

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors concerned and are not necessarily those held by the Royal Air Force Historical Society.



**REPRODUCED FROM A COPY OF JOURNAL 17
BUT WITHOUT ACCESS TO THE ORIGINAL
ILLUSTRATIONS, HENCE THE INDIFFERENT
QUALITY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS.**

Copyright © 1997 by Royal Air Force Historical Society.

First Published in the UK in 1997

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the permission from the Publisher in writing.

Printed by Fotodirect Ltd, Brighton. Tel (01273) 563111

Royal Air Force Historical Society

**THE JOURNAL
OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

No 17

President: Marshal of the Royal Air Force
Sir Michael Beetham GCB CBE DFC AFC

Vice-President: Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey KCB
CBE AFC

Committee

Chairman: Air Vice-Marshal N B Baldwin CBE

Vice-Charman Air Vice-Marshal A F C Hunter CBE AFC
MA LLB

General Secretary: Group Captain J C Ainsworth CEng
AFRAeS

Membership Secretary: Dr Jack Dunham PhD CPsychol AMRAeS

Treasurer: Desmond Goch Esq FCAA

Members: Wing Commander A J Brookes BA FRSA
RAF
J S Cox BA MA
*Dr M A Fopp MA FMA FIMgt
*Group Captain A P N Lambert Mphil RAF
Air Commodore H A Probert MBE MA
A E F Richardson
Derek H Wood Esq AFRAeS

*Ex officio members

CONTENTS

	Page
1. SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT AND EXPERIENCE OF OFFICIAL MILITARY HISTORY Lecture by Dr Noble Frankland CB CBE DFC MA Dphil	5
2. 10th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Royal Air Force Club 10th June 1996	21
3. ARTICLES	33
4. BOOK REVIEWS	45
5. CORRESPONDENCE	57
6. NOTICES: INCLUDING NOTICE AND ACCOUNTS FOR 11th AGM. RAF CLUB 10th JUNE 1997	61

INTRODUCTION BY CHAIRMAN OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AIR VICE-MARSHAL BALDWIN at the 10th AGM, June 10, 1996.

It is my great pleasure to welcome Dr Noble Frankland and Mrs Frankland to our meeting this evening. In the later stages of World War II as a navigator on 50 Squadron he was on Lancasters flying out of Skellingthorpe, a satellite of Waddington. Little could he have guessed at the time that one of his comrades, Flight Lieutenant Mike Beetham, would become CAS and ultimately President of the RAF Historical Society and share the front row with him. 50 Squadron is in my blood, too, for I was CO of Waddington when it was a Vulcan station nearly 20 years ago. Afterwards I spent three years at the Air University, Maxwell. Ian Madelin was there with me, and we both found ourselves putting the other side of the strategic bombing campaign to American students who knew all about LeMay, B-29s and B-17s but had never heard of the night campaign or of Lancasters and Halifaxes, and had no concept of the losses the RAF took. Dr Frankland was one of the prime sources used by Ian and myself. Two quotations helped us in our first task. First: 'The whole belief that the bomber was revolutionary, in that it was not subject to the classical doctrine of war, was misguided. For all the massive technology embodied in the bomber aircraft its load, once released, was an astonishingly crude and imprecise weapon.' Second and my favourite: 'People have preferred to feel rather than to know about strategic bombing.' Webster and Frankland's work, done – unlike the American history – on a shoestring, continues to be of critical importance. It is a very great pleasure to invite Dr Frankland to tell us how he and his colleagues went about it.



Dr Noble Frankland and Mrs Frankland in discussion with Denis Richards

Photo: Edgar Spridgeon

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT AND EXPERIENCE OF OFFICIAL MILITARY HISTORY

By NOBLE FRANKLAND CB CBE DFC MA DPhil

The strategic air offensive of the Second World War has always been widely misunderstood and traduced. Two recent examples illustrate the point. The Vice-Chairman of the Thames Valley Branch of the Bomber Command Association was reported in May 1996 to have said, 'Yes we bombed Dresden, but it was nothing compared to Hitler's bombings of London and Coventry.' Somehow, she had failed to take in that more people were killed in the Dresden attack than the *Luftwaffe* managed to kill in all Britain in all the six years of the war.¹

The second example is provided by John Keegan, who wrote in his *The Battle for History* as follows,

'In 1942, Britain decided on a change of policy. A new chief of Bomber Command, Arthur Harris, decided to abandon precision bombing of military targets and to 'de-louse' the German civilian population of the great industrial cities.'

This, amongst other things, makes it clear that Keegan had not thought out the difference between 'precision' and 'selective' bombing, that he had not been detained by defining what is a 'military target' and that he certainly had no idea of what were the divisions of responsibility as between the War Cabinet, the Chiefs of Staff, the Air Staff and the C-in-C Bomber Command.²

The official history of the strategic air offensive has also, even before it was published in 1961, been widely misunderstood and traduced. Again I give two examples. In February 1953, Sir Arthur Harris protested to the Secretary of State for Air, Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, that it was wrong that the history of the bomber offensive should have been placed in the hands of the 'Labour Government's selection', an LSE Professor. To others, he complained that this Professor (who was, of course, Sir Charles Webster) had insisted on working with Dr Frankland, who had already written a thesis to prove the futility of the bombing offensive. Even worse, Harris went on, was that Webster had insisted on Frankland's name being joined with his own as a joint author of the official history. This Frankland, Harris had decided, was a somewhat 'rabid individual' who, he even went so far as to say, had failed to complete a tour of operations in Bomber Command.³

Harris had not read my thesis, the Labour government had nothing whatsoever to do with the appointment of the official historians of the strategic air offensive, Webster had not expressed derogatory opinions of Bomber Command, of which he was, in fact, a particularly pronounced admirer. He was guilty of no more than having written an article, which Harris did read, in which he said that Bomber Command had not won the war single-handed. I had, in fact, completed a tour of operations in Bomber Command, a fact which it would not have been hard for

Harris to check.

The great man, nevertheless, condemned the official history out of hand on these rather curious grounds and, as soon as it was published, he went public with thunderous abuse, notwithstanding that he had declined our offer of reading and commenting upon the draft, that he had not read the final version of the book and did not do so until after the shouting had died down. He was then, I have it on impeccable authority, not wholly displeased with what he found.

For my second example. I return to John Keegan. He recently wrote of the British official histories that,

‘there is a tenderness for reputations, which, though not as marked as in the obsequious volumes of the official history of military operations of the First World War, deprives the narratives of bite. The explanation of the tone derives from the origins of the authors: most were retired regular officers, such as Captain S W Roskill, the author of the three-volume *The War at Sea*, or themselves participants, like Noble Frankland, the joint author with Sir Charles Webster of the history of British strategic bombing.’⁴

Before he made that pronouncement, did Keegan read Webster and Frankland? I hardly think so, for, if he had, how could he have written on the subject as he did in the extract quoted earlier?

The great difficulty about strategic bombing is that people prefer to feel, rather than to know, about it and the main difficulty with the official history of it is that they like to pronounce upon it but do not care to read it.

The experience of being the author of that history was, in many ways, a singular one and it forms an important element in the book I am now writing about the historiographical conclusions I have reached after some fifty years as a student and practitioner of the art. My book deals with all the aspects of the unfolding of history of which I have experience – watching it happen, writing it, demonstrating it in Museum galleries and sites, projecting it onto the TV screen and so on. Here, however, I give a brief resume of that specific part of my account which deals with the official history of the strategic air offensive. I will describe how Webster and I came to be appointed, how we viewed the challenge of official history and how we combined to produce the four volumes of our study. I then relate the rather extraordinary manoeuvres adopted by the Air Ministry in a concerted effort to suppress, or, if not to suppress, to emasculate, the book. Finally, I will refer to the press and TV hysteria which greeted the publication of it and which spread literally across the world.

I must first explain that the British official histories of the Second World War, unlike those of the First, were controlled by the Cabinet Office, that is to say, everything which was written was secret until it had been cleared for publication by the Secretary of the Cabinet, in our case, Sir, later Lord, Norman Brook. The Service Departments and some other Departments of State had the right to read and comment on the drafts: they did not have the power to alter or suppress them. If they wished to do that, they had to resort to complex tactical methods of

obstruction.

The first step in securing an author for the history of the strategic air offensive was the appointment of a Chief Military Historian, who, with the advice of a Panel of advisors, would make the choice. This first step was achieved in October 1946 with the selection of J R M Butler, who seemed to have what are nowadays described as a safe pair of hands. He was the Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. His father had been the Master of Trinity, Cambridge, of which he was later to be the Vice-Master. His cousin, R A Butler, had been in the wartime government and was later narrowly to miss being Prime Minister. J R M Butler had been tutor to the future King George VI and Duke of Gloucester when the brothers were Cambridge undergraduates. The unkind observed that Butler's reward, the MVO Fourth Class, reflected the degrees the Princes might have got had they taken them.

Butler knew from the outset that finding a historian for the strategic air offensive would not be easy. He recognised that the subject was highly controversial and extremely complex. He was reluctant to consider retired regular officers. If the man chosen was an airman, such as Sir Douglas Evill, who wanted the job, he might be judged to be biased. If he was a soldier, he might be condemned as uninformed. Butler wanted someone of good academic standing and enough prestige to stand up to the brickbats that were sure to fly.

In February 1949 six names were considered by Butler and his Panel. They were T D Weldon, a fellow of Magdalen, Oxford, who had been Harris's court jester at High Wycombe during the war; Professor W J M Mackenzie, another fellow of Magdalen, who had now become Professor of Government at Manchester; P. Johnson, a third fellow of Magdalen and Lecturer in Natural Science, who had now gone to Cranwell as Director of Studies; W W Rostow, an American, who held the Pitt Chair of American History at Cambridge; Professor C H M Waldock, who was Chichele Professor of International Law at Oxford, and myself. All were turned down.

Many more people were subsequently considered, including C E Carrington, the biographer of Kipling, who was turned down on the grounds of being short tempered and not in the first class academically, and T C G James, who was rejected because it was thought that the job would ruin his promising career as a civil servant in the Air Ministry. Then, at one extreme, the distinguished Sir George Clark was asked and declined and, at the other, the playboy historian, Hilary St George Saunders, was invited and accepted, but then withdrew on health grounds. Sir George Clark had been told that I might be available to co-operate with him and the same ploy was used with my former tutor, R B Wernham, a fellow of Trinity, Oxford, who had written a brilliant narrative on the pre-war evolution of Bomber Command for the Air Historical Branch of the Air Ministry. He also declined.

Nearly four years of search had failed to produce the required author, but, by this time I had completed a dissertation on the planning of the bombing offensive

and its contribution to German collapse. Though it was a secret document, this dissertation was circulating in authorised quarters. Both Butler and the air member of his panel of advisors, Air Chief Marshal Sir Guy Garrod, had read it and J C Nerney, the Head of the Air Historical Branch, under whose auspices it had been produced, spoke enthusiastically about it in influential circles. The dissertation contained the guts of what later became the official history and Nerney, in the belief that the latter might never materialise, even thought of pre-empting the situation by publishing it.

It was at this juncture that Professor Postan, an economic historian and a member of Professor Hancock's team of official civil historians, suddenly had the bright idea that Sir Charles Webster should be approached to take on the strategic air offensive. It was a shot in the dark. Webster, who held the chair of international history at the London School of Economics, was a diplomatic historian, noted for his studies of the Congress of Vienna and the foreign policy of Castlereagh and, at the time, he was completing a study of the foreign policy of Palmerston. He knew little about military history and nothing at all about air history. He, nonetheless, looked favourably on Butler's invitation to do the history of the strategic air offensive. He saw the task as an inviting challenge and a public duty but he was also full of doubt as to his suitability for the work. He told Butler that when he wrote about diplomacy, he at least had some experience of the practice of it. He had, indeed, been at the Versailles Conference and the San Francisco Conference of 1944. He doubted if he could ever master the intricate technicalities of air warfare. Butler told him that this did not matter. What was needed in the historian of the strategic air offensive, he told Webster, was judgement, experience in weighing evidence and one whose name carried authority. He rounded this off with the news that I would probably be available to supply the technical know-how.⁵

Webster accepted Butler's invitation, he was introduced to me and supplied with a copy of my dissertation. He duly told me that, bearing in mind the difficulties of the subject, he thought it was the best dissertation he had ever read. He brushed aside the suggestion that I should be appointed as his assistant and insisted upon my being given full and equal status with himself as a joint author.

Webster had all the directness of a true Liverpudlian. He was also over-bearing, rather boastful and not infrequently extremely rude. But Butler was right; his name not only carried authority, it also inspired considerable respect and, in the civil service, a good deal of apprehension.

These qualities proved to be of fundamental value to the official history of the strategic air offensive. Webster told Sir Norman Brook that he could not accept many of the restrictions imposed upon the official historians. In particular, he insisted that we must be allowed to cite all our sources, which the others did not do, and that we could not necessarily respect the anonymity of civil servants, which the civil servants were very keen that all the official historians should do. More important still, he demolished the position in which, if there were differences of opinion between the historians and the civil servants, the views of the latter

would necessarily prevail. The only restrictions which Webster and I accepted were that we would delete anything which could be shown to endanger national security and that we would not quote the individual views of Ministers expressed in the Cabinet, or Cabinet committees.

I cannot sufficiently stress the importance of Webster's courageous and determined stand on these and other connected issues. I alone, though I had alerted Webster to many of the potential dangers, could not possibly have negotiated them. Nor could I alone have enforced their observance when the Air Ministry sought to suppress the book. Without Webster's protective wing, I would have been swept aside, dubbed as an incompetent. and I have little doubt that I would have disappeared, with the official history, without trace.

Despite his rather abrasive manner and my youthful over-confidence. Webster and I hit it off from the word go. In rather over ten years of intimate co-operation, we never had a cross word. All our disagreements were historical and all of those were ironed out by historical argument. We soon settled the scheme of our book. Each chronological sequence would contain three parts, the first dealing with strategic planning, the second with operations, both of which I would write, and the third with intelligence appreciations and actual results, which Webster would write. We decided we would exchange our first drafts as soon as they were written and then argue about them until we were both satisfied. In the intervals of research and writing over this ten year period we indulged in a continuous dialogue about the issues with which we were grappling and other connected historical conundra. This went on in our offices, at Webster's flat in St John's Wood, at my home in Oxfordshire and quite often at Lord's cricket ground or the Oval. We recognised that the defect of our scheme was that it involved a certain amount of repetition, but we accepted that, because our three-part idea was the only practicable method of deploying our respective skills and competence. Only if we had been one person could we have written a more logically and economically arranged book.

When we had completed the first draft of the whole of our work, we were allowed to circulate it to people who might have useful comments and criticisms to offer. We were enjoined to submit it to Butler and his Panel of advisors, and, if those stages were passed, we then had to circulate it to the Admiralty, War Office, Air Ministry, Foreign Office and Commonwealth Relations Office. The results of these consultations were remarkable, in some cases, I must say, amazing, and they tell us much about the attitude of history in general and official history in particular on the part of men of action and of power.

I have already mentioned that in our first round of consultations, Sir Arthur Harris had declined to read our draft. He had decided that, as Webster was at the LSE, he must be a communist dedicated to the destruction of the British Empire and that I was a disgruntled Navigator. It all sounds rather bizarre, so much so that I must briefly relate how this ridiculous situation arose.

Neither I nor Webster had ever set eyes upon Sir Arthur Harris, but, finding himself in New York towards the end of 1952 and hearing that Harris was also in

town, Webster phoned him up. Harris immediately invited him to lunch at his apartment on 45 E 62nd Street between Madison and Park. Webster found Harris's potted meat and salad delicious and Lady Harris's Melton Mowbray pie was 'something to remember'. Over these delights the two men embarked upon a discussion of the bomber offensive which lasted some two hours. Webster noted in his diary that no one with whom he had talked had been more frank and willing to discuss the problems of writing the history of the offensive than Harris had been. Webster was cock-a-hoop and wrote to me of how delighted he was to have been so kindly received by, and to have got on so well with, the great man.

Alas, even as I received Webster's triumphant letter, I was given early intelligence of a different view of the same event. This showed that while Webster was writing to me, Harris was writing to Sir Ralph Cochrane. 'Who the devil is Sir Charles Webster?' he asked. All he knew was what Webster had told him, namely, that he was at the LSE, which Harris knew was a communist organisation. Webster had also told him that he was working with me and Harris knew that I had written a thesis which had infuriated Cochrane.⁶

I seized my pen to warn Webster that his view of their meeting and Harris's did not coincide. Webster was quite taken aback. My letter startled him and all he could say was that nothing could have been more cordial or sane than his talk with Harris. He thought there might be some mistake about what I had heard, but he promised to be more on his guard when he saw Harris again. He was, indeed, rather nervous about this second meeting, but when it took place a few days later, he found that 'nothing could have been more pleasant.' Webster was anxious to convince Harris that, because he was a Professor at the LSE, he was not necessarily a 'red'. He, therefore, turned the conversation in that direction and found that he and Harris were able to agree on most things, especially the Germans and the communists. Harris thought that the latter should be outlawed on the grounds that they owed allegiance to a foreign power. Webster instanced the Roman Catholics as having the same fault, but Harris thought there was little difference between them and the communists. Even on this, they did not seem to be far apart. 'My Protestant blood and upbringing,' Webster recorded, 'if they did not force agreement, at least caused many cells to respond.' Harris asked Webster to tell him about me, which he did and they parted apparently the best, of friends.

