

WORK

When one hears 'Naval Air Station' one thinks immediately of planes and pilots. A bit deeper thought might lead to other aircrew such as gunner or to the people who maintain and service the plane. Other jobs and their incumbents probably never come to mind unless a particular issue or incident comes up.

It is obvious of course that any organisation of several hundred people who are largely resident at their place of work needs all sorts of support functions.

The work at Royal Naval Air Station Stretton naturally was mainly concerned with flying and maintenance of aircraft. The biggest branch was therefore the 'Air' branch and it probably contained 80% of the personnel on the station.

The other branches were there for support, including technical and welfare.

We have attempted to give some idea of the duties carried out by individual trades within a branch. No doubt there are some omissions for which we apologise.

NAVAL AIR BRANCH

The general organisation structure was:

Station Commanding Officer, normally a Captain

Deputy Station Commanding Officer, normally a Commander

Commander (Electrical) Lt. Commander Lieutenants Sub Lieutenants Chief Petty Officers Petty Officers Leading Air Mechanics(L) Air Mechanics(L)	Commander (Engineering) Lt. Commander Lieutenants Warrant Officers Sub Lieutenants Chief Petty Officers Petty Officers Leading Air Mechanics(E), (A), (O) Air Mechanics(E), (A)(O)	Commander (Flying) Lt. Commander Lieutenants Sub Lieutenants Midshipmen Chief Petty Officers (TAGs) Air Traffic Control Duty Crew Handlers
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The Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers could either be skilled tradesmen known in the R.N. as 'Artificers' or have been promoted from Ldg. Air Mechanic. During the war the Artificer had either previously served a long service apprenticeship at an R.A.F. training centre or were reservists bringing their civilian trade with them. All Chiefs and Petty Officers were responsible for controlling and supervising the work of the Air Mechanics with the Artificer grade tending to deal with the more technical and complex tasks.



A. Perrett

C.P.O. (AA3) Ron Cooper and P.O. (AA4) Tony Perrett on their 'Pussers' bikes ca 1950

A suffix letter denoted the trade of the mechanic. 'L' was 'Electrical', 'E' was for 'Engines', 'A' for 'Airframes', 'O' for 'Ordnance'. 'H' was for 'Handler'. This latter position did not exist in the F.A.A. until 1945.

The substantive rate or rank for mechanics and others was 'Naval Airman'. 'Air Mechanic' was the non-substantive rate or trade. A suffix was added to either term to denote the specialisation. Movement from Naval Airman II to I was 6 months after qualifying at the trade.

The early mechanics were trained at R.A.F. establishments and R.A.F. personnel also worked on the station for most of the war. Air Mechanics (O) (Armourers) for example were trained at R.A.F. Kirkham.

Naval Training camps were established of course as fast as resources would allow. H.M.S. ARIEL at Culcheth was opened in 1942 to train air radio mechanics and extended in 1946 to train electrical and radar mechanics. A significant number of Wrens were trained as mechanics and some eventually became Leading Hands in charge of male mechanics. Later on training was carried out at H.M.S. FLEDGLING, Millreece, Staffordshire for E and A mechanics.

The jobs of the Petty Officers and mechanics are fairly obvious in the case of 'Engines' and 'Electrical', remembering of course that it applies to aircraft only.

The ranks and badges are shown on the following page.

The following are some of the badges of the Royal Navy. It is not a complete picture, but includes most of the badges of rank and specialisation worn by ratings at a Naval Air Station.

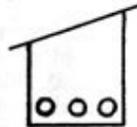
ALL BRANCHES—worn on the left sleeve.



Leading Rate



Petty Officer



Chief Petty Officer
worn on both cuffs

AIR BRANCH—worn on the right sleeve.



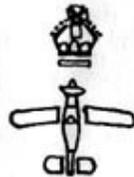
Naval Airman II



Naval Airman I



Leading Naval Airman



Petty Officer

SUPPLY BRANCH



Writer



Supply Assistant



Cook



Steward

Chief Petty Officers wear their Badges on the lapel of the jacket

NAVAL AIRMEN—Specialisation

A E H M E T O

Airframe

Engine

Aircraft
Handler

Meteorological
Observer

Ordnance

P S E

Photographer

Safety Equipment

ELECTRICAL BRANCH



Electrician



Electrician (Air)



Radio Electrician



Radio Air
Electrician

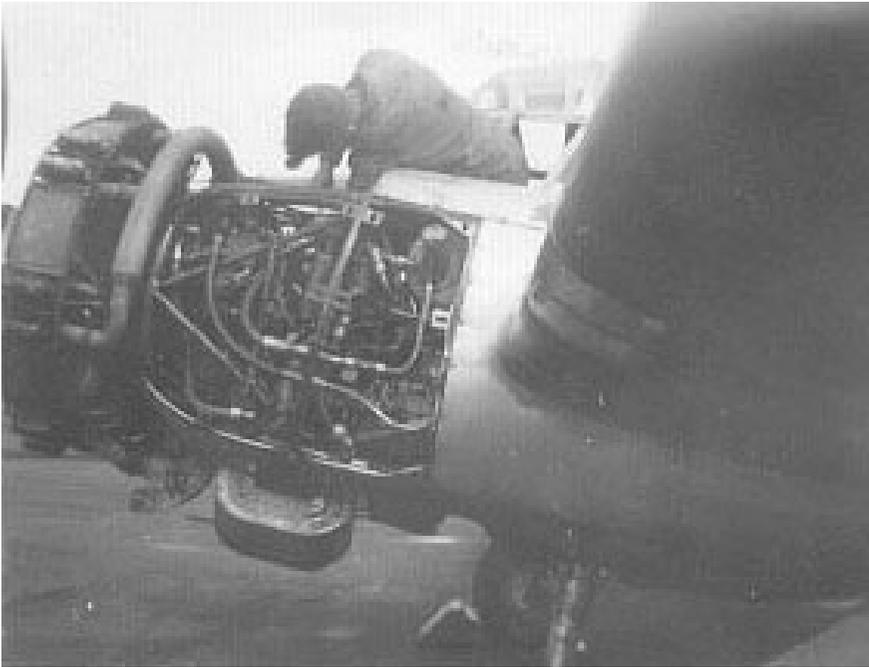
OTHER BRANCHES



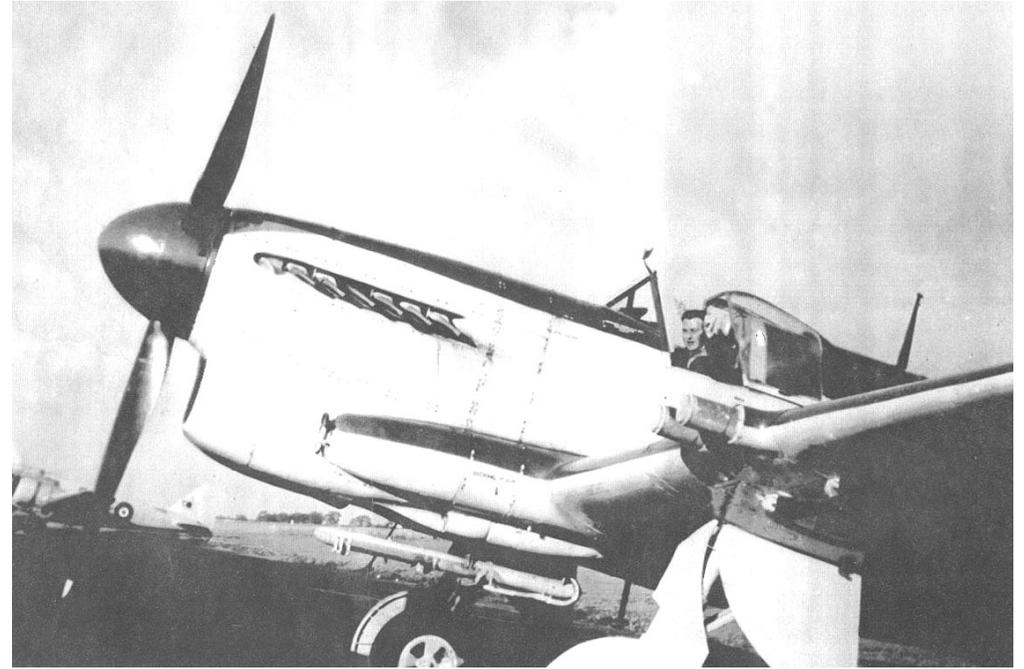
Sick Berth



Regulating

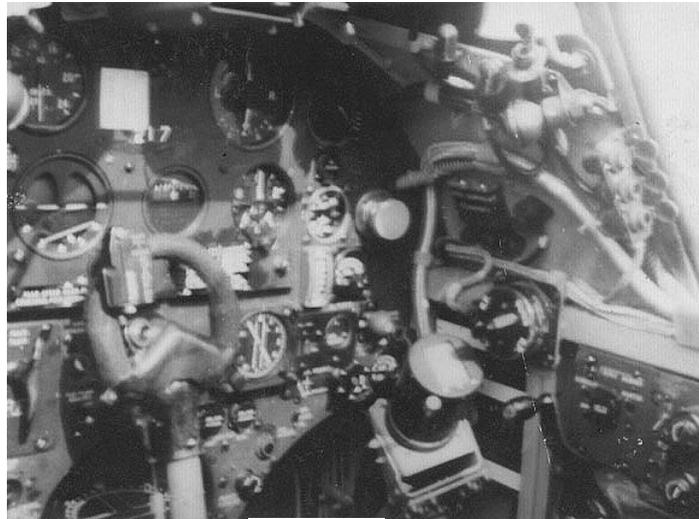


Air Mechanic (E) Venables at work ca 1950.



Air mechanic (L) W. Clelland completing cockpit electrical and instrument checks on a Firefly ca 1950.

Inside a cockpit



all photos
W. Clelland

'Airframes' is rather more difficult for the layman to understand. This mechanic was sometimes referred to as a 'rigger' and one internal applicant to the F.A.A. was told "Oh, you're a seaman so you know all about knots and ropes, we'll make you a rigger".

At the start of the war planes such as the Swordfish were common, with struts and wires everywhere. These had to be properly set and adjusted to fly efficiently and safely, hence the need for a 'rigger' who had been trained in the theory of flying. In addition repair of damage to the body of a plane had to be undertaken. This was quite often a case of fabric and wood rather than metal. The 'airframe' mechanics were also concerned with the hydraulic and pneumatic systems in aircraft.



Air Mechanic (A) John working on nose of Firefly ca 1950.

The 'ordnance' mechanics were normally based in the Armoury and often called 'Armourers'. Wrens received basic ordnance training at the Royal Navy Gunnery School at Whale Island, Portsmouth and training specific to aircraft, from R.A.F. instructors, when drafted to Stretton. There were about 50 armourers at this time. Their work included daily inspections of the armament of resident aircraft and the Very flares carried. They were responsible for ensuring that access hatches that had been removed were secured after the inspection. This was sometimes a problem on American made aircraft such as Corsairs. The hatches were secured with special screws, which were not available in the U.K. then. The only way to get spare ones was to go over to Burtonwood for them.

Incoming squadrons that had fired the specified limit of ammunition also had their gun barrels changed by the armourers. The worn barrels were sent to Speke for reconditioning.

All flying aircraft or aircraft coming out of storage for use had to be inspected daily by the A, E, L and O mechanics. They had to sign an A700 form after to say that all checks etc. had been done; this included the hatches mentioned above.

Naval Mechanic Handlers were introduced in the Navy in 1945. This was to regularise the task of moving aircraft and securing them after they had landed. This was primarily on aircraft carriers where it could be an extremely difficult and hazardous job. Previously it was done by any personnel available at the time and could take skilled men away from their prime function. They only worked as Fire Crew on the Crash Tender at Stretton until 1949 when they started dealing with movement of aircraft on the ground.

They then wore No 2 uniform (blue serge with white gaiters and white belt), as opposed to the overalls or No. 8 dress of the other mechanics. There also appears to have been some gaps in their training such as not knowing that a pilot taxiing a plane to the storage location could not see the handler in certain positions. They were also not supposed to stand on plane wings etc, with their boots on.



