Wittering Female team. The opening leg in the male competition saw SAC Lee Athersmith 15 min 59 sec secure a good lead for RAF Wittering, Sgt Chris Rowland 16 min 51 sec, Flt Lt Rich Bromfield 18 min 37 sec continued to hold on to the lead. As SAC(T) Wright set off for Wittering on the final leg the question was whether RAF Benson athlete SAC(T) Oz Ellis could overhaul Wittering the long time leaders. Ellis clawed back the 2 min 36 sec lead with 1.5Km still to run recording

a time of 16 min 15 sec. SAC(T) Wright successfully saw off the challenge from the Waddington team ensuring a second place finish for the Wittering Male team for a second successive year. The success of Witterings 'A' teams was emulated by all Wittering runners both male and female. The mens 'B' team came in 7th and the CIS Eng Flt Male team 10th with some very strong individual performances. Both CIS Eng Flt and Low Flying Ops entered a team in the female race and were placed 7th and 9th respectively. Cpl Angie Morgan recorded a time of 22 min 3 sec meaning that Wittering had 4 of the first 8 finishers.

If you are interested in taking part in any of the running events held at RAF Wittering or in the local running league please contact Flt Lt Bromfield on ext 6291 or Sgt Rowland on ext 7320.

### Team Results

#### Male

1. Benson 70 min 17 sec
2. Wittering 72 min 33 sec
3. Waddington 73 min 04 sec

#### Female

1. Wittering 62 min 15 sec
2. Brize Norton 67 min 05 sec
3. Northolt 69 min 29 sec



## Wittering Disco In The Gym

RAF Wittering's Corporal Samantha Pursley aided by the rest of the Physical Education Flight organised and hosted a fancy dress disco in aid of Help for Heroes, attended by 100 personnel. The Station gym was transformed into an unrecognisable disco hall, courtesy of No 5001 Sqn who provided the dance floor and the Officer's Mess who provided the refreshments. Highlight of the night was a 'Slave for the Evening' auction, which included a Warrant Officer, a Sergeant and two SACs. Despite just reaching their reserve total of £70, other items such as VIP X Factor tickets and a signed rugby ball kindly donated by Leicester Tigers helped raise the total raised to a magnificent £950 for Help for Heroes, which was presented to the charity during the Station Families Day on 3 July.









# 20 (R) Sqn

## Celebrates 40 Years Of The Harrier

1969 saw the first flight of the Harrier so this being 2009, 20(R) Squadron decided to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Harrier in style. It was just after New Year when ideas were banded around as to how to celebrate this momentous milestone.

Suggestions were made for a formal dinner or a big families day or a hangar party, so naturally Joint Force Harrier decided to have all 3. RAF Cottesmore hosted the families day and subsequent hangar party on Friday 24th July 2009 whilst RAF Wittering hosted the formal dinner the previous evening on the 23rd July 2009 in the 20(R) Squadron hangar. A small team of people then assembled to discuss plans for the event. This team grew rapidly once it became apparent as to how much work was involved. Letters were written to sponsors, a website was designed, caterers sought and the list of jobs grew and grew as the size of the event did. No one really knew at the start, how much it would cost and the effort involved putting up a large black curtain around the inside of the hangar for the event, but soon the team became experts in event management. All the small details were covered to ensure everything necessary was in place for a spectacular celebratory dinner.

The dinner itself had been preceded by an open afternoon on the Squadron. The doors to the Squadron were open to anyone who had flown, worked on or worked with the Harrier over the last 40 years. Over tea and coffee guests perused old squadron diaries from 1, 4 and 20 Squadrons. It was interesting to hear their stories of the good old days and see the photos of retired very senior officers when they were young junior pilots on the squadrons. It was a great privilege to meet in person some of these people who we had all heard of and seen their young photos on the Squadron wall of fame. The guests were free to walk around the Squadron and see how the Harrier has developed into the GR9 over the years and compare how it is operated today versus days gone by. Many guests had heard of, but were still surprised to see, Royal Navy personnel working alongside the Royal Air Force in Joint Force Harrier. They were able to walk around and sit in the modern day Harrier. The new young pilots of today explained the latest technological