But they were not. Harris continued to send a series of increasingly abusive letters about Webster and myself to his acquaintances in high air circles. For some reason, Harris turned on the charm to Webster's face and the vitriol behind his back. I have never understood why this should have been, but the result was that Harris divorced himself from us, he denied himself the opportunity of commenting on and criticising the draft of the official history and, instead, prepared an order of battle against the authors of a book he had not and would not read.

This attitude of Harris's was unfortunate to the point of absurdity, but I will now only observe that I am not so naive or professionally proud as to expect great men of action, such as Sir Arthur Harris undoubtedly was, to be historically

sensitive and understanding. Henry Ford, whom Sir Arthur Harris was fond of quoting, was, after all, another such.

One of the troubles with Harris is that when one passes from him to some other subject, things tend to get rather dull. All the same, I must mention briefly the reactions to our draft of the official history by some of the other great men of the bomber war. Lord Portal, with whom we had had several discussions, kept the draft for several months and then returned it saying that he had failed to find the time to read it. This fitted with his apparently dignified and Olympian detachment and made his later reaction all the more surprising. Sir John Slessor's comments were balanced, well informed, constructive and, from our point of view, helpful and encouraging. Lord Tedder wrote to us, 'I have read through your book twice – quickly I admit – but right through.' He told us it was 'masterly' and 'courageous.' 'Frankly,' he wrote, 'I had not thought that anything so near the truth would ever be likely to go on record.' Sir Richard Peirse threatened a libel action. Sir Robert Saundby commented at length and, on the whole, in measured and interesting terms. He did, however, want us to say that the Battle of Berlin was a 'draw' and not, as we had done, a 'reverse.' Of course we could not do that. Nor could we meet his wish that we should put most of the blame on the Treasury for the pre-war neglect by the Air Staff of navigation, bomb aiming and night flying. Neither Butler nor his Panel of Advisors gave any trouble and so we came to the Departments of State.

The Commonwealth Relations Office wanted us to delete a bit about how Canada had dragged her feet in the early stages of the Empire Air Training Scheme. Webster told Butler that we did not intend to take any notice of the comment. The CRO had not suggested that what we had said was untrue; what they suggested would make an untruth. Butler told the CRO that we were 'reluctant' to make the change suggested and the matter dropped. Perhaps Butler was a better diplomat than Webster. The Admiralty objected to our description of the Battle of the Atlantic as defensive. Webster told Butler that the Admiralty was 'quite silly' on this subject and he left it to Butler to explain to their Lordships what was the difference between strategic and tactical definitions.⁷

The Air Ministry was supposed to comment within two months, but the first decision there was that this was not enough. J C Nerney, now retired from the Headship of AHB, but still used by the Air Ministry as their historical advisor, seems to have realised straight away that this was a mistake. The Departments of State were supposed to comment, not simply to obstruct. When he sent the draft of our history to his superiors, Nerney accompanied it with a minute of his own. In this, he pointed out that Butler and his advisors, including the Air Ministry representative. Air Chief Marshal Sir Guy Garrod, as well as those of importance in AHB, had already made their comments, which, in the main, had now been incorporated into the draft. He said that Butler's panel had been unanimous in congratulating Webster and Frankland on having produced a 'most scholarly, comprehensive and judicial history of a singularly complex and controversial

subject.' He added that 'one must agree with this view' and he warned his superiors, especially, no doubt, the Permanent Under Secretary of State, Sir Maurice Dean, that the book was based on exhaustive research among primary documents at all levels and was, so far as it was possible to judge, 'accurate and authentic as to the facts.' In an ordinary world that would have been that, but the Air Ministry, as we shall now see, was not an ordinary world.⁸

For some time past, Sir Arthur Harris and Sir Maurice Dean, who were close friends, had been indulging in a lively correspondence about the awfulness of the book neither had read and the iniquitous authors thereof. Harris was determined to stop the book and Dean pledged himself to do his utmost to achieve that end. He planned to entice Portal off the Olympian heights, get him to read the draft and then protest about it.

In this he had immediate success. It transpired that after all, some passages had already caught Portal's eye. He wanted the description of the bitter dispute he had had with Harris in the winter of 1944/45 about oil or area bombing to be watered down by the removal of all quotation of their correspondence. This was grist for Dean's mill.⁹

Meanwhile, Dean worked up an elaborate theory that any published quotation of any official document would be a breach of Crown Privilege and that any quotation of unofficial ones would be a breach of the authors' copyright. He also complained that the book was libellous. As the Treasury Solicitor was unmoved by these ingenious constructions, Sir Norman Brook, from the vastness of the Cabinet Office, was able more or less to brush them aside. While defending us in our detailed description of the historic clash between Portal and Harris over the oil and area bombing campaigns and in our extensive quotation of their correspondence, Sir Norman Brook did, all the same, ask us if it was really necessary, in addition to that, to publish the whole of that correspondence in full in an appendix as well. Webster and I decided that it was not and we agreed to withdraw that appendix. That, indeed, was the only important change to which we did agree, but it was not, of course, enough for Dean. Though we knew nothing of it at the time, he now demanded of Brook that the whole question should be referred to the Prime Minister in person.¹⁰

It was now February 1960 and about two years had passed since we had first begun to circulate our draft. Though we knew that the Air Ministry was jumping up and down, very little detailed information was passed on to us beyond that we were being asked to chop our book up into ribbons, remove all quotation from it and leave out anything unpleasant. We had no idea that Sir Maurice Dean was personally engaged and none that Mr Macmillan was to be involved.

Mr Macmillan was now in South Africa, whither he had gone to tell the residents that the wind had changed. Sir Norman Brook had gone with him and, from Pretoria, he dated a surprisingly long memorandum to the Prime Minister on the subject of Webster and Frankland and the Air Ministry. This introduced Mr Macmillan to what the Cabinet Office reckoned was his first 'official history

problem.’ The tone of the memorandum was much more sympathetic to Webster and Frankland than to Maurice Dean. Brook pointed out that we could not be expected to change conclusions which were founded on ten years of research. Nor did Brook seem to be unduly disturbed by Sir Arthur Harris and his threats. He, after all, he pointed out, had published his own book. Indeed, Brook, who knew that Harris had not read our book, thought that he had little to complain of since he emerged from it as a great commander. He was more bothered about Portal, who did not come out of the book as well as Harris and who had not written his own. The danger, however, was that if Webster was pressed to make changes in the face of the evidence, he would refuse and then there would be a controversy of more damaging proportions than that which the book would cause. Brook also soothed the Prime Minister with the thought that official histories ‘do not normally attract much public attention.’ The Prime Minister immediately recognised that the book could not be stopped. He hoped, all the same, that the authors could be persuaded to give a bit more ground to Portal. Brook told him that this could not be done. He insisted that the authors would stand by their resolution to give a fair and faithful picture of the dispute which had taken place between Harris and Portal. ‘Alright,’ the Prime Minister minuted, and the official history of the strategic air offensive, in the form intended by the authors, went to press. Before it emerged in print, Sir Charles Webster died and I was left to face the flak alone.¹¹

It is hardly surprising that much of what Sir Norman Brook thought and did, now that I have discovered it, strikes me as right. In predicting that the official history of the strategic air offensive would not attract much public interest, he was, however, painfully wrong. When the book came out there was a blast in the press and on TV, not only at home, but all over the world.

The banner headline in the *Sunday Telegraph* proclaiming that Webster and Frankland had described the bombing offensive as a ‘Costly Failure’ spread from paper to paper and from country to country until the good people of Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Trinidad, Malta, Bermuda and the USA all had the opportunity to read all about it.

Harris, Bennett, Dickson and masses of other luminaries launched broadsides against the contention and no one seemed to be in the least disturbed by the fact that Webster and I had nowhere described the offensive as a ‘costly failure.’ On the contrary, we had stated as a main conclusion to our work that the strategic air offensive had made a decisive contribution to the defeat of Germany. This, however, was an observation which evoked little or no notice in the tabloids or their longer-winded equivalents, the so-called quality papers.¹²

I conclude this saga with a curious little footnote. At the time, as I have described, I knew nothing of Sir Maurice Dean’s vigorous and sustained efforts to suppress the book. Years later, he and I, I still in a state of innocence, became friends. He used to lunch with me in my office at the Imperial War Museum and he consulted me freely about the writing of his history of the Royal Air Force.

In that book, published in 1979 and complete with a Foreword by Sir Arthur Harris, Dean wrote as follows:-

‘One event which did not help the establishment of the truth was the reception given by the British Press to the publication in 1961 of Webster and Frankland’s history. The history,’ he continued, ‘is an exhaustive and scholarly account of Bomber Command’s defeats and triumphs, and the final and decisive defeat of Germany Like the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church, it remains more often quoted than read and more often read than understood. This is sad because in that book the troubles and the triumphs of Bomber Command are plainly and honestly recorded...’¹³

NOTE: This article is based upon a lecture which I delivered to the Royal Air Force Historical Society on 10th June 1996.

Though I have made some minor editorial revisions to the text of the lecture to make its wording more appropriate to an article, I wish to stress my belief that an historical piece basically designed to be heard is in a different category to one basically designed to be read. In this case, however, the issue is further qualified by the fact that the lecture was abstracted from the relevant chapters of the book I am at present writing, which is provisionally entitled ‘*History at War*’ and is to be published in 1998 by Giles de la Mare Publishers Ltd., 3 Queens Square, London WC1N 3AV.

I should also explain that I have now supplied references to the sources used when particularities are concerned and where the documents are available for inspection, for example, at the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Royal Air Force Museum. Many of my sources, however, are contained in archives which are not at present open and to which, for the time-being, I have exclusive access. To these latter I have not supplied references.

REFERENCES

- ¹ *Oxford Times*. 10th May 1996.
- ² Keegan, *The Battle for History*, Hutchinson, 1995, p26.
- ³ Harris to De L’Isle and Dudley, 27th February 1953; Harris to Air Chief Marshal Sir Ralph Cochrane, 11th December 1952; Harris to Sir Maurice Dean, 10th October 1959, Harris Papers, RAF Museum Acc 85/5 Mixed Air Min and Official and Personal A-F.
- ⁴ Keegan *op cit*, p39.
- ⁵ Butler to Webster, 19th May 1950; Webster to Butler, 21st May 1950, PRO CAB 140/103.
- ⁶ Harris to Cochrane, 20th November 1952. Harris Papers, RAF Museum Acc 85/5 Mixed Air Min and Official.
- ⁷ A W Snelling (Assistant Under Secretary of State, Commonwealth Relations Office) to Butler, 9th June 1959; Webster to Butler, 15th June 1959; Snelling to Butler, 23rd June 1959; C H Fone (Foreign Office) to Butler, 24th June 1959; Sir John Lang (Secretary, Admiralty) to Butler, 23rd June 1959; Webster to Butler, 9th July 1959; Butler to Lang, 9th July 1959, PRO CAB

140/104.

- ⁸ H T Smith (Deputy Under Secretary of State II, Air Ministry) to Dean, 22nd April 1959; J C Nerney to Smith, 29th April 1959, PRO AIR 20/10467.
- ⁹ Correspondence, Harris and Dean, eg Harris to Dean, 10th October 1959 and Dean to Harris, 26th October 1959, Harris Papers, RAF Museum Acc 85/5 Personal A-F; K Macdonald (Private Secretary to Dean) to Smith, 14th May 1959, PRO AIR 20/10467; Portal to Air Chief Marshal Sir Dermot Boyle (Chief of the Air Staff), 24th June 1959; Portal to Smith, 30th September 1959, PRO CAB 103/554.
- ¹⁰ Dean to Brook, 17th June 1959; H G Ware (Assistant Treasury Solicitor) to Smith, 29th May 1959, PRO AIR 20/10467; Mins of meeting including Brook and Dean, 14th July 1959, PRO CAB 103/554 encl 242; Webster to Brook, 16th December 1959, PRO CAB 103/554 encl 263; Mins of meeting of Brook and Dean on 21st December 1959, 23rd December 1959, PRO CAB 103/554 encl 267.
- ¹¹ Brook to Macmillan, 27th Jan 1960; Macmillan to Brook, 9th February 1960; Brook to Macmillan, 25th February 1960; Macmillan to Brook, 26th February 1960, PRO CAB 103/554.
- ¹² Press cuttings from the countries named.
- ¹³ Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, Cassell, 1979, p297.



Head of Air Historical Branch Sebastian Cox (facing) with Tammy Biddle, American historian, and chairman of the Royal Air Force Historical Society Nigel Baldwin.

Photo: Edgar Spridgeon

DISCUSSION

SIR FREDDIE SOWREY: The writing of the American history, in contrast with yours, was, I understand, done by a team, to some degree anonymous. Was theirs a better system or did it result in a more watered-down coverage of their daylight strategic offensive than ours, in which two men's reputations were put on the line to the disadvantage of their own personal feelings at a later stage?

Dr FRANKLAND: It was certainly a painful experience having our work treated in the way that it was when first published. On the other hand, Webster and I did invite that kind of reaction. We had decided to write this history – as though it were a history of the Napoleonic Wars – without fear or favour. We were determined to write history as we saw it, on the primary evidence available. We wished to sign it and put the sources in – otherwise nobody would believe us – and we did expect controversy to be aroused. The personal venom which also arose was not something we had reckoned on, and Webster did not actually experience it, for he died before the history appeared. It was extremely unpleasant, with the Beaverbrook Press in particular persecuting me. But we had brought it on ourselves; we did write the truth as we saw it. I believe the historian must always write the truth as he sees it, though of course he may not invariably see it correctly. In addition, I have always believed that the RAF – and the other Services – are best served by the truth – no less and no more. We can never learn anything from history if it is tailored to suit the fashions of the time at which it is written, and I think successive Air Staffs may have possibly gained some wisdom from history – which is what this Society is for. Such wisdom can only be real if it comes from what the individuals responsible consider, in their judgement, to be the truth. On the American side you are right that some of the work was anonymous but quite a lot was signed; my friend John Fagg, for example, signed the bits about the strategic air offensive from the UK. But the volumes were strictly conformist; the American official history was controlled by the USAF, which had pretty solid ideas about what the conclusions were going to be, and historians who did not fall in with these were not encouraged. Our system was, in my view, better than theirs since we were protected from the Services, so to speak, by the Cabinet Office, which was supposed to be working in the national interest without regard for, or fear or favour to, the individual Services. That was our protection; had the Air Ministry been in charge of our book, Webster and I would not have lasted long as official historians – and even if we had, the book would not have been published.

AVM BALDWIN: I am reminded here of the huge resources which the Americans put into their post-war United States Strategic Bombing Survey.

Dr FRANKLAND: Yes, they threw an enormous amount of money at the whole project, but their Strategic Bombing Survey is a pretty useless piece of evidence. It is so detailed that the only general conclusion you can get from it is whichever one you happen to be reading. It's all written by different hands, with different points of view and it argues different points, mostly related to various competing policies

in the Pentagon at the time. Although lavish and produced by huge teams, the Survey produced very disappointing results – much less good than our own much smaller British Bombing Survey, which produced some quite interesting reports.

AIR CDRE PROBERT: Two questions. First, while you were writing did you have much contact with the authors of the other official military histories, and did you discuss with them the method you were adopting as compared with the much more traditional, standard approach they were following – most of them fairly senior retired officers? Second, as background to your research, were you told anything about the breaking of the German Enigma ciphers? I know you could make no reference to them but were you both in the picture?

Dr FRANKLAND: We were concerned to keep well informed about the work of our colleagues. They were a somewhat mixed bunch. Roskill, for example, was a marvellous self-publicist and a very nice man – but as an historian he simply soaked up what the Admiralty wanted him to say and said it. John Ehrman, on the other hand, was and is a very good historian. I remember a discussion amongst the official historians on footnotes, when Sir James Butler mentioned that Webster and I were insisting on putting in footnotes and another official historian leant across and said ‘I say, Frankland, what is a footnote?’ Turning to Enigma, my late wife was at Bletchley Park so I already knew that something was going on there. Yes, we were also told officially about ULTRA but were not allowed to make any reference to it. I remember being here in the RAF Club when Winterbottom launched his rather inaccurate book on the subject, and I was amazed to hear all those things coming out when the people concerned had sworn never to relate any of it. ULTRA, in my humble opinion, has been exaggerated in importance. I once observed to Field Marshal Montgomery – very brashly – that he had, of course, been greatly helped in the battle of El Alamein because he had all the intelligence and knew exactly what was going to happen. He looked at me in an annoyed sort of way and told me that indeed he did have all the information but had to decide which bits of it to accept and which to discard, so that the responsibility was his. I could see the point of that. You can have a mass of intelligence, some of which is planted, and the responsible commander still faces the basic problem of deciding what he is going to do, and it does not necessarily make his task any easier.

Mr DENIS RICHARDS: I should like to add a footnote about the meeting between Harris and Webster. I have been fascinated to hear the detail you have given us. and all I know is what Harris told me about it. He met Webster in New York and found his mind so totally made up about everything to do with the offensive that he saw no point in trying to convert or convince him. I am not stating this as my opinion but am just reporting what Harris said to me.

