

D FLT

22 SQN



1980

A Relic of the Humour and History of RAF LECONFIELD

THE LECONFIELD 1942-45 STAR AND ROSETTE.

This consists of a shining star depicting a Halifax in full flight chased by a modern Stirling and a Wellington. On the reverse is the Waterhouse and tankard naturally filled.

2. The ribbon is of heavy 640 tightly tinged with 96 on a resounding crushed 196 and 466 Background. The whole is tactfully superimposed by delicate shades of 51.

3. Conditions of Issue:

Service at Leconfield of 2½ years or over, between December 1942 and August, 1945, all leave, 48 hour passes, days off and other scrounging to count as Service, except cases of A.W.L.

4. The Rosette:

This consists of a Hercules at full revs and boost, and is worn on the ribbon only when drunk.

5. Conditions of Issue:

If entitled to Defence Medal or at drinking session held in honour of the arrival of the Waterhouse heir.

Letter and cutting recieved from a past member of the RA
who was stationed at Leconfield

STED GLADIATOR. BOSTON. PAUL. HAMPDEN.
KINGSTON, LANCASTER. & HALIFAX. AND OTHER
I CANNOT RECALL. The Aerodrome
opened any very serious damage although
one or two occasions we were
visited by Jerry and on one occasion
at 8 AM when he ~~dropped~~ machine.
From the damage, a stick or two
of bombs was dropped on the main camp,
the Druffell was also bombed at
midday, the west wing of the officers
mess was badly damaged and there
was loss of life by some WAAFs and
other personnel. Myself I feel very
little is known of the history of
Leconfield, but long observed & the so.
MANY OF THOSE MARVELOUS GUYS I
as an old boy old LOOK BACK and
FEEL PRIDE TO HAVE ~~known~~
~~been~~ BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH SUCH
A WONDERFUL ASSEMBLY OF AIRMEN &
AIR CREW OF ALL COUNTRIES WHO SAW
US SAFELY HOME & DIED.

Leconfield 1936

First two Sqn's to land at Leconfield 97500' 166 ft.
Bomber Dues "Type of aircraft" "Stuyferts" Bomber
operation was to take place at Aldergrove. ^{NORTHERN IRELAND}
All air crew at that time were housed
in wooden huts accommodation. The present
officers mess was still under construction.
Commanding officer & Station Commander was
Wp. Foden, taking over from the first C.O.
who took over the Aerodrome, The C.O. name
was Wp. Vachell. The first change took
place when the two Bomber Sqn's moved down
to Benson & OXFORD. Flying Training
Command moved in for but for one the
plans being plan was the yellow Colonel
"OXFORDS". At the time Charles was employed
on the Aerodrome, as Admin, Martin also as
Clerk & S.H.O. and other departments. As the
1939-45 war drew near the majority of
Crews left the Drome and was replaced
by Air-men & Airwomen. Flight Commander by
the time was at Leconfield and was
Commanded by Wp. Winton. In 1946 the
Battle of Britain was being placed, once
①

to the battle machine, 2 No less than four SAs flew
to Leipzig for a rest period, the SAs
I recall were 234-245-616 and
303 Polish SAs, also 249 which I
forgot to mention, 249 SAs was the same.
Like Nicholson was with when coming home.
We were grateful with our crew of all
countries including Free French, Czechs, Poles,
Norwegians not forgetting the Danish & Germans
SAs, one clearly the best person, the
Poles were visible by their Star of David
General Sikorsky who often wearing his
famous SAs hat seen in the press.
It is interesting to note that at one time
the 303 Polish SAs was commanded by S/R
Kellat who at one time was with
616 SAs. During the years I was in the SAs
from 1942 into the cessation of the war in
1945 I recall with pride some of
the very famous men who served at
Leipzig & one of a history to have
been mentioned by those for many days
amongst them, was Nicholson VC. 249 SAs
was I Sherwood who took 151 wing

(2)

from Leipzig to 3 hop over the Rhine & the
at that time was taking a bad
homage at Moscow & Smolensk 151 wing
launched the Rhine to fly the SPT and
the SAs and kept open their life line
while the supply line were kept going
and the ~~British~~ American supply were safely
escorted through by our RAF & Royal
NAVY. 151 wing was a wonderful success
and no loss of life was reported after
the operation was completed. I also
remember well Group Captain Baskin who
was a close friend of Wallace Bonnes
the Bonnes-Baskin affair. He was SAs
related the German west Block through the
efforts of the Bombs. Other STATION Commanders
I can recall are Gen. Melne, Gen. Gibson
of the 1st Bomber Force and of course
Gen. Warkentin. We also had the C-in-C
of the Mosquito SAs, and Gen. SHEEN
the director of the SAs, Becky DUNDAS
ORGANIZER of 616 SAs. Many types of aircraft
were flown from Leipzig to the fight
? Both Commanders including the SPT & 151
(3) Hermann Bock fight ALLENHEAD & many

Four rescued as trawler sinks

FOUR FISHERMEN were airlifted to safety from the deck of their sinking vessel in a dramatic rescue off Flamborough yesterday.

The crew, all from Grimsby, tried desperately to save the 70ft. vessel after the engine room began to flood with water.

"We were trying to bail her out for about an hour," said the skipper, Mr Roger Snowden (34), of 8, Byland-grove, Grimsby.

Two helicopters from RAF Leconfield and lifeboats from the Humber and Flamborough responded to a Mayday call from the trawler, the Heather E, a 70ft. registered vessel, which subsequently sank after being taken in tow.

When the helicopters arrived at the scene, about 50 miles east of Flamborough, the crew members had abandoned ship and were in a lifeboat attached to the stern. The weather was poor.

Lt. Bill Ritchie, pilot of the first helicopter, said the

trawler appeared to be fairly low in the water.

"The skipper, who was still on board, told us on the radio that he would abandon ship and opted for a helicopter lift," he said.

Helicopter winchman, MALM Gordon Davies, was lowered on to the foredeck to advise the crew in the dinghy that it would be easier to lift them from the trawler.

"We airlifted two of the crew and the other two were taken on board the second helicopter," said Fl. Lt. Ritchie.

A joint airlift was carried out to share the weight between the two helicopters.

The crew, who were uninjured, were flown back to RAF Leconfield where an ambulance was waiting to take them to Hull Royal Infirmary for a medical check.

While at the base, the skipper, Mr Snowden, said he thought the vessel was damaged by the trawl door hitting the bottom of it.



A word of thanks as the crewmen arrive at Leconfield with their helicopter rescuers.

"We were working on deck when it happened. We think the door came off underneath," he said.

The other members of the crew were Mr D. Roach (33), of Flat B, 103, Hamilton-street, Mr D. Dalton, of 8, Wesley Court, and Mr S. Ward, of 57, Fraser-street.

The water flooded the vessel's engine room, and had

penetrated the fish room and cabin accommodation by the time the rescue was completed.

Also at the scene was a German barge, the Huntetor, which took the trawler in tow, heading for Middlesbrough.

But the Heather E. sank, five hours after the mayday call, about 30 miles east, north-east of Flamborough Head.

The incident came at a bad time for the Humber lifeboat. It was undergoing engine maintenance, but managed to motor out to the Heather E on one engine.

Coastguards at Spurn coordinated the rescue, which involved the two helicopters from RAF Leconfield, lifeboats from Spurn and Flamborough and other craft in the area.

11th January 1980



First Crew
Flt Lt Ritchie
Flt Lt Hind
MALM Davies

Second Crew
Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Rule
Sgt Laken

Air-lift operation has to be abandoned

14 JAN 80

P34/10
A winchman from an
RAF Leconfield helicopter
was stranded on the Hull

fishing vessel Summer
Rose on Monday when his
winch caught on the boat's
rigging as he tried to air-
lift an injured crew man to
hospital.

The helicopter had to
return to RAF Leconfield
without him and
Bridlington lifeboat
escorted the Summer Rose,
with the winchman and the
injured man aboard, to
Bridlington harbour.

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Barnes
Sgt Laken

The injured man was Mr
William White, of Hull, who
was aboard the Summer
Rose seven miles South
East of Flamborough Head
when he trapped his arm in
a winch. He was taken to
Lloyd Hospital but was not
admitted.