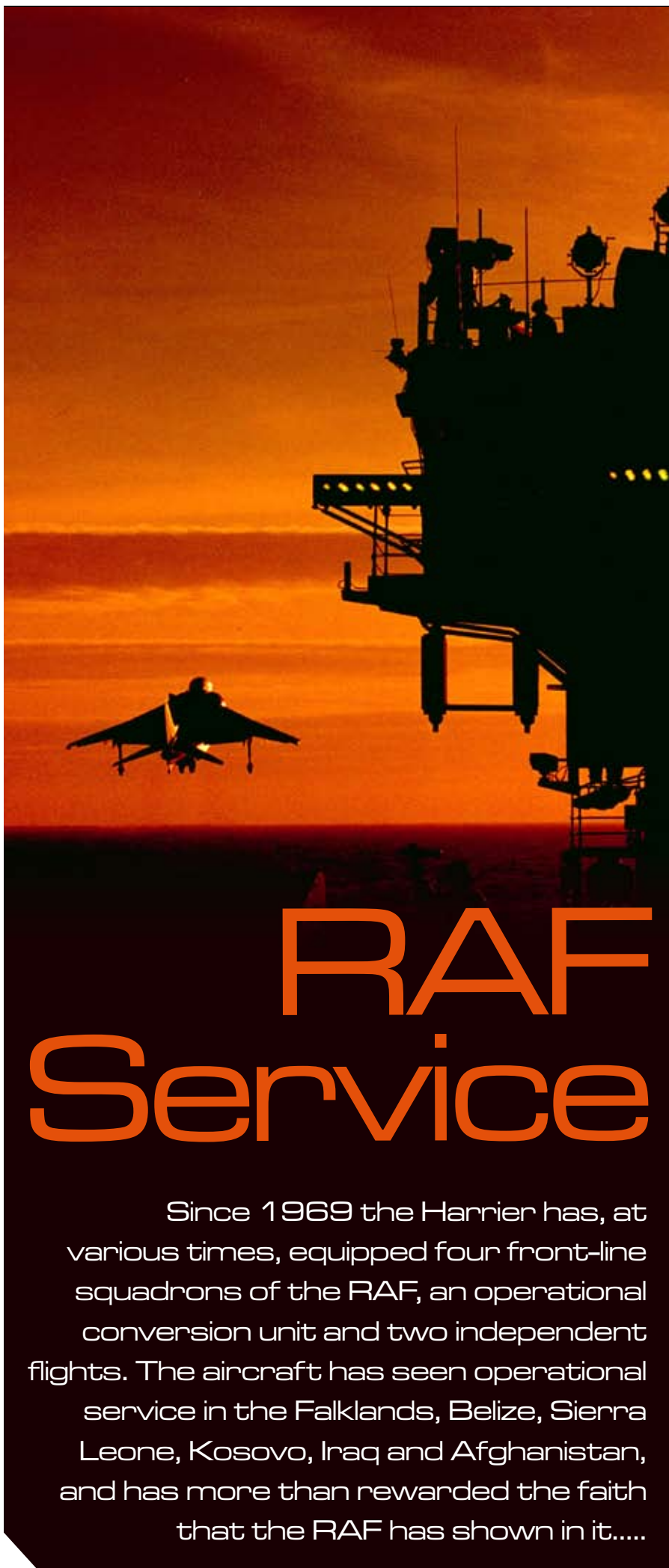
advances that have made the Harrier GR9 the awesome war proven attack aircraft it is today. Some guests even took up the opportunity to fly the Harrier Flight Simulator. This naturally developed into a competitive event with retired Harrier pilots demonstrating how they still had the ability to fly the jet just as good as the 'young ones' of today.

The evening function was an especially glamorous event to mark the 40th anniversary of the Harrier. Squadron personnel spent a lot of time clearing the hangar of aircraft and clearing up so that various companies could come in and install drapes, lights, tables, toilets, cooking facilities and possibly the longest bar in NATO. The transformation saw guests arriving through a blacked out tunnel in to a sensational atmospherically lit hangar, the back drop to which was the presence of the Kestrel (the development aircraft prior to the Harrier) and a modern day Harrier GR9. The Royal Marines Band played as old friends reunited and reminisced over the last 40 years of Harrier operations and the important part that everyone has played over the years. Staff working on the evening were from across RAF Cottesmore, RAF Wittering and included No 3 Mobile Catering Squadron who provided the food for the event. Sqn Ldr Rich Walker was the project officer for the event and even as guests were arriving he was seen on the telephone arranging last minute transport

for the guest speaker, this whilst walking to his Harrier in order to fly the display for the event. He flew a faultless display despite the pressure of doing so in front of the most demanding audience possible of over 300 Harrier pilots who were critiquing each flying manoeuvre. He need not have worried as all stood in admiration listening to the roar of the Rolls-Royce Pegasus engine as the Harrier hovered and bowed. After the round of applause when he landed someone even spotted him smile as he walked back in to the dinner.

There are so many people who worked tirelessly towards the event to thank them individually here, but they all know who they are. The Joint Force Harrier Commander was able to do that on the evening itself and plenty of letters have arrived from guests expressing their gratitude for a successful evening. As guests left at the end of the evening there were many who remarked at what a milestone 40 years is for a small military jet to achieve. The majority of personnel working in the Harrier Force today hadn't even been born when the first Harrier flew. The question still remains as to exactly when the Harrier will retire from service. But let us hope in 10 years time we will all assemble again to celebrate 50 years of the Harrier VSTOL fighter and pay tribute to all who have contributed to the operation of this unique aircraft.





# RAF Service

Since 1969 the Harrier has, at various times, equipped four front-line squadrons of the RAF, an operational conversion unit and two independent flights. The aircraft has seen operational service in the Falklands, Belize, Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, and has more than rewarded the faith that the RAF has shown in it.....

