

# ARIES

The Magazine of RAF Shawbury

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SHAWBURY**

Edition 2  
**2022**





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## Editor's Welcome

*By Squadron Leader Kim Leach*

**W**elcome to Edition 2 of 2022.

I hope that you have enjoyed the Platinum Jubilee celebrations. At RAF Shawbury, we were delighted to host our local veterans for a Platinum Jubilee tea party in the Officers' Mess. The tea party has become an annual event and we were delighted to see so many familiar faces as well as welcome new attendees for the first time. The children in Springs Nursery entered into the spirit of the event by making fantastic crowns, which they modelled for our Station Photographer.



Spring and the easing of COVID restrictions has also finally enabled our personnel to get out and about and resume activities in the community. This has included 5 visits during May to support the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) curriculum in schools within Low Flying Area 9; these visits were accompanied by RAF Shawbury personnel, who have volunteered to be STEM Ambassadors, and included visits to Grange School (Shrewsbury), Tattenhall Park Primary School, Market Drayton School, St Mary's (Shawbury) and St Peter's (Wem). Earlier in the year, Wg Cdr Spencer, Officer Commanding Engineering and Logistic Wing led a team on a STEM visit to Berkeley Academy in Staffordshire, and you can read about this visit on page 8.

Our trainees are also enjoying giving back to local communities and Flight Operations Specialist Course 20 completed a fantastic project recently at the Grinshill parish church.

I want to finish by introducing a new member of the Aries Magazine team who takes over as the Deputy Editor. Flt Lt Ade Vine, is no stranger to RAF Shawbury, having served a total of 14 years at the base during his career and is delighted to be back. Welcome Ade, and I hope you enjoy your time at RAF Shawbury.

Happy reading.

### COVER PICTURE:

*Helicopter visit to support Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths at Berkeley Academy, Staffordshire, (Photograph provided by Berkeley Academy). Read more on page 8.*

### Date of Next Edition:

Submissions for the Autumn 2022 edition to be received by 10th September 2022 to SHY-AriesMagazine@mod.gov.uk

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# FOREWORD

by Wing Commander Phil Spencer MBE MA BSc (Hons) CEng MIET RAF

**M**y foreword for this edition of the Aries Magazine is a farewell to the Station at the end of my Service Career. I will leave the Royal Air Force after 38 years, proud to have served and delighted that my last tour was here at Shawbury.

I arrived at Shawbury during a very busy period as the Defence Helicopter Flying School (DHFS) converted from Squirrel and Griffin to Juno and Jupiter. It was also the arrival of Ascent on Station, the aircraft maintenance being conducted by Airbus, Babcock providing the off-aircraft engineering and supply support, ESS conducting catering, leisure and hotel services and Aquila delivering new Air Traffic Control radars and airfield equipment support.

The School of Air Operations Control (SAOC) was at Shawbury with the School of Air Battle Management (SABM) still based at Boulmer. Four years on, with a global pandemic to add to the richness of the experience, the support arrangements have matured, and all three schools have been renamed. DHFS has become Number 1 Flying Training School, and SAOC and SABM merged to become the Defence College of Air and Space Operations (DCASO).

In addition, the Strategic Support Programme has changed the way we deliver HR services with Personnel Management Squadron (PMS) now centralised at Cosford. Our IT support has gone the same way now that the resident team have done an excellent

job supporting the transition to new IT systems. In addition, our Risk Management processes have changed significantly and we have been subject to many audits, twice by the Military Aviation Authority, once by the Command Environmental and Safety Officer, plus Annual Formal Inspections, Air Safety Assurance visits and oversight by many other regulators. We passed them all with great results. There have been lots of others too – I apologise if I have missed you out or not celebrated your success, but the editor told me there was a word limit.

At no point have I been bored. It has been a hectic and challenging four years. Collectively we have achieved a great deal and it won't stop. But we mustn't forget why we are all here. Through all that turbulence we have continued to graduate world class helicopter crews for the UK armed



forces and had success in providing newly trained personnel in all the disciplines within the Air Operations Profession.

The Royal Air Force I joined 38 years ago was a very different thing, but so too is the world in which we operate. Change has been necessary to respond to world events and to ensure we continue to reflect the society that we represent and who we serve and protect. What hasn't changed is the organisation's ability to attract the brightest and the best. I never cease to be impressed at the character, enthusiasm and determination of the people I have met who are at the beginning of their careers. I have also been privileged to work with a fantastic team across the whole force that makes Shawbury what it is.

I have enjoyed my Service career and would do it all over again if I could. I will soon retire and hand the RAF over to the next generation. I hope that each and every one of you will be able to look back at your careers with the same job satisfaction that I have.

*“Change has been necessary to respond to world events and to ensure we continue to reflect the society that we represent and who we serve and protect. What hasn't changed is the organisation's ability to attract the brightest and the best. I never cease to be impressed at the character, enthusiasm and determination of the people I have met who are at the beginning of their careers. I have also been privileged to work with a fantastic team across the whole force that makes Shawbury what it is.”*

## RAF Shawbury Force Protection Training Flight

**F**orce Protection (FP) is everyone's business, right? Certainly, that's how Force Protection specialists view the world. Agile basing and Combat Force Employment might be the current buzz words around the RAF and how we might fight, but no matter what, our Individual Readiness Training is at the heart of our Services' ability to prepare our people. How we go about achieving that has changed drastically over the years, but the fundamentals are still the same. Your FP Training Flight at RAF Shawbury is here to assist you and advise you in all your FP needs, whether during annual training or pre-deployment training.

Blended learning on the DLE now forms a significant part of that preparation, learning at your own pace and in a modern interactive way is a paradigm shift from old school methods, but hugely important. Some practical skills however very much lend themselves to one-to-one face to face delivery. We launched a new initiative in April to assist those living with neurodiversity (or Specific Learning Difficulties in old money) to better absorb individual FP knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

### Get the basics right and hit the target anywhere, anytime.

Cpl 'Mac' MacKinnon here at RAF Shawbury FP Trg Flight reflects - we pride ourselves on sound marksmanship being fundamental and essential for close combat, it has been proven on operations that marksmanship and effective application of fire is battle winning. Your weapon handling confidence is a major factor in both accuracy and effectiveness, this confidence must be founded on a core of competence derived from quality training and exposure to regular weapon handling.

To develop marksmanship abilities coaching is used to develop your understanding, challenge you and support you in becoming a better shot by increasing your knowledge



*Cpl Mackinnon testing students' Sudoku skills*

of the fundamentals such as the marksmanship principles:

### Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN)

Cpl 'Mac' MacKinnon at FP Trg Flight recently re-qualified as a CBRN instructor; the advice coming from the Defence CBRN Centre at Winterbourne Gunner is that the onus of CBRN drills and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) should be placed onto the user. This means that we will be more responsible for user checks, cleanliness of our PPE, and better trained in carrying out personal drills, meaning a return to practising drills more often. In more good news, CS will be returning soon, those not fortunate enough to have the experience of stating

your name, rank, and number in a CS environment during phase one training will be glad to know that it is mandatory and therefore you will soon experience it for yourself. For everyone else, it will soon be back to the days of leaving the FP training flight with tears in your eyes and CS in your hair.

All the staff at RAF Shawbury Force Protection Training Flight are committed to providing support using modern learning techniques as well as old tried and tested methods to maintain our individual skills. We provide bespoke training on request as well as our normal modularised training days – come and find us by MTMS, we might even make you a brew.

**WO S Griffin**  
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in the next issue of

# Aries

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# Flying High for Junior Ranks at Shawbury

**T**his year, both SAC Harris and SAC Stirrat were among the 15 junior ranks selected for a position on the Junior Ranks (and Officers) Pilot Scholarship Scheme (JR/OPSS). So, what does this mean? What is the JR/OPSS? And how did we secure our places on the scheme for 2022?

## What is the JR/OPSS?

The Junior Ranks/Officers Pilot Scholarship Scheme was set up in 2015, allowing Junior Ranks and Junior Officers the opportunity to learn how to fly light aircraft, and gain valuable experience, flying hours, and tuition which contributes towards a civilian pilot's licence. Each year between 15-30 Junior Ranks are awarded a place on the scheme, as well as up to 5 Junior Officers. This year, there were 15 places awarded to Junior Ranks, and 3 places awarded to Junior Officers.

The scheme was set up with the RAF Flying Clubs' Association and is funded by the RAF Charitable Trust, enabling all JR's and JO's selected to receive 15 hours of flying training, free of charge. Some of the JR scholarship winners may also be awarded a Top-Up Grant, giving them a further 15 hours of training, allowing them to meet the 30 hours flying required to achieve a full Light Aircraft Pilots Licence (LAPL). This LAPL allows the pilot in command to fly a light aircraft with up-to 3 passengers, anywhere in Europe. Alternatively, scholars can use their flying hours towards a Private Pilots Licence (PPL) which requires an overall total of 45 flying hours. The Top-Up Grant is currently not available to Junior Officers.

## Once selected, how is training delivered?

Each scholar is assigned to one of six flying schools around the UK that are qualified to deliver the scheme. These are Benson, Brize Norton, Halton,



Marham, Moray and Waddington. Flying training is then delivered by qualified flying instructors at the schools between April-July. The initial 15 hours of flying training will include effects of control, air law, stalls, basic radio phraseology, circuit flying and should culminate in conducting your first solo flight.

