



MINUTES OF THE 32ND MEETING OF THE
FLY NAVY FEDERATION
Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton, 25th October 2019
www.flynavyfederation.org.uk



Present:

Jock Alexander	Chairman/Navy Wings
Cdr Matt Boulind	Wildcat Maritime Force Cdr
Vic Murphy	Aircraft Handlers Association
Harry Worth	Aircrewmans Association
John Hallam	Armourers Association
Arthur Charles, Gill Charles,	Cloud Observers Association
Arnold Thompson, Mick Worship, Jeff Cook	Fleet Air Arm Association
Brian Stanley, Robin Harper	FAA Buccaneer Association
Cdre Simon Thornewill, Steve George	FAA Memorial Church
Tina Cullen	FAAMC / Junglie Association
Andy Harris, Gill Kerslake	FAA Officers Association
Danny du Feu	RN Photographers Association
Dave Philpot, John Sciver	RN Safety Equip & Survival Assn
Bob Gullett, Gary Niel	Sea Harrier Association
Phil Carpenter	Secretary

INTRODUCTION

1. Jock Alexander opened the meeting and thanked all for coming. Apologies noted.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

2. No immediate points were raised. On-going items were carried forward to the agenda.

COMMAND BRIEF

3. Wildcat Maritime Force Commander, Cdr Matt Boulind, was thanked for taking time out of a busy day to brief the meeting (with 3 family members - all budding FAA enthusiasts!). His update showed how busy and forward-looking the current FAA is, with many brand new aircraft types (F35, Merlin Mk

∨2 & Mk4, and Wildcat) currently deployed on Westlant 19 in support of the on-going trials of HMS Queen Elizabeth (<https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/westlant>). HMS Prince of Wales is now on sea trials, and will be commissioned in Portsmouth on the 10th of December.

The RN And FAA is once again being recognised globally for its equipment, expertise and can-do attitude. This recently including an RNAS Yeovilton Wildcat being first on scene to offer assistance in the Bahamas, after the devastating hurricane Dorian hit in September – a Somerset-built aircraft from a Somerset Naval Air Station delivering much needed assistance thousands of miles from home.

NAVY WINGS (navywings.org.uk, office@navywings.org.uk, 01935 842005)

4. Jock Alexander stated that although the ex RNHF aircraft have yet to be transferred to Navy Wings, and currently remain 'in limbo', there is light at the end of the tunnel. The team have overcome many of the significant hurdles placed in the way of getting the aircraft back in the sky, but the decision has to be ratified at a political level. The RN have informed Navy Wings that they expect the ex RNHF aircraft to be transferred to their ownership before the end of November, at which time they will be placed on the Civil Register (having been removed from the Military Register on 31 March 2019).

In the meantime the existing Navy Wings and associate aircraft continue to fly the flag. Yeovilton Air Day was opened in great rotary-wing style, with a formation flypast by the superb 'new' Wessex 5 and two Wasps, and later on the Sea Fury gave another outstanding display – a very successful day. The Associate Collection continues to grow, with 20 aircraft in the fold, and more to follow, potentially including another Swordfish, which is undergoing restoration at White Waltham. Returning the Sea Vixen and Seahawk to the sky are still long-term projects, whilst for rotary enthusiasts a Sea King Mk 4 and Lynx Mk 8 are potential future additions to the collection.

The Navy Wings Store www.navywingsflightstore.org continues to offer a discount to members of all Associations of the Federation – **including special offers for Taranto Night.**

FLEET AIR ARM MEMORIAL CHURCH (navyyeo-chaplaincys@mod.gov.uk, 01935 455257)

5. i. Tina Cullen gave an update on church activities, which include a **Remembrance Sunday (10th Nov) Service at 1030**, as well as weddings and baptisms. A recent special event was the full military honours funeral of Sir Donald Gosling, who is now buried in the cemetery at the church (see a video tribute at: <https://www.facebook.com/rnasyeovilton/videos/778952742536708/>).

Note from the Chairman: A memorial service for Sir Donald Gosling will be held in Westminster Abbey on Wednesday the 11th of December. It is open to all, but tickets must be applied for at: <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-events/special-services/2019/december/sir-donald-gosling>

ii. **Fleet Air Arm Memorial Pathway Project.** Steve George, with Cdre Simon Thornewill, gave a presentation (copy attached with minutes) on a proposed project at the FAAMC. The plan is to create a 70 metre memorial pathway of approximately 4000 non-slip granite blocks, to remember individuals who have served in the Fleet Air Arm (the Roll of Honour and military graveyard are reserved for those who have died in Service). The memorial stones and inscriptions will all be of a standard pattern and format, whether commemorating an AET or Admiral – ‘All of One Company’. The project was very well received by all, and considered to be an excellent addition to the FAAMC. It compliments the FAA memorial at the NMA, as this is for Associations, Units, and Ships, as opposed to individuals. The project is in its early stages, but the trustees will be welcoming suggestions after their next meeting in mid-November, after which more details will be released.