As the longest user of the Harrier the RAF has sponsored continued improvement in the aircraft with the GR.1, GR1A, GR.3, GR.5, GR.7 and GR.9 single-seaters having served, supported by T.2, T.4, T.4A, T.10 AND T.12 trainers. A total of 118 first generation single-seat and 23 two-seat Harriers have been followed by 94 second generation single-seaters and 13 trainers - these figures exclude development batch aircraft.

Until the end of the Cold War the RAF's Harrier force was primarily dedicated to supporting the British Army in Germany, with a secondary role supporting NATO's northern flank in Norway. Like much of Britain's armed forces, the 1990s were a period of transition towards a more flexible peace-keeping and rapid reaction role for the Harriers, a move that has culminated in the creation of the Joint Force Harrier in early 2000 to bring all UK Harrier and Sea Harrier operations together under one umbrella organisation.

## RAF Squadrons -

### No 20(R) Squadron

20 Squadron was formed, as part of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) on September 1st 1915 at Netheravon in Wiltshire. During the First World War, the Squadron established a place in the record books by amassing 613 aerial victories - the top score for all fighter squadrons involved in the conflict.

Undoubtedly, the highest accolade must go to Sgt Thomas Mottershead, born in Widnes, Lancashire, who was described as "one of the bravest men who have ever fallen in war". He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) for his conspicuous bravery, endurance and skill on January 7th 1917. When attacked by two German fighters, he and his Observer, Lt W E Gower, shot down the first aircraft but suffered catastrophic damage from the second. With his aircraft engulfed in flames, Sgt Mottershead persisted in finding a safe place in which to land whilst for his part, Lt Gower valiantly attempted to fight back the flames right up to the point of crash landing. Although he was able to save the life of his Observer, Sgt Mottershead succumbed to injuries five days later, remaining cheerful and uncomplaining to the very end.

In 1919 the Squadron moved to India, thus beginning a 30-year association with an area that was bounded to the West by the North West Frontier and to the East by Singapore and Brunei. The badge of 20 Squadron still emphasises this long association with the Far East, displaying the rising sun and an eagle holding an Indian 'Talwar' or fighting sword. Also noteworthy is the fact that Col T E Lawrence CB, DSO, the legendary 'Lawrence of Arabia' sought refuge in the ranks of 20 Squadron. Disguised as 'Aircraftman Shaw', he fulfilled the role of Orderly Room Clerk until the long arm of the Press Corps discovered his presence there and repatriation was deemed to be the only acceptable political solution.

During World War II, the Squadron operated from over twenty different locations in India and Burma and became a leader in the development of the Westland Lysander aircraft in the Army Cooperation role. Subsequently, equipped with the Hawker Hurricane, the Squadron distinguished itself in front line operations against the Japanese forces. Demonstrating the typical tenacity of the age, when faced with a chronic shortage of weapons, just as British Land Forces needed the most support a Squadron Medical Orderly flew in a Harvard training aircraft and dropped empty lemonade bottles noted for their screaming effect - over the Japanese lines.

Following World War II the Squadron moved to Wales in 1947, and remained there for a period of three years, before once again moving overseas, mainly to various bases in Germany. In the early 1960s, 20 Squadron returned to the Far East, when tensions in Laos and Borneo called for the judicious use of the Hawker Hunter fighter/ground attack aircraft. By 1970 the Squadron was back in Germany once more, where it stayed until 1992. During this post-War era the Squadron had operated the De Havilland Vampire, the North American Sabre, the Hawker Hunter, the British Aerospace Harrier, the SEPECAT Jaguar and the PANAVIA Tornado.

A further demanding period in the Squadron's history involved operations in the Persian Gulf. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd 1990, 20 Squadron was required to work-up crews in the Airfield Denial role, using the formidable JP233 weapon system. However on November 8th 1990, that requirement was changed to a declaration of eight crews for the new ALARM (Air Launched Anti-Radiation Missile) role, with the remaining four crews on the Squadron continuing with the JP233 role. In the ensuing 43 days of conflict, 20 Squadron made a significant contribution to the overall effectiveness and success of the Tabuk Wing in Saudi Arabia, conducting JP233 and ALARM missions and carrying out precision attacks with 1,000 lb bombs. Although Battle Honours were ultimately shared with other Laarbruch based squadrons, four officers from 20 Squadron were singled out for special recognition of their achievements. One officer received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), while three others were Mentioned in Dispatches.

On their return from the Gulf the Squadron found themselves overtaken by events, most notably the UK Government's "Options for Change" defence review and No 20 (Tornado) Squadron was disbanded at RAF Laarbruch on July 31st 1992. At around this time the decision was taken to renumber all Operational Conversion Units (OCU) within the RAF, and as a consequence of this the 20 Squadron designation, now held in 'Reserve' status, passed to No 233 Harrier OCU on September 1st 1992.