The JRPSS is considered off duty. As a result, the flying training will be conducted during weekdays after work, on weekends, when on leave or if given stand down days from your parent unit.

## How do you apply for the scheme?

Applications for the 2022 scheme ran from Dec 21 – Jan 22, with winners being announced in March. The application consists of a single online form requiring the applicant to include a short pen picture of themselves, why you are applying for the JR/OPSS, how you will commit to the training required, and if successful, how will the JRPSS benefit both you and the RAF?

There are no further interviews, only an online application and a limited number of characters for you to sell yourself to the trustees.

## Further Opportunities

Along with learning how to fly an aircraft, scholars are expected to attend events throughout the year. The Royal International Air Tattoo at RAF Fairford invites display teams and aviation businesses from all over the world to demonstrate their flying capabilities and build relations with potential customers. The scholars can attend the event for free, in order to publicise the JRPSS to those that attend the event. Additionally, scholars are also invited to attend the UK British National Championships aerobatics competition and some scholars are even able to compete, despite having limited or no previous aerobatics experience!

## Previous Scholars

An indirect result of the JRPSS has led to 20% of scholars obtaining a commission, three quarters of those choosing to commission as pilots. Other scholars have subsequently left the RAF to become commercial pilots or remained in the RAF and continued to build on their flying experience gaining additional flying ratings, such as night flying or aerobatics, and some have even progressed to be qualified flying instructors themselves.

Both myself and SAC Harris are looking forward to this exciting opportunity and we'll keep you up to date over the coming months with our flying experiences.

By SAC Harris and SAC Stirrat



# STEM Ambassadors pay a flying visit to Berkeley Academy

**O**n 17th March, a group of four RAF Shawbury personnel took a day out of the office for a flying visit to Berkeley Academy in Crewe, with the team arriving by helicopter and landing in the school's field.

The personnel are science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) ambassadors hoping to educate and inspire the next generation into STEM careers. With the entire school waiting outside excitedly to greet them, the STEM ambassadors were met by a vibrant atmosphere upon landing, with hundreds of young children screaming in awe and excitement at the sight of a helicopter arriving at their school. After landing, the ambassadors were organised into groups to deliver assemblies and tours of the helicopter to the pupils for the rest of the morning.

The assemblies started by discussing the importance of STEM within the Royal Air Force to the children, before showing videos of the training delivered by No. 1 Flying Training School and the Defence College of Air and Space Operations. At this point, the STEM ambassadors were put in the hot seat, with the pupils given the chance to ask their own questions to the personnel. Many of the questions asked covered a broad spectrum, such as: "Are

there motorways for aircraft like there are for cars?" to "Have you ever had any animals in the helicopter?". To the latter, Flight Lieutenant Collins responded: "No, but I have had to lift a cow by helicopter that was stuck." This was met by numerous giggles from teachers and pupils alike.

At the same time as the assemblies were running, other classes were given a talk and a tour of the Juno helicopter. The talk covered several points, from how an aircraft flies to what the number on it means. Finally, the children were given the chance to have a souvenir photograph taken by their teacher, whilst sat in the back seat of the helicopter.

After a well-earned spot of lunch, the team moved onto delivering a lesson about helicopters in two different classrooms concurrently. The lesson consisted of making their own colourful paper propellers and throwing them in the air to see how they work, before building their own miniature helicopters using lollipop sticks, elastic bands, and a plastic propeller. The enjoyment in the children's faces from making their own helicopters was clear to see, as they saw their own mini helicopters work. Once the lesson was completed, it was time for the STEM team to leave, with the whole school once again gathering outside to say goodbye to the group. The children provided a rousing cheer as the team left to return to Shawbury, pleased to have been able to deliver STEM learning to the youngsters.



*Wg Cdr Spencer enjoying teaching the class*



*Pupils learn about how a helicopter flies*



*Berkeley pupils climbing into the Juno helicopter*



*Two Berkeley pupils seeing how propellers work*

"It was a truly memorable day for both the children and staff and one that I am sure will be talked about for years to come," said Berkeley Academy head teacher Charlotte Parker. She added: "The shrieks of excitement from the children as the helicopter came into land and took off were fantastic to hear. For many children, this was their first opportunity to see a helicopter so close and, to then be able to ask the team questions about both the aircraft and the different roles within the RAF, certainly gave even more meaning to their learning about the STEM subjects. Children were able to see the value of the different STEM subjects and how integral they are to different roles which they may not have considered before. We are extremely grateful to Wing Commander Phil Spencer and his team for their organisation, enthusiasm and contribution towards making the day such a huge success."

Well done to all four STEM ambassadors for making the event so successful, helping to create a lasting memory for many young children and hopefully inspiring them to pursue a career in a STEM industry.

**By Fg Off Peter Parker**

*Photos courtesy of Berkeley Academy*

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Taking storytelling to the edge



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This year's exciting programme includes the wonderful storyteller Dovie Thomason from America, who has Lakota, Plains Apache and Scottish Traveller ancestry, Gauri Raje who lives in Scotland and hails from India sharing beautiful and evocative stories, the wonderful Michael Harvey from Wales, who will be sharing the classic Taliesin, the story of the Celtic world's greatest bard, accompanied by the renowned singer and musician Pauline Down, plus many more great storytellers from near and far.

A hearty feast of live music this year will include amongst others; the hugely popular Belinda O'Hooey (who co-wrote and sang the theme tune to the BBC's Gentleman Jack, with Heidi Tidow), the very talented writer and musician Jess Morgan from Norwich, multi-award winning singer, songwriter, musician and proud Devonian Jim Causley, and the multi-talented Nick Hart whose work with the English folk song is rapidly gaining him a reputation as one of the most acclaimed artists of his generation.

The festival prides itself on being a family friendly event and offers an exciting children's programme for all ages in a variety of venues, providing tales, workshops, bedtime stories, and all-day activities in the Big Top Tent with festival regular's Panic Family Circus where children can learn amazing circus skills over the weekend.

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# RAF Shawbury celebrate the Platinum Jubilee by hosting a Veterans' Tea Party

Once again, RAF Shawbury were privileged to welcome local veterans to attend a Tea Party in the Officers' Mess.



The Committee struggled to think of a worthy theme for this year's Tea Party as there didn't appear to be any milestone events that were taking place across the Nation. Based on this, they came up with a simple idea to host a Queen's Platinum Jubilee themed Tea Party! Of course, we were not going to miss an opportunity to welcome our valued veterans and mark this Royal occasion! With the help of Flt Lt Si Duncan and WO Anita Coyles, the plans were put in place to host the event on 27 May 22. Jubilee pin badges were ordered, historical photographs were printed by the Shawbury Graphics team and several bundles of bunting arrived. More by luck than judgment, due to a simple 30 metre versus 300 metre bunting order error, the Mess was as bright as a Royal Palace.

With the help of Sqn Ldr Gary James, our veterans were contacted and even collected to ensure the event was a vibrant occasion. The Tea Party was a joy to attend and a great opportunity for friends to reunite and share stories. An excellent speech was given by Mr Michael Jones MBE, which even the Mess fire alarm couldn't dampen. However, it did allow us to expand the event into a Royal Garden Party for a short while, until the fire crew gave us



the all-clear! We were serenaded by Sqn Ldr Andy Smailes, providing songs for the veterans to listen (and sing) to which were worthy of a Royal Palladium performance. As always, the event wouldn't have been possible without the excellent service from the Officers' Mess Staff and Station personnel who hosted the veterans.



By FS Matt Lingham

Rose Davies with FS Lingham



Group photograph outside Officers' Mess

# Guild of Aviation Artists visit the base

On 25 May, RAF Shawbury was delighted to welcome 6 members of the Guild of Aviation Artists to sketch the Juno and Jupiter aircraft on the main dispersal.



The Guild of Aviation Artists is recognised throughout the world as the premier society for the promotion of aviation art. With over 300 members, the Guild brings together the worlds of art and aviation and stages exhibitions and events across the UK.

Despite the weather being very windy, as well as the scene constantly changing due to the weather dictating the number of aircraft on the dispersal to paint, you can see from the photos, that some very high quality sketches were made.

Flt Lt Vine, Fg Off Thomas and Fg Off Gurung, who were the escorts for the day, made sure that the day went to plan, including an enjoyable lunch in the Officers' Mess. They also picked up some useful artists' tips!

*We hope that you enjoyed your visit!*



# DCASO Dits

The Defence College of Air and Space Operations (DCASO) is definitely back in top gear following a much-needed Christmas break with a full complement of courses keeping us busy. We also had our very first DCASO formal event; our inaugural Dining-In Night was unfortunately a casualty of COVID last year, so instead we celebrated in style at the DCASO 1st Anniversary Dinner where we had the pleasure of welcoming AVM Ian Duguid (AOC 1 Gp), Air Cdre Ian Sharrocks (DFT) and Mr Mike Stoller (Aquila CEO) as our VIP guests. A great night was had by all, and we are already looking forward to the 2nd anniversary event.

## AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TRAINING SQN

The DCASO Anniversary event was well attended from ATCTS, with military, Babcock and Aquila colleagues coming together to celebrate. The evening included a series of vignettes explaining the past, present and

future of DCASO, and our very own Mr Kev Scullion gave an outstanding speech on the history of SAOC and SABM which perfectly highlighted the mutual respect between the two former schools, paving the way for the happy home which is DCASO. ATCTS also provided Mr Vice, in the form of Flt Lt Aaron Morris, who entertained

the assembled throng with an inspired inter-Sqn competition which saw Sqn Ldr Andy Mortimer discover a love of baked beans. The night was a great success and praise goes to the ProjO, Lt Zoe Kennedy, who spent many evenings leading up to the event bottling gin, applying labels and sealing them with a wax top! Thank you



*Anniversary dinner*

to all involved in the organisation of this event, and also to Aquila who very kindly funded the Gin Gizzits!

Unfortunately, we say goodbye to our departing personnel – WO Bate and WO Carmichael. Both have enjoyed a long and distinguished career (36.5 and 32 years respectively) and we are grateful for the time they spent with us at DCASO. However, it is not a long goodbye; WO Bate has enjoyed being here so much he has decided to stick around in a Babcock uniform!

### AEROSPACE BATTLE MANAGEMENT TRAINING SQN

The Anniversary Dinner saw a great turn out from the ABM Training Sqn and it was a memorable night for many, especially our Junior Ranks as most of them had never had the opportunity to attend a formal function before due to COVID. The event introduced them to the many traditions of a Dining-In Night, and they were treated to an impressive performance from Mr Vice along with a unique piece of cinema titled 'DCASO the Movie'.

April has seen a flurry of change as a legend of the ABM universe, Mr Phil Sowerby said goodbye to the world of controlling after 49 years working with the MoD and is now looking forward to his well-earned retirement. CTF made sure Phil departed in style, with a shindig at the Elephant and Castle, surrounded by his family and work colleagues, new and old.

However, we have said hello to some new faces; Flt Lt 'Mimi' Hobbs has been a great addition to the team and has recently been joined by our newest arrival, Flt Lt Chris Thompson-Watts. In sporting news, Flt Lt Ben Davies spent a week down in Cornwall gaining both ISA Level 1 Surf Coach and Beach Lifeguard qualifications; providing him with the skills to deliver surf training to RAF personnel.

Flt Lt Rachael Robertson represented the RAF at the National Powerlifting

Championship in Suffolk. She successfully secured a place for the World Championships which are due to take place in November.

SSF junior ranks also participated in a visit to Bletchley Park as well as RAF Cosford Museum that gave them an opportunity to develop their knowledge of military history and develop their knowledge of the RAF.

### AIR AND SPACE OPERATIONS TRAINING SQN

Here we go again! ASOTS start by saying farewell to Flt Lt Tom Green, posted to Innsworth, Cpl Rich Mcquillan promoted and posted to RAF High Wycombe and WO Kev Morley, posted to the other side of the MT yard into TDT. Temporary farewells see Flt Lt Will Metcalfe detached to London and Cpl Sarah Hodson detached to MPA. We welcome to the ASOTS family, Cpl's Lowri Hope, Megan Walsh, Liam Dodd and WO Chris Marriott. Greeting also to the youngest member of the Sqn and the first baby this year, Joshua Lee; congratulations Jason and Emma. We also welcome back Sgt Michala Jones from maternity leave.

The premier DCASO Sqn set the bar high with an outstanding effort in the RAF Shawbury 10km, committing no less than 24 personnel (18 trainees and 6 trainers (Loughran, Turner, McBrinn, Moss-Jones L, Avery and Rowe)) to assist with the planning and execution of the event. Graduation courses include FOSC 18 & 19, FORC 11 & 12 and FOTC(O) 10.

Cpl Will Moss-Jones joined a team of DCASO trainers conducting an outreach programme to Swanwick, Odiham and Boscombe Down to showcase the role of the DCASO trainer. Interest was high, briefing 22 potential ASOTS trainers and spreading the word of the good work done by DCASO personnel.

### ASSURANCE SQN

Winter, the perfect time of year for Assurance Sqn to undertake a 20km

canoe down the River Severn. Organised by Fg Off Daniel Mills and Fg Off Jack Buckley with the support of Sgt Tom Healing and Cpl Kristie Harper from the PED flight. The aim of the day was to further develop the Sqn's coherence, mental/physical resilience as well as exercises to focus on our own personal mindfulness. Along the route we learnt the fundamentals of canoeing including reading the river, navigating, and steering. Sgt Dan Beagley and Fg Off Jack Buckley obviously missed the last point as they 'inspected' both sides of the river throughout. Segments of the route were carried out in complete silence for up to 10 minutes. An opportunity to de-stress, concentrate on the sounds of nature, immerse ourselves in the natural surroundings, and escape from the stressors of day-to-day duties that we have accepted as the norm.

The team took advantage of Stn FD by taking part in the Shrewsbury Landmarks Orienteering challenge. Taking in historically significant sites and lesser-known points of interest. TDT managed to answer and capture 15 riddled clues throughout the day with only time and weather preventing them from achieving a full house.

Warm welcomes and sad farewells within Assurance Sqn; Cdr Lynne Crompton and Sqn Ldr Rob Scothern both departed on promotion, and we also said farewell to Flt Lt Colin Bennett, Flt Lt Andrew Jones, Flt Lt Tom Green, Cpl Steve McVay. On the bright side, we now have a much quieter TDT office with the departure of WO Chris Marriott.

The Sqn has welcomed Lt Cdr Victoria Rees, Flt Lt Rachael Robertson, WO Dan Jackson and WO Kev Morley. We wish those who have moved on all the very best in their ventures and we look forward to building cohesive working relationships with our new Sqn colleagues.

### The DCASO Diarists

# DCASO Dits

## All Saints Church, Grinshill

A community project by Flight Operations Specialist Course (FOSC) 20

**'Out of sight, out of mind'!** It's true! We are all guilty of it. Often, we overlook or forget things that aren't clearly visible or present in our day-to-day lives. But, despite that there are times when the devotion and care is still present, but an extra pair of helping hands (or several in this case) are needed. And that is just what the trainees of FOSC 20 (flight Ops) offered to the Grinshill community.

Armed with just a single shovel, two rakes, a few paint brushes and 12 pairs of hands, they divided themselves up and set to work on restoring the natural beauty of the grounds of The Parish of Grinshill, All Saints Church.

A team of two spent the morning revitalising two discoloured and weather worn memorial benches. Sanding them down and applying a few fresh coats of paint, they brought a sense of life back into them, making for a warm welcome to all who wish to reminisce.

To the rear of the church, in the garden of remembrance, a second team was hard at work with the removal of a barbed wire, weed covered, withered old wooden fence, that was well on its way to collapsing into the churchyard. This was definitely the most challenging task of the day for the group, as the fence proved to be far sturdier than it initially appeared. Nevertheless, with dedicated teamwork and effort, along with the Reverend Paul Cawthorne supplying additional tools (shears and shovel), the group was able to uproot and dispose of the fence.

What's more, in the back corner of the garden there was a large gnarled old tree that had been overrun with ivy and weeds and had ivy creeping up its trunk and out onto the garden's path which was causing harm to the tree and potentially the graves. The remaining trainees got to work on stripping the tree of its infectious ivy and transporting the debris into large rubble bags. This truly opened the garden up and made for a beautiful background scene.

The final task of the day required all hands-on board, including that of the Reverend Paul and his chainsaw. On the path amid the garden, there was a tall and fragile tree that was at risk of snapping and damaging the graves stones and wall surrounding it. So, with the Reverend in the tree sawing away, the trainees had the simple job of deflecting the falling branches and transporting them off



the grounds. Thankfully with effective communication, everyone and everything made it down and out in one piece.

It was a long and sweltering day, filled with demanding work from the trainees of FOSC 20. But all involved were proud of what they had done, in giving back to a part of the community that is renowned for providing an almost invisible infrastructure of care, support and socialisation for people. And they would all happily do it again!

By AC Samantha Spencer



# Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands War

On the 24 March 2022, 9 Regt AAC organised and hosted the Army Led Dinner.

The event was open to both the Officers' and the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Messes, achieving a fantastic turn out of circa 120 people. The dinner night was an opportunity to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War and the importance of aviation during Op CORPORATE in 1982. The evening followed the traditional army format, familiar to more senior mess members. It was a chance for many of the newer members to don their Mess Kit for the first time, as it was one of the first large scale events post Covid restrictions.

9 Regt were delighted to host Maj Gen James Illingworth OBE, Director Land Warfare and Deputy Colonel Commandant AAC, as the Guest of Honour. Maj Gen Illingworth was greeted by the Station Commander and CO 9 Regt on arrival, he then enjoyed a Juno familiarisation flight with WO1 Massey before joining the other guests for pre-dinner drinks.

Following the group photo, several mess members were presented with various promotions and awards by Maj Gen Illingworth.

9 Regt also had the honour of hosting 4 Falklands Veterans, Capt Glyn Price RM, Mr Doug Sealy RN, Mr Ricky Strange RM and Mr Mark Hassall RM. It was a fantastic opportunity to hear from the veterans when they spoke between the courses, giving all attendees an insight into the conflict from the perspective of both aviators and ground forces.

Unfortunately, several Army and RAF veterans had to drop out last minute due to Covid, we hope to host them at a later date. This highlighted the fact that you can always rely on the senior service to turn up when a free meal is on offer!