Note handlers in boots on wing of Swordfish.

W. Clelland



Handlers moving Barracuda

W. Clelland



C. Gibson

Manoeuvring Sea Fury into hangar ca 1953

Before the A.M.Y. was operational in 1944/45 maintenance and other work on aircraft was carried out in the Station Flight area. The Aircraft Repair Section was in the large Callender Hamilton hangar and the Engine Repair Section was in a nearby small Mains hangar. It was also done in the 8 hangars on the southeast perimeter or on adjoining hardstanding. After 1945 most mechanics were employed in the A.M.Y. with lesser numbers in the 'Mosquito' section (ex Fairey Aviation site) and Station Flight/Ferry Flight. Mechanics were also attached to resident squadrons e.g. 767. The R.N.V.R. had its own volunteer mechanics in addition to a number of regular mechanics. A number were left in Station Flight as 'Duty Crews' to service 'Ferry Flight' aircraft or any incoming visitors who needed it. Mechanics were also attached to resident squadrons e.g. 767. The R.N.V.R. had its own volunteer mechanics.



A.Taylor

Sea Balliol



W. Clelland

Duty Crew members 1948. L to R, back - A.M. (L) Fletcher, A.M. (A) Williams, P.O. Poynton. front - A.M. (E) Whittaker, A.M. (L) Clelland



A.Taylor

Wyvern



THE AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE YARD

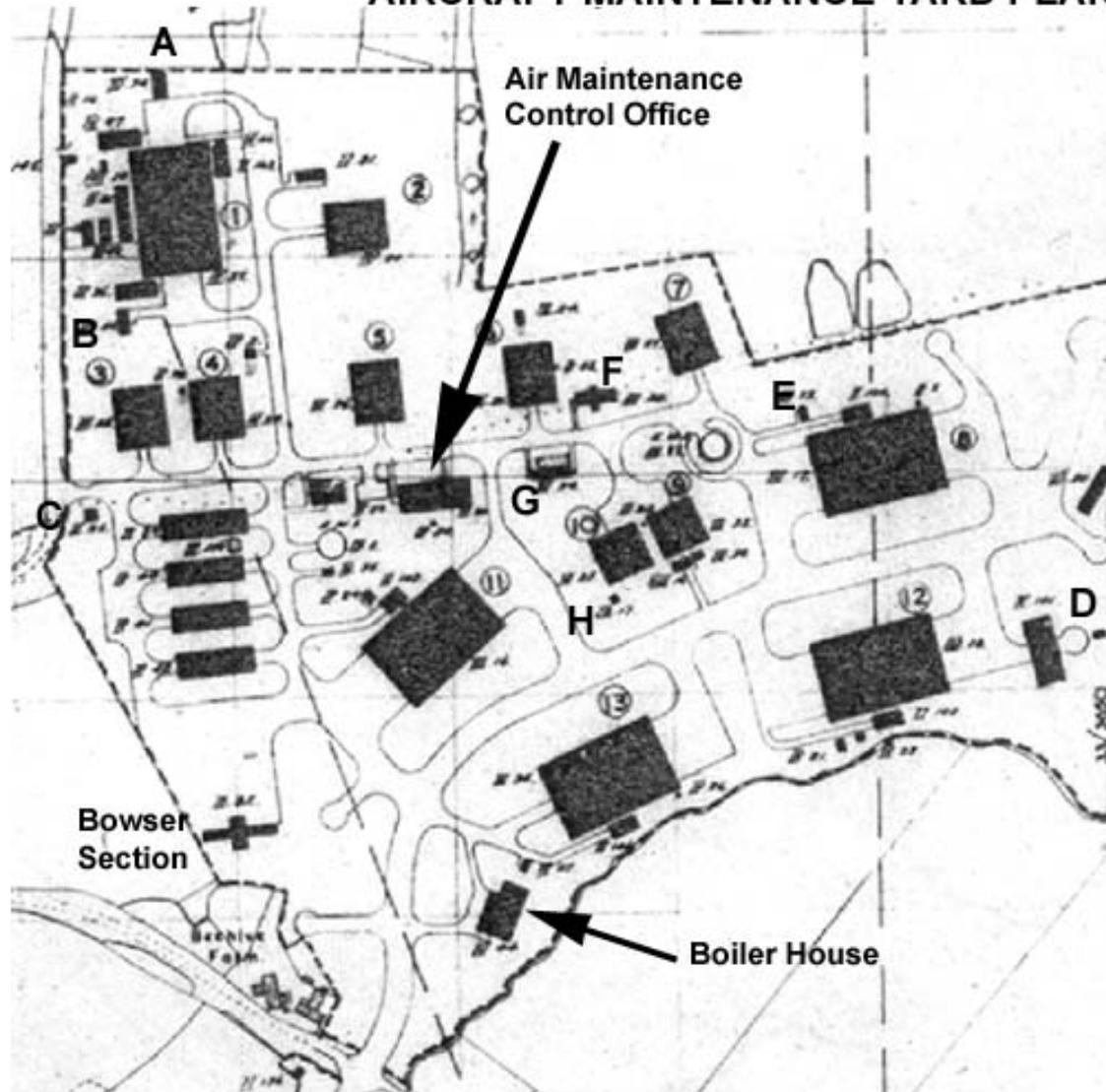
HANGARS

- 1 Engine Holding Unit 2 Eng.....? 3 Metal Workshop 4 Engine Fitters Shop 5 Woodwork Shop
 6 Electrical & Instruments Shop 7 Dope Component Shop 8 ARS 'C' / Venom 2 RDU 9 Air Ordnance Section
 10 Component Repair Shop 11 ARS 'A' 12 ARS 'B' / Wyvern RDU 13 ARS 'D' / Venom 1 RDU

ARS = Aircraft Repair Section

RDU = Repair and Dispatch Unit

AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE YARD PLAN ca 1955



- A - Oxygen Charging Bay
- B - Auxiliary Boiler House
- C - Police Office
- D - Cannon Butts
- E - Dope Store
- F - Radio Workshop
- G - Battery Charging
- H - Sewage Pump House

Most of the other buildings are:-

- Grew Room and office
- or
- Crew Room and store
- or
- Latrines

THE AIR MAINTENANCE YARD

The aerial photo and the plan give a good idea of the extent of this area. As indicated there are many smaller buildings that are not named. This is mainly because the site plan we have is not good enough to identify all of them and we do not have a key to building numbers shown. The information is probably available in an archive somewhere if anyone wants it badly enough. The plan shows services such as drainage and better copies may be in local council files etc. The use of hangars varied over the years and we have shown this where known.

The accompanying account by Tony Perret illustrates the variety of work undertaken in this area, as do parts of other accounts.

Tony Perrett, Petty Officer (AA4), 29th June 1949 to 8th July 1952

My three years at RNAS Stretton are recalled with some of the happiest memories of my service life despite writing in my diary on the day of arrival 'first impressions not so good'! Having arrived there on the 29th June 1949 I was to remain, apart from a six weeks course in Wiltshire and leave periods, until departing again on draft on the 8th July 1952. Initially I was accommodated, with the small group of about a dozen from Arbroath on draft with me, in a Nissen hut at the back of the main camp site, in a two tiered bunk bed, which I shared with Ken Wilkins who was later to transfer to the Australian Air Force and attained the rank of Wing Commander. Rising at 0650 next morning and doing joining routine, I note that my impression had 'changed slightly' more favourably, no doubt helped by the warm fine weather! The day after that I

started working at 'Station Flight', in a hangar for operational and visiting aircraft, where I was entrusted to clean the windows of a De Havilland Dominie as a first job, plus handling various other aircraft into position! During the following week I cleaned dope (paint) off a Dominie and took the wheels off a Barracuda, later working in the wheel bay assembling tyres onto wheels ... at last I was earning my keep! In those days weekend leave started at noon on the Saturday, following a morning's work, until Monday morning, but every so often you could get a 'Friday While' ... a long weekend from noon Friday until Monday morning.

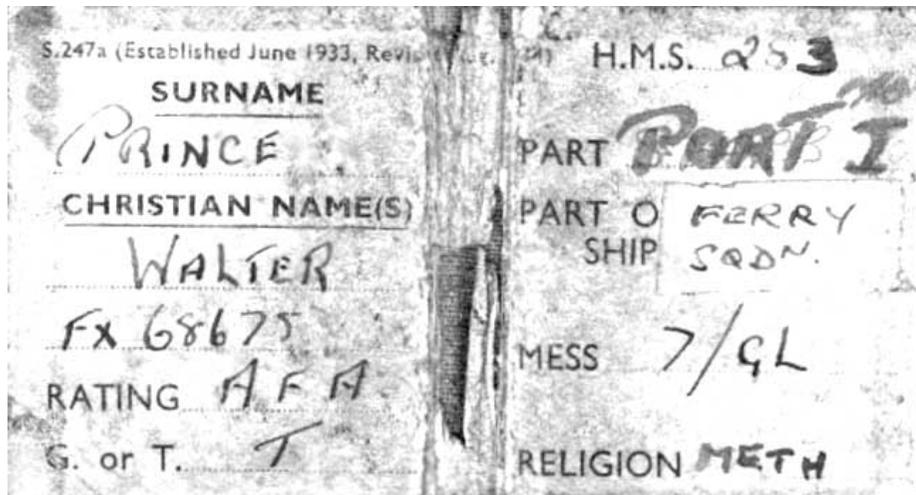
We were now 'Aircraft Artificer's 5th Class', and rated as such after seeing the Captain on the following Wednesday the 6th July, then proudly sewing our red 'hooks' (fouled anchor badge of rank) on our uniform's left arm. This was the same badge worn by Leading Seamen and Leading Airmen in the matelot's 'Square Rig', and we were collectively known as 'Leading Hands' or the nickname of 'Hooky'. Gold badges were for the future, after becoming fully-fledged Petty Officers and getting our 'Number 1 suits'!

One of my unpleasant memories of Stretton was the terror inducing camp dentist who I had my first appointment with the very next day for a filling which was obviously spotted during my joining routine inspection! I recall several subsequent visits to him, a rather sinister looking man who operated a foot-tread drilling machine without any kind of anaesthetic, and on at least one occasion attacking a tooth with a small hammer and chisel! Next day, a Friday, brought the fortnightly 'Payment Divisions', plus a lecture in the afternoon.

By the 12th day of that same month I was working on a Mosquito bomber doing a 'Daily Inspection'; the weather was

hot and thundery, and next day it was time for another visit to the dreaded dentist before doing 'Gangway Leading Hand' duty in the Guard Room all evening! This included the taking and giving of 'Station Cards' from/to shore-going men. (These small cards, coloured red or green according to 'Port or 'Starboard' Duty Watch, recorded your name, service and ship's book numbers etc.).