From a historical perspective, No 233 Operational Conversion Unit originated at Pembrey Sands in 1952, where the unit trained De Havilland Vampire and Hawker Hunter aircrew in the Ground Attack role. The unit was disbanded in the mid-1950s but in the late 1960s, the Harrier Conversion Unit adopted the designation, starting its first course on March 1st 1971. This date also marked the introduction of first four pilots into the Harrier Force for the very first time. No 233 OCU was responsible for training all RAF Harrier pilots in the Ground Attack and Reconnaissance role and it also became responsible for converting combat-ready Harrier GR3 pilots to the new Harrier GR5 when it entered service in 1989.

The OCU is now equipped with eight single-seat Harrier GR9s, four two-seat Harrier T Mk 12s and two two-seat Harrier T Mk 10s, which are infinitely more capable than their predecessors and definitive proof that the RAF can boast some of the finest and most technologically advanced aircraft in the world today. Squadron personnel number approximately 380 people in a variety of trades. The OCU also incorporates the Harrier Maintenance School (HaMS) which has been in existence for more than quarter of a century. Originally located in building 492, it ran Harrier specific courses for RAF personnel and from 2003 RN personnel. It also trained personnel from all 3 services in Fibre Reinforced Plastics Repair. In Aug 2004, the school moved to its present location in building 376, sharing with the Met Office, Collyweston Gym and 85 (EL) Wg Training & Standards. As JFH has evolved, so has the school. In April 2006, HaMS formally became part of 20(R) Sqn. The school now trains some 70 RN AET phase IIB personnel per year as well as RAF & RN phase III technicians, prior to employment on Front Line Sqns or 20 (R) Sqn itself.

Today, 20 (R) Squadron consists of two 'Flights'. 'B' Flight specialises in aircraft handling, focusing on VSTOL (Vertical/Short Take-Off and Landing) as well as Navigation, Instrument Flying and Air Combat. The Flight also runs post-graduate courses for the training of Harrier instrument Rating Examiners and Harrier Qualified Flying Instructors. 'A' Flight specialises in Weaponneering,

Tactical Operations and Electronic Warfare. The Flight is also charged with producing Qualified Weapons Instructors and Electronic Warfare Instructors. 20 (R) Squadron also has the responsibility of converting RN Sea Harrier pilots from their traditional Air Defence role into the Ground Attack role of the GR9, as part of Joint Force Harrier.

In the current age of company 'Mission Statements', 20 (R) Squadron is clear about its business, which is: "To fully train RAF and RN Harrier Pilots, Engineers and Maintainers in order to enhance the capability of Joint Force Harrier across the complete spectrum of operational and contingent tasks". The Harrier Display shows some of the unique handling characteristics of this remarkable aircraft, but both the pilot and the personnel who maintain it, are well aware that they could also be called upon to augment the front line Harrier Squadrons, either alongside land force or from naval platforms, or even as the UK's principal contribution to any multi-national operation.

#### Badge and Motto

Motto: Facta non verba - Deeds not words

Badge: In front of the rising sun, an eagle, wings elevated and perched on a sword - approved by King George VI in June 1937. The rising sun is intended to commemorate the unit's long association with the East. The eagle is perched on 'Talwar' indicative of the Squadron's work with the Army in India.

#### Battle Honours

Western Front 1916-1918, Somme 1916\*, Arras\*, Ypres 1917\*, Somme 1918\*, Lys, Hindenburg Line, Mahsud 1919-1920, Waziristan 1919-1925, Mohmand 1927, North West Frontier 1930-1931, Mohmand 1933, North West Frontier 1935-1939, North Burma 1943-1944, Arakan 1943-1944, Manipur 1944\*, Burma 1944-1945\*, Gulf 1991.

Honours marked with an asterisk may be emblazoned on the Squadron Standard.





# A Woman's World?

I had no idea what career path I wanted to follow until a 'father-to-daughter' chat when I was 16 made me realise that at some point I needed to plan my future.....

**M**y father had recently returned to flying helicopters, following ten years running a pub and his own brewery, so I thought I'd give flying a go. My only personal aims on the job front were that I wouldn't be stuck at a desk and I wouldn't work 9 to 5. My Dad managed to get me flying in a helicopter, through some old Fleet Air Arm contacts, as well as 2 flying lessons at our local airfield and from then on, my career path became clear.

At the time the RAF were recruiting women to fly non-combat aircraft only. However, there was hope that this would be extended to allow women to fly fast-jets so I decided to apply to the military rather than the civilian flying world. I wanted to do some fun flying rather than flying a bus.

It was too late when I decided to join the RAF to apply for a 6th Form Flying Scholarship, so I applied for a University Cadetship. I hoped that the RAF would sponsor me through University and that I would be able to fly with the University Air Squadron (UAS) at weekends and during the University holidays. This I achieved and I spent 3 years flying Bulldogs at RAF Leeming whenever my degree course allowed. My UAS Boss was old-fashioned in his views towards female pilots and the first 2 terms of UAS were quite stressful.

By now the RAF had started to train females as fast-jet pilots and the best pilots, at the time, were selected to join the Harrier Force. Therefore, despite the Force's reputation for being sexist, insular and arrogant I decided that I would try to join. If at any stage I failed to reach the required standard at least I would know that I had tried my hardest. I can't imagine anything more frustrating than not knowing whether you could have made the grade had you tried that little bit harder.