Dr FRANKLAND: I find that interesting and probable; it is good first-hand evidence. Webster, as I mentioned, tended to be overbearing but he was very lacking in confidence on the subject of bombing and therefore anxious to present a picture of authority in a field where his knowledge was limited. So I can quite understand how he could give Harris that impression. What I do not understand is

why Harris was so friendly towards him. Why didn't he say, as he said to most people, 'You are talking through your hat'?

Mr RICHARDS: You spoke of what you called the bitter dispute between Portal and Harris about bombing. Certainly there was a clash of opinion but I do not think that 'bitter' is the right word with which to describe it. I discussed this with Harris and nobody could have been more full of praise for Portal than he. The two men remained on perfectly friendly terms throughout, and it seemed to me that Portal pushed this to the limit with Harris and was finally satisfied that Harris was – albeit reluctantly – obeying the orders of the Air Staff in so far as operational considerations permitted. Yes there was a dispute – but not a bitter one. On the question of the Dresden casualties, they were greatly exaggerated at first; they are now thought to have been about 30,000 and I am sure the *Luftwaffe* managed to kill many more than this in the course of the war, not least on the Russian front. On the question of Cabinet control of the writing of the official histories I do not think it is true to call this an innovation. The War Office made such a hash of writing a history of the Boer War that the Cabinet took away control of military history from the War Office. The Air Ministry and the Admiralty kept control of theirs, but all the Army volumes of the First World War were covered under the auspices of the Cabinet. I actually sat alongside Cabinet employees who were still writing some of these during the Second World War.

The reason why the strategic bombing offensive volumes aroused such exceptional hostility, in my view, lies in part in the decision to isolate strategic bombing from all the rest of Bomber Command's work. The former was more controversial, but an enormous amount of other work was done in 1944/5, and it is because this did not come into the strategic history that people got the impression that it was entirely hostile to Bomber Command. It was not a complete account of Bomber Command's activities, nor did it set out to be such, but its reception suffered from that fact. There is another factor that led to its hostile reception – if Dr Frankland will forgive me. The analysis is very acute and very exact. but the early failures are very clearly brought out and then rehearsed again at the end. As a result the final impression is less than triumphant, simply because of that repetition.

Dr FRANKLAND: I was most interested in what has just been said, not least since it was obviously spoken with much authority. On Portal and Harris, it is really a question of what construction one puts on their exchanges. As I read it, Harris won the dispute, because he said he was putting the full weight that he could on to oil in the light of operational conditions – which in fact he was not doing, for he was directing by far the greater weight to general attack on cities because he believed this would speed up the victory. Both Portal and Harris believed that their respective views were those which would most effectively shorten the war, but these views, by this stage, were fundamentally opposed to each other. There was an extra factor in this situation which complicated it, namely that many of the ideas Portal was using, particularly in connection with the oil offensive, were actually

Sidney Bufton's ideas, and Harris absolutely loathed Bufton; he couldn't stand mention of that name. The documents leave no doubt that the dispute between them was bitter in the extreme. Harris often said to Portal, 'Why do I have to take orders from a junior officer; why cannot you give me the orders?' So Harris did feel very bitter because he knew that a lot of what Portal was telling him was drafted by Bufton. It did a lot of damage to the relationship between the two men, and this became extreme in their dispute about oil and city centres in the winter of 1944/45.

Years later I said to Lord Portal that I thought it a pity that Harris, as a great commander, had not been given a peerage, to which Portal replied: 'We could not possibly have had him in the House of Lords'. It appears that Attlee turned it down. Sir Robert Saundby told me that Harris had actually been offered a peerage and had refused it, but I am not sure about that. In summary, the dispute in the winter of 1944/45 was certainly very serious, and one about which subsequent events showed Portal to have been right. But at the time he signed off with the statement that it would be necessary to wait until after the end of the war before finding out who was right and this does not strike me as a very sound attitude for a Chief of Air Staff to take towards a C-in-C.

Of official histories of the First World War, it is correct that the Army ones did finish up nominally with the Cabinet Office, but this was because that was the name given to the Army's historical branch. It is quite extraordinary; there was an Air Historical Branch, a Naval Historical Branch, and a Cabinet Office branch, which was, in effect, the Army Historical Branch.

Turning to why our history of the Strategic Air Offensive is controversial, I agree with what has been said. Webster and I in some ways regretted that our terms of reference were not to write the history of Bomber Command but to write that of the strategic air offensive. We did in fact describe at some length in our operational chapters the Normandy operations of 1944 and also much of the effort against the German Navy, but we did this to demonstrate the developments in techniques and so on, for, strategically, it was outside our remit. I agree that you do not get in our history a true picture of Bomber Command's peripheral contributions, but strategic bombing was at the heart of its effort and without that there would have been no Bomber Command as such. During and immediately after the war, the offensive itself was controversial for various reasons, for example – one of the silliest – that it would have been better to deploy the force in the Battle of the Atlantic, or it would have been better deployed in the Middle East to support the 8th Army. These are idiotic arguments, not least since we did, in fact, win both these campaigns, so there would have been no point in destroying Bomber Command to support them. Yet many people still believe fervently in such diversions even today, and when you point out that no effective operations could have taken place for a couple of years while they re-trained, re-equipped and so on they just do not accept it.

So in those days there was that sort of controversy, but the main one now is all

about being nasty to Germans: there were some people who thought that during the war, such as Bishop Bell, who was a very courageous critic of Bomber Command, but this was very unusual. Most people were very pleased with Bomber Command during the war and until it was virtually won; then they turned round and said it wasn't a very nice way to wage war. This is the sort of issue that arises today, but people who indulge in that have simply failed to examine what the conditions of the Second World War actually were. It's all very well to say today that it was a great pity to kill all those civilians, but if minds are cast back to 1940 it all looks very different. Then Bomber Command's offensive was extremely popular and was a major factor in national morale and our ability to continue the war. Bomber Command was the only force able to strike substantial offensive blows against the heartland of Germany; otherwise for all those years the Germans would have been immune from those blows and would have suffered no penalty whatsoever. Lastly, I do, of course, accept that there are views contrary to my own which are worth consideration, but I am not interested in what impression the book created. It was not designed to create any particular impression. It was simply created to reveal what Webster and I concluded, in the light of our ten years' work, was the true history of the subject.

MINUTES OF THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY HELD IN THE ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB ON MONDAY 10TH JUNE 1996

Present: Air Marshal Sir Frederick Sowrey (in the Chair) and 57 other members.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from (in alphabetical order): Wg Cdr Beamont. Air Cdre Brown, Gp Capt Croucher, AM Sir Denis Crowley-Milling. AVM Furner, AVM Herrington. Lt Col Lacey-Johnson, Gp Capt Lambert, Mr Rudd and Sqn Ldr Taylor.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman said that he and Members had come a long way together since that day at the RUSI ten years ago when, after John Terraine had spoken on the publication of *The Right of The Line*, and he had given a two-minute pitch on the possibility of such a Society, 60 of those present had put down their names in support. Much had been achieved in the subsequent decade.

In bare statistics the Society had grown to a membership of 645 and had current assets as the accounts showed of more than £20,000. It had published 16 issues of its Proceedings (now the Journal) including 80 book reviews, and six hardback publications in the 'Bracknell Papers' series of reports on the World War II 50th Anniversary Seminars. Thanks to the initiative of Sandy Hunter, a very successful joint seminar with the University of Newcastle on 'Defending Northern Skies' was held last October. The proceedings will be published shortly in hardback with a fetching new light blue cover to differentiate them from the Bracknell series. This was the first of what was intended to be a sequence of Regional seminars of major importance in that they will spread the Society's activities around, avoiding too great a concentration on London and the South-East.

Also awaiting publication is the seminar on Air Intelligence, which broke new ground in its coverage of 'Cold War' intelligence gathering; not for sensation's sake but to probe the historically significant aspects of a peacetime period of great responsibility for the Service. In this role the Society had a strong advocate in Lord Craig, who had done much to loosen purely bureaucratic shackles while maintaining security where it was needed.

Two joint seminars had been held with the Society's American opposite numbers, one on each side of the Atlantic, and an annual 'Two Air Forces Award' had been established for the best contribution to air force history by a member of each Air Force.

The Chairman said that both the other services had Historical or Record societies of long standing but, with respect, neither had the Society's panache nor the involvement of their members in recounting their own making of history. Why was this so, he asked? First, the Society had enjoyed the tacit support of the Air

Force Board – which had to be continually re-earned by results. The most obvious effect of this had been the ability to use the Royal Air Forces badge on Society business. Successive Chiefs of the Air Staff had been encouraging in their response to the Chairman's reports on progress. The involvement of successive Heads of the Air Historical Branch had been crucial. It was Henry Probert who had suggested that a paper written in 1979 suggesting such a society, which fell on deaf ears at the time, should be dusted off. His successor, Ian Madelin, had been a tower of strength throughout and now Sebastian Cox had buttressed the Society's integrity by aiming high for historical accuracy. The Chairman hoped that the Society had not pulled any punches since it was 'lessons from the past' which gave history its relevance to the problems of those serving today. His only disappointment had been that the records showed only 13% of the membership joined whilst still serving and the offer of a year's free membership to Cranwell graduates had evoked a negligible response.

The Chairman continued that it had given him great pleasure to observe the enhanced status and standing of the Society epitomised by the ready response to requests for speakers, both from Germany and the United States, as well as distinguished academics and historians from Britain. The Society had also been fortunate in having successive Commandants at Bracknell and Directors of the Royal Air Force Museum who had been generous hosts for the seminars in surroundings with a strong flavour of Service excellence.

The final ingredient in the Society's recipe for success had been people. Here, the Chairman said he felt he must pay special tribute to the tremendous contribution made by Henry Probert through his encyclopaedic knowledge and his ability to find just the right speakers, as well as his attention to the hard graft of organising seminars and editing the results for publication. All this while producing two books, including 'The RAF in the Far East War'. His latest work is a new biography of MRAF Sir Arthur Harris, undertaken with family agreement. This meant that he would be giving up the chairmanship of the Programme Sub-Committee to concentrate on this important work. The Journal recorded the names of those who had given their time and energy to run the organisation – Cecil James and Andy Brookes. General Secretaries Tony Jutsum and Joe Ainsworth, Treasurers Tony Bennell and Desmond Goch, Editors Alec Lumsden. Peter Ralfe, Tony Richardson and Derek Wood, Membership Secretaries Hans Neubroch, Peter Montgomery and Jack Dunham. Members had run seminars: David Clark, Andrew Thompson. Mickey Witherow, John Herrington, Philip Saxon, while Peter Mason was producing an index to the Proceedings and many others had been ready and willing to take part if asked. The spread of members' backgrounds and interests was wide so that all had something to contribute. The President, Sir Michael Beetham, had lent his authority to the Society's work, exercising the traditional aspects of counselling, praising and warning in ways which had made the Chairmanship much easier.

The Chairman said that the future, given the continued support of Members,

looked bright. Philip Saxon's Seminar on the History of Air Navigation would take place in October while on 24th April next there would be another Regional seminar, at Bristol on the TSR2, and in Autumn 1997 a seminar at the RAF Museum will cover air operations in South Arabia. While the RAF Staff College would be merging with the others to form a Joint Services Command and Staff College, it was hoped that the Society would be welcome there.

The Chairman said that he hoped that shortly the Meeting would appoint AVM Nigel Baldwin to succeed him. AVM Baldwin had been a founder member with much experience who was about to leave the Service and thus had considerable standing among younger servicemen and women. He had age on his side to take the Society well into the 21st Century. The Chief of the Air Staff had written recently that the Society was 'such an important jewel in our Royal Air Force crown'. He was confident that with AVM Baldwin the Society's future would be in good hands and that the jewel would continue to sparkle.

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

The General Secretary (Gp Capt Joe Ainsworth) said he was delighted to report that membership now stood at 645, and was showing a net increase of around 10% each year. This was a sure sign of a live organisation. The Society was now receiving better public recognition. While he still received the odd letter from a schoolchild seeking help with a project, the bulk of enquiries were now from academics and serious researchers. An example was an American who was writing a book on Enlisted Pilots. In every case it had been possible either to answer the query or to suggest where the answers could be found. The October seminar on Air Navigation, which was being organised jointly with the Royal Institute of Navigation and the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators, had already attracted 118 bookings and looked set fair to create a new record.

TREASURER'S REPORT

In presenting the Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st December 1995 the Treasurer (Desmond Goch) pointed out that while the accounts showed a deficit for the year this had been due to the cost of the brochure and the fact that the Society was again bearing the full cost of producing its publications. It was, therefore, a proper charge on the Accumulated Fund. In reply to a Member who queried the cost of publications, he said that he thought the Society was getting the best value practicable and he saw no need at present to increase subscriptions. He stressed, however, the value to the Society of Covenanted subscriptions and urged all members not yet covenanting to consider whether they could do so. In reply to a question he said that the wording on the covenant forms was being changed in a reprint. Philip Saxon, to murmurs of assent, said he thought Members were getting good value for their money.

ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1995

The Chairman asked if there were any questions on the Accountant's Report which had been distributed to all members. There being no questions it was proposed by Air Cdre Stockwell and seconded by Gp Capt Neubroch that the Accountant's Report for the year ending 31st December 1995 be approved and adopted. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.

APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE

The President took the Chair. In a brief address he stressed the progress made during Sir Frederick Sowrey's tenure of office. Sir Frederick had been a key player throughout and would carry on as Life Vice-President. His initiative, drive and wise guidance had brought the Society safely through its formative years, leaving it strong and financially healthy. The Service, as well as the Society, was in his debt. Now it was time for him to hand over. The President unreservedly recommended AVM Nigel Baldwin for the post. He was a founder member, an assiduous attender and had the interests of the Society at heart. It was proposed by AVM Hunter and seconded by ACM Sir Denis Smallwood that AVM Baldwin be elected Chairman. When put to the Meeting the motion was carried unanimously. AVM Baldwin then took the Chair.

The Chairman said that the present members of the Committee, being eligible, were prepared to continue serving. He asked if there were any other nominations. There being none, it was proposed by Gp Capt Neubroch, seconded by AVM Hedgeland, that the present Committee be re-elected to serve until the end of the 1997 AGM. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously. The members of the Committee so appointed were:

AVM N B Baldwin CB CBE RAF	(Chairman)
AVM A F C Hunter CBE AFC MA LLB	(Vice-Chairman)
Gp Capt J C Ainsworth CEng MRAS	(General Secretary)
Dr J Dunham PhD CPsychol AMRAS	(Membership Secretary)
D Goch Esq FCCA	(Treasurer)
Wg Cdr A J Brookes BA FRSA RAF	
*J S Cox Esq BA MA	(Head, Air Historical Branch)
*Dr M A Fopp MA FMA FIMgt	(Director RAF Museum)
*Gp Capt A P N Lambert MPhil RAF	(Director of Defence Studies)
Air Cdre H A Probert MBE MA	
A E F Richardson Esq	
Derek H Wood Esq ARAAS	
* Ex-Officio Member	

APPOINTMENT OF ACCOUNTANTS

It was proposed by Gp Capt Madelin, seconded by Mr A E Game, that Messrs Pridie Brewster be appointed Accountants to the Society and that the Committee be empowered to fix their remuneration. The motion was put to the Meeting and carried unanimously.

This concluded the formal business of the AGM and the Chairman closed the Meeting at 6.50pm.



Group Captain R. E. G. Britlain

MA RAF

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE FLYING CLUB

During my last year at Oxford I applied for and was granted a commission in the RAF Reserve. I was instructed to report at Hatfield Aerodrome to undergo flying training during the long vacation, and I made my first flight there in a Moth on 30th June 1931.

There were some fifteen or twenty of us, mostly from Oxford and Cambridge, on the RAF Reserve 'ab initio' course. By the September, when we had all qualified and got to know each other well, we realised that we were about to go our various ways and would be unlikely to meet again, except possibly during our annual 2 weeks training. We held a farewell dinner at Oddenino's in London, and it was then that it occurred to me to form some sort of club to unite us after such a pleasant summer together. The idea was approved by the others, but we did nothing about it until more than a year later.

On leaving Oxford I took every opportunity to fly with one civilian club or another, often taking up friends - something which of course was not allowed in RAF aircraft - but the charges were very high, and there were no concessions for qualified pilots. I believed that fairly experienced pilots, say with 50 or more hours solo, should qualify for lower insurance rates and that a group of us, with Air Ministry backing, should be able to arrange flying in light aircraft at a cost of no more than £1 per hour. After some research I decided to organise such a group, with a nucleus of those present at the farewell dinner the previous year, and call it the RAF Reserve Flying Club. With a plan worked out I went up to Cambridge where about twelve of us who had trained together met in the rooms of Peter Underwood in Clare. This meeting filled me with confidence. I found them all very keen and I was promised full support.

As the Club was to be of a semi-military nature, Air Ministry approval was essential, and my next meeting was with Sir Christopher Bullock, the Permanent Secretary. From him I received permission to go ahead with my plans, and an assurance that Air Ministry approval and recognition of the Club would be forthcoming, although not financial support. I suggested that, as evidence of its support, the Air Ministry might loan me Service parachutes for the use of Club members. I was supplied with three parachutes, none of which, I am glad to say, was ever used in earnest.

Mr Alan Butler, Chairman of the De Havilland Aircraft Company Ltd, makers of the famous Moth, very kindly promised me the full support of his company and housing and maintenance for our aircraft at Hatfield Aerodrome. The De Havilland Company also agreed to supply our first aircraft, and we brought the Moth G-AAEO in which I happened to have had my first flight.