FLY NAVY FEDERATION - ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

6. i. **FAA Memorial – National Memorial Arboretum (NMA).** Thanks to Alan Breward (FAABA) for continuing to check on the memorial and provide an up-to-date photographic record. It is in good condition, but requires a clean, especially as muddy boot prints have been observed on some of the stones. The secretary has complained to the NMA, as it is unacceptable for anyone to be walking on the memorial stones. New plinths for 892 and 825 squadrons will be placed on the 6th of November by the stone masons, who will also carry out an overall clean.

ii. **Remembrance Day Cenotaph March.** Despite best efforts by all, and success in 2018, the 2019 marching order for Column E was seen to have some associations separated from the main FNF group. On investigation, this was due to inputs by a new RBL staff member, who saw fit to recognise the anniversaries (and thus ‘seniority’) of some associations, without reading past notes or taking in to account association wishes. This was corrected after much correspondence. A new marching order has been published, with the FNF contingent re-grouped. However, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Photography Branch, the Phots have the honour of leading the RN Column (E), accepting that they will be separate from the rest of the FAA for this year. It was decided that, in order to get all associations to the Embankment FAA Memorial in good time after the march-past and Royal Salute, associations would continue straight ahead towards Admiralty Arch, rather than wheeling right in to Horse Guards Parade. This worked well in 2018 for several associations, and will be briefed to all Column Commanders, as well as members, so that all are aware of the plan. The gathering at the Embankment FAA memorial will take its well-established format, with Steve Adam (FAAFGCA) thanked for agreeing to be Parade Master.

iii. **FAA Memorial Service - Lee on Solent.** The 2019 service was held in St Faith’s church, which is also likely to be the venue next year – on **Sunday 17th May 2020**. This is due to public works continuing in the vicinity of the FAA memorial. Many thanks to Arnold Thompson, Ben Worship and the FAAA for organising the service again, and to Val Sayer for organising the socials at Lee on Solent Golf Club. Costs of £150 for Blendworth Brass Band and Rev Chamberlain were met by donations from the FAABA, FAAA and SHARA – many thanks to them for their continued support.

The Saturday evening meal, Sunday service and post-service lunch are supported by RAFAA, HMS Sultan and local dignitaries, but it would be good to see more members of associations attending. Please advertise the 2020 service as widely as possible, and encourage members – especially those living in the vicinity – to add their support, or there is a danger that it may not run for much longer.

iv. **Channel Dash Association/Memorial Trust.** As member numbers diminish, the CDA/CDMT is looking at how it will continue in future to support the commemorative events and memorials in Ramsgate and Dover. With few associations based in the South East, there is no obvious answer to where new support will come from. As other associations also face the same issue of sustainable membership numbers, ‘merging’ may be a sensible way forward.

Subsequent to the meeting, the CDA/MT Chairman, Malcolm Godfrey, emailed to say that the association had recognised that the 80th anniversary of the Channel Dash may be a good opportunity

to 'go out with a bang'. Therefore plans are forming for a big commemorative event, after which the association may be wound-up. Malcolm hopes to attend the next FNF meeting with more details.

v. **Swordfish V4295 story and memorial – Cefalu, Sicily.** Phil Glover (FAABA) was in touch with the secretary by email, and forwarded details of some fantastic work by an Italian airline pilot, Capt Luca Lazzara, in highlighting a remarkable story of a Flight of four Swordfish flying from Malta on a mission to find Italian ships in WWII. On the night of 11th November 1941, exactly one year after the Taranto raid, three of the Flight ditched off Cefalu (Capt Lazzara's home town - where underwater pictures have identified them), and one crash-landed on the beach. The latter was possibly (confirmation required) the same Swordfish, V4295, which had hit the Bismarck with a torpedo earlier that year.

On the 13th of October 2019 Capt Lazzara arranged for a memorial service in Cefalu, which some of the families of the Swordfish crew attended. He also arranged with the Town Council for a memorial to be erected at the site of the crash, and this was unveiled on the same day.

Capt Lazzara is thanked by all for his fantastic work, not only in highlighting the story, but also for remembering the Fleet Air Arm crews, contacting their families, and making arrangements for the memorial. More details are on the following Facebook page; please share them as widely as possible: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/foto-storiche-cefalu/the-centennial-pilot/2327262987345920/>

vi. **Lossiemouth Covesea Museum update.** Dave Clark (FAABA/Fulmars) is thanked for continuing to support and provide updates on the museum project at Lossiemouth. It is attracting good visitor numbers, and donations outweigh costs, all of which is good news. A full update is attached with the minutes.

vii. **Conference Of Naval Associations (CONA – www.cona.org.uk).** Ben Worship is thanked for continuing to attend CONA meetings, and for forwarding relevant topics and benefits, including holiday discounts, **which are available to all associations**. Of particular note from the recent meeting were several organisations offering great support to veterans, including a proposed new veterans' home at St Christopher's Hospice, Portsmouth. Please see links to the organisations in the CONA report attached with the minutes, as well as on the CONA website (link above).