On graduation from University I joined a holding pool to wait for my Basic Flying Training Course (BFT) at Linton-on-Ouse and spent one and a

half years doing menial jobs at various stations around the RAF. I also held for a further 6 months following BFT waiting for an Advanced Flying Training Course at RAF Valley. During this period I had my first experience of the Harrier Force, as I held on the Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) carrying out the display manager role. Although I was treated extremely well I sensed that no-one took me seriously when I said I wanted to be a Harrier pilot. However, rather than putting me off this only served to fuel my determination to succeed.

I had a great time at RAF Valley, flying the Hawk and, having come top of my course, was selected to join the Harrier OCU. Both the OCU and I were nervous at first; the staff were given a pep talk before I arrived (contents unknown), probably direction to treat me like any other student, but I'm not sure. I hope that their fears were unfounded. The OCU was hard work and it took me a while to understand the scan and nozzle adjustments required for a rolling vertical landing. However, I got there in the end and finished the syllabus on a par with my course mate.

My subsequent tours on 3(F) Sqn as a junior pilot, IV(AC)Sqn as a frontline Qualified Weapons Instructor (QWI) and 20(R)Sqn as a QWI instructing the ab initio Harrier pilots were challenging and scary at times, but extremely rewarding, and I loved flying the Harrier.

An example of one of the challenges I faced was the first time I landed on an aircraft carrier; I'd never even seen one before let alone landed on one. It wasn't pretty, more of an arrival than a landing, and it took quite a while for my right leg to stop shaking after I touched down. I've also planned, briefed and lead a number



of multinational Composite Air Operations (COMAOs) where 200+ aircrew, of varying experience levels, mostly men, were focussed on me. It was pretty nerve-racking, but you've just got to swallow your nerves, take a deep breath and hope that you are up to the job. I've also come close to flying into the ground. During a complex night training sortie at Otterburn range I came within 70ft of becoming a statistic. It was entirely my fault; I was looking over my shoulder for my wingman rather than focussing on the terrain ahead, which happened to be rising ground; I was very lucky.

While on the squadrons I definitely came across the occasional misogynist who didn't appreciate a woman joining his all-male flying club. I never let this bother me and saw it as a sign of their weakness rather than mine. Overall I am proud to say that I can look back on my time flying the Harrier and know that I have acquitted myself well.

Now, however, I am a mother and my attention has turned to looking after my 2 children. To be the best mother I can I have chosen a ground-based job working 9 to 5 from a desk (how ironic!). The hours are more flexible and allow me to spend more time with my kids than I could if I were still flying. For me the RAF maternity benefits and job flexibility could not have been better, but I plan to leave in 2011. The risk of being sent out of area for 6 months is not what I want for my family. I am a staunch believer that as long as you are willing to work hard, are mentally strong and determined to succeed, then any career path is open to you; it's an attitude I'll certainly be trying to instil in my son and daughter.

*Sqn Ldr Mitch Webb*







During the last 6 months, the so called "volleyball players" have been doing everything but playing volleyball! Since January 2009 the Royal Air Force Fire Fighters have been working endless hours to make RAF Wittering and Wittering Village a safer place.....

# Fire Section Update

In January, to aid Cambridgeshire Local Authority Fire Service (LAFS), the RAF Fire Service started working in partnership with the LAFS by carrying out Home Safety Visits and distributing Fire Safety leaflets around Wittering Village covering both service and civilian properties. Cambridgeshire LAFS Community Fire Safety Department came to RAF Wittering and trained our Fire Fighters in Home Fire Safety. Although Fire Fighters come away from basic training with background knowledge of Home Fire Safety, it is more of a specialist area than the day to day fire fighting role.

In February, to carry on the theme of aiding the local community, RAF Wittering's Fire Fighters went down in their off duty time to assist Lincolnshire Fire Service (Stamford) with a Charity Ladder Climb & Fun Day which raised a total of £500. The money went towards the impressive total from Red Nose Day as well as The Fire Fighters Charity which is set up by Fire Fighters for Fire Fighters and their families who need help coping with injuries or the loss of life sustained whilst serving others.

In March, Flight Sergeant Fox took delivery of a "New" Fire Training Simulator. This simulator had been sat unused at RAF Honington for over 10 years. The simulators at Wittering were coming to the end of their life & were not providing the training necessary for the Fire fighters to maintain competence in all areas of their job. Having the updated simulator has enabled Fire Fighters to now train for more scenarios to aid quicker and more effective fire fighting and rescue of personnel from airframes.

During May, COS (Support) Air Command

Air Vice Marshall Kurth visited the Fire Section. AVM Kurth was given the chance to fulfil a boy hood dream and experience the capabilities of the RAF Fire Service. Fire crews whisked AVM Kurth from his lunch in the Officer's Mess to the Fire Service Training Area in the Rapid Intervention Vehicle (RIV) with full Blues and Twos flashing and sounding. He was given a full demonstration using a simulated aircraft crash where fire crews effected a rapid and successful rescue.