The winchman returned
to RAF Leconfield by road.

Picture shows Mr White
being helped ashore at
Bridlington.





3 MAR 80



ATC Cadets come out with flying colours

Twelve cadets from the 399 (Beverley) Squadron, Air Training Corps have gained a total of 18 awards between them.

The presentations were made by Flt-Lieut White at the ATC hut on Monday night.

Eight cadets gained proficiency certificates on the result of examinations, and five became members of the Lyke Wake Club, having completed the crossing in less than 16 hours.

Cadet Corporal Lane received his Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award, and ex-Cadet Corporal Proctor a Silver Award.

The Byass Shield for sport was won jointly by Cadet Corporal Crosby and Cadet Watson and both, apart from other achievements, represented the Wing at rugby.

The Cadet of the Year Cup was won by Cadet Corporal Trevor.

Flt-Lieut White, Commanding Officer, 'B' Flight, 22 Squadron, Helicopter, Search and Rescue, took the Squadron parade and carried out an inspection before presenting the awards. Afterwards he gave a talk to the Squadron on the work of the Search and Rescue Service. Also present was Flt-Lieut Mitchell, Wing Staff Officer, and Warrant Officer Collins, who until last year, had been the Squadron's Adult Warrant Officer.

Under the command of Flt-Lieut Greer, the Squadron is flourishing, taking part in numerous sporting and recreational activities, including adventure training, flying and gliding. The Squadron now has 35 members but others are very welcome. Any adult who would like to assist in the activities mentioned above please contact the Commanding

Officer, Flt-Lieut Greer at the Squadron Headquarters, Longcroft Lower School on Monday evenings between 7.15 p.m. and 9.15 p.m.

Our picture shows Flt-Lieut White presenting the Byass Shield for sport to joint holders Cadet Crosby and Cadet Wilson. Also shown are Flt-Lieut Greer (far left) and Cadet of the Year, Cadet Corporal Trevor (far right).

MAY 80

5 th

**Shot youth
'improves'**

A 19-YEAR-OLD Cleethorpes Youth, Mark Nielson, who was shot in the spine during a fair-ground incident, was today said to be "improving slightly, but still poorly" at Hull Royal Infirmary.

He was flown by RAF rescue helicopter to Hull last week for an emergency operation to remove the bullet.

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Hind
Sgt Laken

11 th

**Airlift
for
injured
woman**

A 65-YEAR-OLD North Thoresby woman was airlifted to Hull Royal Infirmary yesterday after suffering serious head injuries when her car collided with another at Ashby Hill Top, near Ashby-cum-Fenby.

Mrs. Ella Salt, of Milestones, High Street, was thrown from her car when the accident happened shortly after midday at the junction of the B1203 and the B1431.

She was still unconscious when a helicopter from RAF Leconfield later flew her from Grimsby General Hospital to Hull. Today she was said to be seriously ill.

The driver of the other car, Mr. Alan Stark, of Newstead Road, Cleethorpes, was uninjured but his passenger, Mrs. Ivy Stark, suffered slight head injuries.

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Gibbon
MALM Todd

28 th

**Sea alert for
3 in a boat**

An RAF helicopter, an inshore lifeboat and coastguards were alerted when a 14ft. dinghy with three people on board got into difficulties off Ulrome, near Bridlington.

But Mr. J. Charlesworth, of Fulwood, Sheffield, his son and another teenager managed to get the outboard motor going and get back safely.

People on shore raised the alarm when they saw the boat in trouble.

Flt Lt White
Flt Lt Rule
MALM Davies

Flt Lt Ritchie
Flt Lt Hind
MALM Todd

SEINER SLAMS ON TO BEACH

A HULL fisherman airlifted to safety from a Grimsby registered seiner, which ran aground under cliffs at Aldbrough after he collapsed at the helm, was recovering in hospital today.

Three other crewmen including two from Hull, took to a lifeboat and scrambled ashore only minutes before waves swamped the 25-ton Susan Joy after it ploughed on to the beach and keeled to one side.

A dramatic attempt to save the seiner ended in horror after the fishermen found 30-year-old Ian Wardrobe unconscious on the wheelhouse floor as it headed to Bridlington to pick-up another crewman before heading to the Dogger Bank fishing grounds.

The three men slammed the Susan Joy's engine in reverse but failed to prevent wind and waves pounding the seiner into 40ft high cliffs.

Today the Susan Joy was still aground off Aldbrough. Discussions went on between insurers, marine surveyors and the owners yesterday as to its fate.

Coastguards kept a 24-hour watch on the wrecked seiner to prevent looting and make sure it did not move. Meanwhile, the owners took off all the gear.

A coastguard spokesman said today that the vessel was firm aground and could break up if the weather got really bad.

Two miles

The seiner left Hull early on Saturday morning to sail up the coast before a three week North Sea fishing trip. The crewmen to be collected had missed a rendezvous with the Susan Joy in Hull on Friday night.

Mr Wardrobe, whose address has been given as

Edgecumbe Street, Hull, was at the helm as the seiner approached Aldbrough. The owner, Mr John Muntus, was in the engine room and skipper Derek Gates (35), of Kilssea Grove, Hull, and Geddy Goodhand, of Exeter Grove, Hull, below deck.

Mr Muntus explained: "I had been told to keep us about two miles offshore. We knew nothing about his collapse until we heard a bumping noise. We found him on the floor unconscious. We put the engine in reverse but we were aground and couldn't pull off."

A cliff-top farmer, Mr Michael Meadley watched helplessly as the Susan Joy headed inshore but raised the alarm by ringing coastguard. Minutes later a radio message was sent from the seiner asking for help.

An RAF helicopter from Leconfield lifted the collapsed man off the boat and flew him to Hull Royal Infirmary. Mr Wardrobe's condition today was said to be "satisfactory."

The three other crewmen took to the boat's liferaft and paddled ashore before Skipper Gates was also lifted by helicopter to the cliff-top.

Pulled up

Coastguards at Spurn received the telephone alert and then the Mayday message at about 10.45 a.m. Withernsea inshore and Humber lifeboats were launched but not needed in the rescue.

Withernsea coastguard arrived on the cliff and dropped a collapsible ladder for the two other fishermen to clamber up. Mr Meadley

pulled the liferaft up the cliff with his tractor.

Coastguards from Hornsea were also called to the isolated beach.

Waves were soon breaking over the Susan Joy which listed heavily to port. She was built in Denmark in 1938 and operated by the Joy Fishing Company out of both Hull and Grimsby.



Susan Joy, beached beneath the cliffs at Aldbrough.

10 MAY 80



Blood and gore in Kilnsea 'disaster'

SEA RESCUE services combined to save a squad of Territorial Army soldiers when their boat 'exploded' off Kilnsea yesterday.

Air sea rescue helicopters from RAF Coltishall and RAF Leconfield winched 'badly injured' and 'shocked' men from the water and put them down again on the Humber lifeboat.

Some of the crew who were seriously injured suffered serious burns and head and body wounds. The injuries at first sight were alarming. The real thing couldn't have been more gory.

It was only an exercise but around the Humber estuary and Spurn Head emergencies are the rule rather than the exception.

And you can be certain that if it was for real all the ser-

vices might react faster — but only fractionally.

To most of these men danger and risk are routine. As the pilot of a lightning fighter was once heard to say: "Same old thing — excitement."

ANNUAL EVENT

The occasion yesterday was the annual medical exercise of the Royal Lifeboat Institute, watched by observers and commanded by Lt. Alan Tate, RNLI divisional inspector for the North East.

The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate current methods of handling casualties at sea and the type of problems which can arise in a combined search-and-rescue operation.

It involved crack air-rescue

squads from RAF bases at Coltishall (Sea Kings) and Leconfield (Whirlwinds), the Humber lifeboat Withernsea Inshore lifeboat, two pilot launches, a boarding boat, coastguards and members of the Territorial Army and the 502 Field Ambulance unit from Hull.

During the exercise it was noticeable how impressed the Sea King helicopter crew was with the fluency of their counter parts movements from RAF Leconfield.