In March 1933, I sent details of my plan for the Club to all the RAF Reserve trained at Hatfield, about 500 people in all. In the first week 35 applications for membership came in, which was encouraging as I had calculated that the Club could operate successfully at the special low rates on a basis of 50 members per machine. Peter Underwood, Denis Grice and I did all the clerical work and agreed to underwrite the costs if the Club failed, and we formed the first Committee. I was Chairman, Underwood Secretary. and Grice Treasurer.

The dozens of encouraging letters which arrived from all over England led me to circularise the whole of the RAF Reserve, and in April 1933 I sent out a further 1,500 letters. The extent of the response was almost overwhelming at my home, as my address appeared at the top of the letters. Replies came from all over the world, with many applications for jobs such as ground engineer, secretary or instructor. As a result, it was decided to form a committee of seven, one of whom was Squadron Leader B C Rice. who owned *Ye Olde Griffin Inne* at Amersham. Our first committee meeting was held there in April 1933 where, with the assistance of W A Hammerton, a barrister who had joined the committee, we drew up the prospective Club rules and arranged the date of an Inaugural General Meeting to be held at the Royal Aero Club in Piccadilly.

Five minutes before this meeting began. I ran into Captain A G Lamplough of the British Aviation Insurance Company, who had already joined the Club, and I invited him to stand for office on the committee. He readily agreed to do so, and also offered to help with insurance matters in any way that he could. At the meeting, my plans were accepted and all the proposals passed unanimously. Afterwards, a large number of us once more joined at dinner, but not to say farewell.

On May 23rd 1933, G-AAEO was handed over to us at Hatfield, completely overhauled and painted in silver. At a committee meeting in June it was decided that the club should be launched officially with a flying display the following month. In addition, a list of distinguished people as possible President or Vice-Presidents was drawn up and I was deputed to find out whether they would honour us by accepting office. Headed by Marshal of the RAF Viscount Trenchard, the list comprised Sir Christopher Bullock; Air Commodore C L Courtney, Director of Training; Group Captain R Leckie, Superintendent of Reserves; Lieutenant-Colonel F C Shelmerdine, Director of Civil Aviation; Lord Wakefield of Hythe; Captain Geoffrey de Havilland; Lord Sempill; and Sir Harry Brittain, my father. All accepted. It was also decided that we should invite HRH The Prince of Wales to become our Patron. I was tasked to make an approach and, in due course, reported that HRH would be willing to consider doing so once the Club had been active for some time and shown itself worthy of Royal patronage.

Our inaugural display was held on 22nd July 1933, a day I shall never forget. The first item was the unveiling of the Club Badge, designed by one of our members, on G-AAEO by Mrs Robert Leckie the wife of one of our Vice-Presidents. I then flew this aircraft. There followed a series of displays by Club members and by three squadrons of the Royal Air Force. The Marquess of Londonderry, Secretary of State for Air, flew over from Hendon to view the proceedings. It was a thoroughly successful launch, overshadowed only by the sad death, following a motor accident, of Squadron Leader Rice who had done so much for the Club.

In the months which followed it became increasingly clear that the Club's future was no longer in doubt, and that it should extend its activities to embrace all the Flying Services. In January 1934, having obtained Air Ministry approval and with the agreement of Lord Trenchard and the Vice-Presidents, the Club deleted 'Reserve' from its title and opened its doors to all members of the Services, past and present.

Our second display, which took place at Hatfield in June 1934, was attended by HRH Prince George, most members of the Air Council, and several Cabinet Ministers and Ambassadors. It was rated by the press as second only to the Hendon Display.

Soon after this, following an interview that Lord Trenchard and I had with Lord Londonderry and Sir Philip Sassoon, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, the Club was granted financial subsidy and presented with two Gipsy Moths. In 1935 HRH

The Prince of Wales became our Patron and he continued to hold that office after he ascended the Throne. In 1937 our Patron became HM King George VI.

By this time I was serving in Egypt, having been commissioned into the regular RAF, and was looking into the possibility of establishing an Overseas Branch there. I set about organising things on lines similar to the original Club and, fortunately, was presented with a Tiger Moth by Lord Wakefield, one of our Vice-Presidents. However, Italy's ambitions in Abyssinia took me away from Cairo on duty for a spell and the launch of the Egyptian branch had to be postponed until the end of hostilities after the fall of Addis Ababa. An agreement was drawn up between the RAF Flying Club and Misr Airwork of Almaza aerodrome, Egypt, enabling the Club to use Misr Airwork aircraft. By November 1937 the Club was operating in England and Egypt a fleet of 12 aircraft.

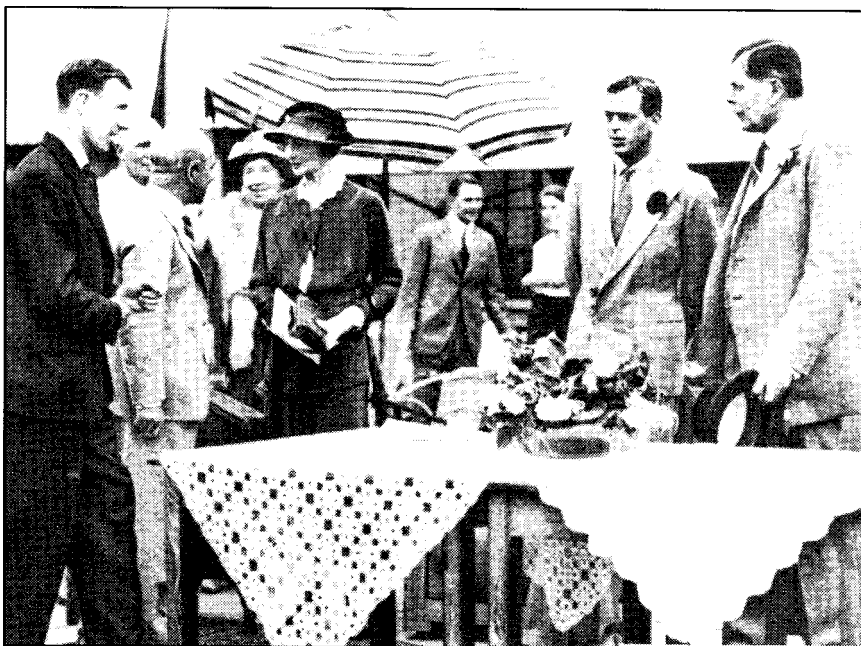
That, briefly, is the history of the RAF Flying Club. With the outbreak of war in 1939, like all other flying clubs, our activities were suspended and our aircraft requisitioned. After the war, in 1948, an attempt was made to revive the Club at



Panshanger, as Hatfield was no longer available. But Panshanger was much less

HRH Prince George watching an aerobatic display by a member of the RAF Flying Club at Hatfield. 16th June 1934. On his right is Flying Officer R E G Brittain, Chairman of the club committee.

Photo courtesy of The Illustrated London News Picture Library.



HRH Prince George and Lord Trenchard at the RAF Flying Club display held at Hatfield on 16th June 1934. On the left of the picture is Flying Officer R E G Brittain, founder of the Club and (behind) his father, Sir Harry Brittain and Lady Brittain. Next to Flying Officer Brittain, Group Captain R Lecki., Superintendent of Reserves, is talking to Lady Trenchard.

Photo courtesy of The Illustrated London News Picture Library

accessible and membership applications did not promise too well, especially with costs racing ahead. A Committee was formed, including a number of new faces, but the pre-war enthusiasm had gone. In 1949 I was posted for two years as Air Attaché in Rumania. Within a year of my arrival in Bucharest, I received a circular from the Club saying that, with great regret, the Committee had been compelled, for financial reasons, to close the Club and sell its property, and the proceeds were being divided equally among the members. My letter contained a few pounds. The Royal Air Force Flying Club had become a war casualty.

POSTSCRIPT

MARSHAL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
THE LORD ELWORTHY KG GCB CBE DSO LVO DFC AFC MA

You are very nearly right in your recollection of my early lack of discipline! In fact I took Audrey in G-AAEO from Hatfield and we landed in a field alongside the house of old friends in Wiltshire and they persuaded us to stay for dinner - a good one - and that resulted in taking off when it was already getting dark. I deserved to be Court Martialed - I think I was dismissed from the RAF Flying Club but graciously readmitted a year later!

Yours ever
Sam

You are very nearly right in your recollection of my early lack of discipline! In fact I took Audrey in G-AAEO from Hatfield and we landed in a field alongside the house of old friends in Wiltshire and they persuaded us to stay for dinner - a good one - and that resulted in taking off when it was already getting dark. I deserved to be Court Martialed - I think I was dismissed from the RAF Flying Club but graciously readmitted a year later!
Yours ever Sam

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE FLYING CLUB.

President:

Marshal of the R.A.F. Lord Trenchard, G.C.B., D.S.O., D.C.L., LL.D.

Vice-Presidents:

Sir Christopher LI. Bullock, K.C.B., C.B.E.

Air Commodore C. L. Courtney, C.B., C.B.E.,

(Director of Training) D.S.O.

Group Capt. R. Leckie, D.S.O., D.S.C., D.F.C.

(Superintendent of Reserve)

Lieut. Col. F. C. Shelmerdine, C.I.E., O.B.E.

(Director of Civil Aviation)

Lord Wakefield of Hythe, C.B.E., LL.D.

Sir Harry Brittain, K.B.E., C.M.G., LL.D.

Capt. G. De Havilland, F.R.Ae.S.

The Lord Sempill, A.F.C., F.R.Ae.S.

COMMITTEE.

Chairman: F/O. R. E. G. Brittain, R.A.F.

Vice-Chairmen:

F/O. W. A. Hamerton, R.A.F.O.

F/O. A. G. Lamplugh, R.A.F.O.

F/Lt. R. W. Reeve, D.F.C., M.M., R.A.F.O.

Capt. C. K. Robinson.

F/O. D. N. Grice, R.A.F.O.

Hon. Secretary:

Capt. E. C. Winkley.

G. F. Court, Esq.

Hon. Treasurers:

C. M. Wigh-Boycott, Esq.

F/O. P. E. Underwood, R.A.F.O.

Lt. O. M. Hills, M.C.

December, 1934.

The R.A.F. Flying Club has three primary objects. To provide flying for past and present Service pilots at a reasonable rate; to enable passengers to be carried, which is not permitted during Service training; and to provide flying for Reserve Officers who are forced to cease active training at 38.

Membership is confined to past and present Officers of the Royal Air Force, Auxiliary Air Force, Reserve of Air Force Officers, the special Reserve, the British Empire Military Flying Services, the R.N.A.S. and R.F.C., past and present members of the Oxford and Cambridge University Air Squadrons, and any officer who is or has been lent, seconded, or attached to the Royal Air Force.

The minimum qualification in all cases is 50 hours as a pilot. Members may not fly Club machines unless they are in possession of a current "A" or "B" licence. Special provision however, has been made for time to be put in, in order that an "A" licence may be obtained.

The Club has its headquarters and operates at The de Havilland Aerodrome, Hatfield, Herts. The Club's aircraft are ~~two Gipsy I Moths~~ *one Gipsy I Moth & one Puma Truck*

*

~~The Entrance Fee is £2. The annual subscription is £4, which may be paid by two half-yearly instalments. The flying rates start at £1 per hour for a voucher for one hour, and decrease proportionally to 15s. per hour for a voucher for 100 hours.~~

Officers on the R.A.F. Active List and Auxiliary Air Force Officers shall be admitted to membership without payment of Entrance Fee. Officers of the Dominion Military Flying Services on temporary visits to the Mother Country, are admitted to Membership without payment of Entrance Fee, and for a temporary subscription of £1 to cover not exceeding one month. For longer periods the ordinary half-yearly subscription applies without payment of Entrance Fee.

The Club has obtained official Air Ministry approval and recognition and also certain facilities for the use of Service parachutes. There are also parachutes for the use of passengers and non-Service members.

The rules concerning cross-country flying enable a member to be charged for flying time only, except at week-ends when there is an additional charge of 1s. for each hour's absence in excess of four hours. Members may land free of charge at any R.A.F. Aerodrome.

The Club owns a Williamson Pistol Camera of the latest type for the use of any member wishing to take aerial photographs.

The Club subscribes to the Automobile Association, and a list of all the A.A. licensed landing grounds is available at Hatfield.

The Club's insurance and that of its members is most favourably undertaken by Captain A. G. Lamplugh of the British Aviation Insurance Co., Ltd., who is a member of the Committee.

Members of the Club are entitled to wear the Club tie and use the Club car badge.

Any further particulars and application forms can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, Royal Air Force Flying Club, Hatfield Aerodrome, Herts.

† Para. 6. line 2 after "Entrance fee" add
" and for a subscription of £2 p.a.
payable half yearly if desired.

* Subscription £2 per annum.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA: ROSS AND SHAW OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

By L. S. Rivett

Everyone has heard of Lawrence of Arabia and perhaps a few know that he spent his last few years in the RAF. He made a contribution to the Junior Service during the eleven years he spent in it as an aircraftman, much longer than he spent in the desert.

Lawrence wrote of his first term of service in the RAF from notes he made at the time, with later additions, during his time at Karachi in 1927 and entitled it *The Mint* 'A day-book of the RAF Depot between August and December 1922 with later notes by 352087 A/c Ross'. He burnt his original note books and the book, after much revising, was 196 pages long and contained 70,000 words. It was not to be circulated before 1950 nor be published during his lifetime. A few copies were printed in New York in 1936 and the first general publication in Oxford in 1955, with barrack-room coarse speech eliminated. It is in three parts: The Raw Material; In the Mill; Service. He dedicated it to Lord Trenchard, '*The Mint* because we were all being stamped after your image and superscription.' He later wrote a tailpiece to *The Mint*, entitled *Leaves in the Wind*.

When I read *The Mint* about two years ago I realised that many things in the RAF had not changed in the twenty years when I joined in 1941. There were echoes and similarities of my own first few weeks in the RAF. Of course some things had changed, for example airmen no longer wore puttees ('horse bandages') but the ill-fitting uniforms, heavy boots, early morning reveille and 'lights out', square bashing, PT, kit inspections, 'biscuits' (three square mattresses), ill-cooked food, 'irons' and washing up buckets, 'tea and wads, sausages and mashed' in the canteen, guard duty and fire pickets; cleaning and polishing boots and equipment, bullying NCOs, incompetent officers, fatigues, 'jankers', communal punishment, 'victimisations', petty restrictions and discipline to which recruits were subjected were much the same. But the recruits in 1922 were issued with sheets, one of which was changed each week. They spent hours learning semaphore (only used at the Depot) instead of Morse.

After his experiences in the desert and the way in which he thought that the British Government had betrayed the Arabs. Lawrence wanted to lose himself in anonymity. He was enamoured by the RAF and through the good offices of Lord Trenchard, whom he had met at the Cairo Conference in 1921 and befriended, he was able to enlist in the name of John Hume Ross. 'Participating in the life of the RAF was only a partial solution to his problem at that time. Some quality had departed from his life before he became a RAF recruit. Lawrence of Arabia had died' (Findlay). Lawrence wrote in *The Mint* how he explained to a Flight-Sergeant why he was in the RAF. 'I'd overdone the imaginative life, as expressed in study,

and needed to lie fallow awhile in the open air. That meant earning a living by my hands, as I had no resources, and my scholarly hands weren't worth a meal at any trade. So I had enlisted'. He also wrote of his, 'urge downwards, in pursuit of the safety which can't fall further and the necessary compulsion to re-learn poverty, which comes hard after some years of using money'.

Lawrence first joined up at Uxbridge in August 1922, but when his identity became known to the Press he was forcibly discharged in January 1923, then under training as a photographer at Farnborough. He then enlisted in the Tank Corps and suffered frustration until he was able to re-join the RAF under the name of Thomas Edward Shaw in August 1925. This time after an appeal on his behalf to the Prime Minister (Baldwin) by John Buchan, he went to Cranwell.

In *The Mint* he describes how he was one of fifty-odd men crowded into a hut, subject to new and arbitrary discipline; 'wearied with dirty, senseless, uncalled for yet arduous fatigues'. The airmen wore khaki uniforms for the first few days before being issued with RAF blue. (In the Middle East in the 2nd WW it was reversed!). These were far too tight. They were only allowed out of the depot after they had been issued with the blue and had to carry black canes with a silver knob correctly. Lawrence wrote, 'I'd as soon dangle a doll through the street'. He described the RAF service police as 'pariahs', ready to report every minutiae of offence of dress. They were not counted as 'men' but were unhappy hybrids, 'they can earn their fellows' praise only as they neglect their duty'.

The corporal in charge was a father-like figure but there were others who were bullies and who delighted in degrading the recruits. 'We have been led here by our innate impulses and are offering the RAF our best. So the curtness of command and its professional severities jar on us. We must acquire the stolidity to carry on and like the work too well to let it suffer, however they mishandle or punish us, ignorantly. The RAF is bigger than itself'. The hut was 'a fair microcosm of unemployed England; not of unemployable England, for the strict RAF standards refuse the last levels of social structure'. This is followed by thumb-nail portraits of his fellow recruits. Public school and state school did not mix easily when it came to the social code. In the hut Lawrence was 'posh', not for his bookish accent but for having the only active wristwatch and was asked the hour fifty times a day. In 'return courtesy' they deferred to him, when they sought something, as 'Mister'.