The heat-wave had ended by the 18th when I changed work



locations and moved to 'ARS B' hangar (Aircraft Repair Shop/Section), in cooler occasionally wet weather, now working on airframes and hydraulic assignments, whilst quite frequently doing 'AEO's Rounds' on duty evenings, which I imagine consisted of security rounds about the airfield and hangars since the title referred to the 'Air Engineer Officer'. One rather strange duty I recorded in my diary was that of 'Drying Room Sentry', which suggests a security check against would-be underwear 'nickers'! On the 23rd August I

changed to working in 'ARS A', about 200 yards away from 'B', where I recall there were Dominie and Walrus aircraft, and then undertook a two day 'Gas Course' at the end of the month. There was also an 'ARS C' hangar next to ours which at one stage at least was full of Sea Prince aircraft. It was the practice to move us new young 'Tiffies' around the various departments to give us experience, and my next move was to 1831 (RNVR) Squadron on the 5th September, over on the main airfield site, working on Seafires, at least until the 20th when the squadron flew off to RNAS Lee-on-Solent and I reverted to 'ARS B' again next day, signing my first aircraft 'Daily Inspection (D1) Log' on the 23rd! Then on the 18th October the big day came to move into the Petty Officer's Mess and more comfortable huts, although still AA5's (Hookies), which was a welcome privilege. On the 21st December I went on leave again the next morning, from which I returned overnight to arrive back in camp at 0400 on the 5th January in the new year (1950), putting in a full day's work plus AEO's Rounds that same evening into the bargain! Fortunately the next day was Friday and 'Payment Divisions' at which, in those days, you had to queue up and wait for your name to be called in sequence, then step forward to the paymaster's table to present your cap, flat top upwards, whilst shouting out your ship's book number as the money was laid on top of your cap. A smart turn to the left or right and then march off quickly to the NAAFI, Mess bar, shop or creditors to soon deplete it! This ancient ceremony no longer takes place as current naval payments are made directly into bank accounts! On the 6th February it was 'change around time' once more, when the AA5's were scheduled to move to a different section, but according to my diary I was kept on at 'ARS B' - 'by request'. . . - but it doesn't say whose! I took

weekend leave on Friday the 24th, after returning from which I then moved to Station Flight again on the 'Inspection Team', only for two days however as I then went to the Administration Block for 'AMCO' (Air Maintenance Control Office) experience in office duties. In March I was in the works department and went through a series of changes covering 'Appendix A, Stores Office, Magneto Section, Bowser Section, Oxygen and Component Bays'. From the 6th to the 20th April I went home on Easter Leave, and returned to work again in 'ARS B' on a Mosquito aircraft's metal repairs, then on May 1st I was assigned to the Machine Shop and two days later I know that I was having a haircut because I remember others there discussing the launching of HMS Ark Royal that day in Liverpool by Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother). The 15th May was significant from the fact that I wore the new No 8 rig for the first time (light blue working shirt and dark blue trousers in a strong material) issued instead of overalls, and moved yet again, this time to the 'Armoury' where my first task was to sift the sand in the Butts before being allowed to strip a gun! Then it was back to 'ARS B' on the 22nd and sitting the AA4's exam the next morning.

Having obviously passed that exam and undertaken a three day disciplinary course meantime I was on 'Captain's Requestmen' on the Friday morning 7th July to be rated to 'Acting Petty Officer (AA4)', so now fully entitled to be in their Mess. A change in duties now meant that I no longer did 'Gangway Leading Hand' and instead did 'Stand-by Duty PO' on the 15th, which included supervising the cinema show on that Saturday evening. I should perhaps mention at this point that because nobody under 25 years of age received marriage allowance or married quarters in those days (and

married quarters were very limited locally anyway), the majority of the camp's complement lived onboard and so it was a continuous round of dances, socials, concerts, plays and cinema shows. This duty also entailed taking your bedding to the Pay Office on the airfield site to sleep the night on guard, followed by a more pleasant and traditional duty the following morning, about noon, of supervising the rum tub issues and savouring the aroma!

No doubt the wet stormy weather at this time influenced me in going to 'Slops' (clothing store) on the 23rd August to buy an oilskin coat and rubber sea-boots, wearing the latter in the smart regulation RN style with thick white stockings turned down over the top few inches! The cost of an oilskin coat then was £1 14s 0d, compared to £4 1s 0d for a Burberry raincoat; or an overcoat at £4 5s 0d (new style) and £2 11s 6d (old style) with either gilt or horn buttons. Those prices were for 'Other Ranks', and it mystified me that officers had a different scale, the same oilskin coat costing them £2 6s 6d! If you wished to complete the oilskin set you could have leggings for 4s 11d and Sou'wester for 2s 9d..... but I made do with just the coat! The £1 14s 0d oilskin coat cost in current decimal money would be £1.70 but worth considerably more than that today! I explained in Part 1 that only men dressed as seamen were issued with oilskins, but many others like me purchased this useful garment, for whilst a Burberry was alright for light showers, only an oilskin proved fully waterproof in a heavy downpour. The sea boots, or 'Boots, knee, rubber' cost 14s 6d - (£1.45), while 'Boots, ankle' (parade boots) were £1 0s 2d. The annual Kit Upkeep Allowance' (KUA) for CPOs (Class I uniform) was then £15 5s 0d. Petty Officers and Men dressed as Seamen (Class II uniform) received

£13 10s 0d. - Petty Officers and Men not dressed as Seamen (Class III) got £15 0s 0d. For National Servicemen these allowances were £7 15s 0d - £6 15s 0d and £7 10s 0d respectively.

With the continuing dull and wet weather I was obviously making good use of my newly acquired oilskin coat, and one thing I do recall using it for was wrapping it around my bedding in inclement weather when I wheeled it up to the pay office on my 'Pusser's Bike' for duty nights as none was provided there! (Everything belonging to the Royal Navy was referred to as 'Pusser's' . . . a name derived from the old naval term of 'Purser' for the pay and supply officer). I also remember the quite vile smell of Gestetner machine ink which pervaded this office, and sometimes when it was really cold, with no heating on during the night, I would have to sleep in my oilskin to keep warm! Thankfully nobody ever attempted to raid the pay office during my duties!

Packing my kit bag on Tuesday 9th January 1951, I departed next morning at 0845 on draft to HMS Royal Arthur, the Petty Officer's Training School at Kingsmoor near Corsham, arriving at 1730 and settling into a cabin with my course companion PO (Electrician) Richardson, who I had travelled down with from RNAS Stretton. Our course number was 158, and as much of it took place outdoors. We were doing it at the worst possible time weather-wise, cold and thoroughly wet, with some snow included! The course consisted of lectures (two of which we had to give individually, one a given subject and the other by choice), parade drill, PT and sports, firing on the range and obstacle courses, plus an endurance test when we were dropped by lorry somewhere miles away to find our way back by fair means or foul. We had to reach the camp without being caught by another team

of men lurking around the base waiting to pounce; I got caught on the 24th January and then on the 7th February it was my turn to be one of the 'hounds' (or 'jailers') sent out on bicycles to catch the 'hares' ... the returners. My two lectures were on 'Aircraft fabric work' and 'A history of the theatre'. We took it in turn to take charge of the squad and in addition to the course schedule we also had to do camp duties occasionally such as Duty Camp PO and Duty Gate PO. One of the most memorable events on this course was being taken down a local deep mine under the Mendip Hills which contained masses of MOD stores and had its own electric railway system. A few years earlier Prince Philip, as a Lieutenant RN, had been an instructor here, and we had our Course 'Booze-up' in the same pub 'The Methuen Arms' in Corsham that he often frequented to play 'Skittles'. The course over, which we both passed, the time came to return to RNAS Stretton on Thursday 22nd February, and leaving camp at 0830 went by rail from Corsham, via Bristol, Newport, Crewe and Warrington to arrive in 'Blackcap' at 1830. Next day was spent unpacking and doing 'joining routine' once more, then it was back to 'ARS B' on the 'Minor (Inspection) Party', and I obviously did something right as the two aircraft which I worked on went off on successful flights a few days later! Since working in 'A.RS B' the jobs I recall doing were fabric repairs on a Tiger Moth, engine changes on Seafires and Mosquitos, but now found myself in charge of the hangar stores (including the Dope/Paint Store outside) on the 20th April! This was a job I took to instantly, having explained earlier of my disinterest in engineering, and was in fact to be my 'part of ship' for much of my remaining time in the FAA.

I was now (on the 17th May) the official proud owner of a

'Pusser's Bike' drawn out on temporary loan, and thus quite mobile! Due to a burst water main, the camp's water supply was cut off from the 26th until noon of the 29th. How we managed meantime I cannot recall, but unless some emergency supply was provided we were perhaps all smelling like skunks! In early June I was doing a 'Small Arm Course' in practice for a 'Reserve Firing Party', whatever that was! I saw the Captain on Thursday morning 12th July to be rated 'Confirmed' Petty Officer (AA4) rank from the previous 'Acting' grade. Returning to camp at 0400 on Friday 17th August from leave it was back to work immediately and again the following morning, then Duty PO the next day! I lost my cushy stores job on Monday 20th and was put in charge of the 'Mods & STIs Crew' - Mods referred to 'Modifications' and STIs were 'Special Technical Instructions' I believe. I obviously came into some money about now, so could afford to order a No 1 Doeskin uniform suit from Burton's Tailors in Warrington on the 1st September. On the 14th came a new duty for me . . . 'Duty Bus Inspector', which I remember entailed supervising and selling tickets on an RN bus run from the town's Central Station as a late night service after 'Mrs Naylor's Buses' stopped operating! King George VI died on Wednesday 6th February 1951 and at Divisions two days later the proclamation of Queen Elizabeth II was read out, then on Friday 15th, the day of the King's funeral, I went on parade in Warrington with the HMS Blackcap detachment, marching through the town to Bank Park in Sankey Street where we formed up on the open ground in front of the Town Hall. Other service units and local dignitaries took part in this memorial service to honour the late King. Five days later I collected my new uniform serge suit from 'Slops', and was then attending the sick-bay

for treatment to burns on my hands which I got from touching the stove in the hut which I thought was unlit! In those days it was the practice to wrap an ointment saturated gauze around the affected part which was messy and smelly, but these days such wounds are doused in cold water and left open to air.

Of personalities not previously mentioned, some names I recall working with me in 'ARS B' are CPOs Machesney and Ron Cooper; POs Ted Hill, Ken Thompson, 'Taff' Allman and Jim Burgess; Leading Airmen Binns & Clark; Naval Airmen Beckett, Kitchen, Hopkins and Morris. The AEO was Lt Kennedy RN who drove a large open Lagonda car. In 'Ark Royal "E" Mess' of the PO's Block, I shared with Dick Barton and Alec Graham amongst others. The PO's Mess President for much of my time was 'Red' Lister and other prominent members I recall were 'Dingle' Girling and Wally Crummey who organised outings and other functions. A CPO 'Buck' Taylor, of a mature pensionable age, operated the Tobacco (Tickler) Store, where everyone eligible drew their monthly 'rations' of cigarettes or leaf tobacco. Other former apprentices who came here on draft with me included 'Alge' Addy, Doug Asbury, Don Green, Amos Lovell, John Rounding and 'Titch' Smith. Jim Leigh, who was quite small, had rescued the pilot Mike Gibson from his crashed Seafire aircraft, which had overturned, by crawling under it.

Apart from 'Ma' Naylor', who often was met issuing tickets on her buses into town, another 'Ma' was Mrs Parr, running the small shop just to the left outside the main gate of the camp, and another well known local character was Harry Jarman, whose band often played at the camp dances.

I had served here under three Captains - Anthony Miers VC RN (submariner); R H Courage OBE DSO RN and St. John

R. J. Tyrwhitt DSO DSC RN; and despite my initial misgivings, had a really great time with lots of good friendships made. Now I was on draft again by rail - back to Scotland and bound for RNAS Lossiemouth in Morayshire.

FERRY FLIGHT / STATION FLIGHT

A 'Ferry Pool' existed in the later war years and immediately after the war. No. 2 Ferry Squadron was formed at Stretton in January 1946 becoming No. 2 Ferry Flight at the end of 1947. This unit was responsible for the transit of aircrew collecting or delivering aircraft from other establishments at home or abroad. Its pilots also taxied aircraft from the A.M.Y. and storage to the Aircraft Dispatch and Inspection (A.D.I.) and Ferry Flight as needed. The unit also performed the function of 'Station Flight' in providing a 'Duty Crew' to service visiting aircraft on the 'Apron' near the Control Tower and make up the Fire Crew when required. The Duty Crew came under the Air Traffic Control Officer as did Controllers, Meteorologists, Radio Operators, Photographers and Handlers.



Peter Lyons
photographer 1943



Jim Buie
Running up the engine
on an Airspeed Oxford.
Ferry Squadron 1947

FAIREY AVIATION

This was an assembly plant of two large hangars on Barleycastle Lane taking aircraft and parts from a factory on Wilderspool Causeway, Warrington. The assembled craft were then handed over to the Air Station for modification etc. to F.A.A. requirements.

After 1945 it was taken over by the R.N. and used for storage and modification of Mosquitoes, hence its name.

