



**The newsletter of the 202 Squadron Association**



**Former 202 Sqn stalwart XZ597 two years ago. Things could only get better...and they have! See inside for the aircraft's current state.**

**Number 40**

**Winter 2019**

## The President's Piece

Once again, on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November, our Association took part in the Remembrance Parade at The Cenotaph, on Whitehall. As on previous occasions, the weather was kind to us, heavy rain overnight cleared, and the sun came out as we were making our way to Horse Guards Parade to form up. Owing to a couple of late injuries, there were only eleven of us marching, but the same old camaraderie was in abundance, not only between ourselves, but amongst all the participants there.



Having marched through into Whitehall, we found ourselves close to the front of our column and able to watch the proceedings on the big screen (*photo on next page*).

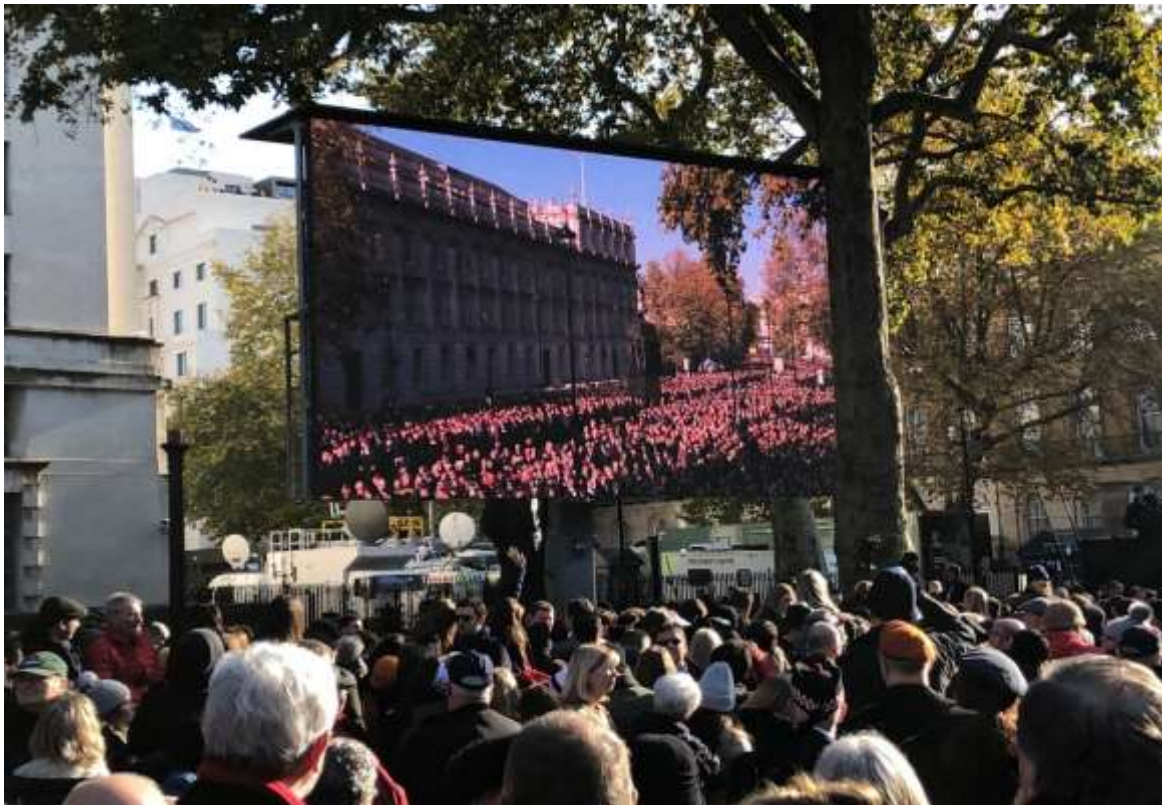
After the wreath laying by the Royal Family and the other civilian and military dignitaries, we marched past the Cenotaph in the traditional veterans' column, handed over the Association wreath, and returned to Horse Guards to disperse. We then repaired to the Royal Air Force Club for a well-deserved pint and an excellent lunch.

I am particularly proud of the contribution which the 202 Squadron Association makes to the occasion, but sadly, it must be said that numbers are dwindling, and I'd like to think that there are other potential participants out there. So, a plea, please have a look at your plans for Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November next year and come and join us. It's a great occasion, in convivial company, with not a lot of marching and a pleasant lunch to follow. If you can, let me know by email at [pete@thechads.org](mailto:pete@thechads.org) or by phone at 07710 910077.