Music for the evening was provided by the RAF Salon Orchestra. They played an eclectic mix of both new and old, creating a brilliant atmosphere for guests to enjoy the great food and wine provided by the mess staff. To serve 120 plates simultaneously to such a high standard is no mean feat, our thanks go to Mandy and her team for looking after us so well.



*Maj Gen Illingworth signing visitor's book*

To conclude the meal, Maj Gen Illingworth addressed the audience. He spoke about tri-service combined arms manoeuvre and the importance of aviation within it, both in the past, but also the present and future. It highlighted the relevance and importance of the training conducted at Shawbury and the wider Army's recognition that aviation is an integral and battle winning asset.

Following the Loyal Toast, guests retired to the bar, where 'dit spinning' from the veterans was enjoyed late into the night!

**Maj Ed Marsden, 670 Sqn**



*Army Led Dinner 2022 Group Photo*



# ADVENTUROUS TRAINING

## Exercise SNOWDONIA TRAIL

On 9 - 10 May, some of the members of 705 Naval Air Squadron took part in an Adventurous Training (AT) exercise to Snowdonia, North Wales; the honour of leading this Exercise fell to Lt Sian Lewis RN.

We kicked-off at Jubilee Gym under the eye of Cpl Kristie Harper RAF (AT Instructor), to collect the necessary clothing and equipment before we departed to Wales. On entering Wales, the Exercise linguist, Capt Rob McCrea AAC, read and translated many notable signs to celebrate, and verbally massacre, the beautiful Welsh language.

The first activity was at Blaenau Ffestiniog - Zip World Llechwedd 'Bounce Below' - an underground trampoline adventure park, occupying twice the space of St Paul's Cathedral, with multi-story trampolines, net ladders and slides. Within minutes, several participants were taking tactical pauses to catch their breath and reconsider their technique, but with a second wind we managed to survive the full session of cave-trampolining.

Following lunch, the Exercise moved to Tryfan Bach for rock climbing. Cpl Harper identified the routes: a selection of warm-up climbs, progressing to Hard Very Severe routes. Lt Ross Wiltshire RN and Lt Lewis gave a masterclass to the group, while Capts McCrea and Gaz Evans AAC demonstrated mid-climb dangling and also a "gentleman's 2 minutes" moment of contemplation. After proving the benefits of good communication and trust in one's Belay, and many humbling attempts and successful climbs, we packed up; Lt Cdr Nick Bane RN then took the opportunity to give a spontaneous lesson on how-not-to-coil-rope.

With the Day One activities complete, we moved to our overnight base at the RAF Valley Mountain Lodge. From there, over dinner and a hot Ribena,

we conducted a thorough Exercise Evaluation of the day's events. To ensure the success of the Exercise's mission to develop personal performance and team spirit, no individual error, faux-pas, or any case of bad admin was omitted.

Day-two brought sunshine and a slight breeze; near-perfect conditions for the final activity of Stand-Up Paddle Boarding (SUP). We, a mix of beginners and old sweaty SUP'ers, moved to Llyn Padarn (Llanberis lake) and prepared our equipment. The first job of inflating the boards proved surprisingly difficult for some of the highly trained aircrew participants, notably Lt Cdr Gresswell RN being unable to apply the principle of 'righty-tighty' to the air valve. Once on the water, everyone quickly got the hang of manoeuvring with apparent ease. Except Capt Evans, who spent most of the time on all fours. As we navigated the 2-mile lake, nobody remained completely dry for long, and with our ability to remount the boards fading, 'End-Ex' was declared, and we returned to RAF Shawbury for the clean-up, wash-down and dispersal.

The combined efforts of everyone involved created a fun and challenging AT exercise - we are definitely a closer team for it. Thanks to all participants for their enthusiasm, endeavour and humour; to Cpl Harper for expert AT instruction; and to Lt Lewis for organising.

By Major Rob Gittoes



# All change for 705 Naval Air Squadron!

On Thursday 10 March, Lt Cdr Phil Crompton formally handed over command of 705 Naval Air Squadron to Lt Cdr Dave Forrest.



*Lt Cdr Crompton hands over to Lt Cdr Forrest*

Lt Cdr Forrest re-joins RAF Shawbury after a tour working for the Military Aviation Authority. Having previously instructed on both 660 Sqn AAC and Sixty Squadron, he is greatly looking forward to the challenges of command as well as instructing basic rotary wing trainees once again.

No.1 Flying Training School will be sad to see Lt Cdr Crompton leave; as a member of the original fielding team, he was involved in the introduction of both the Juno and Jupiter aircraft and has commanded the Squadron through many changes over the years, much of which has been under the complications imposed by CV-19. He moves on to become one of the Royal Navy pilot career managers.

**By Lt Cdr Nick Gresswell**

## CFS(H) NEWS

### CFS(H) Sqn celebrate the Graduation of QHI/QHCI Course 389

On Tuesday 26th April 2022, CFS(H) Sqn celebrated the graduation of QHI/QHCI Course 389. The tri-service graduates, share a variety of Front Line experiences across a range of airframe types including Chinook, Wildcat, Puma, Merlin and Apache.

The QHI/QHCI course takes Qualified Pilots and Rearcrew and teaches them the instructional techniques required to provide training across a spectrum of abilities for teaching inexperienced ab-initio students

the basics of flying. They leave the course as B2 QHI's (Qualified Helicopter Instructors) or B2 QHCI's (Qualified Helicopter Crewman Instructors), a number of which will stay at RAF Shawbury to teach flying trainees on



*Gp Capt Jordan presents the trophy to Lt Charlton*

2MAW and 9 Reg. Others return to Front Line Squadrons and Operational Conversion Units.

For many of the graduates, becoming an instructor has been an ambition for many years and therefore it is a special celebration of achievement and a significant milestone in their career as a professional aviator.

CFS(H) Sqn would like to wish the graduates of 389 Course all the best in their future instructing - Imprimis Praecepta!

**By Flt Lt Lloyd Burgess**



*Number 389 Course at their graduation*

# Exercise FROZEN GOAT

In the military we are always 'double-hatting'. You might be aircrew who organise the Total Flight Safety Day or an Air Traffic Controller organising the Station Families' Day but you can also be a J1 Clerk who organises a Station mountain biking weekend in Wales, a Fighter Controller who is the Expedition leader for a summit attempt in Africa or an MT Controller who is also a Snowboard Instructor for the RAF Ski Champs. There are so many amazing opportunities within the Adventurous Training world of the military and rarely are they exhausted.

I mention this as I have been extremely lucky enough to be involved in the above activities and with a very basic initial knowledge, I took advantage of any course, Adventure Training (AT) and leader scheme I could be involved in. I write this article about Exercise Frozen Goat mainly as an advertisement to let military personnel know that AT is alive and well. There are hundreds of Expeditions and courses to progress your skillset from zero to instructor in a matter of years. In the civilian world this would cost you thousands but in the military you are actively encouraged to do it, paid for it and given time to do it. So my plea is to speak to your local Adventure Training Instructor (ATI), browse through the courses available and think big. Organising any Military Exped takes work but it is the highlight of my job.

Exercise Frozen Goat was a one-week Ski Exped in Tignes, France. The aim of the Exped was to take 20 Station Personnel of all Services, ranks and trades from any ski ability to Ski

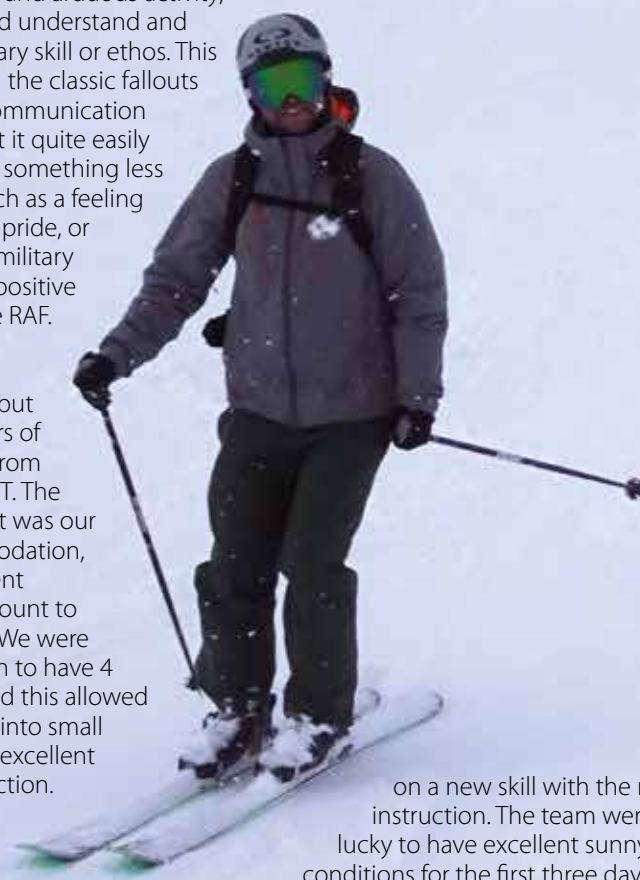
Foundation 1. The secondary aim was to expose personnel to a mixture of altitude, weather and arduous activity, so that they could understand and learn a new military skill or ethos. This might have been the classic fallouts of Leadership, Communication or Team work but it quite easily could have been something less documented, such as a feeling of self-belief and pride, or positives for the military like retention or positive promotion of the RAF.