More recently, a Joint Force Road Traffic Collision Exercise was set up between Cambridgeshire LAFS, Lincolnshire LAFS and our very own RAF Fire Fighters and RAF Medics. This consisted of a large number of different training exercises involving Road Traffic Vehicles & took place in Rogue sale training Area on the evening of 18 Jun 09. The Fire Service is trained to stabilise vehicles and extract trapped or injured personnel and this was a good chance to compare techniques and experiences with other Brigades. It also gave the RAF Medic's a chance show how they excel in what they are trained to do by carrying out casualty triage, casualty stabilisation and promoting casualty recovery.

Finally, as part of National Child Safety Week 22 - 28 Jun 09, The Fire Section visited Wittering Primary School. During this visit several members of the Section gave a school assembly to the children, pointing out the dangers of fire & the actions to be carried out in the event of discovering a fire. The assembly included a story entitled "Francis the Fire Fly" &

later that day all children received a free copy of this book together with several fire safety orientated stickers.

The RAF Fire Service here at RAF Wittering would like to thank everybody for their continued support around the Station and Village and will continue to serve RAF Wittering and the people of Wittering Village with professionalism in every task given to us. For more information on Fire Safety matters please call the Fire Section on Ext: 7628 or alternatively further information can be found on the website: [Fire.kills.gov.uk](http://Fire.kills.gov.uk)

**Remember "Fire Kills - Be Safe!"**



# FROM SPRINT TO RACE

- Surely It Can Be Done On A Budget

Having been through the painstaking task of preparing a car for racing, I said I would never do it again. What a difference a few years down the line and a couple of seasons sprinting would make.....

I have been itching to get back in to racing since selling my Mini Se7en back in 2001, but the time was never right, so I started sprinting my fathers Peugeot 405 Mi16 Le Mans in the RAF Motorsports Association Speed Challenge up at RAF Barkston Heath. This would keep me happy, or so I thought. The car was completely standard apart from slightly uprated brakes by the second round having had the pedal go to the floor at the first event. At the end of the second season it was still in one piece. Then came the big decision, what to do next. Take it off the road and keep sprinting. Dare I say scrap it, never really an option. Or compete in the RAFMSA Race Challenge. Mmmmm.....

After removing most of the interior, the first hurdle was the roll cage. Nobody makes an 'out of the box' kit for the 405 and after numerous conversations with various fabricators, I called upon an old friend who luckily agreed to do the job building it from scratch. One of the worst bits of the whole project was the removal of the dashboard so that the cage could be fitted behind it.

Getting it started was just as interesting as everything seemed in place but no power

was getting through from the battery. After checking and rechecking everything, a small earth strap to the battery mount, yes I did mean mount, was found to be loose. Bingo, we were up and running. Now for the test drive. What a difference a welded in cage can make to the handling. I hardly got past first gear but already new it was going to be completely different. A proper test was booked at Mallory Park and the first fix of decals went on the car in the meantime. It was now just a case of getting everything in order before the first round at Brands Hatch.

We were originally scheduled to have our own RAF race at the event, but due to the lack of entries for various reasons we ended up in with sports, saloons and JEC powered by Jaguar championships. A full grid of 32 cars would be starting with plenty of reserves. This was going to be a baptism of fire for me as I hadn't raced for a few years and I was still a novice (no bad thing considering the track and field of machinery) and to top it off I had never been round Brands.

I made a good start in the race, gaining two places by the first corner. It was to be short lived as my exit out of the hairpin let one of them back past. For the remaining laps I did everything I could to keep the others behind me as these were my direct competition in the RAF Challenge. Both of their cars were running on race tyres, and boy did I know it. They were much quicker out of the corners and as my tyres started to give up, were attacking me at

every opportunity. Every lap seemed to be an eternity, but I managed it to the chequered flag. You would have thought I had won the race, I was that pleased. All achieved with a 'standard' Peugeot 405.

I had proved that it could be done on a budget, but think of a price and then double it.

After subsequently competing in rounds at the great venues of Rockingham and Cadwell Park, and also part of a group entry race at Mallory Park, I was more than pleased to finish 2nd overall in the Challenge for 2008. This has certainly proved that the RAFMSA Race Challenge does what it says it is designed to do, and that is, to give everyone a chance no matter what budget they have. I look forward to competing in this years Challenge:

*If you wish to know more about the RAFMSA Sprint or Race Challenges, please contact Sgt Paul Waterhouse on ext 5008.*









## RAF Netball Inter Station Competition 2009

The RAF Netball Inter Station competition was held on 30 Apr 09 at DCAE Cosford. It comprised of 15 teams in total, venturing from as far as RAF Aldergrove in Northern Ireland and RAF Lossiemouth in the north of Scotland. The competition was split into two leagues, one for the cup and the other for the plate.

**RAF** Wittering's station team, The Harriers, were struggling to get a full team of seven players together. Fortunately we managed to partner up with RAF Cottesmore and put forward a Joint Force Harrier team. But due to operational commitments (plus one injury), three of the players had to drop out days before the competition, which left the rest of us hunting around the two stations to scrape another few players together. In the end we travelled to the competition a man down praying we wouldn't encounter any injuries!