In Comradeship,

**Pete Chadwick**

[pete@thechads.org](mailto:pete@thechads.org)



## **Update from the Chairman**

Dear Members,

Those of you who know me, either personally, from hearing me talk at our AGMs or from reading my updates, will know that I am always quick to praise. However, when I identify an issue, I am equally quick to confront it. The issue I want to tackle is: what is the point of the 202 Squadron Association? I have been a Member of the Association since it was established. At that time, the annual Reunion was the sole purpose of the Association: to catch up with old friends and colleagues, and to make new friends with a common interest.

Earlier this year we had a superb annual Reunion in Valley, with participation from the SAR members of 22 and 84 Squadron. Following an excellent visit to 202 Squadron's new premises at RAF Valley, the guest speaker at the Dinner was Air Officer Commanding 22 Group (and ex-Officer Commanding 202 Squadron), Air Vice-Marshal Bunny James. However, despite all these 'hooks', attendance by 202 Association Members was relatively small.

More worryingly, one of our Members, a staunch attendee of Association events, recently died. I wrote formally to his widow to offer our condolences and we arranged a formal attendance at his funeral. However, few Association members wrote to the widow - another staunch participant in Association events - and even fewer attended the funeral.

In my view, if we cannot look after our fellow Members and interest in attending Reunions is dwindling, then I question the value of the Association. This situation is particularly dispiriting for Geoff, who spends endless hours organising Reunions, only to see low attendances. I know that there are often reasons why Members cannot attend Reunions (or funerals) but these do not explain the year-on-year reduction in attendees. Hence the question to you all in my opening paragraph: what do you think our Association is for? I have been Chair of the Association for over 5 years and have repeatedly asked for input/suggestions about how things could be improved and/or volunteers to replace me or any other Committee



member. None of us on the Committee want to waste our time on a declining organisation where our efforts are nugatory and unappreciated. In an attempt to gauge what you want from the Association, the Committee has decided to canvas the Membership for guidance (of note, when we last did this exercise in 2014 we received only 37 replies from the then Membership of circa 150; we need greater engagement). If you want the Association to be simply an organisation that maintains a website/magazine for communicating to a common interest group, then please tell us. Similarly, if you want us to organize annual reunions, please give us ideas of the format that would encourage you personally to attend. You might also suggest either that it is time for a joint 'SAR Association' (please be aware that we still have a handful of ex-Met era Members) or that invitations to our annual reunions should routinely be extended to the other SAR squadrons. If these questions don't give you freedom to express what you want to say, please simply provide feedback!

You will gather I am frustrated! I would welcome your ideas - indeed, I implore you to submit them. Without your active participation the Association will slowly wither on the vine. As a long-term Member, this would disappoint me immensely; however, none of us wants to spend our time pushing 'stuff' uphill with a twig. Please, please tell us what we should be doing differently.

Yours,

**Steve Garden**

[Garden\\_hoose@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Garden_hoose@yahoo.co.uk)





## *Farewell .....*

In the last 12 months your committee has been notified of the death  
of the following Association members:

November 2018     David Angela and Don Spate

October 2019       Gunner Sugden

November 2019     Bryn Lewis and Roy George Moore

*May they Rest in Peace.*

Please tell me if you hear of the death of any of our comrades, so that both the Association and individual Association Members can send their condolences to the next of kin.

**Derek Whatling**

**Almoner**

[derekwhatling@btinternet.com](mailto:derekwhatling@btinternet.com)



## **News from 202 Squadron**

Happy Holidays from 202 Sqn! It has been a slower year for us than we had hoped for, but we have managed to remain flexible, making ourselves useful despite the challenges we have faced in the early days of Rotary MFTS (Military Flying Training System).

We were delighted to host many of you here at Valley back in March for the 202 Sqn Association Annual Reunion. We could see that our History Room brought back some memories for a few of you. Those of us who were able to make it enjoyed the 'Meet and Greet' on the Friday night and the formal

dinner on the Saturday night in the Trearddur Bay Hotel. The stories never get old!



### **202 Sqn Jupiter over Snowdonia**

As you have seen, our new modern aircraft have much to be enthusiastic about, despite the current limitations relating to over water flying and winching. Once these puzzles have been solved we will be looking forward to progressing the work required on our new syllabus. In the mean time we have been operating both the Juno and Jupiter this year at 202 Sqn with most crew holding dual qualifications. In fact, despite the plan for 202 Sqn to be a Jupiter only unit, we have flown more hours this year on the Juno, predominantly in support of the Shawbury based syllabi. This has included a large amount of mountain flying for both student pilots and rear crew from all three services. Furthermore we have provided more navigation training for RN Observer students.