The week started well with a busy but punctual 12 hours of travel with help from RAF Shawbury MT. The UCPA in Val Claret was our chosen accommodation, who offer excellent services and discount to Military Groups. We were fortunate enough to have 4 Ski Instructors and this allowed the team to split into small groups for some excellent small ratio instruction. Abilities ranged from never seeing a set of skis, to personnel who could tackle a red run. Because of this, we split into 3 groups and catered the training appropriately to get the most from the individuals.

The beginners were given some excellent 3:1 instruction and this allowed them to progress quickly, from understanding why on earth you would strap two planks to your legs, to mastering basic turns on a Blue slope. 6 days of pizza and chips (snow plough to parallel), it was impressive to see how quickly personnel can take

on a new skill with the right instruction. The team were lucky to have excellent sunny conditions for the first three days with a change to cold days with heavy snow towards the end of the week, which tested abilities and determination.

The other two groups of Intermediates were given slightly more challenging manoeuvres and instruction with the main focus being to mastering carved turns. As the weather altered throughout the week the team also had to learn to adapt to changing snow conditions, from ice to powder, boiling hot to freezing temperatures and fantastic visibility to snowstorms. Tignes really offered up a mix of conditions to really stretch and improve personnel's



“ Overall, the week was a huge success with fantastic and challenging conditions due to the altitude of the Tignes Valley. 19 personnel achieved their SF1 but more importantly everyone walked away with a smile on their face, a new set of skills in their back pocket and no broken bones ”



abilities. The following is an account from one member from each team:

*“The weather made for an interesting element to the week. For the first three days there was nothing but sun. Consequently, lots of sun cream was used at the risk of developing goggle marks, yet some members of the group did fall victim to this. It was an idyllic introduction to skiing for the beginners, the team couldn't believe their luck. Yet in true adventure training fashion the weather did turn and visibility became a challenge. The clouds closed in over the next three days and you couldn't see more than 100m ahead. This meant that the terrain was difficult to determine and it was tough going. But the group persisted and developed the expertise to deal with these conditions under the excellent guidance of the instructors.”*

*“During those early clear skiing days, Green, Blue and Red runs were tackled with self-assurance. By day 3, a quick trip up the 'Grand Motte' to 3653m and to the resort's highest peak, provided all an opportunity to test themselves on a modest Black run under the careful watch and supervision of their instructor. The second half of the week proved to*

*be more taxing due to increasing levels of snow fall and low cloud. The methods and skills learnt in the earlier half came to the fore as texture levels fell and terrain became more difficult and uncertain to judge. The culmination of the week's efforts occurred on a snowy, misty Thursday morning, with all successfully navigating and skiing the famed Val d'isère 'Black run', Olympique La face de Belvedere. A piste almost 3km in length and a vertical drop of 959m, it tested the bravery and skill of all. Whilst inclement conditions prevailed, all group members experienced a fantastic week in Tignes, vowing to hit the slopes at the next available opportunity.”*

Overall, the week was a huge success with fantastic and challenging conditions due to the altitude of the Tignes Valley. 19 personnel achieved their SF1 but more importantly everyone walked away with a smile on their face, a new set of skills in their back pocket and no broken bones. With a huge variety of rank, age and trades on this Expedition, it was fantastic to see the team come together so well and very humbling for myself to take



personnel, some with over 30 years' service, on their first, but hopefully not their last, AT Expedition.

The military is an excellent pathway to becoming an instructor or simply to take part in some life changing Expeds, we don't know how long this opportunity will be around, so take the leap and speak to your local ATI in the gym.

**Written by Flt Lt Christian Wilkins  
Exped Leader**

## APPEAL TEAM RETURN FROM SUCCESSFUL KENYA VISIT



Since the visit was completed, Charlotte Hope was tragically killed in a car crash in early April; she was only 19 years old. The crash also seriously injured her mother, Helen. Charlotte has always been a keen supporter of the Taking Football to Africa and Beyond Appeal, sacrificing much of her free time to help pack boxes, sort kit and help her dad Neil in any way possible. As part of her support, she visited Kenya several times and it was on one of these trips that she fell in love with an organisation called Restart.

Restart helps to house, care for and educate the street children of Gilgil, one of the poorest places in Kenya. Charlotte was studying to become a primary school teacher with her goal to teach in Kenya and therefore being able to continue to support the children of Restart.

We are trying to raise as much money as possible for Restart so that Charlotte's memory will live on there and she can continue to support the children she loved so much.

Should you wish to donate the page can be found at:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/charlottehope9>

A team of 15 were representing the RAF Shawbury based Taking Football to Africa and Beyond Charitable Appeal in delivering 'Aid through Football' have just returned from a 10-day visit to Kenya in East Africa. The Appeal began at the North Shropshire airbase in 2006 and has, to date, delivered over 302,000 items of football kit and children's clothes to 59 countries worldwide. Its organiser is Wing Commander Neil Hope MBE who is assisted by Flight Lieutenant Mark Smales.

This was the 15th visit, and the first in 2 years due to the COVID pandemic. Many of the team were visiting Africa for the 1st time. The visit began on 10th Feb (Day 1) with flights from London Heathrow to Nairobi Jomo Kenyatta airport. Bags were then dropped at Braeburn Garden Estate School in Nairobi, as the base for most of the visit. The team are proud to be partnered with this impressive school, who also assist, through the Headmaster, Tim Richards, Executive Head for Braeburn Schools, John Herbert, and the amazing Irene Kinchley, with storing the kit ready for delivery and providing transport to assist.

Day 2 began with a 3-hour journey as the team travelled up the edge of the Great Rift Valley to their home for 2 nights; the Naivasha County Club.



The first 2 delivery days were in the small town of Gilgil an hour further north. Gilgil is a very poor town with its roots set in the days of the British Empire. These days, it has a heavy Kenyan Army training presence. Day 3 deliveries were limited to 2 excellent locations which have become great friends of the Appeal. First was the Restart Centre, run by the amazing Mary Coulson. The home looks after abandoned, abused, and orphaned children. Next was a visit to the Saidia Children's home, where the team also spent time paying their respects and visiting the Commonwealth War Graves in the town. Day 4 saw the team again





in Gilgil with deliveries to the Gilgil Youth Sports Development Association (GYSDA), Loving Hands Children's home (with many children who are HIV+) and Tam Tam FC. The first and last deliveries included playing the children at football. A journey back to Nairobi followed for our first night stop at the school.

Day 5 saw the team travel across Nairobi for 4 deliveries at schools assisted by the UK based Porridge and Rice Charity. The schools in Ruritu, Ngando and Dagoretti Corner provide education, between them, for over 2000 children. The schools were Emmanuel Excel, Lizpal, Foresters and Heri. The day began at the Hope House Orphanage in Mountain View estate, where many of the team fell in love with the babies before a short journey into Kibagare Slum. First stop was the Kibagare Good News Centre, which included St Martins Secondary School. The centre was started in the 1970s by some nuns with 30 children and it now houses over 800. On a Saturday, they

also provide a feeding programme for over 1500 slum children. Whilst most of the team took lunch with Sister Emmah (who runs the centre) Neil and Mark completed a delivery next door at the Bamboo Pitch to Kibagare FC. They were assisted by Taylor Wood and Rob Owen. Rob is kitman with the Leicester City 1st team and was producing a short film during the visit. Taylor is a year 2 university student in Sports Media and the 2 were working well together to produce information for Leicester City to use. At Kibagare FC Rob completed a live Q&A with Leicester City and Nigeria forward Kelechi Iheanacho. The day was completed by a visit to the Pastor Amos Okolo school, with children from 3 to 18, including children rescued from abuse.

Day 6 was a well-earned down day during which most of the team enjoyed a visit to the Nairobi National Park, Sheldrake Elephant Orphanage and The Giraffe Centre. Neil and Mark used the time to sort through the

remaining boxes.

Day 7 saw the team visit Mathare slum. This is a very different area than Kibagare, in that it is partly concrete buildings with large areas of corrugated iron shacks intermingled. The visit to Mathare was in conjunction with the Tushinde Charity from the UK, which places vulnerable and impoverished children into schools in the area. The team delivered items on visits to the Stella Maris School, Brain House Academy and Casa Upendo Academy. They then travelled back to the Githorogo area to finish the day at the Starkids Academy, a wonderful small school to around 130 children.

Day 8 saw the team visit the massive Kibera slum. It is the largest slum in Africa with estimates of between 1 - 2 million people living in shacks with no mains electricity, sewerage system or running water. It was pleasing to see improvements to the infrastructure, with some roads added as well as concrete sewerage off flows, although



still all open. First visit was to Raila school, a large school on the edge of the area, followed by the Stara School. This is a brilliant school run by Josephine Mumo and most agreed was probably one of the best of the trip. The school was bulldozered 2 years ago by the Government to make way for the upgraded railway which runs through the slum, but Josephine was able to appeal, and the school was then rebuilt slightly further back from the tracks (still corrugated iron buildings which get very hot). Next to visit was the small Kimta School, operated by the head of the Kibera Project, and our main contact in Kibera, Vincent Kegode. A quick visit to the HQ building to see the project was followed by Oloo School. Since our last visit this school has also been rebuilt from a shack building to a breeze block double story building, much better suited to children's learning.