AIRCREW

Pilots naturally receive extensive training and those of the Fleet Air Arm were no exception. In addition to actually learning to fly a plane they also had to learn how to land on a moving carrier deck. During the war it was also necessary to be able to cope with being catapulted off a ship and to land on water to be hoisted back on board again.

Pilots at Stretton were those of arriving and departing squadrons, Ferry Flight pilots, Maintenance Test pilots, those being trained as Deck Landing Control Officers with 767 squadron and the R.N.V.R. pilots of the post-war period.

The accounts of Lt. Nash, Capt. Gledhill and Ray William's article about the Northern Air Division (R.N.V.R.) give a feeling for the pilot's job.

Observers – It could be a difficult task to find a carrier at sea and consequently observers were required as navigators in many fighters as well as bombers. They first received similar training to pilots but then moved on to speciality training. As well as navigating they took photographs, observed action results and relayed them back to the parent ship. They also had to maintain radio communication in a bomber if there was no TAG (Telegraphist Air Gunner) on board.

TAGs were naval ratings, usually of Leading Hand or Petty Officer rank. They had to acquire many hours of flying time as well as becoming proficient air gunners and radio operators. The latter task included the use of radio navigation beacons.

TAGs would normally have been encountered only in visiting Torpedo Bomber Reconnaissance (T.B.R.) squadrons.



1831 Squadron Pilots

D. Leigh

Commander Ronnie Hay



Commander (Air) at HMS Blackcap from 1955 to 1957. During World War II he was a Royal Marine pilot and shot down at least 10 enemy aircraft. In 1940 on his first sortie in action in a Blackburn Roc, from the aircraft carrier Ark Royal, he shot down a Heinkel bomber. He survived the sinking of the Ark

Royal in 1941 and went on to win a DSC for his actions in the Mediterranean. He flew in action in the far east for the rest of the war and gained a DSO and later a Bar to his DSC. After the war he overshot in a Seafire and was out of action for six months. Prior to joining HMS Blackcap he was Lt. Commander (Flying) on the aircraft carrier Indomitable.

Account by Basil Nash [ex Sub-Lt.(A) RN] Australia



Basil Nash 1946

In April 1948 I was posted to Stretton near Warrington, HMS Blackcap, as one of the MTPS (Maintenance Test Pilots). It was the home of No 2, Ferry Flight and a storage and maintenance depot and I831 RNVR Squadron, who flew at weekends in Seafire 17's. The Ferry Flight meant aircraft were coming in and out all the time, and during my time there I flew Seafire 15, 17 and 47. The latter really bore very little similarity to the old Spits because it had contra props, and a laminar flow wing and a beefed up undercarriage. The thing you had to be most careful about was that with the tail up there was about 6 inches clearance between the prop tips and the runway. Other aircraft were Tiger Moths, Ansons, various Dominies, which we used as taxi aircraft for the Ferry Flight, Sea Fury 10 and 11, Firefly 3, 5, and Trainer, Barracuda 3 and 5, Sea Hornet 20, Firebrand 5, Oxford, Harvard, Sea Otter and Auster 5. The Mosquitos that passed through were Mk 3, 6, 16, 33, 34, 37 and 39. Apart from the 3's, most of these went to Fleet requirement Squadrons and most of the 39s went to Malta. The Mk 39 was a specific requirement for the Navy and was used for photography and target towing. The conversion of mostly 16's was done by General Aircraft at Lasham and they came to Stretton before

being ferried to Malta. The conversion which consisted of a square all-glass nose [as in Photo] totally compromised the flying characteristics of the Mosquito and increased the stalling speed by 10 knots and generally it was fairly horrible to fly. During my 6 years flying I had 3 accidents, all in Mosquitos, which with one exception showed how forgiving the Mosquito was. In the first I had a faulty airspeed indicator in a Mk6, and through inexperience I did not realize this fact and stalled out at about 60 feet on the final approach to Heston Airfield. The aircraft hit the ground at about 100 knots and the undercarriage came up through the wings and it stopped in about 5 yards. No fire, no disintegration, and I and my passenger hopped out. My passenger had a bottle of scotch in a suitcase in the back and it was in one piece!! The second one was at Stretton in a 39 when I had engine trouble on one engine and did a single engine landing. Having got too far down the runway, I was running out of runway fast and there was a large pond at the end of the runway where I had no intention of finishing up, so I lifted the undercarriage. You stop remarkably quickly!! The last proved the point made in the initial article by David Ogilvy on flying the Mosquito. " If you have an engine failure on take off or landing and are under safety speed you shut the other engine and land straight ahead. If you try anything else you will be dead." In my case I was coming in to land, quite normally in a Mk. 16, with undercarriage down and full flap and on reaching round out I decided to do an overshoot and go round again, and as I opened up both engines to full power, the port engine stopped. I was about 50 feet up with a speed of about 100 knots .

I started to get the undercarriage up and took off some flap, in an attempt to get up safety speed, but realized very quickly that it wasn't going to work. I throttled back the starboard engine and sat and waited. I knew the country ahead was mostly farm land, but I didn't have a lot of choice in the matter. The aircraft hit the ground about 2 miles from the end of the runway, and started shedding bits. The propellers went first, followed by most of the wings as it went through some trees, the tail, starboard engine, and the remains which consisted of the cockpit and the port engine came to rest about 500 yards from where it hit the ground. The survival of me and my passenger was greatly increased by the fact that the ground was ploughed fields. Once the aircraft stopped we both bailed out very quickly!! It is funny that one's automatic reactions are to carry out normal routine. I remember holding very tightly to the control column for support, only to find when the aircraft stopped that it wasn't attached to anything at the bottom !! Apart from a lot of bruises, we were neither of us hurt. I was flying again a couple of days later [No counselling in those days] and I don't think it affected my flying. There was no doubt that someone from upstairs was sitting on my shoulder that day. The finale to the story, is that when the accident report came back from the investigation, it was found that a bleed hole in the block between the high and low pressure oil systems was blocked with carbon, which had starved the low pressure system of oil causing it to seize up. The engine had done 3 hours since major overhaul. In all I did about 380 hours in Mosquitos out of a total of 1010 hours, and of the 130 odd Mosquitos in the Navy I flew about 70 of them.

Jim Buie, Air Mechanic (E)

Mosquito Section 1947/1948

The Mosquito Storage section at Stretton at that time consisted of two fair sized hangars full of Mosquitos plus a fair number of Mosquito 25s, which were stored outside and were being cannibalised for spares. The aircraft were occasionally pushed outside for engine running. As some had not run for some time, they were difficult to start. The normal starting procedure was to give the Ki-gas pump, which was situated on the outside of the engine nacelle, a couple of pumps and then screw down the pump. When the engines had not been run for some time it was necessary for an engine fitter to very slowly operate the pump as the engine turned which usually resulted in an effective start. It was the usual practice to encourage a new fitter on the Section to undertake this job and to advise him to keep operating the pump quickly and hard while the engine turned. This resulted in a loud bang and a jet of flame from the exhaust stubs, which pointed to the position of the luckless fitter, which usually resulted in the loss of eyebrows. One day we received instructions to prepare a stored Mosquito No TE720 for operational service. As I recall, it was required in Malta. I was detailed as engine mechanic together with an airframe mechanic and an electrician to carry out the necessary work. When the work was completed and the aircraft was due for its test flight, lots were drawn between the three mechanics as to who would accompany the pilot. I was "lucky" enough to win the draw.

I was told to draw a parachute and helmet and await the pilot who turned out to be the Chief Maintenance Test Pilot, Lt. David Parker. We took off and carried out the various tests which presented no problems and, at my request, we flew over my home. We returned to Stretton and received permission to land. As we touched down at a fair speed, the pilot realised the flaps had retracted. By this time we were well down the runway and the pilot decided to abort the landing and go round again. He slammed the throttle open and we cleared the boundary fence, according to witnesses with nothing to spare. The pilot tried several times to lower the flaps without success. The lever normally rested in a central position. It was pushed down to lower the flaps and lifted to raise them. As soon as the operation was completed the lever sprung back to the central position. In our case, as soon as the lever was pushed down, it cancelled to the central position. The pilot received instructions from Flying Control to change runways due to a change in wind, but decided to use the original runway, as it was the longest. He suggested I got on the floor and put all my weight onto keeping the lever in the "down" position which I did, continually going up and down with the lever. As we touched down I heard an expletive from Lt. Parker, and wondered what disaster had now befallen us, but we had one wheel on the runway and one on the grass, which may have helped to pull us up as we eventually stopped on the perimeter track at the far end of the runway. On return to the section, the Chief suggested helpfully that I would find a clean change of underwear in his office. Before serving on Mosquito Section, I served on No.2 Ferry Squadron which also served as Stretton Flight and serviced visiting aircraft. A Mosquito T33 became due for a Minor

Inspection whilst visiting Stretton. It was the habit to try and ensure that an aircraft fell due for inspection whilst in someone else's care! We carried out the engine inspection and I replaced the spinner, which as I recall, had an unusual fastening, not the usual button fasteners and it was difficult to see whether these had engaged. I locked the fasteners as far as I was concerned and subsequently hung on the spinner to ensure the locking had engaged. The engine mechanics usually finished their inspection before the airframe mechanics and consequently it was some days before an engine test was carried out. Whilst working on another aircraft I saw the Mosquito being pushed out. I heard the engine start and the throttle immediately closed, and on looking up I saw the spinner proceeding across the apron at a rate of knots. I saw the P.O. approaching with a face like thunder and subsequently I received a severe reprimand. A salutary experience.

**Sub Lt. (A) J.A. Gledhill R.N.Z.N.V.R. (Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve) .
12th December 1942 to 14th April 1943**

There were some seven or eight New Zealand officers in No. 827 Naval Air Squadron, a large squadron equipped with Albacores. It was selected by the Admiralty to be the first squadron to re-equip with the new Fairey Barracuda. We were sent to Stretton to collect the Barracudas as they came off the production line at Ringway. Some of our maintenance crews were sent over to work on the production line.

Our first flight from Stretton was area familiarisation. We were briefed not to fly over Liverpool balloon barrage. I took off in an Albacore on 21st December 1942 to look at the countryside, flying south to Cheater where I took a close look at a water tower in open and very attractive meadows. Possibly at a little below approved height (like ground level). Never having seen Liverpool I climbed on a mostly northerly course to a point where I could just see Liverpool sprawling in the distance with its balloon barrage. There were no balloons that I could see in my vicinity but apparently a balloon was close hauled (on the ground) near me and probably camouflaged – you weren't supposed to see them! Some smart, over zealous, Observer Corps member rang Stretton. When I landed I turned off the runway and was directed to the control Tower apron and stopped. There, lined up was the welcoming committee – everyone from the Commander (Flying), Little (F) and my C.O. downwards, all tapping their toes! Why had I flown over Liverpool balloon barrage?! Commander (Flying) took over the interrogation in his office. He was a Canadian V.R. officer with his own ideas on punishment – quite contrary to KR&AI. He wanted me to wear in the Wardroom a 'bill board' with "I must not fly over balloon barrages" printed on it, I declined his invitation quite firmly. Finally he settled for a "Hundred Lines" and a week or so as duty officer at night, in the Control Tower, where I had to sleep. Hardly the way to treat a Kiwi who had come 12000 miles to help fight the war.



Lincoln bomber at Stretton

SUPPLY AND SECRETARIAT BRANCH

This branch contained those people responsible for stores and offices. The ratings for the first group are called 'Stores Assistants' (S.A.s) and the second group 'Writers'. The officers were referred to as *Rank* (Supply) and *Rank* (Secretariat).

Writers were employed in the Administration Block i.e. Captain's Office and Pay Office on secretarial, clerical and accounting duties. Secretarial duties in the Engineering Offices were mostly carried out by female civilian employees. There were also ratings in some offices who were loosely called 'Writers' but were in fact other trades who had been trained to do clerical duties.