Our Jupiter has been flown over water earlier this year and brought to the hover alongside our support vessel, the Smit Don, in the Holyhead Harbour area. The visibility from the cockpit is fantastic and we are still looking forward to attempting some winching, possibly before the end of 2019.



RAF Valley is getting busier, with the Texans (Tucano replacement) now operating out of the old SAR Force HQ. I believe there have been more flying complaints on Anglesey due to their distinct noise! Fortunately our aircraft look like Police helicopters, so we've probably had less complaints. People actually slow down in their cars when they see us to avoid getting a speeding ticket! We're also told that a new road will be built for us to avoid having to cross the threshold to Runway 01 – this could actually save a lot of time waiting at the lights!



### **202 Sqn Juno HT1 above the Mountain Flying Training Area**

Sqn Ldr Ally McDowell continues to hold the reins as OC 202 Sqn, but will be due for a posting in 2020. The military contingent on 202 Sqn remains relatively small, but we may have to increase our numbers, dependent on decisions regarding what detail will be included in our final courses. It is possible that we will require an uplift in hours and therefore staff. We continue to have a good relationship across the military, Ascent, Airbus, Babcock and civil service personnel at 202 Sqn. It is a great place to work, despite the frustrations with MFTS progression!

CFS Exam Wing conducted their formal visit to us in the summer. This went very well with the unit achieving an overall 'Excellent' result. This was all the more pleasing given that we have been coping with the introduction of rotary MFTS and new aircraft, site, etc.



The 202 Sqn Standard Party made it to Gibraltar again in June for the Queen's Birthday Parade. All went well and I managed to keep the eagle from touching the ground during the 21-gun Royal Salute – phew!

We hope that you all have a superb Christmas and we hope to catch up with you in 2020. Please give us a call/email if you're in the local area at Anglesey and you would like to pop in for a cuppa. You are all, of course, always most welcome.

Nadolig Llawen!

**Flt Lt Josh Ryznar**



## MY FIRST DAY ON 202 SQUADRON: ADDENDUM

Readers may recall that a couple of issues ago, I put a note in the Duck about my inauspicious first day as a National Service rookie on 202 when I got off badly with the squadron commander when it was thought that I might have Cat-4'd his Hastings on my familiarisation flight by pulling too much 'g' and overstressing the main spar. As it turned out I hadn't, and the incident was soon forgotten. Only in recent reading have I realized the seriousness of the situation into which I had inadvertently blundered. Let me explain.

Whilst the immense progress in airframe and engine design that occurred during the Second World War is much written about, less is reported about the accompanying developments in metallurgy and the materials that made this possible, particularly in the area of high strength, low weight aluminium alloys. Designers working on the new generation of postwar aircraft now had materials of outstanding performance, including the latest super alloy DTD683 embodying proportions of zinc, magnesium and copper, giving the highest strength to weight ratio, excellent toughness, and outstanding fatigue resistance: ideal for main spars and other highly stressed components. This was adopted by Vickers for the Valiant, de Havilland for the Comet and Handley Page for the Hastings, amongst others.



However, in the air, DTD683 performed rather differently from the laboratory. This was brought home dramatically when the first prototype Valiant, on a routine test flight in January 1952 and with less than 100 hours total airborne time, experienced a loud bang accompanied by electrical failure and total loss of aileron control. Inspection revealed that the starboard wing was now flying at a greater angle of attack than the port. Any thought of making it back to Boscombe was abandoned when the wing caught fire. The skipper ordered the rearcrew to bale out of the back office, manually of course, and then ordered the co-pilot to bang out. No sooner had he gone than there was a huge explosion and the starboard wing separated, the remainder turning knife-edge and heading downwards: the skipper made the first recorded horizontal ejection. All survived except the co-pilot who was blown into the tailplane by the explosion.



**You can almost hear the DTD683 cracking...**

Examination of the wreckage revealed that the rear spar of the starboard wing had failed, breaking the aileron operating rod, the fuel pipes and electrical wiring, from which the aircraft could not be recovered.

Metallurgical examination of the failed spar concluded that there had been a



fault in the billet from which the spar had been machined, and that it was a one-off. Since the second prototype was satisfactory on test, the design was released for the production of 60 aircraft.