The dining hall (called a Mess Deck) was a vast hall with a floor of resonant cement. Din filled its walls at meal times, the din of iron food trays, heavy serving spoons and boot nails on the floor. The recruits soon knew the first law of safety when the officer of the day came round; there were never complaints. Biscuits (iron rations) were issued in place of bread for Friday's tea. 'Because we are paid and the Air Ministry wants our hunger to give the canteen first pick of our pockets'. Tinned salmon and fried onions once relieved the monotony of the diet. Bacon and eggs made the world's richest breakfast although it consisted of 'spindly brine-sodden rashers and stale eggs noisomely splattered in the grease which half an hour ago had been frying fat'. Four mugs of water were provided for

twelve men. Of kitchen duty, one of the worst and most unpleasant fatigues, which involved disposing of tons of swill, Lawrence remarked 'each service throws away enough food to feed the other two'.

The day started at 6.45 with PT and after dressing fully, breakfast at 7.45, with only eight minutes to eat; then five minutes in the hut getting ready for drill at 8.10. Drill lasted 75 minutes, then ten minutes rest before a second drill period until nearly 11.00 when the recruits were due at school eight minutes away. School, with civilian teachers, was vastly different from the rest of the training. Then, still marching in fours, to the hut to fetch knife, fork and spoon for dinner followed by half an hour's rest. The afternoon was like the morning, drill and PT with only fifteen minutes in which to get ready for tea. After this a lecture and two or three times a weeks fire picket duty. Cleaning and polishing boots and new equipment took up much spare time.

Due to his service in and the privations of the desert Lawrence had a great fear of being unfit and hated PT which sometimes made him physically sick, but he liked Drill (then in fours) except for the bullying tactics of the instructors. Once they were kept at Drill for six hours. Kit inspections, when everything had to be laid out in proper order, 'All our official effects were so on view, mathematically spaced, folded, measured and weighed', always led to victimisation, although this is not a word Lawrence used. The Commandant had been a distinguished soldier but was severely crippled and treated the recruits cruelly. 'We can be half-killed, not killed; punished but not capitally. The sudden barking of sergeants and sergeant majors on parade always denotes a miscarriage of authority, wanting to spread blind terror'. Fatigues were seen as breaking the men's spirits by drudgery. Boots took hours to bone smooth and polish. 'They have transformed us fifty civilians into very frightened troops in a few days This Royal Air Force is not antique and leisurely and storied like an army. We can feel the impulsion of a sure, urging giant behind us between it and Trenchard, the pinnacle and our exemplar; but the awe of him surely encompasses us. The driving energy is his, and he drives furiously. Trenchard has designed the image he thinks most fitted to be an airman; and we submit our nature to his will, trustingly'. Trenchard was a legend in the hut and spelt out confidence in the RAF

Lawrence described the basic training as 'rank cruelty' and that some instructors hurt men to gratify a passion and not for the men's own good. 'Despite my background of achievement and understanding, despite my willingness that the RAF should bray me and re-mould me after its pattern; I still want to cry out that this our long-drawn punishing can subserve neither beauty nor us'. The recruits were punished for any mistakes, for any falling short of standard; or of requirement, or fancied requirement; or punished merely because someone thought it was about time they were. Headquarters sent the flight commander the reminder one day, 'There is not enough crime in your flight'.

Lawrence records an amusing incident. At a kit inspection the officer noticed he had a book by a Danish author and asked if he read Danish. On being told 'Yes'

he told the Sergeant Major to take his name. The next day Lawrence was marched in bareheaded under escort, to face a 'Charge'. The officer laughed and said that he wanted Lawrence's name in case he wanted an intelligent man for a job.

The omnipotence of the non-commissioned officers in the Depot struck Lawrence as un-English and unfortunate. They totally eclipsed the officers who were incompetent, completely out of touch with the men and lacked dignity. It is interesting that they could charge an airman with 'dumb insolence' if he looked resentful, as in WW2. Lawrence wrote that the recruits offered the RAF their best but were 'its ridden beasts; and of our officers and NCOs some will be bad riders. We must acquire the stolidity to carry on and like the work too well to let it suffer, however they mishandle or punish us, ignorantly. The RAF is bigger than itself'.

In *The Mint* Lawrence used 'irks' for airmen instead of the more familiar 'erks'. One drill sergeant used the expression 'Per Ardua ad asbestos' explaining that it meant, 'F... you Jack, I'm fireproof'.

Church Parades were unreal and the worship had no contact with the men. They were a monotonous failure of a church, 'This apparatus of a parade service prejudices into blasphemy what thin chance organised worship ever had over vigorous men'. Bayonets were worn and the men were conducted like cattle to market through the streets. The first hymn 'Early in the morning my song shall rise to thee', was not well thought of after a 6.45 reveille. The padre ignored the life of the airmen and equally their language. When Lawrence was at Cranwell on the day that Queen Alexandra was buried there was a church parade at which 'Our distrusted chaplain preached one of his questionable sermons (32 minutes long).' The dead Queen was 'a Saint, a Paragon' but Lawrence had seen her at Marlborough House and wanted to run away in pity.

The recruits learnt the road of least resistance and to dodge everything except their pay. They soon became proud of being airmen and not soldiers, whom they saw as existing for drill and fatigue, military futilities as a whole profession. 'Airmen are lords and masters, when not slaves, of their machines, which indeed the officers own in the air but which belong to us individually for the longer hours they are on the earth. Not here of course in the Depot'. After six week's basic training the recruits were 'squadded' and later could look back at the Depot 'as an ordeal which earns liberty for unchased work, ahead'. They had found a corporate life, a flight-entity, outside their individualities, thinking, deciding and acting on parade without a word being said. 'Men are becoming troops when like one body they are sluggish (to a bad instructor) mulish (when angered) willing (to an open-hearted man)'.

Lawrence left the Depot before completing the full course and was posted to Farnborough. He wrote 'The RAF for me is now myself; a vocation absolute and inevitable beyond any question under the sky: and so marvellous that I grow hot to make it perfect. I have hated to see the bloom of its virginal recruits wasted by the inept handling there'.

The last section of *The Mint* was written three years after Lawrence left

Uxbridge, when he re-joined the RAF, and is headed SERVICE.

He was amazed and impressed by the change when he arrived at Cranwell. Now, under the name of Shaw, life was so much more easy and leisurely. He was told NOT to stand at attention when addressing a corporal and to use his Christian name. Airmen still wore puttees although he describes the wind whipping sudden curves into the trouser legs from groin to ankle on a windy inspection. They still had drill but it was a kind of fun. Sixteen slept in a small hut, the beds down each wall, with a table and two forms and a square stove down the middle. He was afraid that talking in his sleep the first night he had given the game away as to his true identity. There was no rude awakening, no duty before a leisurely breakfast. The bed had five blankets and sheets. The mess deck had twelve to a table. The food was miserable; little and bad but they did not have to wash their plates. There was a flourishing canteen. After breakfast all were on parade for the hoisting of the Colour: Jews and Roman Catholics fell out before the chaplain took prayers. Lawrence saw the funny side of the petition 'that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, when some will be flying an hour later and all have been misdoing and swearing obscenely -since the dawn'.

Later, when at Karachi, Lawrence described 'The hangar and our day's work'. The hanger was a girder frame sheathed in iron with a concrete floor without one pillar of obstruction and at night looked like a palace. The Flight Commander was 'a jewel' and at Cranwell 'the RAF Officer comes back to his own'. The fifteen-man flight had three or four officers. 'We are the hands who actually push their machines about; on our vigilance and duty the officers' lives depend, for hours every flying day'. The airmen worked eight hours a day in the workshop: before and after they did their own cleaning, bed-making, hut-tidying; another hour and a half; then, 'much grudged the occasional hour wasted over equipment or bayonet for some posh parade; monthly duty flight and stand by all the hundred and sixty-eight hours for emergency aerodrome occasions; fire picket at night; a rare police guard and you get a full life of work. Wednesday afternoons, Saturday afternoons and the few Sundays not desecrated by a parade service are golden spots in our laboriousness'.

But Lawrence loved it. Everywhere he found a relationship and had no loneliness any more. He wrote, 'When I passed from Depot to Cadet College I passed from appearance to reality. After two days I was saying I had found a home. Now I was to learn to be an airman, by unlearning that corporate effort which had been the sole spirituality of the square Our machines fly when they're as good as it lies in our power to make them.' He admitted in the Preface to *The Mint* that the Cadet College part was 'vamped up, to take off the bitterness of the depot. The Air Force is not a man-crushing humiliating slavery, all its days'.

'Airmen estimate in terms of their trades. The overwhelming responsibility our generation lays on us is that our kites and engines must always be airworthy, to take our masters and ourselves into the air. The airmen call the tune, in work hours. A spanner, a screwdriver, a scraper, a file – these are our insignia; not the plumed

wings, the swords, the eagles.’ Every mechanic was proud of ‘his’ Bus and cursed ham-fisted pilots.

At Cranwell Lawrence was able to indulge in his passion for motor bikes. On two evenings a week he went shopping in Lincoln for bacon and eggs which he took back to the billet. He had found contentment and happiness.

The Mint ends with ‘I can’t write ‘FINIS’ to this book, while I am still serving. I hope, sometimes, that I will never write it’.

Lawrence was posted to India at the end of 1926 and the voyage out on the troopship *Derbyshire* was very unpleasant. He arrived at the RAF Depot at Karachi, where he described the work as ‘Cushy’, with every day as a half-day, except Thursday and Sundays which were whole holidays – except for Church every other Sunday. ‘No PT, guard every two months, no bugles, food excellent, canteen vile, spare hours make up 15/16 of life apparently’. Here he had time to write up his notes for *The Mint*. He got his fellow airmen used to hearing classical music, especially Mozart, who was his favourite composer.

In December 1928 when he was at the most remote RAF Station in the North West, a newspaper suggested that Lawrence was acting as a spy on the borders of Afghanistan and so he was rapidly posted back to the UK.

Lawrence then served as a mechanic on RAF motor boats and became a marine expert. After witnessing the crash of a flying boat Lawrence pointed out the need for reforms in air sea rescue. He was seconded to Hythe to test the RAF 200 class motor boat and wrote the manual for it – some 15,000 words. He was involved in the RAF Schneider Trophy Race entry in 1929 and 1931. He was stationed at Cowes, Felixstowe, Manchester, Wolverhampton and, finally, at Bridlington in November 1934, when he was billeted at the *Hotel Ozone*. Lawrence contributed greatly to the development of safety launches and Mountbatten said, ‘My own view is that he was one of the prime architects of our Air Sea Rescue Service’. John Harris in *The Sea Shall Not Have Them* (Hurst and Blackett, 1953) states that 13,269 lives were saved from the sea by ASR.

In 1934 Churchill asked Lawrence, ‘In event of an air attack what would be our best defence?’ Lawrence replied, ‘Multiple air force defence stations to intercept’. After his death, in a somewhat mysterious motor cycle accident on 13th May 1935, Churchill wrote ‘Lawrence saw as clearly as anyone the vision of Air power and all that it would mean in traffic and war. He found in the life of an aircraftman that balm of peace and equipoise which no great station or command could have bestowed upon him. He felt that in living the life of a private in the RAF he would dignify that honourable calling and help to attract all that is keenest in our youthful manhood to the sphere where it is most urgently needed. For this service and example, to which he devoted that last twelve years of his life, we owe him a separate debt. It was in itself a princely gift.’

Lawrence kept up a voluminous correspondence with many famous people, including George Bernard Shaw (who became a great friend), Lady Astor, Edward Elgar, Robert Graves, E M Forster, Eric Kennington, B H Liddell Hart, Siegfried

Sassoon, Henry Williamson and W B Yeats.

He took up with Trenchard some proposed reforms, ranging from the abolition of the death penalty for cowardice to the wearing of bayonets on church parades, 'as bad as a wooden leg', and other 'Trifles, that irritate do most harm'. He was on leave staying at the Union Jack Club in London (known surely to some readers) when shouts of joy informed him that his suggestion that the top two buttons of greatcoats could be left unfastened was announced. He wrote to Trenchard, 'Have a bayonet put in your In Tray every morning and say to yourself, 'I must get rid of that today'. Lay out all your shirts and socks nightly on your bed; and say, 'My God, what a bore this is'. In India one of his Commanding Officers suspected that Lawrence was acting as Trenchard's spy and had his outgoing mail censored on one occasion. In one letter Lawrence wrote, 'I've enlisted twice in the British Army, and twice in the Air Force. I've seen from the inside the Turkish and Arab armies, and something of the Navy. The RAF is streets finer, in morale, in brains and eagerness than the lot of them. In ten years it's become the best Service'.

In India on one Station many airmen followed Lawrence's example and rigged up reading lamps from leads connected to the fan switches. After an inspection the CO ordered their removal. On the next inspection Lawrence's lamp was still burning brightly but the leads were not connected to the camp supply but apparently to a large battery under the bed. In fact the battery was a dummy with cleverly concealed leads to the forbidden switchbox. He also recorded that on one Armistice Day a rocket which was meant to signal the two minutes silence went off prematurely right into the Officers' Mess. He was the first serviceman to show that there was no medical necessity for wearing solar topees or pith helmets as a protection against sunstroke and he went about bareheaded. (RAF airmen were still issued with them in 1942 as part of tropical kit).

While he was in the Tank Corps in 1924 Lawrence was offered a commission and the task of writing the History of the Air Force by Trenchard but he promptly turned it down. He was offered honours by the King but refused them.

As J H Ross and T E Shaw in the RAF Lawrence gave much further service to his country after being 'Lawrence of Arabia'. The Royal Air Force owes much to him.

ANGELS AND THE AOC

By Professor Max Hammerton

One of the topics of enduring interest in RAF history is that concerning the departure of ACM Dowding from Fighter Command after the Battle of Britain. A recent book¹ by Dr. John Ray has drawn attention to some matters which have generally been overlooked; but I wish to suggest that there remains the possibility of yet other factors being involved.

There is no doubt that Dowding himself felt ill-used. However, Ray's evidence seems to prove that his memory of details was at fault by the time he talked to his first biographer. Ray further argues that his handling of the battle was less errorless than his admirers claim, and, following a contribution by Group Captain Haslam,² that increasing doubts about his methods of dealing with the night Blitz played a large part in the decision to supersede him.

Few, if any, who are seized of the facts would deny that Dowding's organisation of Fighter Command, with the welding of aircraft, radar, observers and ground control into a single unified system of defence, constituted a major – perhaps the major – factor in securing the daylight victory. (Those who claim that there was no victory, only an avoidance of defeat, are merely crass. Avoiding defeat was, in the circumstances of the time, a clear and decisive victory.) Critics have, more sensibly, adverted to his tactical handling of the battle.

It is argued that he left his Group Commanders, particularly Park and Leigh-Mallory, to fight the battle without higher control, and that he did not sort out the problems of tactical co-operation which arose between them. It has also been suggested that the geography of the situation, coupled with the known ranges of the aircraft in service, should have led him to concentrate all the Spitfire squadrons in 11 Group, leaving the Hurricanes to the others.

It has justly been observed that there is no vision to compare with 20-20 hindsight. No doubt Nelson would have captured even more ships at Trafalgar if he had been able to fight the Battle again. It must be allowed that there is some force in these criticisms – albeit the suggestion that the Spitfires should have been redeployed was not made, so far as I know, until long after – but when full allowance is made for them, the fact remains that the day battle was won. How did Dowding approach the problem of defence at night?

He had given his estimate of the materials necessary for successful defence against night raids well before they started.³ These were: a special-purpose twin-engined two-seat night-fighter, GCI radar over land (the early systems gave warning of approach to the coast, and relied on visual reporting inland), and an AI radar.⁴ & ⁵ When the Blitz began, Bristols were working to provide the first; and TRE (afterwards RRE) were working on the other two. Short of producing a miracle, it is difficult to see what more Dowding, or anyone else, could have done.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, on the weight of the evidence, the score was Dowding, 2: Critics, 0. On the other hand, the times were not conducive to the calmest assessment of the evidence. The Blitz was hammering away at our cities, almost with impunity. It was not certain in advance that civilian morale would hold – and, as one who was a schoolboy in London at the time, I believe that the phlegm and determination of Londoners has generally been overstated by historians. The conviction that something had to be tried, if only a change at the top, is understandable, even if not justified in the light of hindsight.

It is possible to speculate that, as well as this, some of Dowding's views may have made him unpopular, and some others suspect, with the Air Ministry hierarchy.

During the second half of 1941 he wrote a strange book entitled *Twelve Legions of Angels*.⁶ During the War, permission to publish was refused; but it appeared in 1946, with Dowding's assurance that he had not altered one word for post-war publication. The book is in two parts, of which the first, subtitled 'The Things which are Caesar's', is a layman's guide to air warfare. The main points are made Socratically, in a series of question-and-answer sessions between a layman and an expert. After outlining the essential qualities for different types of aircraft and the considerations which should guide procurement policy, he discusses how to ensure that the war be not lost and how it could be won.

A successful invasion would, of course, mean utter defeat; but he is satisfied that this could not happen without loss of air superiority at home. Hence '... a strong Home Defence fighter force... is an *absolute* requirement no other can be compared with it.' (His italics.) He considers it improbable that the night blitz could bring defeat by itself.