Day 9 saw the last day of deliveries on what was very much a football day. First call was to the Hearts of Ruiru in the town of Ruiru on the edge of Nairobi. The teams are run by a Prison Officer, Mary Mbaka. The team had a fantastic reception and played a football match against the children. The team dropped a total of 5 boxes for the Hearts and various other teams that Mary supports (Jaspers, TOC, Kiviu Village, Mukuyu Primary School and Devki Secondary School). Additionally, the team were joined by representatives from Gitothua Starlets Ladies team and the CCIC Foundation to pass on boxes to them. The last delivery took place in the afternoon at the DR Kampf School in Eastland's to the Kick Off to Hope Academy ran by the formidable Musa Otieno. Musa is Kenyan football royalty as he is the most capped footballer in

Kenyan history. A tour of the school and assisting in the lunch feed for the children followed before a football match against an excellent youth team, losing just 1-0. Also, at the school for a collection was Kenyan Premier League Referee, Fred Akida. Fred collected a box for his village in Uganda and some fabulous Referees kit donated by Tony Payne, a Shropshire Referee. With the conclusion of the visits, the team travelled back to Braeburn for the final evening before flying back to the cold windy UK on day 10.

Overall, the team achieved all the goals set before the trip. 18 months of extensive work ensured a successful visit with all the team getting an insight into the poorer side of East Africa and the workings of the slum areas. We met some inspirational people doing incredible work. Neil said: "I am hugely thankful to those that came on the trip for their efforts. The trip was completely self-financed, and I am sure that they will all remember it for the rest of their lives, as will those people we have helped in Kenya. In total we delivered close to 12000 items (59 tri-wall boxes and 15 kitbags) across 10 days (8 days in country) to 36 teams, groups, schools, orphanages, academies, and children's homes during 25 separate visits. This visit is the culmination of nearly 16 years of the Appeal during which we have delivered over 302000 items to people in 59 countries worldwide.

Huge thanks go out to all who have assisted the Appeal especially the clubs and people across the UK who have donated so much kit. The Appeal team will now prepare for the 5th attempt at going to Nepal to complete a delivery trip whilst attempting the Everest base Camp Trek in September 2022.'

## KENYA 2022 DELIVERY TEAM:

### RAF Shawbury Organisers:

Wing Commander Neil Hope MBE VR – Battlespace Management Force, Flight Lieutenant Mark Smales – Battlespace Management Force, Flight Lieutenant (Retd) Tony Kinchley – Babcock DCASO Trainer, Warrant Officer (Retd) Louise Simpson – Babcock DCASO Trainer.

**Team:** Squadron Leader John Feast VR, Wales and West Air Cadets RAF Cosford; Squadron Leader Allison Feast VR, OC 28 Sqn Air Cadets RAF Shawbury/ Hospital Administrator; Squadron Leader (Retd) Suzanne Crooks, Secondary School Geography Teacher Bourne Academy; Sergeant (Retd) Gary Simpson, Fitness Trainer Shawbury; Helen Hope Lead Biomedical Scientist for Cellular Pathology, Shrewsbury & Telford NHS Trust; Rob Owen, Kitman Leicester City FC First team. Taylor Wood, Sports Media University Student UCFB Wembley; Julie Smith Foster Parent Shawbury; Claire Edwards Marine Accountant, York; Charlotte Hope Primary Education University Student, Edgehill; Hannah Crooks, GCSE student St Georges Academy, Sleaford.

**Kenya:** Mrs Irene Kinchley – PA to the Headteacher – Braeburn Garden Estate School – Nairobi

### Donors (Kit distributed during the visit):

AFC Emley, Angels & Cobras FC, Ann Lewis, Anston Rangers JFC, Aston Villa FC, Barton Town FC, Basingstoke Town FC, Boldmere St Michaels FC, Bourne Academy, Brian Adshead, Brighton & Hove Albion FC, Bristol Downs Lge, Charlotte Hope, Charlotte Lucy, Cheltenham Saracens FC, Chippenham Town FC, Chris Phillips, Claire Edwards, DCASO, Dean Keelan, Derbyshire CFA, Doug Hillard, Durham CFA, England/FA, Espial FC, Forfar Athletic FC, Forfar Boys FC, Fulford School, Glenn Frost, Glenn Scott, Halfords, Hampshire CFA, Handsworth JFC, Handsworth Junior Sporting Club, Handsworth Paramore FC, Harbury Jnrs FC, Helen Massey, Helen Plumley, Hillard Sports, Hook Utd FC, Hopes, Hullbridge FC, John Jergas, Julie Smith, Kadar FC, Keith James, Leicester City FC, Louise Simpson, Malcolm Tanner, Manchester United FC, Manchester United Foundation, Marie Kennedy, Mark Haining, Matthew Arnoldi, Navenby Jnrs FC, Newcastle Benfield FC, Nike, Northern Counties East FL, Nottingham CFA, Oakley FC, Oakwood Yth FC, Oxford City FC, Owen Dow, Packwood Haugh School, Phoenix Football Academy, Portsmouth Ladies FC, QPR FC, RAF FA, RAF Shawbury Cashier, RAF Shawbury PEd Flt, Ranjita Ltd, Reka Varga, Securecloud+, Sharon Loe, Sheffield & Hallamshire CFA, Sheffield Rangers FC, Shrewsbury Town in the Community, Shrewsbury Town FC, SGP, Southampton FC Foundation, Southampton Ladies FC, Staffordshire CFA, Store, Steve Agace, Thetford Town, Tony Payne, Torpedo AFC, Tottenham Hotspurs, Vern Edwards, Wallsend Boys Club, Waltham Wolves FC, Widbrook Utd FC.



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# Fighting Loneliness with Friendship



**'It wasn't until I started volunteering with the Royal Air Forces Association that I truly understood how much of a problem loneliness is among the veteran community'**

Having served in the RAF for over 34 years myself, I've seen many colleagues leave or retire from the service. Watching so many great characters and friends leave has left me feeling a bit lonely at times – but I have the benefit of still serving in a fast-paced dynamic organisation.

For many veterans and their dependants – especially those who live alone – life can go very quiet once retirement sets in and they start losing contact with former friends and colleagues.

I've seen, during my time so far with the RAF Association, that loneliness can bring a real sense of pain and can actually cause other health and wellbeing problems. Loneliness shouldn't be confused with just wanting to be alone. We

can all benefit from choosing to have some 'alone space', but experiencing loneliness is not usually a choice.

Sadly, for many older RAF veterans, their only connection with the world comes through their radio or TV – which is why I want to encourage some of you to consider joining me as a volunteer with the RAF Association's Connections for Life project.

Connections for Life brings lonely members of the veteran community together with people like us, so they can chat on the phone. After some simple online training, I'm now making calls to people who were finding it difficult to cope with loneliness.

The project affords me the flexibility to make calls at my convenience, fitting them around work and homelife. The

beneficiary that I connect with gives me as much self-worth and comfort as I aim to give them. Among other things, we talk about the old days, National Service, RAF stations in Germany and the Second World War. I have listened to so many fantastic stories that have made me laugh and have humbled me in equal measure! Just being a friendly voice on the end of a phone helps to give these veterans a real sense of value and shows them that we care for them. Who knows, we may find ourselves in their situation one day.

**To find out more about volunteering, please visit Connections for Life - The Royal Air Forces Association ([rafa.org.uk](http://rafa.org.uk)) or contact Flt Lt Tony Martin TSA DCASO.**

by Flight Lieutenant Tony Martin



# Polly went PINK for Undiagnosed Children's Day 2022

On the 29 April, the RAF Shawbury community got together to support a fantastic charity, SWAN UK, a charity that works tirelessly to offer 24/7 advice and support to families just like ours.

Approximately 6,000 children are born each year in the UK with a syndrome without a name (SWAN), a genetic condition so rare that it is often impossible to diagnose. Without a diagnosis, it can be difficult to access basic information and support; this is where SWAN UK becomes invaluable to hundreds of families.

SWAN UK offers a community for families that are in search of help and support for their child/children. Genetic testing can be an extremely long and frustrating process that can often come back inconclusive. The SWAN UK forums and virtual groups offer parents and carers a place to seek advice and discuss their situations with families in the same boat.

Polly was born on the 16 May 2020 right in the thick of the coronavirus pandemic; unfortunately, she has suffered from a range of medical concerns since birth. From significant

feeding/swallowing issues, gastroesophageal reflux disease, allergies, absences, esophagitis, oesophageal dysmotility and undiagnosed gastric conditions. Polly underwent surgery on the 29 October 2021 at The Great North Children's Hospital in Newcastle; whilst having her surgery, the surgeon placed a gastrostomy (a feeding tube directly into her stomach to deliver nutrients).

Despite medical intervention Polly has continued to be static in her growth and this, along with a number of characteristics, has led us to Clinical Genetics and SWAN UK.

We felt it was important for us to support SWAN UK, just as they have supported us. The cake sale was a huge success, we raised lots of awareness for SWAN UK and sold some delicious cakes that the wives kindly donated. Our raffle consisted of a number of amazing prizes from some fantastically generous companies. From an Ooni Fyra Pizza Oven, to a beautiful necklace



from V.H. Jewellery, a voucher for a Barbour jacket (men's or women's any size!), a candle set from the wonderful The Wee Cairngorm Candle Company, Cineworld Cinemas cinema tickets, Costa Coffee gift sets, £50 Boden Voucher and much more!