On arrival, we had a manic 20 minutes of trying to find a team willing to give us a player for the day and were kindly donated AC Hannah Fox from our first opponents of the day, DCAE Cosford. AC Fox then played a fast attacking game against her own team, culminating in us winning the match, 6-2 which put us in the league to win the cup.

We were challenged by RAF Cranwell to a friendly match as their scheduled opposition was a 'no show'. We eventually drew in a nail biting match 6-6, with Sgt Emma Gattlin leading the attack and getting those ever important goals into the net.

Our next match was against RAF Odiham

and as strong as our defence was and even with the height and reach of our tallest player, goal keeper Cpl Gail Husband, it still wasn't enough to counteract the strength of their whole team and we lost 3-8.

JFH's next challenge was against RAF Lyneham, who are notorious for fielding a strong team and one of the few stations ever to consistently enter two teams into this competition every year. We fought hard and strong but at half time were losing by 3 goals. Team captain, Cpl Sadie Peploe, decided to make some tactical changes. SAC Lisa Whittick was brought into defence to utilise her speed in the centre of the court and LAC Jo Tomsett into goal shooter to provide the necessary support at the attacking end. We valiantly came back to draw 11-11.

Our last match was played against RAF Halton, who gave us the biggest challenge so far in the competition, especially as they were fielding an RAF and CS player. Our centre, SAC Tasha Cockerill, played an exceptional game, making several timely interceptions throughout the game. Sadly we lost this game 3-8, but all felt the score did not reflect the game itself. It was a well contested match which we all thoroughly enjoyed playing.

With one win, two draws and two losses, this put us seventh place in competition. The overall winners of the cup league were RAF Cranwell and the plate winners were RAF Brize Norton. It was a fantastic day of netball with the best turnout of station teams to date. All of the JFH girls really enjoyed themselves and expressed a desire to partake in next year's competition.

**Station netball training is on Monday evenings in the main gym at RAF Wittering 18.30 -20.00 hrs, all standards welcome. For more info contact Cpl Sadie Peploe 95351 Ext 7454 or SAC Tasha Cockerill Ext 7050.**

## Ladies Only Fitness

It was brought to our attention at the PEd Fit that the numbers of females attending the gym were significantly lower compared to males; obviously bearing in mind male to female ratio. With this in mind we decided to set up a female only fitness session. Our 'Girl Power' sessions are on Tuesdays from 7pm til 8pm. These sessions cater for all abilities with a wide variety of exercise classes. Sessions include body pump, boxercise, circuits and spinning. We are looking to expand on these in the near future to offer an even larger selection for the ladies.

The overall aim of the ladies only fitness sessions are to get more ladies into fitness and to show fitness can be fun. It has been five months since we began teaching these classes and so far it has been very successful; attendance has been positive and we are now starting to gather a regular group.

So all you ladies out there - personnel and dependants come see what all the fun is about!!

*Cpl Jessica Carter*







# 42

(ES) Wg Overall Winners On

## Forces Development Day

It should have been a bright, sunny afternoon on the banks of Rutland Water but the day in July that saw over 60 RAF Wittering personnel participate in an exciting Force Development competition was a very wet one.



Fortunately, this did not dampen spirits, and those involved enjoyed a thoroughly rewarding afternoon. Stn Execs were able to field a strong side for the day, and other teams from as far a field as MDHU Peterborough and a local CCF unit were able to make the trip up the A1.

Eight teams consisting of 4-6 members representing all areas of the station, started the day by undertaking a timed 5km military hike around the lake separated at two minute intervals. Each team was then awarded points depending upon their finishing times. Even after 5km there was still only seconds separating the majority of the teams. Following the hike, teams were then required to compete in a series of tasks. These activities were managed and run by staff from the Training and Development Flight, Physical Education Flight, Force Protection Training Flight and the Station Medical Centre. Subjects covering all of the 5 domains of Force Development were incorporated into the day varying from core military skills and leadership to physical challenges, air power, ethos and heritage and first aid. Once all teams had completed all eight tasks, total points were counted and the winners found.

Positive character was demonstrated by all throughout the day and one participant's

comment that, 'it was the perfect opportunity to knit the team together and create some good old fashioned team building' is no doubt proof enough of the value gained from the whole experience. Finally, after some gruelling hard work in the rain and some testing of 'grey matter', 42(ES)Wg were the days overall winners with 5131(BD)Sqdn coming in a very close second. Station Commander, Group Captain Paul Higgins was on hand to congratulate the members of the winning team and present captain Sqdn Ldr Scott Weekes with the trophy.

The day was a complete success due to the efforts of the Force Development Squadron personnel, who had put in a huge amount of time and effort to ensure the day ran smoothly. OC TDF, Fg Off Clarke, commented on the professionalism of all involved and declared that the only thing that could improve things for next year would be 'a dab of sunshine and a lakeside BBQ provided by Wittering's very own Mobile Catering Squadron'. All personnel involved with the event thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from the experience. It is rumoured that this type of occasion will now be run twice a year and that in the future even more teams will be able to participate. Let's hope so!