The Territorial Army makeup "artist" might, in better days have had a future with the Bank Organisation. He daubed blood liberally on realistic cuts and gashes and gouged out burn marks on the "victims" bodies.



A Whirlwind helicopter of D Flight, 22 Sqn. from Leconfield homes in on a liferaft during the exercise

12 JUN 80

PHOTOGRAPH BY



Winchmen Ft. Sgt. Mel Ward is lowered away from a rescue vessel with an "injured" survivor.





Pl Werndly receiving his AOC's Commendation from Brig P H Bridgestock Comdt ASMT

18 JUN 80



12 JUN 80
Hospital
Landing
Site
Check

Flt Lt Ashton
Flt Lt Rule
Sgt Lynch

UNG patients at Oldham
District General Hos-
pital had a special treat on
Friday afternoon when
RAF rescue helicopter
landed down inside the
hospitals grounds.
It may have been only a
time exercise for the air-

crew and Oldham's emer-
gency services, but it gave
the youngsters a chance to
see a whirlybird at close
quarters.

Helicopter arrivals at the
hospital are rare, but not
unique. They happen at
regular intervals to keep

flight crews on their toes
and to check any new
obstacles in the path of an
aircraft arriving or depart-
ing in a real emergency.

During the visit, the heli-
copter crew took aerial
photographs of the near-by
Middleton playing field.

The present landing area,

at the rear of the hospital
children's unit, will be
developed within the next
two years for new chil-
dren's psychiatry and elderly men-
tally ill units, and alterna-
tive landing sites are
currently under considera-
tion.

JUNE 1980

Copter crew in daring rescue

AN RAF helicopter crew from Leconfield carried out a dramatic cliff ledge rescue in the Peak District last night after a 17-year-old climber fell 200ft.

In failing light and hampered by a cliff face, waterfall and swirling downdraughts the three-man team snatched the critically injured climber to safety.

Michael Mayhew, of Pinewood Road, Sale, Cheshire, was airlifted to hospital in Stockport where his condition today was said to be "fairly comfortable."

He broke both legs, a kneecap, left elbow and upper arm and suffered back and skull injuries in the fall from Kinderscout (2,088ft.), one of the highest peaks in England.

The crew who carried out the daring rescue were Flt. Lt. Bill Ritchie (pilot), Flt. Lt. Len Hind (navigator) and Master ALM Jeff Todd.

Mr Todd described the rescue as "very difficult, particularly for the pilot."

25th

Flt Lt Ritchie
Flt Lt Hind
MALM Todd

BOWL SHAPE

The alarm was raised at about 8 pm last night and the helicopter began the airlift only 45 minutes later.

A mountain rescue team and a doctor were already at the scene and the climber was secured in a stretcher — but they dared not move him.

Mr Todd described what happened: "He was lying on a ledge after falling about 200ft. and was still some 300ft. above the ground."

"It was in a bowl shape with the cliff towering above us and a waterfall made it like working in heavy rain."

"The sun was setting but the main problem was the downdraught on the cliff face which affected the helicopter," he went on.

TWO RUNS

The whole rescue took only 20 minutes, but that involved at least two runs to assess the situation and the dumping of half the helicopter's remaining fuel to counter the huge downdraught created by the draughts.

Mr Todd was lowered to the ledge as the helicopter hovered precariously near to the cliff. Within minutes, the stretcher was winched home and the flight to hospital was made without difficulty.

"It was a difficult rescue of the sort we don't usually get working out of Leconfield," added Mr Todd.

29th

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Barnes
Sgt Laken

WAVE SINKS YACHT

The Bridlington pleasure-boat the Yorkshire Belle rescued two men after a wave swamped and sank their yacht.

The two men, Mr Tom Nixon, a Bridlington chemist, and Mr Philip Jones, a solicitor, were taking part in a Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club race yesterday and were on the return leg to Bridlington in choppy seas off Wilthorpe when the wave hit.

The men fired flares, and after their boat, a 19-ft National Squib, called the Red Baron, went down they clung to a wooden paddle.

Twenty-five minutes later they were aboard the Yorkshire Belle, which saw the flares while returning from a pleasure trip.

The Bridlington inshore lifeboat and an RAF helicopter were called out when the flares were seen.

The yacht has still to be recovered.

1st JULY 1980



Visit of

Air Marshal JB Curtiss CB FBIM RAF



Pupils of Caedmon School had the opportunity to look round an air-sea rescue helicopter from RAF Leconfield which touched down on the playing fields.

The helicopter was on a test run to the school and took aerial pictures of the official landing site there used in actual rescues.

Mr Steve Greator, deputy health administrator at Whitby, attended on behalf of the Health Service. The helicopter spent about an hour at Whitby.

● Picture — Caedmon School pupils with two of their teachers Mr V. Grayson and Mrs J. Short. RAF Sergeant A. Lynch is in the controls.

20th June 1980

Flt Lt Ashton

Flt Lt Rule

Sgt Lynch

Crash rider flown out

MOTORCYCLIST Michael Hatton was taken by RAF helicopter to a top neurology unit last night after a crash.

Michael, 19, of Nwlands Park Road, Scarborough, received a fractured skull in the accident on the Scarborough-Whitby road near the Flask Inn.

He was taken to Scarborough Hospital but because of his serious injuries, was immediately transferred to Hull Royal Infirmary.

6th July 1980

Flt Lt Ashton

Flt Lt Barnes

Sgt Laken

Barry, six, is speared by

By ROBERT TURNER

A LITTLE boy was speared through the throat with a metal spike as a playtime romp turned to horror.

Barry McDonald, six, was being pushed along by friends in an old supermarket trolley when he fell out on to the spike which was part of a boxing punch-ball stand.

The metal entered just below his chin and travelled upwards through his mouth stopping just short of the base of his skull.

Another fraction of an inch and Barry could have

metal spike

died. But doctors at Hull Royal Infirmary were last night pleased with his progress and have told his parents they expect no lasting effects.

Barry, of Dunmore Crescent, Grimsby, was air-lifted by helicopter to Hull with the six-inch spike still through his neck.

Surgeons carried out an

emergency operation to remove it.

The hospital said last night that Barry was making a 'reasonable recovery.'

His father, Mr Colin McDonald, said: 'It's a miracle he survived this terrible accident.'

'But the doctors have done a marvellous job.'

'Now Barry just wants to come home.'

'One thing that has cheered him up no end is a letter wishing him well from the pilot of the helicopter which flew him to Hull.'



Barry McDonald



31 JUL 80. COUN LANGDALE
MAYOR OF BEVERLEY

26 JUL 80

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Gibbon
MALM Todd

Cliff fall man in hospital

A man who fell down the cliffs near Filey, North of the Brigg, was air lifted by an RAF helicopter from Leconfield and flown to Scarborough Hospital. The man fell in a place which was difficult to reach except by air.

Mr. Wilfred Headley, 54, of Moss Street, Lower Broughton, Salford, was on holiday at a camp. He has been detained in hospital with head and other injuries.

20 JUL 80

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Barnes
MALM Davies

Diver found dead after search

A man died on Sunday and the 17-year-old girl he was teaching to dive had to be rescued after they got into difficulties off Flamborough Head.

The dead man was Mr Roy Vairy (48), of The Croft, Minsthorpe Lane, South Kirby, Pontefract. He and his pupil, Nicola Westmorland, were members of Ackworth Free Divers, a sub-aqua club in Pontefract.

Flamborough coastguard received reports that the divers were missing at 1 pm. A search involving Flamborough lifeboat, a helicopter from RAF Leconfield, coastguards, and other craft, was launched and the girl was picked up almost immediately.

The search for Mr Vairy lasted almost two hours but he was found dead, entangled in kelp seaweed, in the High Stacks area off Flamborough Head.

Coastguards believe Mr Vairy was taken ill and that the girl tried to keep him afloat, but he sank without his oxygen supply connected. Neither diver was wearing a life jacket.

Mr Vairy was a clerical officer at NCB area headquarters in Doncaster, and leaves a widow and a 21-year-old daughter.