So far, so good. He then puts his finger on the point of greatest danger: the Atlantic convoy routes. '(T)he loss of shipping is the gravest remaining danger ...' Coolly and lucidly he examines the problem; and suggests that 'There is a strong case for the conversion of a number of medium-sized ships into aircraft carriers (but) to carry fighters on ships and catapult them off can only be described as the refuge of the destitute.' Quite so.

He next diverts from his main theme and devotes a chapter to the question 'Why are Senior Officers so Stupid?' What he has to say is much to the point and vastly more sensible than the Freudian inanities spewed up by a well-known Psychologist a few years ago.⁷ He observes the strange '.... repugnance of senior officers to settle by controlled experiment questions which can be so settled.' He strongly endorses the policy of inviting Scientists to work with the Services: and urges that '... the advice of the statistician is required at every turn' so long as the statistician is one 'who will work on the principles of scientific experiment and ... not ... (be) influenced by preconceived ideas.'

Defeat avoided and officers educated, he then turns to the question of how to win, and particularly to whether it would be possible to win by bombing. He reminds his readers that there is a limit to the damage a single bomb can do '...

though I shudder to think what may happen if (nuclear energy) becomes available ...’ He drily remarks that he does not suggest that bombing so far had been without a rational plan, ‘... but this plan has not been obvious to the uninitiated observer.’

He reasons that enemy defensive measures are bound to improve, with consequently increased losses of our bombers. He doubts whether bombing would, itself, break civilian morale; and ‘... now comes the time to set the statistician to work ...’ There follows a string of acute, numerate questions, ranging from bomb load required per acre of target to the vulnerability of railway systems to sustained attack. He continues: “You may say, ‘This man is an Air Chief Marshal. Why doesn’t he tell us the answers...?’ (But) nobody can answer without knowing all the facts and studying them meticulously. The greatest danger is that men should consider that because they are Air Chief Marshals... they can work on ‘hunches’.” (His italics.) He wonders whether, since the Russian front was in being, it might pay to make a concentrated attack upon fuel and oil storage and synthesis.

To all of which strategic wisdom, hindsight can add little.

The second part of the book is subtitled ‘The Things which are God’s’. It is so different from the first part that it is difficult to credit that the same hand was responsible for both. One might imagine it to be the work of a kindly, not over-bright, near-fundamentalist cleric. He admits that it may be presumptuous to speak about Divine intervention, but is sure that ‘... God ... has already intervened on our behalf.’ He admits that he cannot prove this; but he claims to have had personal experience.

There is not the faintest ground to question Dowding’s utter sincerity and goodwill here; just as it is impossible to question his insightful perception in the previous part. But we can make fairly confident guesses about how both would have struck the higher echelons of the Air Ministry.

Part One would have raised hackles amongst the elements sometimes nicknamed ‘the Bomber Barons.’ How well were his views known in the Air Ministry? How widely did the text of his book circulate? If it had been read, the second part provided plausible, if mistaken, grounds for ignoring it. Nothing need have been committed to writing; but it is easy to imagine the remarks: ‘Look at this. Poor old Stuff must be round the bend...’

One cannot help wondering.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Ray, J. *The Battle of Britain: new perspectives.* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1994.)
- ² Haslam, E. How Lord Dowding came to leave Fighter Command. *J. Strategic Studies*, 1981, 4(2), 175ff.
- ³ Ray, *op cit.*
- ⁴ Price, A. *Instruments of Darkness.* (London: Macdonald and Jane’s, 1977.)
- ⁵ Gunston, W. *Night Fighters.* (Cambridge: Patrick Stevens, 1976.)
- ⁶ Dowding, ACM Lord, *Twelve Legions of Angels.* (London: Jarrolds, 1946.)
- ⁷ Dixon, N. *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence.* (London: Cape, 1976.)

THE KILLING OF ADMIRAL ISOROKU YAMAMOTO

During the war the British, or the Germans for that matter, were never really presented with the opportunity to kill a personality of such importance as Admiral Yamamoto. Just how much the loss of an important leader affects a long term result is a subject of its own. At the time of the happening it must have a great impact, not only on the plans already laid but in the execution of those plans and, depending on the esteem in which the leader is held, on morale.

The great pastime today is to decry wartime personalities and some of the actions they initiated or took part in. It seems almost impossible for people to understand that a lot of things were undertaken in a climate of opinion that fifty years later does not match the current morality but to question the killing of Admiral Yamamoto as an assassination, as has been done, is patently perverse.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was born on 4th April 1884 making him around his mid- to late-fifties when planning for the assault on Pearl Harbour. He had been promoted Admiral in 1940.

A career Naval officer graduating from the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy at the age of 20, he was immediately blooded in battle at Tsushima on board the cruiser *Nisshin*. The year was 1905 and the future Admiral lost two fingers to a Russian shell. Two assignments in America each of two years gave him an insight into American naval thinking but his career also carried him into the then untried but developing world of naval aviation and aircraft carrier operation. He also became involved in technical research and, surprisingly for a serving naval officer, some semi-political appointments.

As a Vice-Admiral he was an important voice at the 1934 London Naval Conference where Japanese naval construction restraints were shaken off and an accelerated building programme was quietly commenced.

An opponent of the tri-partite axis, Admiral Yamamoto was always uneasy about war with the United States; however, when the die was cast his plan at Pearl Harbor almost worked.

A very experienced commander, well educated and trained and respected as an accomplished man, he was held in the highest esteem by the Japanese public at large.

The final interesting facet of Admiral Yamamoto's character that was widely known was his almost pedantic insistence on accurate time keeping, a matter that had great bearing on his undoing. The Americans had great success with code breaking and therefore it is hardly surprising that four days before Admiral Yamamoto commenced a tour of inspection of Bougainville, his itinerary came to the knowledge of the American Pacific Commander in Chief Admiral Nimitz.

Nimitz passed this highly secret information to his Air Commander South Pacific, Admiral Aubrey Fitch, via Admiral William F Halsey with instructions that if it was possible to intercept the aircraft carrying Admiral Yamamoto, it must be made to appear that this was a chance encounter by a standing patrol in order

not to compromise the breaking of the Japanese codes.

The only aircraft with the range to intercept were Army Air Corps P-38 Lockheed Lightnings based on Guadalcanal and there 339 Squadron commanded by Major John W Mitchell were detailed for the task. With extra large drop tanks of 310 gallons under one wing and standard 165 gallons under the other (there were insufficient large tanks for each aircraft to have two), eighteen aircraft led by the Squadron Commander flew at low level, recorded as 50 to 100 feet, from Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, to the point of interception some 400 plus miles, where the 'attack flight' of four planes would remain low whilst the rest would climb to 20,000 feet to give top cover.

On the 18th April 1943 the Admiral, true to his reputation, arrived on time in a 'Betty' with his staff in another similar aircraft. They came in initially at about 5,000 feet with an escort of six 'Zeros'. The mission was successful with both the bombers being shot down. Captain Thomas G Lanphier Jr and his wing man Lieutenant Rex T Barber were credited with the joint kill of the aircraft in which the Admiral was flying; sadly this award satisfied nobody and has since been the subject of a lot of research.

George T Chandler also flew Lightnings in the Pacific and knew both men very well but became convinced that Barber should have been credited with the 'Betty' in which the Admiral was travelling and not share it with Lanphier, resulting in the forming of an association to have the record changed. Despite new evidence the Air Force and two different civil courts refused to alter the record and there the matter stands.

For a full detailed account, Carroll V Gline's book *Attack on Yamamoto* presents the whole fascinating story and includes a lot of evidence to support George Chandler's assumption.

The tale would not be complete without the final twist in which Admiral 'Bull' Halsey becomes exceedingly cross with Lanphier and Barber who had unwittingly confirmed some aspects of the operation during a game of golf with an AP war correspondent.

Together with their Squadron Commander, the man who planned and led the flight to down Admiral Yamamoto, Major John Mitchell, Lanphier and Barber received a very severe dressing down during which time the recommendation for the Medal of Honour was discarded by Admiral Halsey who informed them that he was 'Downgrading' the award to the Navy Cross although in his opinion they probably deserved a Court Martial.

AEFR

BOOK REVIEWS

The Valetta – Vickers' Last Piston Engined Transport by Bill Overton. Midland Counties Publications. Price £22.95.

A companion volume to the late Bill Overton's *Blackburn Beverley* and details the individual histories of all Valetta aircraft built. Beautifully illustrated with some previously unpublished photographs, and a must to grace the shelves of anyone with the slightest connection with this aircraft, the squadrons that flew it and real aeroplane buffs.

In the foreword Brian Trubshaw says '... it is a lot more than a story about the Valetta a fascinating history and reminder of how this country was involved in world events in the 1950s and early '60s'. One of those books that must come in the highly recommended group.

E O'M

Sun On My Wings by Dundas Bednall. Paterchurch Publications. Price £11.95.

It is probably a unique claim to fame in having served overseas for the entire length of service, 1937 to the end of the war except for initial 'Square Bashing' at Uxbridge. Wing Commander Bednall tells a fascinating tale from flying training at Abu Sueir on Harts and variants to wartime service on Blenheims and then, much to his surprise, in June 1940 to Sunderlands. Involvement in the Battle of Matapan is an interesting highlight but only one of a number. A thoroughly enjoyable book.

AEFR

In Peace & War. Tyneside, Naples and the Royal Flying Corps. Published by E R Rowell. Price £17.50.

Extraordinarily interesting memoirs of father and son, Sir Herbert Rowell 1860-1921 and Sir Robin Rowell 1894-1981, well produced with interesting illustrations. The second half was the most interesting to me being concerned with Robin and flying with the RFC, however, the first half still held my attention dealing with matters of which I had only a sprinkling of knowledge. All in all a book to be recommended and from which all proceeds go to King George's Fund for Sailors and the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund.

SWF

Battle-Axe Blenheims. 105 Squadron 1940-41. By Stuart R Scott. Published by Alan Sutton. Price £19.99.

Foreword by ex Sergeant Pilot Ivor Broom of 105 Squadron later to be rather better known as Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom KCB CBE DSO DFC and two bars AFC. A difficult book to read straight through but an even more difficult book to put down. Fascinating stuff this, so well researched and full of the ordinary day to

day matters as well as the more strange and exotic happenings. Probably in the top two books I have read this year and one for your shelves.

Tony Richardson

Royal Air Force Moreton in Marsh – A History. By John F Hamlin & Gerry V Tyack. Published in 1995 by Gerry V Tyack. Price £18.

169 pages with many photographs. Covers the history of this very well known RAF Station, probably better known as 21 OTU from early 1941 until the end of 1946 where and when the Wellington held sway and where a lot of young men learnt some of the finer points of survival at the sharp end, which was to be their next appointment. From 1946 until 1955 various units moved in and out fairly rapidly until finally in October 1951 No 1 FTS moved in from Oakington to be disbanded in 1955. The RAF gave up the station in 1959 ... *sic transit*... A fascinating book not to be missed.

AEFR

The Battle of Britain: new perspectives. By John Ray. (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1994; pp.222; £16.99).

The Battle of Britain continues to fascinate, and will probably go on doing so for centuries. It was decisive as few battles are: not since the Armada, perhaps not since Salamis, had issues of such moment hung on the outcome. Had Fighter Command been beaten, then, for all the skill and courage of the Navy, an invasion must have followed, with the ensuing defeat and occupation of this country; and then it is hard to see how Hitler's disgusting melange of green Socialism and pseudo-Racism could have been halted.

But Fighter Command was not beaten; and if historians have shown that the result may not have been quite as astonishing as at the time it seemed, it remains astonishing enough.

Scarcely was the battle over, and whilst the frustrated *Luftwaffe* was engaged in the nocturnal bombing of our cities, than the Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, ACM Hugh Dowding, was relieved of his post, and later retired. Was this a monstrous injustice – as Dowding himself came to believe? Was it the necessary supersession of a tired man who could no longer cope? Was it merely the functioning of a rule-bound bureaucracy? These are matters which have been fiercely disputed, and to which Dr Ray addresses himself in this book.

As befits a study originally undertaken for a Doctoral degree, we find here a mastery of sources and a clarity of presentation as admirable as rare. At least one issue he seems to have settled beyond reasonable doubt: Dowding was not brusquely sacked with an unheralded telephone call; and his later recollections to that effect were in error. Also the 'Big Wing' controversy is now seen more clearly: no one, least of all Bader, expected Park to assemble large formations whilst his airfields were being pounded; but it was claimed that he should have

called upon them from Leigh-Mallory sooner and more often. Also, we can now see the cross-currents at work within the Air Ministry during the weeks of battle, before Dowding's departure.

Ray shows that there were doubts about Dowding's handling of the battle at the time and, as Group Captain Haslam asserted, much stronger ones about his handling of the night blitz. Specifically, it was felt that he had failed to impose control upon the fractious – and desperately harassed – Group Commanders. He should, it was claimed, have settled the problems of co-operation between them, rather than leaving them to take what steps they themselves saw fit. More importantly, it was felt that night raiders were attacking almost with impunity, and that Dowding was failing to stop them. All these doubts were well stoked by Trenchard and Salmond, who had never admired Dowding, and by the able and ambitious Sholto Douglas, who wanted, and eventually got, his job.

How much justice was there in these criticisms? Ray seems to consider that there was a good deal; but it is still possible to differ. Certainly the night raiders were having things their own way; and Dowding did decline to try what the *Luftwaffe* later called 'Wild Boar' tactics, which gained some modest success. But he was doing all he could to bring in GCI and AI carried by Beaufighters, which he rightly saw as the only really viable means of defence. One may doubt whether his successor managed to have them in service any faster. Perhaps he should have intervened with the Group Commanders; but they were experienced men, in whom he had confidence.

Ray's book is a serious and valuable contribution to our understanding of these stupendous events. One does not have to agree entirely with the author, or to suppose that there is nothing to add to his account, to rate his book as one which should be read by anyone interested.

M Hammerton

The RAF in Camera 1939-1945. Roy Conyers Nesbit. Alan Sutton Publishing. Price £18.99.

As one has come to expect from Alan Sutton, a beautifully produced volume of 182 pages. The photographs assembled are all interesting and some of course may have a special significance to the viewer which excuses the inclusion of some obviously rather poor originals; however, there are a number which are quite astoundingly sharp given the equipment of the time and the hazardous circumstances in which they were taken.

Avro Manchester. The Legend behind the Lancaster. Robert Kirby BSc, PhD, CGeol FGS. Midland Publishing Ltd. Price £29.95.

An interesting aeroplane and an even more interesting engine both of which are researched in depth and the answer to the question, 'why such basically advanced equipment sorely needed was junked so quickly', is there. Talk of a four-engined

Manchester was mooted less than twelve months after the initial flight of the aircraft and it becomes clear, progressing through 208 fascinating and well illustrated pages, that the success of the Lancaster was firmly based on the failure of a very close relative.

Mandalay and Beyond. By Morton Charlton. Publisher: Merlin Books Ltd. Published 1996. Price: £6.95.

This is a unique book written by a former RAF Nursing Orderly. His war service encompassed India, Burma, China and Normandy to Germany. One of the unexpected pleasures of reviewing this book was to discover one on a completely unknown facet of the Far East War, certainly to the reviewer. This concerns medical facilities for the RAF in the 1942 retreat in Burma. His eye for detail provides a marvellous descriptive picture of conditions on the weary retreat via Lashio to China. One tends to forget, unless experienced, the range of tropical diseases in the Far East before the days of malarial suppressant drugs. As a Nursing Orderly, the author was exposed more than most to all the unpleasant surprises lurking in the Orient.

His good humour and steadfastness reflects great credit on the RAF medical branch and the nursing services in particular. This was a branch of the RAF that aircrew hoped not to have to call upon but were very thankful they existed; they were one of the unsung heroes of the Service.

This book should appeal to anyone who served in the RAF as they will readily recognise descriptions of life on troopships, in the Far East and the relative relief and comfort of a UK posting. For the author his UK posting was rudely interrupted after being medically repatriated from the Far East. His medical category was swiftly changed to enable him to be posted to a Mobile Field Hospital in Normandy shortly after D-Day. He served with his unit until VE Day in Germany.

We have, therefore, in a slim volume, descriptions of RAF medical units world wide by a very shrewd and gifted observer. He is to be congratulated upon a fine job and the RAF should be grateful for such an unbiased account.

B R Jutsum

Eyes of the RAF – A History of Photo-Reconnaissance. By Roy Conyers Nesbit. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. Price £25.

Eyes of the RAF is a good read, especially for someone who briefly was part of the post-war PR scene. The author has given an excellent account of the development of air photography in WW I and of the little-known inter-war period. The story of Sidney Cotton is the stuff of legend but it is re-told sympathetically and in context. The later development of photographic reconnaissance in WW II is covered theatre by theatre and in great detail. His treatment of fighter recce is very much as part of the overall PR story and may not be distinctive enough for those who operated in that very different operational milieu. The dismissal of German

PR capability might have something of a hollow ring to those who are aware of the daylight sorties as far West as Liverpool during the Battle of Britain. Equally, the use of the Arado 234 in the last days of the war to make high-level photographic runs over Scapa Flow suggests a much greater capability than is acknowledged in this book.