But who will now step forward to take the crown from 42(ES)Wg?

Fg Off Mark Hodcroft 42 (ES)Wg

# Families Day 09

RAF Wittering held its Families Day on Friday 3rd July, a day deliberately planned during term time to allow children from the local schools to have a day out of the classroom.



Additionally, about 100 ex-Service veterans from the various local branches of the RAF and RN Associations and the Royal British Legion attended. The aim of the day was to promote the visibility of the Service and the Station by demonstrating some of the operational capabilities to the families and friends of personnel serving at RAF Wittering and Units parented by Wittering.

The highlight of the assorted flying displays on offer was a superb routine by the Blades and the Red Arrows even managed a flypast. A wide range of interactive entertainment such as a rifle range, a climbing wall and archery, kept the children amused and each of Wittering's Air Combat Service Units were on hand to demonstrate their individual expertise and equipment to the families. Other entertainment included a live band, a motorcycle stunt show and a large display of vintage Bentley and Triumph motorcars.

For many families though, their enduring memory was a trip in a 101 Sqn VC10 on one of 2 separate refuelling sorties to replenish Typhoons and Harriers over the North Sea.

*Best shot on the air rifle range was awarded to Lewis Macinnes aged 12.*





**Name and Rank -**  
Gp Capt Bob Iveson (Retd)  
**Role at RAF Wittering -**  
Retired - Ex Harrier Pilot  
**Age -**  
Intentionally Blank  
**Marital Status -**  
Married



# In the **Hot** Seat

*In celebration of the Harrier 40th Anniversary we interviewed a retired pilot who returned to celebrate with friends old and new and reminisce about old times. Group Capt Iveson (Retd) had a few interesting comments to make.....*

**1. What part of your job gives you the most satisfaction?**

Not having one.

**2. And the least?**

Not having an income other than 2 pensions.

**3. What is the best advice you have ever received?**

Never ask questions that you may not like to hear the answers to.

**4. Describe yourself in 6 words.**

A confident, aggressive, exceptional Harrier pilot. (Its hard to be humble once you are perfect).

**5. What career would you have followed if you had not pursued your current profession?**

Airline pilot - Hot and cold running hostesses and enough money to buy fast cars in order to compensate for a very boring job.

**6. Is there one piece of criticism that sticks in your mind?**

As a student pilot, my flight commander wrote in his report that I was "delightfully indolent".

**7. How would you change the MOD?**

A large fire should suffice. Failing that, remove all politicians and civilians and reform it into a proper Armed Forces HQ. Have a separate ministry with all

the politicians etc housed as far away as possible. Perhaps in a different city, country, planet?

**8. What would be your first act as World Leader?**

Repeal all laws remotely connected with the Nanny State, Health and Safety or Political Correctness.

**9. Name your desert island essentials.**

Whiskey, cigarettes and a good woman, plus a fishing boat/yacht to escape from the woman when necessary.

**10. What food would you choose for your last supper?**

An aged corn fed lowan beef ribeye steak.

**11. Who do you most admire in the world?**

Winston Churchill, Graham Hill, Jeremy Clarkson and Valentino Rossi.

**12. Name four people you would like as a dinner guest - and why?**

As above because I admire them.

**13. What one piece of music would you like played at your funeral?**

When the saints go marching in.

**14. How would you like to be remembered?**

As I won't be there, I have no wish to be remembered after I am dead.

## ONION SOUP WITH CIDER AND STILTON

**Ingredients:**

- 2 tbsp butter
- 1kg onions roughly chopped
- 500ml medium dry cider
- 1 tbsp cider vinegar
- Pinch dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 litres of chicken stock (vegetarians can substitute with vegetable stock)
- 225 g of potato peeled and diced
- Pinch of salt and pepper

**For the Stilton butter**

- 4 tbsp butter, room temperature
- 2 tbsp single cream
- 4 tbsp Stilton (or Cashel Blue), crumbled, room temperature
- 1 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tbsp fresh chives, chopped

**Method:**

- 1: Melt the butter in a saucepan and add your chopped onions gently cook over a medium heat for 15 minutes until soft and lightly browned.
- 2: Add the cider and cider vinegar and boil until the liquid has reduced by half.
- 3: Add the thyme, bay leaf, chicken stock, potato and a little salt. Bring to a simmer, and cook for about 15 minutes over a low heat.
- 4: Remove the bay leaf and puree the soup with a hand blender until smooth.
- 5: To make the stilton butter, mix all the ingredients together in a bowl until well blended.
- 6: To serve, ladle the hot soup into warm bowls. Add 1 tbsp of stilton butter to each bowl and garnish with fried onions and chervil.

*This soup is a real favourite of mine. I thought it would be a nice simple recipe for those who like to experiment with flavours at home. It is the perfect addition to any meal whether it be everyday cooking or trying something new on the whole family.*

**Cpl Ben Lashan, 3MCS**