A former footballer — he played for Stockport County, and for 12 seasons with Frickley Colliery — Mr Vairy turned to skin-diving later, and had 15 years experience. He was a founder member of Ackworth Free Divers, and was a dive leader.

Mr Vairy was a prominent member of the British Show Jumping Association, and a commentator at some of their shows. The funeral takes place today, and in lieu of flowers, the family have requested donations to the RNLI at Bridlington.

Miss Westmorland is the daughter of a police constable.

Both Bridlington lifeboats were also launched on Sunday.

The inshore lifeboat put to sea at 1.10 pm to act as safety boat for the Yacht Club's dinghy race. The race was cancelled but the weather deteriorated suddenly and the lifeboat spent the next three hours escorting small craft to the safety of Bridlington harbour.

Craft rescued included the sailing dinghy Bird Song which had two people on board when it capsized. It was towed into South Cliff launching site but had to be rescued a second time after it launched again.

A small inflatable dinghy with three children aboard also had to be rescued twice.

The offshore lifeboat was launched at 4.40 pm to escort the cable Serene from Hornsea into Bridlington harbour.

Also on Sunday afternoon an overdue cabin cruiser Domino, with five people on board, was located by one of the auxiliary coastguards and it got back to harbour safely.

Flamborough coastguard was alerted again in the early hours of Monday morning after the fishing vessel Trudella was reported to be unsure of its position. Its wheelhouse had been damaged and its navigation electronics had been smashed by the sea. The fishing vessel Apollo escorted the Trudella into Bridlington harbour.



The Mayor of Grimsby, Coun. Walter Smith, presents the plaque to Flt. Lt. David White watched by (left to right) Flt. Lt. D. Barnes Flt. Lt. M. Snowden and W/O G. Davies.

TOWN THANKS THE FLYING RESCUERS

RESCUING Grimsby fishermen and airlifting patients from the town's hospitals are just two of the "routine" services provided by RAF helicopter crews at Leconfield.

But of those who have had cause to call for assistance - and there have been nearly 2,000 since rescue operations from the North Humberside base started 15 years ago - few would agree with the "routine" label attached by crews.

This view is also shared by the Mayor of Grimsby, Coun. Walter Smith, who yesterday made a special visit with members of his family to present a plaque to the base.

Handing over the inscribed plaque bearing the town's crest to the Commanding Officer of D Flight, 22 Squadron, Flt. Lt. David White, the Mayor congratulated him on the service run from the base.

"We in Great Grimsby, and particularly our fishermen, are very grateful to the helicopter rescue service, and I have great pleasure in presenting this plaque on their behalf," he said.

Grandchildren

Later Flt. Lt. White showed the Mayor and Mayoress the base operations room before meeting the couple's son, Steven, daughter-in-law Anne, and grandchildren Richard (three) and Graham (five) - who were on holiday in the area - for a look at one of the helicopters.

It was the first visit to the

base for the family, who were all impressed by the RAF's rescue organisation.

From the Mayor there were special questions for duty navigator of the day, Flt. Lt. Dai Barnes, who explained winching equipment and first-aid facilities aboard his three and a half ton Whirlwind helicopter. Meanwhile the young

generation, in the shape of grandson Graham, seemed more interested in borrowing a bright yellow flying helmet.

And Grimsby's plaque? That earned pride of place among similar presentations from the National Union of Seamen, a collection of RAF bases, Humberside Police, and the Hesse Wine Circle.

"I have always admired the RAF rescue service run from Leconfield, and it has been a real pleasure to meet the men who run the operation," added the Mayor as he completed his visit.



6 AUG 80

Big lift-off for Paul's whirlwind trip

Up, up, and away to safety . . . Lee air cadet corporal Paul Johns is lifted up for a bird's eye view of an RAF Whirlwind rescue chopper.

The helicopter, belonging to No. 1 Squadron, Search and Rescue, based at RAF Leconfield touched down at No. 168 (City of Leeds) Air Cadet Squadron, Middleton Grove, Devbury Road, Leeds, for a rescue demonstration as part of the cadets' practical training.

Picture below shows Paul coming down to earth again after "rescue."



Flt Lt White

Flt Lt Gibbon

MALM Davies

AUG 80

9th

Sea searched for plane

Humber lifeboat, an RAF helicopter from Leconfield, and local shipping searched for three hours off the East Yorkshire coast after a private aircraft was reported to have crashed into the sea off Easington.

Two people on shore said they saw an aircraft come over very low and later a splash.

It was later confirmed that a private aircraft had dropped from 1,000 feet to 500, and then landed safely on land.

Flt Lt Ritchie

Flt Lt Gibbon

Sgt Lynch

5th

Playing field passes muster

A LARGE Middlesbrough playing field has passed its annual RAF inspection — to stay on the list of emergency helicopter landing sites.

A Whirlwind helicopter with a five-man crew from the search and rescue unit at RAF Leconfield, near Hull, flew over the St. Michael's School playing field taking photographs and then landing.

An RAF spokesman said the playing field, near Dunstable Road, would become an

emergency landing site if casualties were being ferried to Middlesbrough General Hospital.

"We have a number of hospitals within our flying area where we can bring casualties. Middlesbrough is on the list and the site is checked every year to make sure there are no obstructions," he added.

Fire appliances, police and an ambulance were on hand for the landing as part of the standard procedure.

28 AUG 80



Ten-year-old Jonathon Moran receives instruction from AirLoad Master Jeff Todd during a visit to the helicopter squadron at RAF Leconfield by Hull Youth association of the Junior Phab on a three-day play school. A342/B



A picture for the album for members of Hull Junior PHAB branch as Master Aircrewman Jeff Todd records their visit to the RAF Search and Rescue helicopter squadron at Leconfield.

Annual Formal Inspection

19 Sep 80



BY Air Vice Marshal PE Bairsto

CB CBE AFC FBIM RAF

All Smile



**Its good to see a pair of
legs on the Flight Photo**

The way to ensure

a good debrief



Use Montys 1935 Rolls Royce

as the VIP transport

25 SEP 80

Mercy dash in bid to save girl

AN RAF helicopter made a 60-mile flight from RAF Hospital Nocton Hall to Sheffield last night in an attempt to save the life of an eight-year-old girl.

Julie Marshall, of White House Farm, Billingham Fen, Metheringham, was seriously hurt in a car accident at

by Jane Mackay

where she was first taken, but her condition deteriorated and the RAF were called in.

Timberland cross roads.

Today she was described as "extremely ill" in the neuro-surgical ward of the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield.

Her mother, Mrs. Jennifer Marshall (32), and 12-year-old sister, Joanne, also injured in the accident are "satisfactory," a spokesman for Nocton Hall Hospital said.

Police planned to take Julie by car from Nocton Hall

Lighting

With the aid of special lighting from the fire brigade, the helicopter was able to land in the grounds of Lodge Moor Hospital, Sheffield, and the girl was taken by ambulance to the Royal Hallamshire where she underwent surgery.

Mr. Edward Price (72), and his wife Anne, from Southend were in the other car involved in the accident.

Flt Lt Snowden

Flt Lt Rule

MALM Todd

Flt. Lt. Snowdon,
D. Flight.
22. Squadron,
Normandy Barracks.
Leconfield.
North Fumberside.

Bleak House Farm
North Kyme Fen
Bullingham
Lincoln

Dear Flt. Lt. Snowdon

I would like to
say a sincere thank-you to you
and the crew who helped to
save my life on September 25th

I was unconscious for sixteen
days but with the dedication
from the staff at Hullamshire
Hospital I was able to return
to Nocton Hall three weeks
later. After another two
weeks at Nocton I was
allowed home on 30th October
and I am feeling much better now

My right side is still weak but
with physiotherapy is improving daily

My right hand in particular

is weak so I am trying

very hard to write this letter

Of course I don't remember the flight
but mummy and daddy have told me about
it. Once again a big thank-you from
all my family and me.

Love

from

Julie Marshall

age 12 years

xxxx

Canoe boy dies after high seas rescue bid

By MIKE CLARK

A SCOUT whose canoe capsized in the North Sea died last night after desperate efforts by doctors on the spot, and in hospital, failed to sustain him.