We are thrilled to say we have raised £2010 in total!"



Lauren Graham

**SWAN UK**  
syndromes without a name

## The Dambusters' 80th Anniversary Charity Ride

On the 6 and 7 May, a team of three fundraisers from RAF Shawbury took part in the 60-mile Dambusters' Ride, a cycling challenge organised by the RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF).

The Dambusters were members of the RAF's 617 Squadron, who were assembled to bomb three dams in Germany's Ruhr Valley on the night of 16-17 May 1943. This operation was also known as Operation Chastise. It was a dangerous raid, dropping the revolutionary bouncing bomb at low level, and the cost was high. Of 133

aircrew who took part in the raid, 53 were killed and 3 became prisoners of war.

The team consisted of Jack Baldock, Christin Morris and Samuel Bradshaw, all Senior Aircraftsman at RAF Shawbury. The challenge took place as a virtual event, taking place in the Jubilee Hall. Overall, the team raised a total of £290.



Jack said: "After completing the ride, we all felt a sense of joy and accomplishment for completing the ride and knowing that we have worked hard to help raise money for a cause that will help both serving and veteran members of the Royal Air Force. We took up this challenge as we wanted to show our appreciation to members of the RAFBF and support both currently serving and veterans of the RAF."

By SAC Jack Baldock

## Spring Nursery celebrate the Platinum Jubilee



Children from RAF Shawbury's Spring Nursery celebrated the Platinum Jubilee by making crowns.

The Station photographer was invited to the Nursery to take photographs of the children modelling their crowns, and I think you will agree that they were fit for a Queen!



## Parenting Classes

Over the past 4 months the Community Centre has continued to hold Parenting Classes for our families.

In the New Year we were joined by Heather from Tippiie Toes. Heather introduced the mums and babies to a 5-week Massage and Reflexology Course. Parents learnt about gentle massage/reflexology techniques to help calm their little ones and help alleviate common infant ailments such as colic, reflux and sleep issues.

In early March, Heather returned once more, but this time for Story Massage with the older children. Using popular nursery rhymes and books the parents and children explored a different theme each week with a range of different massage movements. This was perfect for promoting nurturing contact, along with the engagement of songs, rhymes and stories.

Mid-March saw the arrival of Emma from Little Gannets Weaning Classes. These workshops were perfect for

parents with children aged 4-6 months however, our younger babies and their mummies also attended. The 3-week course covered: weaning and choking hazards in week one, nutrition and allergies in week two and finally recipe and meal ideas/inspiration in week 3.

This course proved to be very popular, even our experienced parents found they came away with some very useful information and gained new tips that would save them time, money and perhaps even more importantly... energy!

Funded by the Royal Air Benevolent Fund, these classes have proven to be a great success, benefitting our young families. Community Support staff and our parents would like to say a big thank you for their continued help, support, and generosity.



Please keep a look out for future classes running in the Community Centre:

The Story Tent  
Paediatric First Aid  
Yoga Based Movement  
Fussy Eaters

**Sgt Leigh McGuire**



## Shawbury Military Wives Choir celebrate 10th Anniversary

On February 9th, Shawbury Military Wives Choir celebrated our 10th birthday. The choir was formed just after the Gareth Malone TV programme, being one of the very first choirs to be established and still containing some of the original members, as well as many new ladies who come and go, depending on deployments. We celebrated our birthday with banners, balloons, and cake. The beautiful cake was created for us by Robyn Kendrick of "Oh Crumbs" in Shawbury. The evening also saw us say goodbye to one of our long-standing members, Thelma, who was given a wonderful send off with cards, gifts, and a heart-warming performance of her favourite song, "Bring Him Home" as a special surprise.



In March, we received a visit from the film crew of BFBS TV. They came to interview several of our members and to record our rehearsal for their production of a special Mother's Day news piece for BFBS TV, which was later broadcast over their TV and radio platforms during the Mother's Day weekend. The purpose of the production was to highlight the fact that the Military Wives Choirs network is made up not only of military wives, but also of mums, sisters, daughters, serving personnel, and veterans who have a military connection. It was a very enjoyable evening and very

interesting to see something of how such programmes are made—and we were all really excited to see and hear the results broadcast across the nation over the weekend.

May 6th saw the choir perform at the annual V.E. Day Concert in Welshpool. This is a long-standing event for the choir, and we had very much missed such performances during the pandemic, so we were delighted to be singing for a packed house once again. Joining us for the concert were the Porthywaen Band, Philip Evans (tenor), and "forces sweetheart" Maggie

O'Hara. Members of the choir dressed in an array of 1940s style outfits, with hair and makeup to match, making for a very colourful sight. Led by our Musical Director, Catherine Douglas, our set also included a beautiful duet by two of our sopranos, Nicki and Zoe, who gave a breath-taking rendition of "Falling in Love Again." The crowd loved their performance, as well as their very appropriate costumes! Towards the end of the concert, there was lots of flag waving and audience participation when we sang the old favourites to bring our set to a close.

The coming year will see the choir perform at some very large and prestigious events, as well as returning to our regular favourite venues, both locally and further afield. If you or someone you know would like to get involved, please get in touch. We are always looking for new members, so come and join the fun. There are no auditions, and you don't need to be able to read music. You can find us on Facebook or email us at [shawbury@militarywiveschoirs.org](mailto:shawbury@militarywiveschoirs.org).

By Gwen Marsh



Photo credit: Sharon Reardon

# RAF Shawbury Gliding Club

## *Are you up for a challenge?*

.....  
**T**hat was the question posed to me by the RAF Shawbury Gliding Club (RSGC) CFI Ian Gallagher just after I was sent on my first solo in a glider on 23 January 2022, a flight that is indelibly etched in my mind. I had only started gliding in April 2021, after a flyer for the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association (RAFGSA) Go Solo scheme had caught my attention. Ten months later, there I was experiencing the sheer exhilaration of my first solo.  
.....



*Shawbury's Sgt Liam Riley prior to his launch in K21 (R22) with Navy Gliding Instructor WO Jamie Steel. Ian Gallagher*

Somewhere in the past I had heard about an RAF flying expedition to the French Alps but had not connected it with gliding. And so it was, that as a newly qualified solo pilot, I found myself selected as one of the lucky participants to take part in the annual tri-service expedition, Parours Combattants 2022, to Sisteron, France, an expedition that would see us spending two weeks mountain flying in the French Alps.

I'd never towed a glider trailer before, the vehicle and trailer are as long as an artic, but our journey from RAF Shawbury by road, towing club glider R22 to Sisteron, was uneventful. With my only flying experience being the relative flatlands around Shawbury, and despite reading up on past expeditions, as we approached Sisteron nothing had quite prepared me for the setting of the splendour of the French Alps in which I was about to fly. At an altitude

of 1,772ft the airfield sits on a large plateau bordered to the West by the valley of the River Durance, and to the North, East and South by the Alps.

Listening to the briefings on that first evening I began to wonder what I'd let myself in for. The next morning, I took my first flight in Duo-discus 16, an unfamiliar aircraft and in a very different environment from the flat plains of Shropshire where one of the highest features local to Shawbury is The Wrekin, standing at just over 1,300 feet. In the very capable hands of Royal Air Force instructor Paul McLean, we were soon in the mountains where I took control to join a strong thermal to climb to 10,000ft, and to add to the mix we were now flying on oxygen. Our flight then concentrated on navigating around the local area known to us as 'the bowl'. Ensuring we had sufficient height, we travelled across the bowl to the 4,200ft Le Roc de l'Aigle (Eagle Rock). With sufficient height, we travelled across the bowl to the 4,200ft Le Roc de l'Aigle (Eagle Rock). Looking out at one stage I was surprised to see powered aircraft in a diamond 9 formation flying on the opposite ridge of Montagne de Pélegrine, surely that couldn't be the Patrouille de France, the French equivalent of the Red Arrows? Three hours of flight time on the first



*Shawbury's K21 (R22) with Sgt Liam Riley flying behind the low rock system of Mont Le Gache (4,450ft)  
Ian Gallagher*

*Shawbury's K21 (R22) South  
of La Platte (4,860ft)  
Ian Gallacher*



day and a day I won't forget; more of this please!

After the highs of the first day, it was disappointing to find the weather turning against us. Weather stopped all flights on the second day, so we took a tour by car of the local field-landing options. Over the two weeks, there were many more highlights, and whilst I didn't manage to get my solo flight in Alps, there are enough challenges ahead with the British Gliding Association, and plenty of milestones to aim for over the coming season

If RSGC's CFI Ian Gallagher asks you if you are up for a challenge, just say yes. You never know where you can end up flying. Funding is available for Service Personnel, especially those in phase 1&2 training to start their journey into the sport of gliding at RSGC. Gliding is also available through JSAT and the Eagles scheme.

**By Sgt Liam Riley**



*Shawbury's K21 (R22) over Mont  
Le Gache (4,450ft) looking south  
towards Sisteron town and with  
the Army Gliding Associations  
K21 (A12) in the distance  
Liam Riley*

And if this has attracted your attention and you'd like to know more please contact me, Sergeant Liam Riley: [liam.riley550@mod.gov.uk](mailto:liam.riley550@mod.gov.uk) or for an informal discussion about joining the RSGC then please contact Squadron Leader Alan Swan: [alan.swan143@mod.gov.uk](mailto:alan.swan143@mod.gov.uk), or Ian Gallacher [ian.gallacher375@mod.gov.uk](mailto:ian.gallacher375@mod.gov.uk), both of whom will be delighted to answer your questions. Also available on ModNET Skype or Teams.