Stores Assistants worked in the four major stores in the A.M. Y. that held all manner of spares for aircraft. In a separate Inflammables Store their duty was limited to 2-hour stretches due to solvent vapours. There was the Naval Store as well that held virtually everything needed for daily naval life. As shown in the photo these rates wore fore and aft rig i.e. jacket with collar and tie. This was as opposed to the traditional sailor's square rig of bell-bottoms, jumper, collar and cap.



C. Gibson

Stores Assistant 1953



The photo shows the Supply and Secretariat team.

Winners of Athletics Shield 1958.

Back: Ldg. Writer Brian Coglan, Lt. Beynon (Stores Officer), Ldg.S.A.?

Middle: S.A. Amos, Cdr. B. Ridley (Supply Officer), S.A. ?

Front: S.A. ?, Nat. Service S.A. (Mr 'Frigidaire's son), S.A. ?

COMMUNICATIONS BRANCH



Mrs North

This branch was quite small, a maximum of about 20 altogether, including its officers. The main workplace was the Public Communications Block (P.C.B.). It housed the switchboard (PBX), teleprinters, the Signals Dispatch Office (S.D.O.) and the Wireless Telegraphy (W/T) Office. The male ratings were Telegraphists, Signallers and Messengers. During the war Wrens worked as switchboard and teleprinter operators, Signallers and Messengers. There was a W.R.N.S. Cipher Officer. Civilian operators, at much greater rates of pay, took over the first two jobs in 1946.



P. Whincup

P.C.B. Stretton 1945 – L to R Yeoman Edis, ?, Yeoman Wally ?, Jennifer James, Yeoman? Chris ?.

The Telegraphists were under a P.O. (Tel) and operated radio by voice and Morse. They had to be able to code and decode messages as necessary. There was a Yeoman of Signals in charge of the Signallers. The latter used semaphore and Aldis lamp for communication although the use of these at Stretton would have been minimal if at all. They were responsible for hoisting the correct flags at the correct time on the station.

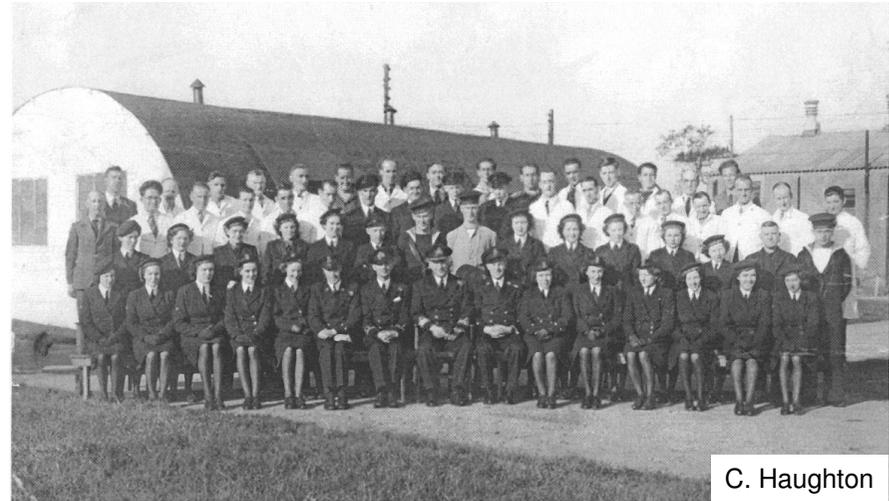


P. Whincup

Cipher Officer 'Dinah' Shaw off duty

VICTUALLING

In order to feed over 1000 personnel a large number of cooks and ancillary staff were required. These were made up of naval and civilian personnel with a good proportion of Wrens in the first five years or so.



C. Haughton

Naval, Wren and civilian cooks and other staff ca 1947. Edward Haughton, top first left was in charge of civilians.



A.H. anon

Wren Cooks outside the galley.

All the different ranks had their own dining rooms – Ordinary Rates and Leading Hands together, Petty Officers, Chief Petty Officers and Officers. Meals were – Breakfast 0700hrs. Dinner 1200hrs. Tea 1600hrs. Supper 1800hrs.

Those people on watchkeeping (shifts) either had to fetch food from the galley or it was kept for them for when they came off watch.

The daily rum issue also came under victualling. It was prepared by them and issued at 1200 hours under the control of the Officer-of-the-Day. Junior ratings had theirs watered down and had to drink it on the spot. The Senior N.C.O.'s ration was collected, neat, in a rum fanny (metal container with lid and hinged handle) for doling out in their Mess. Teetotallers had an allowance of 3d per day in lieu. Teddy Haughton told his son that one day he found some cooks washing the central floor drain grid in the sink. After hard questioning about this unusual event he elicited the fact that a clean container was being placed under the grid daily. When the surplus rum ration was ditched, under careful supervision, it could be retrieved and consumed.

POLICE

The Master-at-Arms was responsible for policing the Air Station and the behaviour of its personnel when ashore. He had Regulating Petty Officers and Leading Patrolmen in each Division who looked after discipline at all times. They were in effect Naval Police who could arrest or detain a miscreant whether on board or ashore. The normal Duty Watch had to do shore patrols in Warrington every night to prevent or deal with any trouble.

In addition there were Admiralty Police who controlled entry to the Station at various points and watched for abuse of the duty-free tobacco system. They were locals recruited by the Admiralty.



M. Hazelhurst

This photo shows Eric Cook on the left in Admiralty police uniform and a Naval Policeman on Guard Duty at the main gate of HMS Blackcap in Appleton.

He previously served in Tripoli and Palestine as a Grenadier Guardsman in the King's Company who were all over 6ft - 6ins tall. He was on guard duty inside Westminster Abbey at the wedding of Queen Elizabeth II in 1947. And in 1952 he was in the escort party at the funeral of King George VI. After returning to Arley Estate for a short time he joined the Admiralty Police and was stationed first at HMS Blackcap then at Risley.

Other locals who were policemen at HMS Blackcap were Harry Smith from Little Leigh, Herbert Cadman from Comberbach and Jim Stanley from Gibb Hill.

OTHERS

There were many other trades at H.M.S. BLACKCAP. We mentioned earlier the doctors, dentist and nurses. They were accompanied by R.N. Sick Berth Attendants who manned the Sick Bay at Stretton and helped at Springfield.

There was a Shipwright (carpenter) located in the Woodwork Shop on the A.M.Y. It has been said that German P.O.W.s helped him late in and after the war. The following photo is of a German motto painted on the tip of a propeller blade. It says, " In the face of stupidity even the Gods struggle". Was this a comment about Hitler?



The last Shipwright before closure was very good at painting murals and he was commissioned to paint caricatures of Leading Hands on the pillars in their dining hall. He was also taken to London by 'Son of Mr Frigidaire' to paint a huge mural on the wall of a nightclub that they owned.

There were other R.N. personnel under the control of the 'Buffer' (Bosun) who carried out general site duties e.g. gardening, painting, roadmending and married quarters removals. 'Station Engineering' under Commander(E) was a group of civilian fitters, mates and foremen that looked after the Boiler Houses and carried out some site engineering work.

Radar operators manned the site in Antrobus and radar mechanics maintained the equipment there and in planes. Radio mechanics were on the station to install and repair sets in aircraft and in the W/T Office. Some of these mechanics were Wrens, trained at H.M.S. ARIEL as many of their male colleagues were.

Some drivers in the Transport Section and for the Sick Bay at Grappenhall were initially Wrens but later civilians were employed by the Admiralty to drive all vehicles including fuel bowsers and the 'Queen Mary' recovery vehicle.



Jim Scragg

Dennis Barber

Lt Cdr Martin

Jim Fisher

Bob Taylor

D. Leigh

Station Engineering Staff 1957/1958



**Presentation to the retiring Lt Cdr 'Pincher' Martin
with a clock mounted in a small ships wheel 1957/58**
Dennis Barber on extreme left and Derek Leigh fourth from left

D. Leigh

VISITS

There were many inspections and visits made at Stretton over its 16 year life. As would be expected many were by senior Naval Officers, some being on an annual basis. This section records details of some of them.

Most of the information here was taken from a scrapbook kept by Lt. Commander Bradbury at the time and donated by his sister, Mrs M. North.

Visit by the Duke of Edinburgh

Many people mention this in their communications to us and it was reported in newspapers and Cheshire Life at the time.



Mrs M. North

The Duke arrived at 1730 on the 17th May 1956 and first inspected the Northern Air Division. He then had a drink in the Chief Petty Officers' Mess before dining in the Wardroom. After dinner he was made a Freeman of the N.A. D. and later watched an exhibition of Mess games. Because of an outbreak of mumps in the Senior Officers' married quarters in Yew Tree Lane the Duke spent the night at Commander Gilchrist's home. The latter fact was almost the whole content of the Press reports.

The next day a quick but thorough tour was made of the whole station before the Duke flew out at 1130.

Before Dinner



Sister Clayton

Sister Purvis

Mrs M. North

*The Wardroom dressed for
Dinner*



Mrs. M. North



Inspecting the N.A.D.

*Captain Harvey
Lieut.-Col. Rougier*

*Commander
Gulchrist*

*Sub-Lieutenants
Croll and Holden*

Mrs. M. North

Visit by Lord Hailsham

On 14th November 1956 the new First Lord of the Admiralty, Viscount Hailsham made a short, informal visit. He saw examples of accommodation and then toured a modified "Showcase" in the A.M.Y. He then left for Chester to speak at a by-election meeting.



Mrs M. North

F.O.R.A. Lord H. A.E.O. Capt. Harvey.

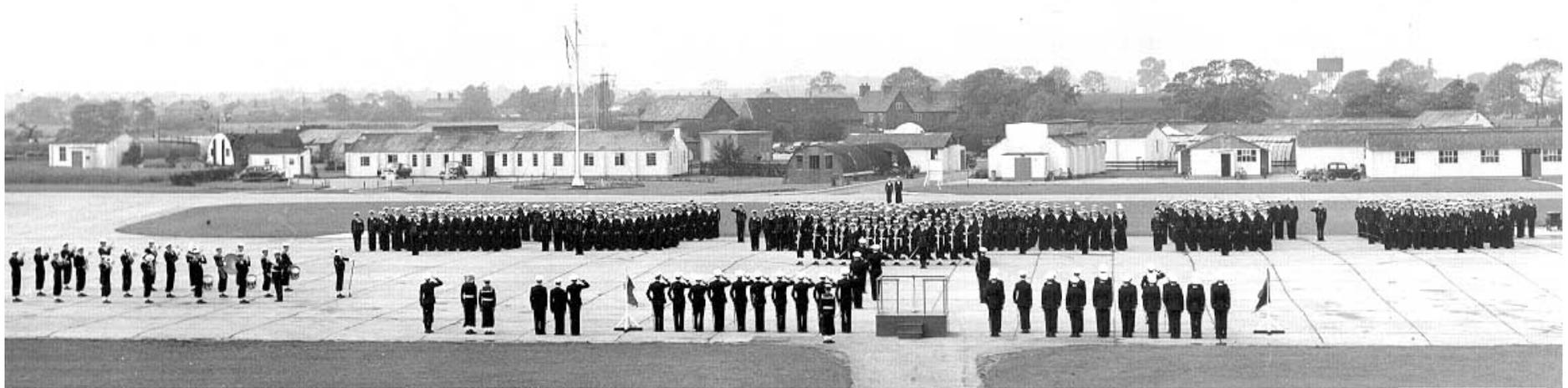
Admiral's Inspections

These took place annually during the Fifties and were conducted by Flag Officer Reserve Aircraft. It was a thorough inspection and several photographs exist of various personnel at different locations but unfortunately are undated.



Mrs M. North

Admiral's Inspection June 1957



Mrs M. North

Admiral's Inspection July 1956



Inspection of W.R.N.S. at H.M.S. Gosling

In 1944 Wren Gladys 'Paddy' Lee and others were chosen to be part of the Guard of Honour for the visit of Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent to H.M.S. Gosling at Croft. The Princess was Commander-in-Chief of the W.R.N.S. at that time.

Other visits of a semi-official nature occurred from time to time such as one by Freddie Mills, the boxer.