A doctor and nurse were rushed by police car to Redcar beach to tend the 12-year-old aboard the lifeboat who was too ill to be moved. Only then could he be

taken to Middlesbrough General at the end of an air and sea rescue at nearby Marske.

Coastguards had earlier warned small boat enthusiasts to steer clear of the coast — because of high offshore winds. And only half an hour after the boy, named last night as Alan McInnney, set-off from Marske, his canoe, and one piloted by a 33-year-old Scout master, capsized.

A woman saw the incident from the clifftops and phoned the coastguards at about 1.30 yesterday. The inshore lifeboat was launched and when a search of the area proved negative Redcar's main lifeboat was launched and a helicopter from RAF Leconfield was called in.

Beached

Working from a coastguard search pattern they spotted the two in the water three quarters of a mile off Marske.

Scout master Peter Dawson was winched aboard the helicopter and rushed to Middlesbrough General to be released last night, but the boy was too seriously ill to go on board.

He was taken on the lifeboat which beached at Redcar, and a local GP and a nurse from Redcar's Stead Hospital went on board to give immediate medical attention.

After approximately half an hour he had improved enough to be taken to Middlesbrough by ambulance.

But last night he died.

Doctors had said he was suffering from acute exhaustion and exposure, after spending more than 50 minutes in the water. Alan, of Cheviot Way, Dewsbury, Yorkshire, was one of a party of Scouts who had been at Marske over the weekend.

**Flt Lt Ritchie
Flt Lt Gibbon
Sgt Lynch**

Distress

Tees Coastguards reported they had had several distress calls from boats all along the North-East coast which had fallen foul of the rough seas.

●A full scale search took place off Flamborough Head yesterday when lifeboats from Bridlington and Flamborough, an RAF helicopter and the coastguards hunted a diver believed to be in difficulties.

Later it was discovered two divers had gone into the sea from a small boat, and when they surfaced found they were some distance away so waved to the boat. This was mistaken by people on the cliff top as them waving for help. It was recorded as a false alarm with good intent.

●An air sea rescue helicopter from RAF Boulmer, and Berwick lifeboat were called out after a report that two distress flares had been spotted ten miles off Berwick. But the search drew a blank, and coastguards treated it as a false alarm.

18 OCT 80

CAULDRON OF DEATH

Yorks sea angler drowned in storm

A342/d

A weekend sea angling expedition ended in tragedy when a Wakefield man died in a storm which overturned his cabin cruiser.

The boat capsized within yards of the entrance to Whitby harbour in a northerly gale yesterday, and a 90-minute search by Whitby lifeboat and an RAF sea rescue helicopter failed to find Mr. Alex Craig, 48, of Manor Haigh Road, Lupset, Wakefield.

But Mr. Craig's son-in-law, Mr. Gary Mountain, 29, of Victoria Avenue, Wakefield, was rescued from Whitby beach as he was washed ashore clinging to wreckage. He was treated at Whitby Hospital for a leg injury, exposure and shock.

Mr. Mountain was "comfortable" but not expected to be allowed home for two or three days.

Onlookers said the cabin cruiser, the 34ft. Wyndways, was in difficulty as soon as it left the harbour entrance and was trying to get back when it capsized.

Whitby Coastguard officer-in-charge, Mr. Craig Allison, said it was "beyond the imagination" why the boat had gone out. "There have been northerly gales for three days and conditions were appalling."

Mr. Craig's wife, Olive, said last night she refused to believe that her husband — an experienced sea fisherman — would attempt any dangerous manoeuvre.

She said her husband — a miner at Parkhill Colliery, Wakefield, had gone to the resort on Saturday with Mr. Mountain to fit new navigation lights to the converted lifeboat they had jointly owned for ten weeks.

"Alex and Gary decided to go fishing for winter cod after they had fitted the lights. I would have been with them if I had not caught a cold," she added. "This is the first time I have missed since we got the boat."

Mr. Craig has two daughters, a son and five grandchildren.



● An RAF helicopter and Whitby lifeboat, the White Rose of Yorkshire, search the

Flt Lt Ritchie
Flt Lt Gibbon
MALM Davies

The RAF Marine Craft Unit at Bridlington of the rationalisation of the armed forces and photographer JIM MITCHINSON presents

Exercise at doom



Moment of rescue

The final stages of the rescue exercise (above), as a Whirlwind helicopter lowers an airman to safety. BELOW: the face they don't show in the recruitment advertisements, of an airman plucked from the sea.



THE air-crew of a wrecked Vulcan bomber were rescued from the cold wastes of the North Sea off Bridlington last week. And the Evening Press was there to record it.

The crew, bobbing about in little orange liferafts, looked like marker buoys in the choppy sea before they were winched up by a Whirlwind helicopter and set down lightly on the deck of a pin-nace from RAF Bridlington.

They were pretty chilly, in spite of water-resistant flying suits and thermal underwear, and some of them were scared and somewhat sea-sick after their short encounter with the unfamiliar element.

But it was all in a good cause. Because this was an exercise, one of the annual drills all RAF air-crew must go through in case their plane really crashes into the sea.

The men were from RAF Scampton, in Lincolnshire, but they might as well have been from Leeming, or Linton, or Finningley, all airfields whose sea-survival training is carried out from RAF Bridlington.

But only until December 5, when the Bridlington station, one of the smallest and oldest in the RAF, closes down after 51 years of active service.

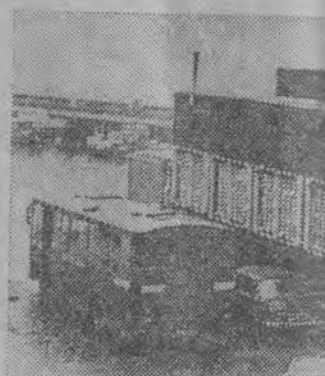
Commanding officer of the 25 men at the little station on Bridlington harbour is Flt-Lieut. Martin Warner, who has fought hard against the closure, and doesn't mind saying so.

Disdain

"I have had my say, and had my wrists slapped, and they all know what I think about it," he said.

The station is being closed because the RAF Marine Branch is replacing its old wooden 63-foot long pinnaces with what Martin calls "new tin boats" — 80-foot long Spitfire class boats which are too big to use Bridlington harbour.

"What they don't seem to appreciate is that these small wooden boats can get into every fishing harbour on the



RAF Bridlington, almost 50 years old. Arabia was stationed here.

east coast with no problem and are particularly good at adapting to the nasty weather and sea conditions we get in this part of the world," said Martin.

RAF Bridlington used to have three pinnaces, "tatty old 300-horsepower standard work-boats with a top speed of 14 knots," he said, with affectionate disdain. They covered the east coast from Dundee to Ramsgate.

But three years ago, a Spitfire arrived at Bridlington and two of the pinnaces were withdrawn to Plymouth. After a year, the Spitfire, too, was withdrawn, leaving them with one boat covering a reduced area, from Amble, in Northumberland, to Grimsby.

They still manage to do a lot of work with that one boat — which is too small even to be allowed a name, and is known as 1392 — including two or three a week of the



A Gemini rescue dinghy speeds across the water.

is to close in five weeks time, victim Evening Press feature writer JANE FLATT t to Bridlington to look at the station's past, and future.

n survival RAF unit



changed since Lawrence of ed there in 1933.

sort of mandatory sea-survival drill we watched last week.

There are about 200 air-crew at Scampton, a bomber base with a total personnel of thousands, and the men don't do the drills necessarily with their own crew-mates. The men on this exercise were from different Vulcan crews.

The drill sounds pretty easy on paper — you jump into the water in pairs, inflate your liferaft, climb in, inflate the raft floor for insulation, enclose yourself in its water

Circles

proof cover, wait for the helicopter, get hauled out by the man on the end of the winch cable and hang beside him like a bundle of washing until your feet touch the boat's deck again.

But that is reckoning without Murphy's Law, that any-



ds through the water during exercise.

thing that can go wrong, will. One man failed to inflate his raft properly, and floundered around wildly until the Gemini rescue dinghy swooped in to help him.