AOB AND INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATION UPDATES

(Note: For a list of RN Associations' reunions, visit <http://www.rnshipmates.co.uk/reunions.php>, and please add FNF Associations where appropriate, as this may reach out to more ex-oppos wishing to attend)

7. i. Jock Alexander thanked the FAA Field Gunners for a generous donation of £200 to Navy Wings – very much appreciated.

ii. **FAAOA.** Taranto Night Dinner is at the In and Out Club on the 7th of November, with about 140 attending. Also on the 7th of November is the opening of the Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey. The Association funds a plot, in which all can place commemorative crosses – please contact Gill Kerslake, the admin director, for details.

iii. **St Barts/FAAMC.** Steve George highlighted the 'Poppy Propellers' at the church, made of hundreds of hand-knitted poppies. Please go and have a look at this spectacular sight.

iv. **Junglies.** Excellent AGM at HMS Excellent in August, and the association is waiting for a suitable weather window to spruce up the Wessex V outside the VL Command building.

v. **RNSES.** Reunion/AGM was at the Aztec Hotel Bristol in April, and Jock Alexander is thanked for attending as Guest of Honour. The association has grown a little, with some current serving sailors joining recently. 22 members will be marching at the Cenotaph.

vi. **COA.** Arthur Charles highlighted that through various contacts Navy Wings is now 'sponsoring' a Leicester Tigers rugby player, Fijian Telusa Veainu. This is at no cost to Navy Wings, but the charity gets a mention every time Telusa scores or is mentioned, so it is a win-win.

vii. **FAAA.** Next AGM will be at the Aztec Hotel, Bristol, on the 1st weekend in May. Ben Worship announced that after 29 years as treasurer of the National FAA Association he has decided to hand over the reigns – many thanks Ben for all of your hard work and input over the years. Jeff Cook announced the formation of the Weymouth branch of the FAAA in August 2019, which now has 34 members, including two still serving. The newly refurbished Standard will be paraded at the Weymouth memorial Service of Remembrance. The Aircrewmans Association has several members in the area, and will contact Jeff for a potential link-up – as well as for visits to the Heliops Sea King flight at Weymouth, where one of the FAAA members is the Ops Manager.

viii. **AHA.** AGM 7th March 2020 in Tamworth, when Vic Murphy and Rod Fearnley will be standing down after many years of outstanding service. 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the Aircraft Handler branch, and a big reunion will be held at Bosworth Hall, Leicestershire. Rod Fearnley continues to produce the Handlers Herald, please contact him for paper and electronic copies, which can be linked on websites.

ix. RNPA. The 100th anniversary of the Phot Branch was marked with a very successful dinner at Whale Island WO's Mess, alongside members of the current branch. There is talk of future joint reunions with the RNSESA and COA. 30 members will march at the Cenotaph, a great turnout.

x. SHARA. The association continues to grow, now with approximately 140 members. It is their 10th anniversary, along with the 40th anniversary of the Sea Harrier. The next AGM/reunion will be at the interesting venue of Drayton Manor Park, where a SHARA member works as an engineer. The association had a great visit to HMS QNLZ in August, organised via the AEO.

xi. Aircrewmen. AGM was in Weymouth in April, with 164 for the dinner. Membership is 386 and rising, with 100% of those receiving their wings at the recent wings parade take-up membership. Next AGM is 3-5 April in Weymouth. Harry Worth also raised the matter of the Falkland Island Memorial stones, currently along the road to the sports field at VL. He asked if it would be possible/feasible to move them to the FAAMC. This is a question for CO VL, which the ACA and secretary will take up.

A Commando Aircrewman Regimental dinner is being held at Yeovilton WO/Senior Rates Mess on 30 Jan 2020. It is open to all ex and serving Commando aircrewmen. This covers a lot of personnel from other trades (and thus associations) of the FAA, who may have served as crewmen in the 60's and 70's. Please advertise this as widely as possible - details are on the Aircrewman's website – www.aircrewman.org.uk

xii. FAABA. The Association is doing well and growing. The 2020 reunion is planned for a week-long event in early June at the Mansfield Hotel in Elgin, and is expected to be very well attended, with the hotel already fully booked-out by the association.

xiii. Veterans ID cards. Brian Stanley asked about progress with veterans ID cards. These will be provided at no cost to all who have served in HM Forces. The process has started for those recently leaving the Service, and will soon be rolled-out for veterans. Please see details at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-veterans-id-cards-rolled-out-to-service-leavers>

NEXT MEETING.

8. Friday 27th March 2020, at 1400, in the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

This will be followed by an informal dinner at the Northover Manor Hotel, details to follow.

Phil Carpenter
Secretary
Fly Navy Federation

(Signed on original)