*You can also find more details on our website:  
<https://www.rafshawburygc.co.uk> #rafgsa #gliding #raf\_shawbury.*

# RAF Shawbury's Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) represent the Royal Air Force in 2022

The Jubilee Hall Gymnasium at RAF Shawbury not only has several PTI's who manage, instruct, and teach students and permanent staff, but they have also been selected to represent the RAF in Football and Rugby Union. Three members of the Physical Education Flight (PEd Flt) Cpl Webb, Cpl Wilson and Cpl Williams have recently competed on behalf of the RAF in the Inter Services Championships.

## Cpl David Webb- RAF Senior Representative (SR) Football

Cpl David Webb has represented the RAF SR football team for 8 years but has never won the Inter Services before. Following a very successful season and pre-Inter Service training camp, the RAF senior squad and Webby went into the Inter-Service competition with great confidence.

The first game of the IS tournament was against the Royal Navy; this was a great event for the RAF as the game took place at Shrewsbury FC stadium, with a great crowd in attendance. The RAF 'ran out' winning this game 2-0 with a tidy finish from Cpl Jake Gosling and a great solo goal from Joe Splading. Cpl Webb featured heavily throughout game putting in a fantastic performance. This victory secured the Cassar Cup for the RAF, which is played for annually between the RAF and RN and set them up for an exciting game against the Army, with momentum behind them.

The second game of the IS, and what turned out to be the game that clinched the Inter- Services title for the RAF, was played at the Aldershot Stadium. This was a fantastic spectacle for all who attended, with some great talent and skill on display from both teams. The Army took an early lead in the game, but the RAF fought back and with the help of three assists from Cpl Webb that early lead didn't last long. The game eventually ended with a relatively comfortable 4-1 win for the RAF.

With two wins out of two, and two fine performances from Cpl Webb, the RAF SR football team were crowned Inter Service Champions for 2022. Congratulations Webby!

## Cpl Pip Wilson - RAF Ladies Football

This season was Cpl Pip Wilson's first year with the RAF Ladies team, and after several successful games in pre-season and a highly competitive pre-IS camp, she was very excited about the prospect of representing the RAF in her first IS competition.

Like the men's SR squad before them, the Ladies' first game was against the Royal Navy played on home soil at RAF Cosford. With home advantage, the RAF Ladies set their stall out from the beginning, taking an early lead with a cross from Cpl Wilson and great finish from Plt Off Georgia Carr. The remainder of the match was very close with both sides putting in fantastic performances, however, it was the RAF that came out on top winning 2-0 with a superb long-range goal from Pip towards the end of the match securing the Lynsey Miller Trophy.

The Ladies then travelled down to Aldershot to play the Army with their confidence high. This game again proved to be another tightly fought contest with both sides creating many chances. The RAF however continued where they left off against the Royal Navy, with a dominant performance in defence, resulting in another clean sheet. In attack, another goal from Cpl Wilson and a fine effort from LAC

Bethan Jewitt resulted in the game finishing 0-2 and the Inter Services title was the RAF's. Well done All!

## Cpl Mark Williams - RAF Rugby Union

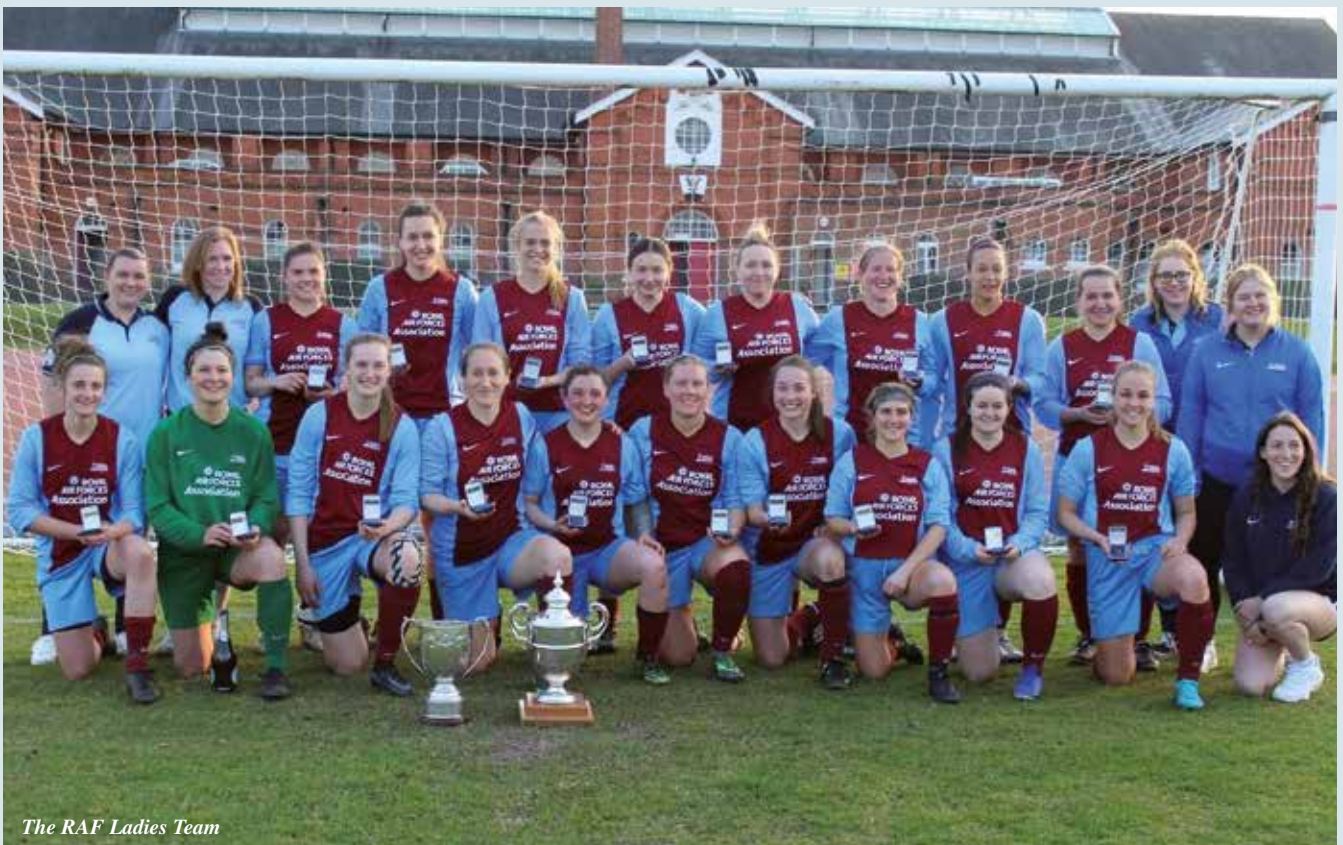
This season was the first year with the RAF Rugby Union Snr XV for Cpl Mark Williams. After some good performances in the pre-season fixtures against Old Albanians & British Police, Cpl Williams was selected to represent the Inter-Services Squad 2022.

The first fixture of Inter-Services was against the Army at the Kingsholm Stadium, the home of Gloucester Rugby in front of a large and noisy crowd. This was a fantastic game which saw the Army, including England International LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni, take an early lead despite a spirited comeback from the young RAF team, including 7 players who had represented the RAF Under 23s last season. The game eventually resulted in a score of 28-20 to the British Army. Due to the close nature of the game, and despite being selected in the match day line-up of 22, Cpl Williams did not get on the field of play to win his first IS Cap.

The second fixture was played at Ealing Trailfinders RFC in London, two weeks later against the Royal Navy, including Fiji International and Northampton Saint, LAET Sam Matavesi. Cpl Williams again was selected in the match day squad, and was hopeful that he would get his first Inter Service cap. The young RAF team were short of their England International Cpl Josh McNally owing to an injury; however, Josh did make the trip to Ealing to support the team. The match again proved to be extremely close throughout with much of the game being fought in the middle third of the pitch, with some big carries and crunching tackles going in, and both defences being on top. After 38 mins, one of the RAF centres came off for a blood injury which meant Cpl Williams took to the field before half-time to earn his first cap. The second half continued where the first left off with



*The Inter Services at Kingsholm Stadium, Gloucester*

*The Inter Services Champions**The RAF Ladies Team*

both defences nullifying any attack. It was becoming apparent that any small mistake or moment of brilliance would determine the result. At 60 mins, Cpl Williams was brought back on to play outside centre and with his first touch of the ball created a great chance for his team mate to break through a hole, unlucky to be turned over a few phases later. Unfortunately, with 5 minutes

left to play, the Royal Navy went on to score a try through their Outside Centre who was player of the match. This left the RAF with too much to do in the time remaining.

Cpl Williams like the rest of the RAF team was disappointed with the results of both fixtures, however, was delighted to receive his first Inter Service Cap. He

thoroughly enjoyed the experience and cannot wait to begin the 2023 Inter Service campaign. This young RAF team has a very bright future, and in a very short space of time will be even more competitive when they next meet their single Service counterparts.

**By Cpl Webb, Cpl Wilson  
and Cpl Williams**



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