It must be said that Roy Conyers Nesbit paints on a much broader canvas than is suggested by the sub-title of this substantial and well-illustrated volume. Besides setting out the history of photo-reconnaissance from its earliest days, he also touches on other airborne reconnaissance methods, including the use of various airborne platforms for Elint-gathering purposes. Whereas that may be fair game, it does seem to be stretching a point to suggest that the RAF's SAR helicopters 'could be used for photo-reconnaissance'. That is especially so when, by contrast, the use of the Pembroke in the PR role merits only a single reference and, at that, not necessarily about its most interesting or sensitive employment. Even the part played by it in survey photography in the Far East is not given a mention.

Overall, this is a very comprehensive book with some odd quirks and the occasional lapse in accuracy, especially where the post-war period is concerned. For all that, it covers an amazing amount of ground – just as the aircraft and crews of its subject have done since the earliest days of military aviation.

Sandy Hunter

Sir James Martin. The Authorised Biography. By Sarah Sharman. Patrick Stephens Ltd. Price £19.99.

Authorised biographies, even in the late 20th Century, are not always the most gripping of reads but Sarah Sharman has produced a book which is not only highly readable but is at one and the same time affectionate and properly critical of her subject. Sir James Martin's reputation as a man to whom control of his affairs and of his product was of the utmost importance is widely known. His remorseless pursuit of excellence and his obsessive attention to all aspects of the design and production of Martin Baker ejection seats are clearly shown as one side of a coin, the reverse of which was his impatience with officialdom and his inability to suffer fools – at all!

Jimmy Martin's route to the days when the name of his company would be synonymous with survival in all manner of emergency situations, in the air, on the ground and even under the water, was one of humble beginnings. His achievement as a self-made engineer and designer are well described as are his endless difficulties with successive ministries. Great questions are raised about what might have been, had his MB series of fighters been better resourced – or had some way been found of applying a brake from time to time to Martin's own restless modification of designs. But it is, perhaps, these same qualities (or defects) which resulted in the ultimate triumph of this amazing Ulsterman and of his life-saving products. The depth of his religious conviction and of his personal integrity are also well illustrated.

It is entirely appropriate and in character with the subject of this excellent book that all royalties from it have been made over to the RAF Benevolent Fund, a fact of which one feels that Sir James Martin himself would have been warmly approving. I even bought my own copy!

Sandy Hunter

Roundels for Breakfast. RAF Tales in Verse by S F Paul. Publisher: Merlin Books Ltd. Published 1996. Price £5.50.

This book is not intended for a lover of esoteric poetry but is a jolly book of verse. It is an ideal bedside book if you crave a laugh before slumber. For those familiar with the Wellington bomber it contains a gem 'The Wandering Wimpy' which left the reviewer quite helpless. There are other nuggets of information, such as the origin of the word 'GEN' which according to the author is derived from the initial letters of 'General Engineering Notes' handed to trainee groundcrew of the RAF.

On a serious note this book would appeal to those who endured the retreats in Greece and Crete. It also contains helpful explanatory notes of expressions familiar to those 'who were there' but a mystery to others.

The author served in a Repair and Salvage Unit in the Desert Air Force and reminds us of their motto 'Ubendum - We Mendum'. He is to be congratulated on this book of verse which encapsulates the innate cheerfulness of all RAF groundcrew which was such a tonic to the aircrew.

B R Jutsum

The Bamboo Workshop. The History of the RAF Repair and Salvage Units, India/Burma 1941-1946 by R. S. Sansome. Foreword by ACM Sir Michael Armitage. Publisher: Merlin Books Ltd. Published 1995. Price £6.95.

On seeing the title of this book in the Public Library one would not realise the fascinating tales contained therein of the RSUs as we called them in the Far East. This book is, of course, of prime interest to anyone who served in the Far East. It is a sorry tale also of the administrative muddles that beset us in that sector. In spite of this, the RSUs acquitted themselves magnificently. This is a classic instance for learning from history and this book should be compulsory reading at the Staff College, in the hope that the students will avoid such pitfalls in future.

It is a credit to the family of the author who went ahead with the publication despite the prior death of Reg Sansorne.

It is rare that a reviewer spots an incident in which he was involved – on page 65: – 'On 3 March 1944 eleven Hurricanes of 60 Squadron returned to Agartala after sorties of Ramu, only to find that the runway had been blocked by a USAAF Mustang which had crashed, so they were diverted to Singabil to land in the dark at 1900 hours on a very muddy strip lit only by a single line of goose-neck paraffin flares, with everyone standing by, keeping their fingers crossed. Although log book comments suggest it was a very dicey situation, no mishaps occurred' Little did

they know on the ground that one of the pilots had night vision that was ‘below average’ – just as well!

The final chapter of the book has more RAF verses, one of which is a most descriptive picture of the kite-hawk. This bird, which had a recognisable nickname, was greatly respected for its acrobatic skill in removing meat from one’s plate, whilst leaving the tasteless marrow.

This book is highly recommended: it represents tremendous dedication and is a worthy memorial to the stalwarts of RSUs and in particular the author.

B R Jutsum

Beyond the Front Line by Tony Geraghty. Foreword by Major General The Duke of Norfolk KG GCVO CB CBE MC. Harper Collins 1996. £20.00.

An inter-allied agreement on ‘The Control Machinery in Germany’, signed in wartime London in November 1944, provided for each of the projected Western forces of occupation to exchange military liaison missions with those of the Soviets in East Germany. Thus came into being, in July 1946, BRIXMIS – the British Exchange Mission, or formally, the ‘Commander-in-Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany’: it continued uninterrupted, despite crises such as the Berlin airlift and the erection and dismantling of the Wall, until its disbandment in December 1990. The terms of the Soviet-British agreement provided for eleven officers and 20 other ranks to be accommodated in East Germany; from the outset RAF officers and airmen formed part of the Mission, albeit in its early days in a role considerably junior to that of the army.

If its original function was liaison, further tasks were soon added: showing the flag and exercising the Mission’s right of passage throughout the Soviet Zone; and – most importantly – gathering intelligence. Not surprisingly, these activities, in varying degrees inimical to Soviet interests, brought restrictions on movement, in the form of prohibited areas, hostile KGB/Stasi surveillance teams (‘narks’, in BRIXMIS parlance), and temporary detentions, as well as more overtly hostile acts such as roughing up these ‘licensed spies’, forcing their vehicles off the road, and shooting at them. As these functions and activities intermingled in the daily life of the Mission, it was not unusual for BRIXMIS officers to spend their days touring in East Germany, being hustled by narks, shot at by Soviet guards or detained in a Soviet *kommandatura*; and their evenings ‘entertaining’ Soviet officers in West Berlin or in the Mission compound in Potsdam. Although an RAF driver, Cpl Douglas Day, was seriously injured in a shooting incident in 1962, it owed much to luck as well as to the skill and discretion of British personnel that, throughout its 44 years’ existence, BRIXMIS, unlike the other allied missions, suffered no fatalities.

By the mid-1950s the assessment of the capabilities of the Soviet Air Force had assumed increasing importance in the Ministry of Defence, which from then on took a special interest in the Mission’s RAF element. Significantly, the Mission

name was changed to 'British Commanders'-in-Chief Mission' (the plural connoting an air force as well as an army C-in-C in Germany), and the senior RAF post in the Mission was upgraded to that of Deputy Chief, in the rank of group captain. The officer tasked with improving the output of air intelligence was a Canadian, F G Foot, who had developed his successful touring and photographic techniques while British Air Attaché in Budapest. From then on the air element went from strength to strength, obtaining detailed photography of the technical features of all military aircraft and ground radars in East Germany, as well as, from the Gatow Chipmunks – the only PR versions of this type – such scoops as the first complete coverage of SA-2 *Guideline*, troop movements covering the building of the Berlin Wall, and numerous changes in the Soviet army's order of battle and equipment.

The events following the crash of a Yak-25 *Firebar*, then the Soviets' latest interceptor, into Lake Havel in the British sector of Berlin provided Cold War theatre at its most fraught and farcical. The aircraft's salvage, under the noses of the Soviets, involved not only the whole of BRIXMIS and other military and civilian authorities in Berlin but also intelligence agencies as far afield as the United States. The bodies of the dead Soviet aircrew were examined, parts of the airframe salvaged and analysed, the engines raised from the lake, flown to England for examination and returned, within 48 hours, to the bed of the lake, before all finally being handed over to the Soviets.

All this and much more Tony Geraghty retails in detail. His account is at its most fascinating when it relates to conflict and discord, be it at the highest diplomatic level between East and West, between the Mission and Soviet or East German authorities or, as sometimes happened, disagreement between the Mission and intelligence branches in London or West Germany – or even within the Mission, when officers disagreed on touring tactics. Much of Geraghty's account is based on official sources but there are also invaluable personal recollections: some, after the passage of so many years, perhaps not wholly reliable. Thus, there are minor chronological as well as geographic infelicities: the Elbe is nowhere 'near Potsdam' (being some 45 miles distant at its nearest point), and the two, very different, accounts of the same Chipmunk flight cannot both be accurate. But even if *Beyond the Front Line* falls short of its publisher's colourful blurb as 'the untold exploits of Britain's most daring cold war spy mission', Geraghty has succeeded not merely in bringing to life a complex historical record but also in evoking the ethos of what the Duke of Norfolk, President of the BRIXMIS Association, calls 'a unique military formation, working in isolation over an unfriendly horizon'. One, moreover, whose achievements earned recognition in a great many honours and awards shared, not least, by some highly proficient RAF drivers and photographic technicians.

Hans Neubroch

Whensoever. 50 Years of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service 1943-1993. By

Frank Card. The Ernest Press. Price £17.95.

The RAF Mountain Rescue Service came into being in response to a wartime need, in much the same way as did the Air Sea Rescue Service; although unlike the latter, it has survived through to the present day with a continuing peacetime role to fulfil.

Its origins were in the Border country and Cumbria when *ad hoc* teams of volunteers, not all of whom were experienced climbers, were called out to locate and rescue survivors of flying accidents which had become frequent occurrences often involving trainee aircrews from the flying training stations in the North West.

When the work of these scratch rescue teams finally came to the notice of the Air Ministry, a modest allocation of funding became available to meet the cost of essential climbing and survival equipment and the service achieved formal recognition in January 1944.

The author joined the service while doing his National Service and in this book he provides a comprehensive and absorbing account of most of the rescue operations in which it has been involved since the early days. His account covers the background of logistical and administrative problems that had to be overcome and he concludes with chapters dealing with the subsequent extension of its activities into Cyprus, East Africa and Asia.

DG

Top Secret Exchange – The Tizard Mission and the Scientific War by David Zimmerman. Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. £18.99.

‘The most valuable cargo ever brought to our shores,’ so one American scientist has said; crew as well as cargo, the crew being Sir Henry Tizard and his scientists and service colleagues and their cargo the latest developments in British technology, especially in radar. David Zimmerman sets himself the task of explaining and justifying this judgement, all the more breath-taking since the mission as such lasted for a mere four-month period, Sept-Dec 1940. He succeeds, both as a military historian and as a skilful narrator of an exciting story of numerous daunting obstacles which had to be surmounted before wholehearted Anglo-American scientific and technical co-operation was assured. In the desperate summer of 1940 one of the British government’s highest priorities was to enlist US support, in materials as well as politically. To the British, and especially to its Anglo-American Prime Minister, the case was overwhelming: not quite so obvious in Washington. Would Britain survive; could the US President outmanoeuvre the isolationists in Congress and the American electorate; what quid pro quo would the British offer? These were some of the basic difficulties.

British efforts to get alongside US technology had begun before September 1939. The prize was the Norden bombsight; the bait was the Royal Navy’s latest mark of ASDIC. There were ingrained suspicions on both sides, the Americans doubting whether there was anything to be learned from the British, the British

worried that their secrets might reach Berlin via Washington. Opposition in London to the despatch of Tizard's mission was mirrored in Washington by opposition to receiving the mission. Patient advocacy by Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador, and Professor A V Hill, one of the founding fathers of radar, in the spring of 1940 did much to convince key figures in the two establishments that a frank and open exchange, rather than the quid pro quo approach, was the way ahead. Yet it was only the destroyers-for-bases deal that dispelled Mr Churchill's doubts about the usefulness of the Mission. Key members arrived by sea in Halifax, Nova Scotia (Tizard had gone ahead by air) as the first of the American destroyers was being handed over to the Royal Navy. They had with them a black box containing one of the first production cavity magnetrons – the breakthrough that made centimetric radar practicable.

The Mission and their American colleagues tackled a wide-ranging agenda. The Norden sight was still off-limits and there were awkward legalistic difficulties such as the US Neutrality Act and patent rights to be surmounted. Money was another problem. The British were running out of hard currency and it was not until the Lease-Lend Act came into effect in the spring of 1941 that finance was no longer important. Yet from September 1940 progress, if not without some hiccups, was both rapid and far-reaching, and Zimmerman describes in detail both the short-term and later dividends for both sides, with Canadian resources also identified and developed. Effective long-wave and microwave radars, an Allied IFF system, proximity fuses are just a few of the benefits which came directly from the mission and to which much-needed US and Canadian development and production resources were applied.

Mutual respect and co-operation, replacing doubts and misgivings, were indirect benefits of incalculable value. Zimmerman claims that the mission changed the climate of opinion in the US on the practicability of an atomic bomb – as important as Einstein's letter of September 1939 to FDR. The best way to use science and technology in the interest of defence was exemplified by the mission. Tizard, to Zimmerman, is an heroic figure. He sees him as a new breed of scientist: not necessarily brilliant but perceptive of the need for teamwork between academic and government scientists and users; and with the strength of purpose and character to be undaunted by the political and bureaucratic labyrinth. The seminal experience for Tizard (a RFC pilot as a young man) had been as chairman from 1933 of the Aeronautical Research Committee and its sub-committee on Air Defence. From their activities, within a few years, radar for home defence and the first ASV and AI radars were researched, developed and produced – with the full co-operation of the Royal Air Force. Zimmerman's book is thus of special interest to members of the RAF Historical Society.

Cecil James

Spy Flights of the Cold War. Paul Lashmar. Sutton Publishing Limited. £18.99.

Paul Lashmar has made a brave effort to tell the Cold War spy flights story. It is interesting, well written and illustrated, and very readable. The lion's share of the story belongs to the Americans who are determined never again to suffer a 'Pearl Harbor' attack. When General LeMay was given command of Strategic Air Command after World War 2 he set about ensuring that his aircrews had the best possible Russian target information so that no time nor effort would be lost in silencing establishments that could launch nuclear weapons. Further, that America would always know if the Russians were assembling bomber fleets anywhere especially to the West of the Bering Strait and, on the far side of the North Pole, 3,500 miles to the Kola Peninsula. And furthermore that America was well supplied with 'elint' intelligence (electronic information, radio frequencies and radar characteristics). All this called for high risk flights over Russia, sometimes in daylight for visual photography when the weather permitted, and again at night to photograph ground mapping airborne radar displays.

The spy flights and everything to do with them were classified Top Secret. Absolute secrecy was essential. Paul Lashmar has teased out a number of stories from the tangled history of the Cold War. He has spoken to USAF and RAF aircrew, he has even been to Russia and spoken to anti-aircraft gunners and fighter pilots who tried to destroy allied aircraft. And now he claims to tell for the first time the full history of the Cold War spy flights.

And yet, and yet, I fear that Lashmar has jumped the starting gun. Our MoD have still said nothing about the flights. Facts still lie in the vaults beneath Whitehall. The people he has spoken to are relying mainly on their memories, and memories are fickle. Some facts from an earlier life over forty years ago are forgotten and, worse, some are misleading, wrong. One day we will be told that the MoD has released the facts and that they are at the Public Record Office. We can all then scamper down to Kew with our copies of Lashmar's book and start marking them. I wonder how many marks he will get for accuracy? I have given him a generous six out of ten for his account of the RAF RB-45Cs at Sculthorpe. For the rest of his book, I have no way of telling.

Spyflights Of The Cold War will look well on your bookshelves and it will certainly remind your children that men did go out in the desperate days of the Cold War to keep an eye on Russia and ensure that there would never be another Pearl Harbor. Outside the Headquarters of Strategic Air Command at Omaha, Nebraska, there is a large notice which reads 'PEACE IS OUR PROFESSION'. Quite so. Thank you, Uncle Sam. Proud to have flown with you. Thank you for the loan of the beautiful big airplanes.

John Crampton

Royal Flying Corps in France. By Ralph Barker. Volume 1. Mons to the Somme. Volume 2. From Bloody April 1917 to Final Victory. Published by Constable. Price per volume £18.95.

These companion volumes by this well known author make for easy but fascinating reading. Even if you know the story by heart, such is the style that absorption in the narrative takes over and then you find that you didn't know the story quite as well as you thought. Definitely one for your shelves, preferably two because it would be too difficult to pick the one with the most, if you know what I mean.

Names With Wings. By Gordon Wansborough-White. Published by Airlife. Price £29.95.

This is a truly unbelievable *tour de force*. An encyclopaedic volume on the history of aircraft and engines flown by British Armed Forces since the inception of military flying in 1878 when the military balloon 'Pioneer' started the whole thing.

Research for this book started in 1941 we are told and has culminated in a superb book with a more than useful index. As Air Marshal Sir Ivor Broom writes in his foreword 'This is several books in one, historical, factual and technical'. It is one of those fascinating books for the real aviation enthusiast which will sit by the bed for many a long year to be dipped in for information that will surprise and delight. Not the usual somewhat dusty technical tome but a book full of interest.