He was not excused from the drill, however, once they saw he was just panicky, rather than hurt. He had to inflate the raft by hand, as he would have to if it happened for real, even though his treatment might seem heartless in an exercise.

The sea was fairly calm, but the master coxswain, Sgt. Keith Buckner, captaining the boat that day, remedied that by taking the boat round in a series of fast tight circles, leaving the liferafts floundering helplessly in the wake.

Then the helicopter arrived from Leconfield, dropping a smoke-flare into the water to monitor the wind direction before getting straight down to the job.

"The idea is to work as fast as possible, because sometimes we have as many as 20 dinghies, and in a high sea and strong winds, it can take quite a while. We work in anything up to a Force 8 gale," said Sgt. Buckner.

Even in those comparatively calm conditions, the helicopter seemed to hover perilously close to the top of the mast. What it must be like when the boat is rising and falling on 12-foot waves, I shudder to think.

But these are among the best helicopter crews in the world, and their accuracy is awe-inspiring. Before flying home, it made two passes over the stationary boat lowering the winch cable until it touched the deck, and keeping it steady there for a few seconds.

Then, almost unbelievably to me, it did the same thing twice more — but with the boat running at top speed, 14 knots, or about 19 miles an hour.

The drill provides practice for the helicopters as well — RAF Bridlington took part in the training of the Sea King helicopter crews at RAF Bulmer, rescue heroes of the Alexander Kielland oil-rig disaster a few weeks ago.

"We also act as a target for air-sea power, guns and



Flt. Lieut. MARTIN WARNER on the deck of the RAF pinnace based at Bridlington — for the moment.

bombs, but not missiles, which are too dangerous, and do drills with maritime aircraft, Nimrods; we go out and they find us," said Martin.

And they still do a bit of what they were set up to do, air-sea rescue of men and planes, both military and civil, which crash into the sea, sharing the work with helicopters and lifeboats stationed up and down the coast.

Cottage

Bridlington is No. 1104 of the air force's Marine Craft Units, a branch of the service which goes back as far as the RAF itself, to April 1918, and has some illustrious names in its list of personnel over the years.

Aircraftman J. H. Ross, alias Col. Thomas Edward Lawrence of the British Army, romantically known as Lawrence of Arabia, was stationed at RAF Bridlington from 1929 until shortly before his discharge from the RAF in February 1935. He died after a motor-cycle accident in May 1935.

During his time at Bridlington, Lawrence lived alone in a fisherman's cottage above the station, and in spite of his lowly rank, was a prime mover in the development of high-speed launches for use in RAF search and rescue work.

The unit began in 1929 as a marine craft detachment from RAF Catfoss, when a boat used to come out from Felixstowe MCU to do range safety work for the Skipsea bombing range.

At first, the local fishermen were highly suspicious of the intruders, but Air Vice Marshal Dowding, as he was then, visited the detachment to put their fears at rest. Dowding later led Fighter Com-

mand to victory in the Battle of Britain.

In 1933, some land was leased from the Bridlington harbour authorities, and the present buildings put up as a support base for the boats.

During the war, the station's main task was search - and - rescue support for the diversion airfield at Carnaby, which had the longest air-strip in the UK, and, being on the coast, was an ideal place to land planes in trouble.

Air-sea rescue continued to be the Marine Branch's main role until 1958, when helicopters replaced flying-boats and took over most of this sort of work.

This was a crisis point for the branch, which has been shrinking steadily since then. Since the war, it has lost the units in Japan, Germany, Bahrain, Gan, Cyprus and Malta, as well as the home bases at Falmouth, Portrush and Newhaven.

In fact, RAF Bridlington was closed in 1958, but was re-opened after six months, with training as its primary task. At that time, there were 50 men there, led by a squadron leader.

The land is still owned by the harbour authorities, but the buildings and equipment are Ministry of Defence property, and their future has still to be decided.

"They call it progress . . . I am too cynical now, but after a break I can get back into it without feeling so disillusioned. The 1104 is no more, and we shall just have to lump it," said Martin. And so another piece of the air force slips into history, and the little unit which has been part of the scenery at Bridlington for so long will join the more illustrious stations, from Duxford in East Anglia to Driffield in this area, where the RAF is just a memory.

14 th

Burniston man still missing

Scarborough police are still looking for Scalby School groundsman Mr Ronald Hodgson, who disappeared from his Burniston home on Monday after going to look for his family's Jack Russell terrier.

Mr Hodgson, of 2 South View Road, left home wearing black wellington boots, a green parka-type coat, a checked shirt, and brown trousers. He said that he was going to look for the dog. The animal later returned home alone.

A helicopter from RAF Leconfield, police dogs, and police horsemen have been used to look for Mr Hodgson, but there is still no sign of his whereabouts.

Mr Hodgson (56) is about 5 ft. 7 in tall with slightly balding grey hair.

Flt Lt Snowden
Flt Lt Barnes
MALM Davies

26 th

Stabbed man in air dash

A MAN was airlifted to Castle Hill Hospital at Cottingham, near Hull suffering from severe wounds after a stabbing incident in Cleethorpes yesterday.

Mr. Terence Day, of 62 Daubney Street, Cleethorpes, was taken to Grimsby General Hospital after being stabbed in a house in Manchester Street, Cleethorpes, at 5.25 pm.

After receiving treatment, he was airlifted by helicopter from RAF Leconfield to Hull where he underwent an operation on his neck. His condition was said to be satisfactory.

A man is helping police with their inquiries.

Sqn Ldr Hayes
Flt Lt Barnes
MALM Todd

28 th

Hunt for woman continues

AN ALL-OUT search was being concentrated in Flamborough today for the 54-year-old woman, who has been missing from her home for nearly two weeks.

Mounted police, coastguards and police on foot with dogs were searching from the Danes Dyke area across the fields to the village in an effort to trace Mrs Marion Paton, who disappeared from her home in Constable Road a week last Friday.

An RAF helicopter from Leconfield has combined a routine exercise with a search of the headland.

30 NOV 80

Clifftop perch anglers 'risk life' in contest

A342
COMPETING anglers who perched on East Coast clifftops, some 200ft. high, risked their lives for a fish, a Coastguard chief said yesterday.

Several hundred fishermen from all over the North took part in the contest, which had a first prize of £250, along 50 miles of the coast around Bridlington.

Some were seen by an RAF patrol helicopter 200ft. above the sea on cliffs at Flamborough and Bempton.

The coastguard in charge of Flamborough Head, Mr. Vic Crosthwaite, said the helicopter radioed that a number of anglers were in very dangerous positions.

"One was on a slippery perch near the foghorn with a sheer drop of 100ft. into the sea. I told him he was on slimy mud after all the rain we had had, and the cliffs were crumbling but he insisted that he was all right.

"I asked him if it was worth it just for a fish and he said it was, and although they were told they should put a stake in the cliffs and tie a rope they went on fishing," said Mr. Crosthwaite.

The competition winner was Mr. Paul Clayton, of Horsforth Avenue, Bridlington, with a 7½lb. cod, who fished from Stottle Nook, Bempton, one of the highest points.

All the first six prize winners fished in this area and all caught large cods.

The highest points on the cliff are preferred because of the sheer drop into deep water where the large fish are.

19 DEC 80

Helicopter drama



28 DEC 80

Copter saves beach angler

A HULL MAN who collapsed while fishing from Holmpton beach yesterday morning was airlifted to hospital by helicopter.

With heavy rain making the cliff side treacherous, police and ambulancemen decided it would be dangerous to try to carry Mr James Bean to the top on a stretcher.

They called out an RAF air-sea rescue helicopter from Leconfield which took the sick man to Hull Royal Infirmary.

Mr Bean (46), of Wingfield Road, is thought to have had a heart attack. He was said by a hospital spokesman today to be "quite satisfactory."

A Withernsea police spokesman said Mr Bean collapsed after complaining of chest pains at about 8.30 am. His son-in-law Mr Andrew Cowley, who was fishing with him, summoned help.

He added that because persistent rain had made the cliff side slippery it was decided to call in the helicopter. "They got us out of a tricky situation," said Chief-Insp. David Hopwood.