Inspection by Director General of W.R.N.S. in 1948.
Also in picture Station C.O. Captain A C Miers V.C.
and Commander Rowland



NAVY DAYS

'Navy Days' have been mentioned by contributors as occurring in 1950, 1951, 1953 and 1955. The first was in fact called "At Home", the second "Navy Day" and the third "Naval Air Day". The popularity of these events can be gauged from the following newspaper report that also seems to suggest "At Home" was back in use.

Warrington Guardian June 23rd 1955

***Navy hopes 80,000 will
join them "at home" today***

A BUMPER crowd of 80,000 is expected at the Royal Naval Air Station, Stretton, today (Saturday), when the station throws open its doors to the public for one of the largest land "At Homes" held by the Navy in the North.

Although highlight of the day will be a two-hour flying display with almost every type of naval aircraft taking part, the emphasis will be on life in the service rather than its flying activities.

Aircraft of 1831 Squadron Northern Air Division R.N.V.R. piloted by "week-end" fliers- some of them local men- will take part.

Exhibitions of all kinds, including judo, fire fighting, crash rescue and massed rocket displays will be among the attractions. A rifle range, try-your-skill bombing range and link trainer will be open to the public and pleasure flights have been arranged.

A 60ft. model aircraft carrier will be on show and a special playground for the children- with a miniature railway- has been built.

The flying display by 80 aircraft will be opened by General Sir Lashmer-Whistler, Commander-in-Chief Western Command who will arrive at the station by helicopter. The display will include air attacks, formation aerobatic and attacks on the airfield by jet aircraft capable of breaking the sound barrier and piston-engined planes.

Clarrie Gibson's account of 1953 (Coronation Year) is rather less upbeat.

"Naval Air Day was planned for one particular Saturday (25th July 1953) and all the preparations were made for the many thousands of anticipated visitors. My allocated job was to collect the fares from the visitors who came by coach and escort the coach to the designated area for parking. Two lanes had been roped off in this field so that six coaches at a time could be dealt with. It rained on that Saturday for most of the day and the only coach to arrive was full of American Servicemen from whom I was instructed to collect 10/- from each but I felt as embarrassed as Hell when taking the cash from the Yanks. All kinds of aircraft were scheduled to fly but throughout the day we caught only a fleeting glimpse of an R.A.F. Vulcan, which was towards the end of the day. The low cloud had kept the rest of the planes grounded. It turned out to be a thoroughly miserable day all round"

A selection of programme pages with some photographs illustrate the shape and flavour of these 'Navy Days'

Programme & Invitation Card

Royal Naval Air Station



Stretton

“ AT HOME ”
23rd September
1950

PLEASE DO NOT SMOKE NEAR AIRCRAFT

PROGRAMME

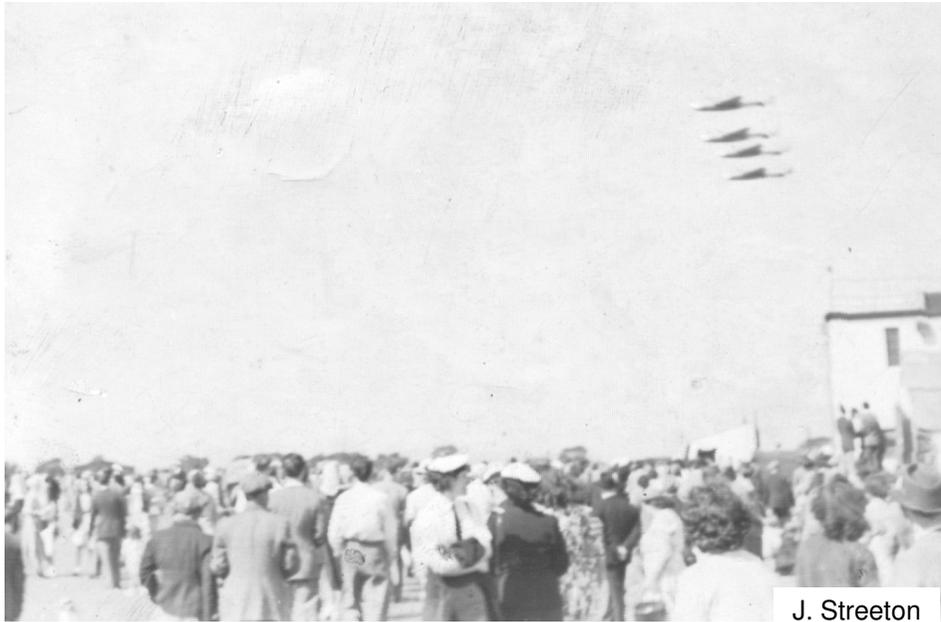
(If wet, see note on back page)

- ~
- 1400 Airfield opens.
 - 1420 Captain St. J. R. J. TYRWHITT, D.S.O., D.S.C., welcomes the guests at the Control Tower.
 - 1430 Flying Display by 1831 R.N.V.R. Squadron, followed by Crash Drill and Fire Fighting Demonstrations.
 - 1530 Tea Interval.
 - 1600 Air Maintenance Yard open.
 - 1730 Air Maintenance Yard closed.
 - 1800 FINALE.
 - 1830 Airfield closes.
 - 1930 to 2300 Dance in Cinema.

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NOTE.

The Admiralty can accept no responsibility for any loss or damage, howsoever caused, to guests or their vehicles or property during this "At Home."



J. Streeton



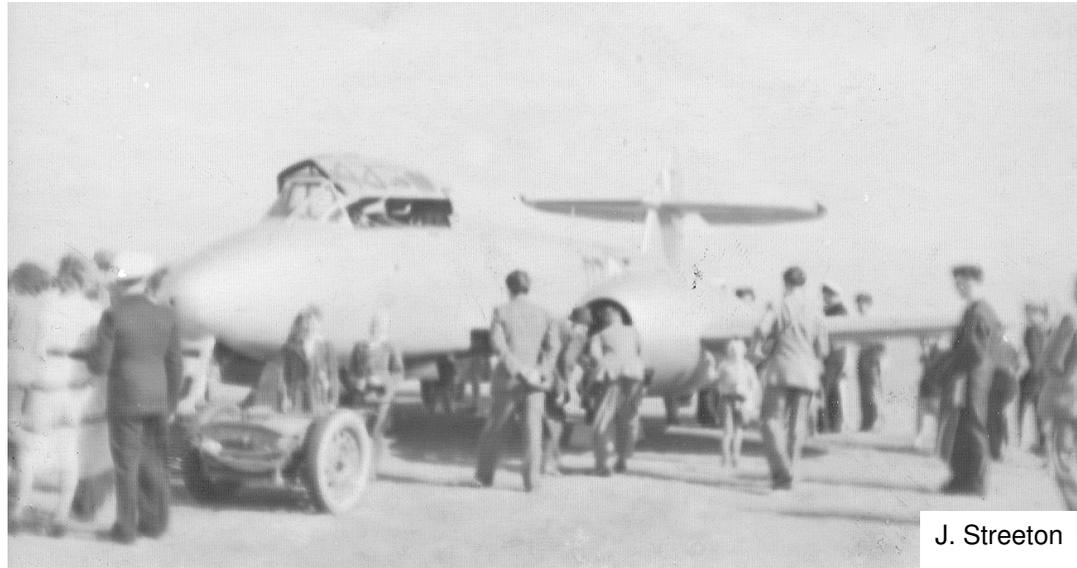
J. Streeton



J. Streeton

RADIO POSTCARD

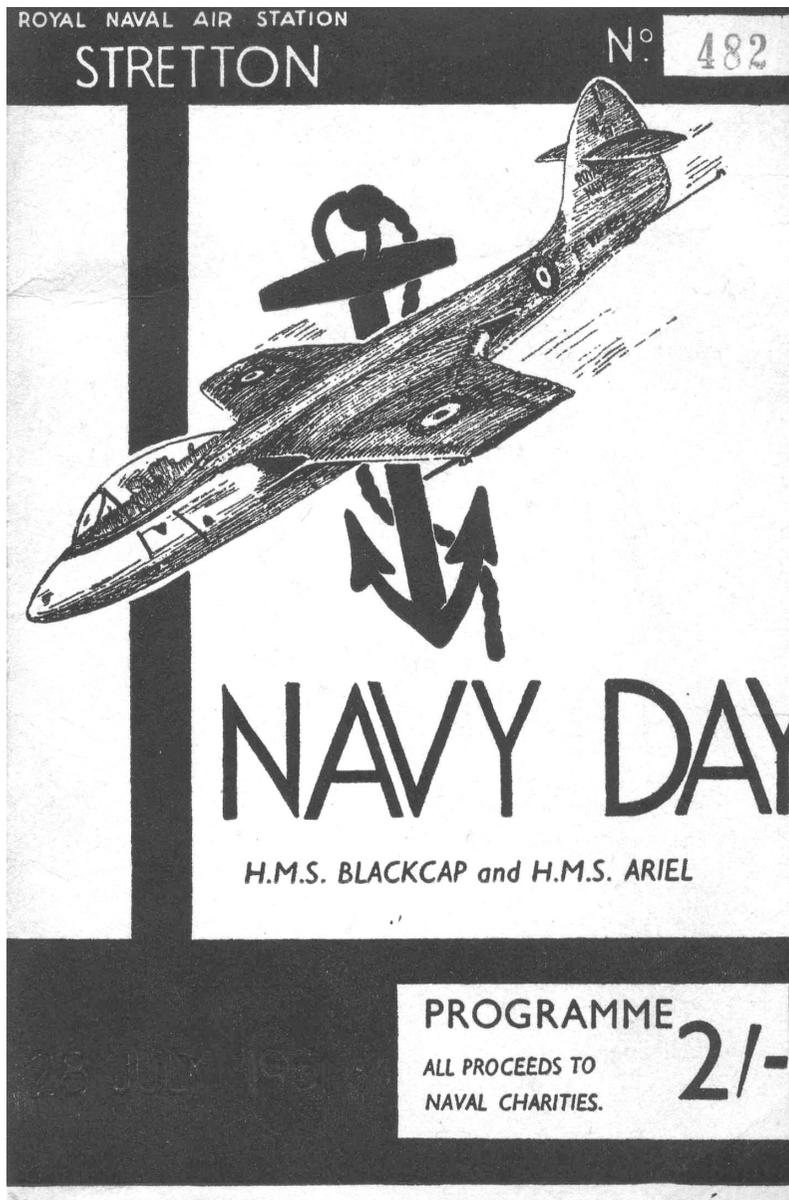
Send your Greetings, by
 Radio from R.N.A.S. Stretton.
 To Anybody - Anywhere.
 Delivered on Souvenir Card.
 Twenty Words (with Address)
 for 1/-
 Messages received for



J. Streeton



M.P. Cocker



The Captain, Officers and Ship's Company of

H.M.S. BLACKCAP and H.M.S. ARIEL

welcome you to

NAVY DAY

at Royal Naval Air Station Stretton

on Saturday, 28th July, 1951

The opening speech will be made by

THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF DERBY, M.C.,
Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire

Programme from 2-15 p.m. to 6-15 p.m.
(Gates open at 1-0 p.m.)

By kind permission of

Captain Sir St. John Tyrwhitt, Bt., D.S.O., D.S.C., Royal Navy,
H.M.S. *Blackcap*

Captain (L) K. R. Buckley, Royal Navy, H.M.S. *Ariel*

ALL PROCEEDS IN AID OF NAVAL CHARITIES

Visitors entering this Naval Air Station do so entirely at their own risk. No liability will be accepted by the Admiralty, their servants or agents, for any injury (including fatal injury)—damage or loss to person or property whether due to negligence or otherwise howsoever.



The Officers and Companies of H.M.S. *Blackcap* and H.M.S. *Ariel* welcome you to Stretton to-day. We hope that you will enjoy this opportunity to see what the Navy does in this district.