CORRESPONDENCE

Argentinierstraße 22/18
A 1040 Wien

Reunion of former 'Palestinian' Volunteers in the RAF

Fifty years after the end of WW II and 55 years after the first 'Palestinian' (that is what we were called at the time) could join the RAF, a reunion was held in the military area of Tel-Aviv Airport. Guest of honour was President Ezer Weizman, himself a former RAF sergeant pilot and later Commander of the Israel Air Force (IAF), Minister of Transport and Defence Minister. Also present was Major-General Herzl Bodinger, Commander of the IAF and the British Ambassador to Israel. Some 300 former RAF and WAAF members (plus wives, widows and husbands of former WAAFs) attended what turned out to be a most successful event.

Soon after the beginning of the war, recruitment on a voluntary basis started in Palestine but was restricted to the Pioneer Corps. It took lengthy efforts by Chaim Weizman in London and Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) in Jerusalem, to persuade the British authorities to accept recruits for – almost all – other services. Altogether some 30,000 volunteers, joined.

On June 1, 1940, the first enlistment to the RAF took place, as from the end of 1942, recruitment for the WAAFs followed. The final count was some 2,000 RAF and some 500 WAAFs.

In the early 1950s, an Israel Branch of the RAF Association was formed, regular monthly meetings were held, contact was kept up and those 'who had made it' were able to help less fortunate members in many ways.

Speeches at the reunion were, thankfully, short and President Weizman delivered one of his incomparable fireworks. It is planned to hold similar meetings once a year.

Possibly the most remarkable feature was the Message of Greetings from the present RAF Chief of Air Staff* which was delivered by the British Ambassador. It is a most fitting tribute.

Yours sincerely
Albert Sternfeld

Note: Ch. Weizman was then President of the World Zionist Organisation, became first President of Israel, he was the uncle of Ezer Weizman. Sharett was Head of the Political Dept of the Jewish Agency, later Foreign Minister and Prime Minister of Israel. Attended reunions 1954 and 1955 as Chairman of RAFA Branch Israel.

The political situation in Palestine at the time WW II broke out and the position of RAF Middle East Command in spring 1940 was as follows:

Relations between Britain as the Mandate Power, ie the Colonial Office and the British Mandate Administration, and the Jewish population were strained, particularly in view of the White Paper on Palestine of 1939 which was seen by many as part of the Appeasement Policy. When war broke out, it was natural that the Jews of Palestine wished to play their part against the Third Reich. The Mandate Administration sought to keep a political balance between Jews and Arabs. However, some Arabs in Palestine and elsewhere actually sided with the Axis Powers, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. As examples – the Iraqi Revolt in 1941 (Rashid Ali), the attempted coup by the ‘Young Revolutionary’ Egyptian Officers (Nasser and Sadat included) and the Syrians co-operating with Vichy.

What Churchill, after his term as Colonial Secretary, found as early as 1923 now became clear. The Arabs could not be relied on. The Jews had their squabbles with the British but, foremost, wanted to fight the Germans. Add to this, from the RAF point of view in 1940, the lack of trained personnel and the scarcity of shipping space. The standard of education and the availability of good tradesmen (fitters, mechanics, electricians, radio technicians but also clerks who knew English, equipment assistants etc.) in Palestine eventually turned the tide and volunteers were accepted. When, at a later stage, there were shortages of, say meteorologists, some were recruited, others trained. Quite a few were used in the Y Service, mentioned by Prof Jones in his inaugural speech of our Society. There is also some literature on the Palestinians in that Service.

*From Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon GCB CBE ADC FRAeS RAF

Ministry of Defence
Main Building,
Whitehall, London, SW1A 2HB

Dear Mr Holbitz

On the occasion of your Reunion to mark the Anniversary of VE Day I send my warm greetings to you, and all members of the Royal Air Force Section of The Israel War Veterans League. During World War II many Jews served with great distinction in the Royal Air Force and Women’s Auxiliary Air Force. They made an outstanding contribution to the successful outcome of that war and can be justifiably proud of their achievements. I salute you all, those who have since enjoyed ALYIA and those who have never lived in Israel.

We, in today’s Royal Air Force, take great pride that a large number of ex-RAF personnel helped found the Israeli Air Force. It is no surprise to us that the IAF has become one of the world’s foremost and most respected Air Forces, and I look forward to visiting my counter part in July to build on the good relations that already exist.

I was particularly honoured to host President Weizman last month during his visit to the VE Day celebrations in London. We travelled together to see our Battle of Britain Memorial Flight where he and I flew in a Lancaster. His warm memories of his time in the Royal Air Force made this visit a very special one for all of us.

I send my deepest appreciation to you and all those in the RAF Section of the Veterans League, to those present and those who cannot be at your reunion for their contribution to the great victory over tyranny which you now celebrate. The Royal Air Force salutes you today and sends its best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely
Michael Graydon

TOM WARNER Chaplain and WOP/AG

Tom Warner was one of the five Ordained men in my survey who volunteered and were trained as aircrew and flew on operations.

He was born on 20th December 1906 and was made deacon in the Church of Ireland on 25th January 1930, and priest on 21st December the same year, both in Limerick Cathedral. He subsequently became MA, MLitt, BD (Dublin), PhD (London). He was senior curate at Drifffield, aged 33, when he joined the Royal Air Force in July 1940 and became a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner as he was too old to be a pilot or a navigator. He said that he had no desire to be 'fooling about on the ground when there is work in the air for able-bodied men'. After completing his training he was 'slung out' as, by then, he was too old as aircrew so he transferred to the Chaplain's Branch. The Station Commander asked him to fly operationally, which he did with 404 RCAF Squadron, Coastal Command on Blenheims.

In 1943 he was encouraged to fly in No 2 Tactical Air Force, with both 98 and 180 Squadrons on Mitchells and completed an operational tour in Germany in 1945. He flew two or three operations a month as an air gunner. He believed that he was the only wartime Chaplain to have been awarded the Air Crew Europe Star. Later he flew Supply Dropping in Malaya 1950-52 with 110, 48 and 52 Squadrons.

He ended a letter to me dated Ash Wednesday 1991, 'I am now 84 with one foot in the grave and the other on a banana skin and I have no doubt that one of these days all the trumpets will sound a raspberry for me on the other side'.

The Chaplain-in-Chief once went to Air Vice-Marshal Sir Basil Embry, Commander No 2 TAF, that he was worried about Warner flying on operations as regulations did not make allowance for the widow of a chaplain being paid the aircrew rate of pensions. Embry replied 'Padre, don't worry about Warner or any other chaplain being killed – just trust in God'.

He was very popular and was known as 'The Bishop', being addressed simply as 'Bish'. Tom said that his obituary notice appeared in the *Hull Daily Mail* and that stories that he conducted services before take-off at dispersal in a semi-circle of bomb trolleys was 'bullshit'. He wrote 'I never believed in bothering God before we take-off except that I always said (in Latin in case I forgot to switch off) 'Into thy hands I commend my spirit'. I knew that God would do sweet Fanny Adams about my safety; If He pulled off the impossible and out of the dust of the earth

brought forth free creatures, we had to be left to our own resources. I certainly used to take 'services' on the dispersal sites with the boys sitting on the bombs but not before take-off.

'I regret not a moment of my Service in the RAF except that I consider the Chaplain's Branch was entirely unworthy of it. Little men like (.....) for instance were an insult to the Service'.

He once wrote down the wrong lesson, most inappropriate, for the Commandant to read, at a Battle of Britain Service, which Tom described as 'bloody nonsense'. When he remonstrated with him afterwards he was made to realise that it was his mistake – their friendship started from that moment.

Once he was asked by a high ranking officer, 'What's the minimum a man ought to believe?' He replied 'The twenty-third Psalm, Sir'. On another occasion in answer to the question, 'Do you know the Lord Jesus?', he replied 'I think I do. I believe in the man who told the story of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan'.

In my survey in answer to the question 'Why did you volunteer for Aircrew?' he put 'Ask God' and 'When and how did you receive your Vocation?' 'Ditto'. He expanded the latter in a comment that he was suspicious, as a student of psychology, of all answers to it. 'As a boy I was brought up in a family whose Theology was conditioned by Calvinistic Anglicanism and Methodism. My elder brother, later Archdeacon of Cork, having been ordained, it was almost inevitable that I should want to be. Most sincerely I may say, I believe all the silly bloody rubbish that the Divinity School in Trinity dished up'.

Tom did not like publicity and asked me to give as little notice as possible about him. Now that trumpets have sounded for him on the other side I feel that he would not mind me telling people about him. He was a true servant of God with his down to earth religion, courage and friendliness.

Revd L S Rivett



ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Registered Charity Number 299029

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) of Members will be held in the Ballroom of the ROYAL AIR FORCE CLUB 128 Piccadilly London W1V OPY on Tuesday 10th June 1997 at 1800 hours for the following purposes:

1. TO RECEIVE THE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
2. TO RECEIVE THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT
3. TO RECEIVE THE TREASURER'S REPORT
4. TO APPROVE THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1996
5. TO APPOINT MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TO HOLD OFFICE AS FROM THE END OF THIS AGM TO THE END OF THE 1998 AGM
6. TO RE-APPOINT MESSRS PRIDIE BREWSTER, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS, OF 29/39 LONDON ROAD, TWICKENHAM, TWI 3SZ AS AUDITORS TO THE SOCIETY AND TO AUTHORISE THE COMMITTEE TO FIX THEIR REMUNERATION.

2nd February 1997

By Order of the Committee
J C Ainsworth
General Secretary

Century Cottage
10 Ellesborough Road
Wendover
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire HP22 6EL

The Lecture after the Meeting will be given by Lord Merlyn-Rees.

ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1996

	Notes	1996	1995
INCOME			
Subscriptions	(1)	9,754	9,335
Income Tax refunds	(2)	1,510	1,335
Seminar fees		4,451	4,151
Sales of publications		790	741
Bank interest earned		1,160	1,380
Donation - RAF Central Fund		-	-
		17,665	16,942
EXPENDITURE			
Printing and distribution		12,253	9,316
Seminar catering, etc.		3,852	4,916
Postages : Stationery :			
Photocopying		1,193	1,518
Computer expenses		175	461
Data Protection Act Registration		75	-
Annual General Meeting		522	365
Two Air Forces Award	(3)	674	-
Brochure: Design & Printing		-	2,813
Accountancy		141	141
Bank Charges		4	372
Sundry Expenses		28	208
		18,917	20,110
(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR			
TRANSFERRED TO ACCUMULATED FUND		£(1,252)	£(3,168)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

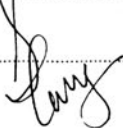
- 1.. Subscriptions are due and payable on 1 January and are credited in the year to which they relate. No account is taken of subscriptions unpaid at 31 December and subscriptions paid in advance for the following year are carried forward.
2. Income tax refunds have been received in respect of members' covenanted subscriptions.
3. The Society's contribution of \$1,000 as its half-share of the cost of establishing jointly with the Air Force Historical Foundation (USA) the prize fund for the Two Air Forces Award.
4. Interest-free loan made to Air Commodore H A Probert to assist in funding research for his planned biography of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris. The loan is repayable by November 2001.

ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AT 31ST DECEMBER 1996

	Notes	1996	1995
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors		229	279
Loan	(4)	500	-
Barclays Bank - Current Account		460	610
Barclays Bank - Business Premium Account		1,481	3,911
Barclays - High Interest Business Account		2,135	2,023
Charities Official Investment Fund Account		16,000	17,000
Cash in hand		<u>81</u>	<u>15</u>
		<u><u>£20,886</u></u>	<u><u>£23,838</u></u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Creditor		141	141
Seminar Fees paid in advance		-	1,860
Prepaid subscriptions	(1)	<u>430</u>	<u>270</u>
		<u><u>£571</u></u>	<u><u>£2,271</u></u>
NET ASSETS		<u><u>£20,315</u></u>	<u><u>£21,567</u></u>
ACCUMULATED FUND			
Brought forward		21,567	24,735
(Deficit) of income over expenditure for year		<u>(1,252)</u>	<u>(3,168)</u>
		<u><u>£20,315</u></u>	<u><u>£21,567</u></u>


.....CHAIRMAN


.....TREASURER

ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT

We have examined the Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet of the Royal Air Force Historical Society for the period ended 31st December 1996 and we certify that they are in accordance with the books, bank statements and vouchers produced to us.



29/39 London Road,
TWICKENHAM,
Middlesex TW1 3SZ.

PRIDIE BREWSTER
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

19th Feb 1997

NOTICES

BIOGRAPHY OF MRAF SIR ARTHUR HARRIS

It was announced at last year's Annual General Meeting that Air Commodore Henry Probert has decided to write a new biography of Sir Arthur Harris. While one biography already exists, namely that written by Group Captain Dudley Saward, this is incomplete in many respects and Henry is being widely encouraged – not least by Sir Arthur's family, our own Society, the Air Historical Branch, the RAF Museum and the Bomber Command and Aircrew Associations – to try to provide a full picture of the man whom many consider to have been the RAF's greatest operational commander of the Second World War. It will be a major task which he estimates will take anything up to five years, and his intention is to time publication to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Harris's appointment as C-in-C Bomber Command, ie 2002.

There is, of course, an enormous amount of source material to draw on and he will have to be highly selective. Nevertheless he is keen to include at least some recollections from those who knew Harris (or of him) both during the war and subsequently and he would like to hear from anyone who wishes to offer material, or perhaps suggest sources of which he may be unaware. Members who can assist or who know of others who may be able to do so are asked to write to him at 88 Kings Road, Henley-on-Thames, Oxon RG9 2DQ – but briefly, at least in the first instance.

CAN YOU SPARE AN HOUR OR TWO TO HELP COMPLETE OUR INDEX?

The Bracknell Seminars form a vital part, of the Society's Work. If you could possibly spare a couple of hours to record names, places and titles of topics for PART of one of these volumes it would be extremely helpful, eg one Lecture, or Discussion Group only.

This would take about two hours (best done in 20 minute/half-hour spells). Each section will need to be checked or done TWICE, but we need to avoid triplication of the work! It really is not too difficult. Simplified notes will be sent, with cards from which your work can be typed out.

If you are able to help, please contact: Peter Mason, 1 Denbigh Close, Helsby, Cheshire WA6 OED. (Tel: 01928 724710).

PUBLISHING AND INDEX

The cost of printing the index to date. some £2,353. is felt in some quarters to be rather expensive for a free issue to members, many of whom would probably have little use for it. There is another view that. as a learned society we have a duty to future researchers to provide an index.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Ladies and Gentlemen

Many members will be aware of the linkage with our sister organisation, the USAF's 'Air Force Historical Foundation'. The return joint symposium, held in Washington DC in 1993, to discuss Anglo-American air power co-operation during the Cold War, is probably the most recent tangible expression so far of our friendship and mutual interests, but I am now pleased to tell you of two other developments.

Your Committee has agreed to accept our American colleagues' suggestion that we combine to fund an annual award, to be known as 'The Two Air Forces Award', to be given to the serving officer or airman, one on each side of the Atlantic, writing the most pertinent article of the year. We have lodged \$1000 with the Air Force Historical Foundation which will produce enough annually to fund a suitable plaque. We also expect to give the recipient a relevant book and ask for his name to be noted in the Air Force List.

We have asked the Director of Defence Studies (RAF), at present Group Captain Andy Lambert, to recommend a suitable candidate. As a result, we have selected this year, Squadron Leader Peter Emmett (whom, I am delighted to say, is a member of the Society). He is an engineer who has published excellent work analysing and explaining evolving Information Warfare theory. We hope to give him his award when we meet at the TSR2 seminar at Bristol on 24 April.

Secondly, the trustees of the US Air Force Historical Foundation have asked us if we would be prepared to participate, and sometimes represent their interests, at the annual (US) Memorial Day Remembrance Service at the American Cemetery at Madingley, Cambridge. I have agreed, of course. For those members living locally who may wish to attend, this year's service will be at 1100 on Monday 26 May.



ADVANCE PROGRAMME INFORMATION

There is to be a joint seminar with the Royal Air Force Logistic Command HQ at RAF Station Brampton by kind permission of the Air Officer Commanding and the subject will be 'Logistics in Support of Deployed Operations'. The programme and date have yet to be finalised but are likely to be the end of October.

ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Royal Air Force has been in existence for over 75 years; the study of its history is deepening, and continues to be the subject of published works of consequence. Fresh attention is being given to the strategic assumptions under which military air power was first created and which largely determined policy and operations in both World Wars, the inter-war period, and in the era of Cold War tension. Material dealing with post-war history is now becoming available for study under the 30-year rule. These studies are important to academic historians and to present and future members of the RAF.

The RAF Historical Society was formed in 1986 to provide a focus for interest in the history of the RAF. It does so by providing a setting for lectures and seminars in which those interested in the history of the RAF have the opportunity to meet those who participated in the evolution and implementation of policy. The Society believes that these events make an important contribution to the permanent record. The Society normally holds three lectures or seminars a year in London, with occasional events in other parts of the country. Transcripts of lectures and seminars are published in the Journal of the RAF Historical Society, which is a publication free of charge to members. Individual membership is open to all with an interest in RAF history, whether or not they were in the Service. Although the Society has the approval of the Air Force Board, it is entirely self-financing. Membership of the Society costs £15 per annum and further details may be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Dr Jack Dunham, Silverhill House, Coombe, Wootton-under-Edge, Gloucester GL12 7ND (Tel: 01453 843362).