15 NOV 80

Filey copter search for crashed hang-glider

A342
An RAF search-and-rescue helicopter made a sweep of the coast at Filey at the week-end after what was thought to be a hang-glider was seen to crash on to the beach north of Filey Brigg.

The crash was reported by the crew of the cable Sea Quest. But when the area was searched, nothing was found.

A coastguard spokesman said that hang-gliders did not normally fly north of the Brigg, and in any case, weather conditions had been unsuitable.

The object may have been a sheet of timber blown from the cliff-top, he said.

A342

A Royal Air Force rescue helicopter was called in by Nottinghamshire police on Wednesday to remove a man's body from Cromwell Weir and was successful at the first attempt.

The body was spotted on Monday morning but river conditions were so bad that the police were unable to use craft or frogmen to remove it.

The body is as yet unidentified but is believed to be that of a man who was reported jumping from the A1 road bridge near Winthorpe last month.

It is just about five years ago that the RAF were called in to help the police and Army remove bodies from the weir after an 11-man assault boat was swept over the weir and ten men died.

5 DEC 00

It's 2,000 up for Leconfield's helicopter heroes

MALM Davies Flt Lt Gibbon Flt Lt Ashton





ANGELS OF MERCY

SHAUN JOHANNSEN (12), from Humberston, was recovering from a fractured skull in Hull Royal Infirmary today where he was rushed in an historic emergency airlift by an RAF helicopter crew from Leconfield.

The flight, which saved the boy a grueling three-hour ambulance journey, was the 2,000th emergency mission by the rescue experts.

In a special two-page feature, beginning on page 11, we fly with the Leconfield "angels."

THE Whirlwind helicopter crew who returned to RAF Leconfield after the station's 2,000th mission on Friday night did not celebrate.

The three men, who make up one of the station's four operational crews, had not battled to be on that flight, but they admitted that the thought that it would be their names recorded against the 2,000th scramble in the mission log was pleasing.

The pilot, Flight-Lieut Martyn Ashton, his navigator, Flight-Lieut Alex Gibbon and Master-Air-Loadmaster Gordon Davies airlifted a 12-year-old boy from Grimsby across the Humber to a Hull hospital after he had sustained a fractured skull in a road accident.

Search-and-rescue helicopters have flown from Leconfield since 1957, but the 35 aircrew and ground staff are now the only RAF personnel there. Leconfield was taken over by the Army in 1977.

Their role is an important one. They provide 24-hour cover 365 days of the year for an area stretching from Redcar in the north to Lancaster in the west, and Birmingham and The Wash in the south — plus an area up to 90 miles into the North Sea.

The Leconfield patch can go beyond that 90-mile radius. To two gas rigs, the Amoco Eight Alpha and the BP Whisky Alpha, both have helipads and allow the Whirlwinds to refuel when they are out at sea.

Air-sea rescue is not the station's primary concern. Their main role is the rescue of military personnel in distress and their secondary role is the rescue of passengers of civil aircraft who are in distress.

Third in priority are any other incidents — and it is these which make up between 90 and 95 per cent of the missions flown by Leconfield crews.

Casualties from land or sea, are taken to the nearest suitable hospital — one with facilities for the helicopters to land. Scarborough Hospital is one of those on the constantly updated list.

Apart from rescues at sea the crews are experienced in the searching for and rescuing of people on moorland and on cliffs.

One of their more mundane but none-the-less important jobs — like their 2,000th scramble — is the transfer of hospital patients from Grimsby to Hull. The need for this will probably disappear with the completion of the Humber Bridge.

Each month the crews have to carry out a strict training programme, which is all-important in encouraging teamwork. Any rescue is essentially a team effort, with each member of the crew trusting the others implicitly.

The pilot, the captain of the team, is "blind" when attempting a rescue. He must depend on his winch-operator for directions.

The loadmaster, dangling at the end of the steel cable, is the man who plucks the victim from the sea or a windswept moor. His directions to the winch-operator are relayed to the pilot.

All winchmen are non-commissioned officers and all are volunteers. Master-Air-Loadmaster Jeff Todd flew on the 1,000th mission from Leconfield, in 1974, when he and his colleagues lifted an injured man from a trawler.

He volunteered for the winchman's role 12 years ago, because he was seeking job satisfaction and the felling at the end of the day that he had done something to help somebody else.

Practice for Jeff Todd's job cannot be simulated and D Flight's co-existence with the Army at Leconfield has had an unexpected bonus.

Many is the young soldier who has "volunteered" to let Mr Todd and his colleagues practise their sea-rescue techniques in Bridlington Bay.



● Maintenance on one of the squadron's Whirlwind helicopters being carried out by Cpls Fred Beamish (left), and Gordon Davies (top).

Historic A342 mercy mission

A YOUNG BOY injured in a road accident was today seriously ill in Hull Royal Infirmary — unaware his tragedy has made history for RAF helicopter crews based at Leconfield's Normandy Barracks.

The victim — a 12-year-old pedestrian from South Humber-side was air-lifted from Grimsby last night in the 2,000th emergency mission flown by the search and rescue experts.

A Whirlwind helicopter from 'D Flight,' 22 Squadron, chalked the landmark, after being 'scrambled' for the mission when doctors ordered the boy to be transferred from Grimsby General Hospital because of his injuries.

A copter piloted by Flt. Lt. Martin Ashton, navigated by Flt. Lt. Alex Gibbon and crewed by Master Air Loader Gordon Davies took off from Leconfield after being alerted by Grimsby ambulance staff.

The boy, Shaun Johannsen, of Lidgard Road, Humberston, had been rushed to Grimsby General Hospital after he was in collision with a car in the village last night.

Doctors discovered he had suffered a fractured skull and feared a journey by ambulance to Hull would take too long and be too much of a risk.

Shaun was loaded into the helicopter after the aircraft landed in a playing field near the hospital — a regular touchdown point used in similar missions. Police cars formed a circle with their headlights blazing to guide Flt. Lt. Ashton to the ground.

The boy was landed at Hull and rushed for treatment. His condition today was described as 'poorly.'

The mission saved an ambulance making a three-hour journey by road.

Over 1,370 lives have now been saved by Leconfield's heli-

copters, which until last year operated as 202 Squadron (Search and Rescue).

Flt. Lt. Ashton described last night's flight as "routine." He explained: "There was a strong wind but nothing really to worry about. Except we did have to fly backwards to land."

"It was a mission we have done many times before. We estimate 20 per cent. of all our scrambles are 'medivacs' from Grimsby to Hull Royal Infirmary."

● A special report on the role of the RAF rescue helicopters at Leconfield will appear in next week's Hull Daily Mail.



ANY day now the alarm bells are going to go in the crew room of D-Flight, 22 Squadron, Royal Air Force, Beconfield and yet another mission will be on its way . . . straight into Humberside's record books.

For the men who fly the bright yellow rescue helicopters from a windswept corner of the former RAF base are set to go on their 2,000th mission.

They have already carried out 1,999 mercy flights from the former bomber base just north of Beverley — the latest being a "medevac" flight when they took a 76-year-old man from Grimsby to Hull Royal Infirmary.

Mission number 2,000 could come tomorrow, next week or next month. The only thing certain in the lives of the group of 35 RAF officers and men who operate from what is now the Army's School of Mechanical Transport is that it will come. For their services have been in demand from the day they set up shop in Leconfield.

That was back in June, 1957, when 257 Squadron began operating Sycamore helicopters from the station, then a fighter base. Previously, search aid rescue machines had been operated from North Cotes across the Humber but it had been discovered that the salt air — North Cotes is nothing more than a stone's throw from the North Sea — was corroding the helicopter rotor blades and a more hospitable climate had to be found.

In December, 1959, that SAR unit became part of 228 Squadron, later 202 Squadron, and began operating the familiar yellow Whirlwinds from Leconfield.

Last summer it changed again to 22 Squadron. But what hasn't changed is the nature of the job or the dedication and skill of the men who do it.

What first human drama sent the crews racing from Leconfield no one knows. The record books at Leconfield only go back to the late 1960s and the squadron scrapbooks a few years earlier.