Stretton, known to the Navy as H.M.S. *Blackcap*, is a holding station where reserve aircraft and aircraft engines are serviced and kept in readiness to supply the demands of the fleet. It is also the home of 1831 (Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) fighter squadron, the officers and men of which give a great deal of their spare time to their country, and, by doing so, set a magnificent example to all.

H.M.S. *Ariel*, partner to H.M.S. *Blackcap* in this Navy Day, is a naval establishment in the village of Culcheth, about 9 miles north-east of Stretton, and is the headquarters of all electrical, wireless and radar training for naval aviation maintenance personnel.

On an occasion like this there will be many of you to whom the greatest attraction will be the flying display. As this programme goes to press we can give no indication concerning the weather to be expected. We can only hope that it will treat us fairly, for we are sure that you must realise that no risk to life can be accepted in the cause of your entertainment.

Commanding Officer, H.M.S. *Blackcap*.

Commanding Officer, H.M.S. *Ariel*.

Static Exhibition

A comprehensive display of equipment used in Naval Aviation will be on view in Nos. 26 and 28 Hangars. The following are among the items displayed :—

A large-scale model, 70 feet in length of the light-fleet-carrier, H.M.S. *Triumph* (H.M.S. *Theseus* which returned recently from operations off Korea belongs to this class of vessel).

Parachutes, dinghies, aircraft lifeboats and other articles of life-saving gear and safety equipment.

Typical aircraft power-plants in use to-day, including sectioned and demonstration models of Rolls-Royce Griffon and Merlin, Bristol Centaurus and Gipsy engines—some of these engines rotate and demonstrate the working of the various parts—“split” engines which show the parts from which the above power-plants are constructed. Jet and gas-turbine units. Propellers and many other aircraft and engine components.

Working models of radio and radar equipment. Aircraft radio and electrical gear, including an A.S.H. bomb (a submarine detector device carried by Naval aircraft), aircraft blind-flying instruments.

Specimen armaments of Naval aircraft, with sectioned models, and models adapted for your operation and amusement.

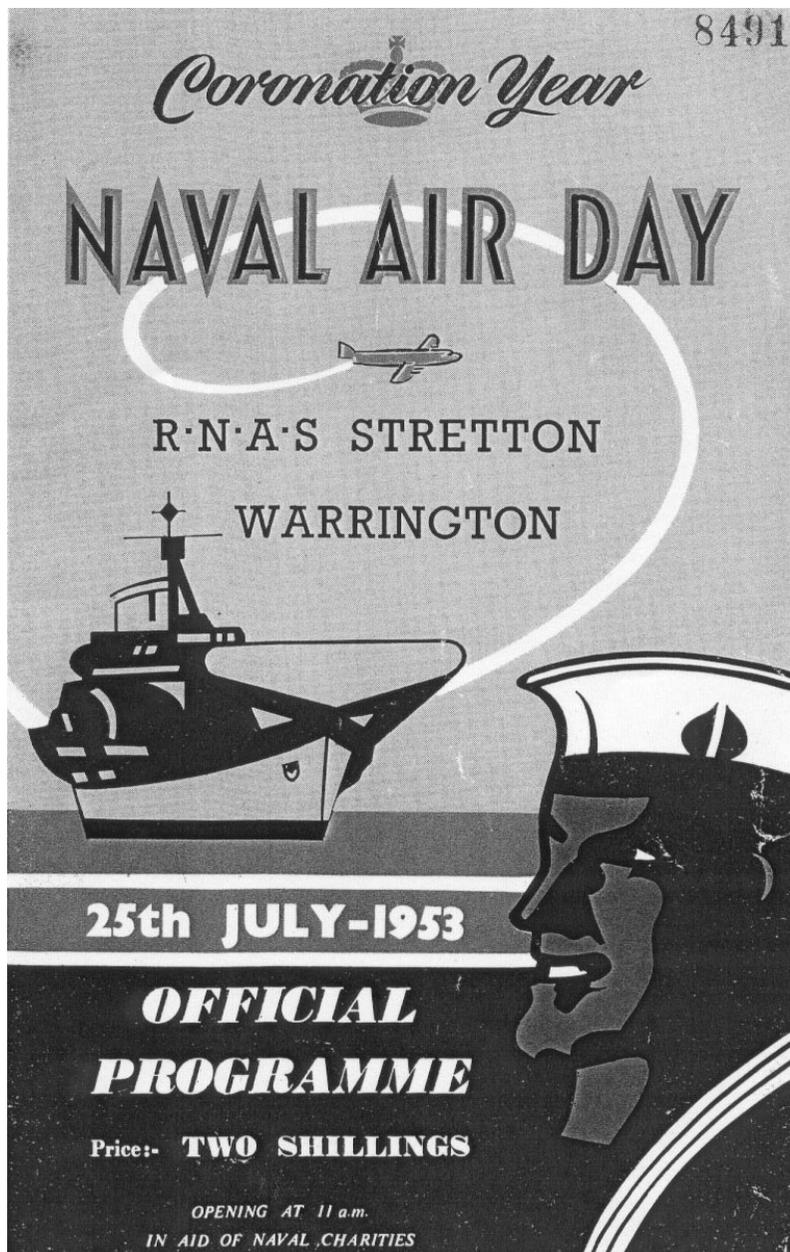
Flight-deck equipment ; the latest in fire-fighting equipment.

An aircraft mounted on jacks will demonstrate undercarriage retraction. There will be a demonstration of power-folding of mainplanes by a Seafury aircraft.

Models and photographs of all types of ships and Naval aircraft.

A naval Information Centre where enquiries about life in the Navy and R.N. or W.R.N.S. recruiting may be made.

Do not hesitate to ask the officers and ratings at the various stands about details which interest you—they will be only too pleased to answer your questions.



The Captain, Officers and Ship's Company of
H.M.S. "BLACKCAP"
invite you to attend

Naval Air Day Stretton 1953

to be held at the Royal Naval Air Station, Stretton, nr. Warrington, on

SATURDAY, 25th JULY

The flying display will be opened by

The Viscount Leverhulme, T.D.

The Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire

Programme from 11 a.m. to 6-30 p.m.

by kind permission of

Captain Richard H. Courage, O.B.E., D.S.C., Royal Navy,
Commanding Officer, Royal Naval Air Station, Stretton.

The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Plymouth

(By kind permission of Major General R. F. Cornwall, C.B., C.B.E.,
Royal Marines, Plymouth Group).

Director of Music, Captain R. H. Stoner, L.R.A.M., R.M.
and

The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines, Royal Naval Air Station, Bramcote

(By kind permission of Captain N. S. Henderson, O.B.E., Royal Navy).

ANY PROFITS IN AID OF NAVAL CHARITY

Visitors entering this Naval Air Station do so entirely at their own risk.
No liability will be accepted by the Admiralty, their servants or agents
for any injury (including fatal injury), damage or loss to person or
property whether due to negligence or otherwise, howsoever.

The Flying Programme

Item	Time	Event	Aircraft
1	2-30	Carrier Squadron Take Off Demonstration by 1831 R.N.V.R., 767 R.N. and 1841 R.N.V.R. Air Squadrons	8 <i>Seafuries</i> 4 <i>Fireflies</i> 6 <i>Fireflies</i>
2	2-33	Rocket Assisted Take Off Demonstration by 767 Royal Naval Air Squadron	4 <i>Seafuries</i>
3	2-38	Formation Fly Past and Stream Landings by The Fleet Air Arm	8 <i>Seafuries</i> 4 <i>Fireflies</i> 6 <i>Fireflies</i>
4	2-51	Parachute Descent by Major T. W. Willans from a Royal Naval Helicopter	1 <i>Dragonfly</i>
5	2-53	Flying and Rescue Display by Royal Naval Helicopters	1 <i>Dragonfly</i> 1 <i>Hillier</i>
6	3-01	Aerobatic Demonstration by The Royal Air Force	6 <i>Meteors</i>
7	3-12	Glider Display by Lt. Commander Sproule, R.N.	1 <i>Tigermoth</i> 1 <i>Olympia</i>
8	3-15	Demonstration by A. V. Roe, Vulcan flown by Sq. Ldr. J. B. Wales, O.B.E., D.F.C., T.D.	1 <i>Vulcan</i>
9	3-18	Instructor/Pupil Act by The Royal Air Force	2 <i>Prentice</i>
10	3-28	Stream Take Off by Royal Naval Piston and Jet Aircraft	<i>Attacker</i> <i>Meteor</i> <i>Vampire</i> <i>Wyvern</i> 4 <i>Sea Hawks</i> and 1 R.A.F. <i>Neptune Mk.1</i> <i>Firefly 7</i> <i>Avenger</i> <i>Sea Prince</i> <i>Skyraider</i> <i>Seafire 17</i>
11	3-33	Precision Aerobatic Display by 738 R.N. Air Squadron	4 <i>Seafuries</i>
12	3-38	Fly Past by Piston and Jet Aircraft	Item 10 except 4 <i>Sea Hawks</i>
13	3-43	Sea Hawk Aerobatic Display by 806 R.N. Air Squadron	4 <i>Sea Hawks</i>

The Flying Programme

Item	Time	Event	Aircraft
14	3-52	Demonstration of Radar Controlled Landing	1 <i>Skyraider</i>
15	3-55	Display by The Last Swordfish of the Fleet Air Arm	1 <i>Swordfish</i>
16	4-10 (approx.)	Fly Past of Firm's Aircraft Flown by : Wing Cmdr. Beamont, D.S.O. D.F.C. Lt. R. B. Mancus, R.N. (Retd.) Mr. Peter Twiss Mr. J. Kempster	1 <i>Canberra</i> 1 <i>Sea Balliol</i> 1 <i>Gannet</i> 1 <i>Sealand</i>
17	4-35 (approx.)	Combined Mock Battle Army and Royal Navy	4 <i>Seafuries</i> 8 <i>Seafuries</i>

THE INDOOR GROUND DISPLAY

The following additional exhibitions will be on display :—

Automotive Products Co. Ltd., Leamington Spa
Display of Products

The Bristol Aeroplane Co. Ltd., Bristol
Sectioned PROTEUS engine. Scale models of 170 and 171 helicopters and the BRITANNIA

B.E.A., B.O.A.C. and Aer Lingus
Display stand of photographs and scale model Aircraft

The Decca Navigator Co. Ltd., London
Display stand of certain products

Joseph Lucas (Gas Turbine Equipment) Ltd., Birmingham
Diagrams of fuel system units of the NENE engine, etc.

Murex Welding Processes Ltd., Waltham Cross
Ground power unit used for starting aircraft

Ransome and Marles, Bearing Co. Ltd., Newark-on-Trent
Wall display of certain technical accomplishments

Rotol Ltd., Gloucester
Sectioned Gear Box as fitted in Meteor aircraft

Rubery, Owen & Co. Ltd., Darlaston
Aircraft general sundries, nuts and bolts and machine components

Saunders-Roe Ltd., Isle of White
Scale model and photographs

Westlands Aircraft Ltd., Yeovil
Model aircraft

THE INDOOR GROUND DISPLAY

(Subject to last-minute alteration)

1. ROYAL NAVY.

- (a) **Safety and Survival Equipment**—Life jackets, parachutes, immersion suits, aircraft dinghies, etc.
- (b) **Photographic Equipment**—Aircraft and ground cameras, contact printers, oblique air photographs, photographic mosaics, etc.
- (c) **Fire Fighting Equipment**—Protective clothing, first-aid equipment, fire fighting appliances, etc.
- (d) **Aircraft Armament**—Model bombing range, all types of aircraft guns, bombs, rockets, etc.
- (e) **Electrical**—Typical electrical equipment and testing apparatus, static and working displays, demonstration of wireless and radar equipment in operation.
- (f) **Aircraft Engines**—All types of modern engines and power units including sectioned engines and "embalmed" engines.
- (g) **H.M.S. "TRIUMPH" Model**—A 70ft. long model of the aircraft carrier.
- (h) **"50 Years of Naval Aviation"**—Model showing advances made in Naval Aviation.
- (i) **Working Model of an Aircraft Carrier**—A model in which everything works, including the aircraft.
- (j) **How to Join the Royal Navy and Naval Aviation**—Information of interest about the Royal Navy.
- (k) **Naval Uniforms**—An interesting display of the present day uniforms and distinctive badges.
- (l) **The Cinema**—Continuous performance showing films of your Navy in action and others of topical interest.