In service a further eleven aircraft were lost over time: causes reported severally as trim runaway, pilot error, or unexplained. It was not until the last two that metal fatigue was highlighted. As a result a much deeper inspection procedure was implemented which immediately revealed severe fatigue cracking on all airframes, including one which was flying with an undetected broken spar. Operations were immediately restricted to low-‘g’ local flying whilst a decision was made. When it came, the decision to scrap the entire fleet was a complete shock. The argument was that with the Vulcan and Victor squadrons now up to full strength, the cost of a massive update to this first generation design aircraft was simply not justified.

What remains a mystery is that the existence of this problem came as a shock, as the poor service performance of DTD683 both as to fatigue, and progressive loss of strength with age, was by then well reported in the technical literature. Indeed when the second prototype having completed its test programme, was given to the Empire Test Pilots’ School for a retirement job, it was not long before it too experienced the big bang, fortunately without loss of flying control function; and on landing back at Boscombe, it was found to have the main spar in two pieces.

Meanwhile, two years before the Valiant decision, Handley Page had received a contract to completely dismantle 100 Hastings, remove all DTD683 components, and replace them with new parts manufactured from conventional materials. The cost must have been enormous, and no doubt put the final nail in the Valiant’s coffin.

To what extent this problem was known on the squadrons when I arrived on 202 full of energy and zero experience and started throwing TG622 around, I don’t know. But if it was, I can understand why they were cross!

As usual, E & OE.

Confused.com (aka **Jack Read**)

Footnote: though its service life was short, the Valiant did not disappear in ignominy. Besides seeing active service in the Suez Crisis, it was the only one of the V-bomber Force to actually drop an atomic weapon, WZ366 dropping a uranium bomb at Woomera, and ZD825 a 3-megaton hydrogen bomb at Christmas Island, making Britain a nuclear super-power, before the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty put an end to air drop testing. For further reading on this interesting topic, reference to 'Valiant Boys' by Tony Blackman and Anthony Wright is recommended. Material sourced from the above for this note is gratefully acknowledged.



## **Announcement: an invitation to dinner**

Underpinning the provision of the very best, high-quality facilities in the heart of Central London to RAF officers and their families is the RAF Club's enduring purpose to preserve, promote and foster the spirit of the Royal Air Force. Through our 101 years of service to the Nation, nothing better reflects this enduring spirit than the recognition of many individual acts of bravery and courage through the award of gallantry medals. These recipients represent the best of us all and reflect those qualities to which we all aspire. These many heroic stories of sacrifice and courage, some famous, some not, reflects the core identity of spirit of the Royal Air Force. Gallantry medals include the following: Victoria Cross (VC); Distinguished Service Order (DSO); Military Cross (MC); Military Medal (MM); Mention in Dispatches (MiD) and Air Force Cross (AFC) & Air Force Medal.

Following last year's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, the RAF Club would like to acknowledge and recognise the courage of these individuals by initiating The Gallantry Club: an exclusive dining club with a sole entry requirement of a gallantry award. Initial data searches reveal there are over 100 living RAF gallantry medal holders, from World War II to the present day, through operations not limited to but including the Falklands War, Gulf War 1 & 2, Afghanistan, Syria as well as peacetime operations. The gallantry awards traverse all individuals from across the Service in all roles: from RAF Regiment to helicopter, multi-engine, and fast jet aircrew, and across all ranks. We wish to acknowledge them all.

If you know of any individual, serving or retired, officer or other ranks, who has received a British military medal or award for an act of bravery or

gallantry, or if you are a recipient of a gallantry medal, we would like you to provide us with contact details so that we can set a date and plan the inaugural event.

The RAF Club is going to hold a Gallantry Medal Dinner on 14th October 2020. All current gallantry medal holders are invited: entry by gallantry medal. We estimate that there are 120-plus current medal holders.

Could all those who are interested in attending, please contact Charlene Jinguenaud, Events Manager, The Royal Air Force Club on 0207 399 1042 or [charlene@rafclub.org.uk](mailto:charlene@rafclub.org.uk). It should be a very special evening...imagine the amazing stories around the room.

Seasons' Greetings,

**Mike Lakey**



## **The rebirth of Sea King XZ597**



Historic Helicopters of Chard in Somerset have been operating Whirlwind ZJ729 on the display circuit for several years. Sea King XZ597 is nearing the end of a comprehensive restoration to flying condition; 11<sup>th</sup> December saw the first engine run and blade fold, and first flight is planned for early 2020.



## Editor's End

The usual appreciation is due to those who have made time to contribute – your efforts are very much appreciated. Please accept my heartfelt thanks. To respond to the Chairman's request for ideas, please contact him direct, or send your thoughts to me and I can forward them on. Happy Christmas and all good wishes for 2020 to contributors and readers alike.

**Charlie Logan**

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