Perhaps it was an injured trawlerman, a child trapped on the cliffs at Flamborough, a yachtsman in difficulties in the Humber, a sick crew member of a cargo vessel or an RAF pilot who had had to bale out over the North Sea. Or perhaps it was one of the mercy flights to take patients from hospitals in Grimsby and Scunthorpe to Hull Royal Infirmary which are dotted through the brief accounts of each flight in the records.

In that time there have been few incidents, minor or major, along the coastline from Skegness to Flamborough which has not needed the helicopter men from Leconfield.

Their skills have been needed to rescue, to transport and to observe, each of which they can do quicker and more effectively than the traditional rescue services on the ground.

The record shows 1,371 "survivors" from the 1,996 missions. Survivors is a term equally applied to the 76-year-old hospital patient to the three men plucked from the wreckage of the Sea Gen 15 years ago, for which one crew member earned the George Medal. These are just a few examples from Leconfield's log:—

JULY 13, 1969. Swimmer in difficulties off Wonderland, Cleethorpes. Search carried out with negative results, body later washed up . . .

MARCH 9, 1972: Mand taken from Grimsby fishing vessel Grenaa Pearl, 15 miles NE Spurn to Grimsby General Hospital . . .

MARCH 25, 1974. Search for missing girl, 2½ years. Found by police asleep under hedge . . .

AUGUST 4, 1976. Seaman taken from fishing vessel Shepherd Lad suffering from dog fish bite, 15 miles ENE Spurn, taken to Hull Royal Infirmary . . .

OCTOBER 6, 1976. Investigate body in water off Donna Nook. Turned out to be a tree trunk . . .

And so the catalogue of mercy goes on. In the heavy snow of 1979, the crews of Leconfield flew round-the-clock missions, supplying fodder to outlying farms, lifting YEB engineers to repair damaged power lines, kidney machines and coastguards to the Sprung Point station cut off by huge drifts.

Throughout most of this time the missions have been carried out by the Whirlwinds, a 1950s-design helicopter still doing service in the 1980s.

Next July, further defence cuts not withstanding, they are due to be replaced by far more modern Wessex helicopters.

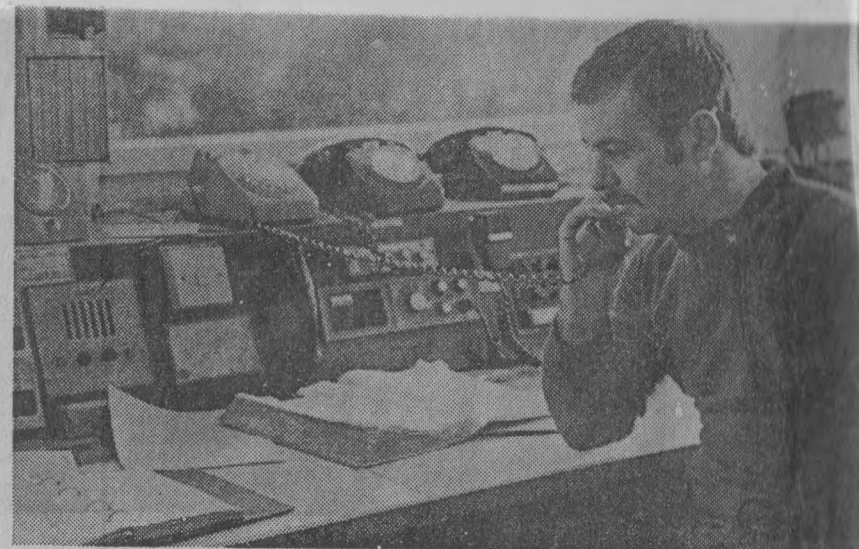
The Whirlwind has a range of 85 miles, allowing the machine 20 minutes working time before the return journey. The Wessex will increase this only marginally but in recent years the helicopter crews have managed to considerably extend their range by using oil and gas rigs as North Sea "filling stations".

The crews work 24-hour shifts followed by a further 24-hour period of being on call at their homes and during each shift they are expected to carry out a couple of training flights over the North Humberside coastline or "dry" winches over the airfield itself to keep the hand in for the real emergency.

Story: Pat Otter
Picture: Brian Frith.



LEFT: waiting for call number 2000 are Flt. Lt. Alex Gibson, Flt. Lt. Martyn Ashton and M.A.L.M. Gordon Davies.



RIGHT: Winchman, Sgt. W. Laken, running the phones, a task undertaken by all crew members.

THE ACTION MEN



Angels of air always ready

By Paul Williamson

A LAZY, hot summer's afternoon on the beach at Bridlington crowded with high-season holidaymakers . . .

Dad dozes in his deckchair while Mum offers her back as a sacrifice to the sun to get a tan which will impress the neighbours back home.

Teenager Tommy is further down the beach playing in the surf on the newly-bought air-bed Dad's wheezing lungs have

Chat to the crew in their quieter moments—90 per cent. of their time, they claim, consists of waiting for the red 'phone to ring—and they will cringe at the thought of being anything more than skilled RAF experts "just doing a job."

Chat to hundreds of

and Allied pilots brought down in the sea off the coast.

But the majority of emergency scrambles take place to rescue civilians whether on ships in trouble far out to sea or holiday-makers in trouble on the East Coast from the Wash to Whitby.

The Whirlwinds have been at

and machines stay Humberside under drone's control.

But 202 is still with affection as who carried out county's most dramatics flying survivors jaws of death.

Not surprisingly, motto was 'Ser lante'—which in Ed 'Eune Watch

Scramble . . . A joint operation with the ground crew and duty flight.

Heroics are ruled out . . .

play Yatzi.

Serious stuff aside, the squa-

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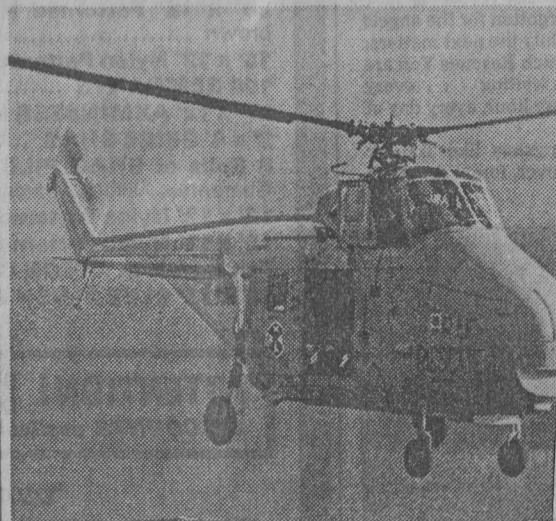
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just inflated.

Thirty minutes later, Dad forces open an eye against the glare of the sky and mumbles with a sigh: "I wonder where our Tommy's got to Ma?"

A tiny seed of doubt lingers in Mum's ears. Rising to her feet, she scans the beach with her eyes. Suddenly, panic and fear change her features as she spots her son.

The teenager—who if he has not been told once has been told a thousand times not to stray too far—is drifting out to sea. Clinging to the air-bed which has suddenly become a life-jacket, one arm waves in the air in blind desperation.

Dad flies off the beach—his deckchair dreams shattered by a nightmare he will never forget. Grabbing a 'phone, his fingers find the three numbers at the bottom of the dial . . .

Seconds later, the red telephone perching in the operations room of 'D Flight' 22

swimmers, boatmen, yacht enthusiasts, farmers and trawlermen and they will tell you **THEIR** story of the men from 22. It may take some time—there are 2,000 of them to tell.

Officially, 'D Flight'—just one of five with others based at Chivenor, Devon, Leuchars, Scotland, RAF Valley and Manston, Kent—has, as its main task, the search and rescue of RAF

Leconfield much longer than No. 22 Squadron, which has a pair of flying ducks on its crest. Until 1979, the aircraft were attached to No. 202 Squadron which also performs in the search and rescue role.

The change-over came when 202 was re-equipped with long-range Sea King helicopters and re-deployed to other parts of the country. The Leconfield men

cially—and much with its public in "Two-oh-Two Tak You," something fishermen and holic Humberside for ne When the chang the unofficial motto to a simply

Continued ov

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