2. MISCELLANEOUS DISPLAYS.

- (a) **The Sea Cadet Corps**—Displays of models and the work of the Corps.
- (b) **Girls' Nautical Training Corps**—Displays and information on the Corps' work.
- (c) **Women's Junior Air Corps**—Model of an Airfield and displays of the work of the Corps.
- (d) **The Air League**—The purpose and functions of the League.

3. FIRMS IN THE AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY.

- (a) **Alvis Ltd., Coventry**—Leonides 550-b.h.p. nine-cylinder air-cooled radial engine for trainers, light transport aircraft and helicopters. A sectioned engine of the type adopted by the R.N.
- (b) **Armstrong Siddeley Motors Ltd., Coventry**—Show models of Python and Mamba engines.
- (c) **Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth, Coventry**—Scale model aircraft.
- (d) **The British Oxygen Co. Ltd., Manchester**—Mobile display unit demonstrating all types of Welding applicable to aircraft.
- (e) **The De Havilland Aircraft Co. Ltd., Hatfield**—Full scale cut away and illuminated working "Ghost" engine. Photographs of Sea Venom, Sea Vampire and Sea Hornet.
- (f) **The De Havilland Propeller Co. Ltd., Bolton and Hatfield**—A selection of Hydromatic constant speed, feathering and reversing propellers in current production for Civil and Military Aircraft.

- (g) **The Dunlop Rubber Co. Ltd., Coventry**—Tyres, wheels, brakes, pneumatic and hydraulic operating equipment, jacks, selector valves, windscreen wipers, flexible pipes and rubber accessories.
- (h) **The English Electric Co. Ltd., Warton**—Display of illuminated colour transparencies showing research test and design facilities.
- (i) **Electro-Hydraulic Co. Ltd., Warrington**—Working multi-wheel bogie as fitted to Handley Page Victor Bomber and undercarriage components.
- (j) **The Fairey Aviation Co. Ltd., Hayes**—Display of certain technical accomplishments of the Company.
- (k) **Ferodo Ltd., Stockport**—Friction materials and various Ferobestos components applicable to the Aircraft and Marine Industries.
- (l) **P. Frankenstein and Sons Ltd., Manchester**—Civilian life jackets as used by B.O.A.C., B.E.A. and other airlines. Services life jackets and inflatable exposure suits. Flying overalls. Constant wear immersion suits. Submarine escape immersion suits.
- (m) **The Gloster Aircraft Co. Ltd., Hucclecote**—Scale models including 1/24th scale Meteor model.
- (n) **The Hawker Aircraft Ltd., Kingston-upon-Thames**—Scale models including Seafury and Sea Hawk.
- (o) **Marconi's Wireless and Telegraph Co. Ltd., Chelmsford**—A representative photographic display of the firm's products.
- (p) **Martin Baker Aircraft Co. Ltd., Uxbridge**—Ejector seats.
- (q) **Percival Aircraft Co. Ltd., Luton**—Sea Prince scale model, sectional models, and photographs.
- (r) **R. A. Brand and Co. Ltd., London**—Cocoon and Koonkote plastic spray packaging for protection of engines and components during shipment and storage. Cocooning demonstration.
- (s) **R.F.D. Ltd., Godalming**—Naval and Civilian life jackets, single-seat life raft and ten-seat Universal life raft.
- (t) **Rolls Royce Ltd., Derby**—Sectioned Nene engine and photographs.
- (u) **The Salford Electrical Instruments Ltd., Salford**—A selection of Electrical Instruments, Radio sonds, compasses, selenium and copper oxide rectifiers, quartz crystals units and test set, aircraft starting rectifier unit—trailer mounted.
- (v) **Saunders-Roe Ltd., Isle of Wight**—Model aircraft.
- (w) **Short Brothers and Harland Ltd., Belfast**—Scale models of Sealand and S.A.4 aircraft and photographs.
- (x) **Vickers-Armstrong Ltd., Winchester**—Scale models and photographs.

THE OUTDOOR GROUND DISPLAY

(Subject to last-minute alteration)

1. ROYAL NAVY.

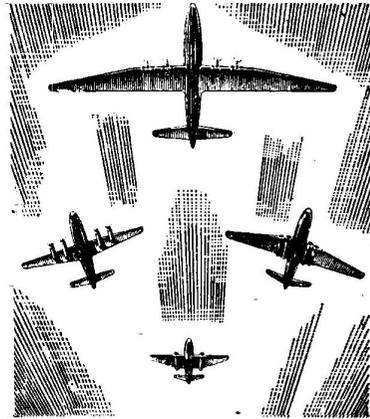
- (a) **Embalmed Aircraft**—Showing how aircraft, including Seafires, Mosquitoes, Seafuries, Sea Prince's and Dominies are preserved.
- (b) **Servicing and Maintenance**—Sea Hawk, Sea Prince, Seafire, Vampire, aircraft in the course of maintenance.
- (c) **Repair Display**—Showing aircraft being repaired and the associated Mobile equipment.
- (d) **Fire Fighting and Crash Rescue**—Fire tenders and crash vehicles used.
- (e) **Aircraft Park**—Seafury, Firefly, Attacker, Auster, Meteor, Vampire, Domini, Sea Hawk, Sea Prince, Seafire 17, Seafire 47, Wyvern, etc.

(Continued on next page)

(Outdoor Ground Display—
Continued)

2. FIRMS' DISPLAYS.

- (a) "SEA BALLIOL"
Boulton Paul Aircraft Ltd.
- (b) "173 TWIN ROTA
HELICOPTER"
The Bristol Aeroplane Co. Ltd.
- (c) "CANBERRA"
The English Electric Co. Ltd.
- (d) "GANNET"
The Fairey Aviation Co. Ltd.
- (e) "SEALAND"
Short Brothers and Harland Ltd.
- (f) "S.51 HELICOPTER"
Westland Aircraft Ltd.
- (g) "DEMONSTRATION OF
FORK TRUCKS AND
ANCILLARY EQUIPMENT"
Conveyancer Fork Trucks Ltd.



leading aircraft
incorporate
**ELECTRIC
EQUIPMENT**

by



Whatever the type of aircraft, BTH can design and develop the complete electric power system and supply the appropriate equipment, including: A.C. and D.C. motors and generators; motor generating sets with electronic regulators; gas-operated turbo-starters; Mazda lamps, etc. With over fifty-four years' experience of the manufacture of electrical equipment, and extensive manufacturing resources devoted entirely to these products, BTH is in an unrivalled position to fulfil the needs of aircraft industry.

**THE BRITISH
THOMSON-HOUSTON**

Company Limited, Coventry.

Member of the ABEI group of companies.

A4631N

In Peace and War

NAAFI

is proud to
serve
the Royal Navy
Ashore & Afloat,
in Home and
Foreign Waters

8707

NAVY DAY

ROYAL NAVAL AIR STATION
STRETTON WARRINGTON

SAT. 25th JUNE 1955

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME

16

IN AID OF
NAVAL CHARITIES

THE CAPTAIN'S MESSAGE



"Whatever the future of the Battleship or the Cruiser there is no doubt about the role of the Navy and in particular of the Fleet Air Arm.

Today we welcome you to Stretton to see something of the work of the Royal Navy and of the Aircraft they fly. We wish you all an enjoyable day.

May I remind you that the proceeds derived from this "At Home" go to Naval Charities."

E. N. Harvey



**Welcome to
H.M.S. BLACKCAP**



If you are outstandingly fit, well-educated, and between 17 and 26 years old, there's a really interesting life ahead of you in the Fleet Air Arm. Full details of commissions—on 8 or 4 year Short Service and National Service commissions—are given in a 24-page illustrated booklet describing the life, pay and prospects of pilots and observers in the Fleet Air Arm.

Please write to:



ADMIRALTY

**D.N.R. (Dept. NF/502),
QUEEN ANNE'S MANSIONS,
LONDON, S.W.1**



OFFICIAL FORMS

There would have been hundreds of official forms used over the years that R.N.A.S. Stretton existed. It is possible that there are many examples still available in various records. All but one reproduced here are from individuals and concern them. Even if anyone had thought to retain other documents it would probably have contravened the Official Secrets Act or Naval Regulations.

Air Mechanic(L) John Barton's discharge papers

6. 1586 (A). (Established—November, 1944.)

ORDER FOR RELEASE FROM NAVAL SERVICE (CLASS A)

(MEN)

H.M.S. BLACKCAP

To: BARTON (Name) (Date) 3rd July 1946
A. M. L. (Rating) (See Note 1.)
PX 592922 Official Number SC/42
1 SEP 1948

- You are being released from Service, by order made under authority of the Naval and Marine Forces (Temporary Release from Service) Act, 1940, as a Class A Release. (See Note 2.)
- The date of your Release will be 28th August 1946.
- You have been granted leave as follows, starting on the day after the date of this Order:—
~~..... days' foreign service leave expiring on~~ and
66 days' resettlement leave expiring on the date of your Release.
- You are free to take up civil employment at any time after the date of this Order.
- You may wear civilian clothing while on leave, and you are to cease to wear uniform after the date of your release.
- After your release you will be regarded as being in Reserve and you will be liable until the end of the present emergency to recall to the Naval Service by revocation of this Order at any time. You will not be recalled, however, except in extreme emergency. (See Note 3.)
- Your home address is noted in official records as follows: 17 Great Eastern St. Mill Rd. Cambridge
 You are to report all changes to the Comynodore of your Depot (if a Royal Naval Reservist to the Registrar General, Shipping and Seamen, Llantrisant Road, Llandaff, Cardiff; if a Royal Marine to the Commandant of your Divisich). While you are on leave you should also report any changes of address to the Officer in Charge of the Pay Office from which you were paid.
- Your Service Certificate will be sent to you after your Release.
- You should carry this Order with you until your Service Certificate is received and you are to produce it when required.

** Delete this line if no foreign service leave has been granted.*

Chesbitt
 Sub. Lieut. (A) R. N. R. R.
 For Commanding Officer.

NOTES.

NOTE 1.—This date is the date on which the rating leaves his ship or establishment.

NOTE 2.—Class A consists of individuals released from the Forces under the Plan for Re-allocation of Manpower during the interim period between the defeat of Germany and the defeat of Japan, in priority of age and length of war service.

NOTE 3.—This release does not affect the normal liability of Pensioners to further service nor of Reservists (who are so liable under the Naval Forces (Extension of Service) Act, 1944) to further service or training.

NATIONAL SERVICE ACTS, 1939 to 1942

ENLISTMENT NOTICE

MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE,
LONDON & SOUTH EASTERN REGIONAL OFFICE,
131-151, Gt. TITCHFIELD STREET,
LONDON, W.1.
30 APR 1945 Date

Ref. W: 14/23

M 1671966 L.A.C.
W. Prince
H. M. S. "GOSLING"

DEAR SIR,

In accordance with the National Service Acts, 1939 to 1942, you are called upon for service in the **ROYAL NAVY** and are required to present yourself on ~~the day~~ at 00.01 hrs ~~on that day~~ on 3 April 1945 (date), between 9 a.m. and 12 noon, or as soon as possible thereafter on that day to:

H.M.S. Gosling
(nearest railway station).

You will be given a travelling warrant for the journey, and you should take this enlistment notice with you when you report to your new Service.

You must understand that you will be deemed to have been enlisted in the new Service from the date upon which you are required to present yourself as indicated above.

Yours faithfully,

J. R. BAILEY,
for Regional Controller.

M29311 30M 3/45 CN&CoLtd 749 (4080) 5

N.S. 12A (T)
14.9.1943—(Capacity)

R.A.F. FORM 1394.

ROYAL AIR FORCE.
BRIEF STATEMENT OF SERVICE AND CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE OF

SUBNAME PRINCE OFFICIAL No. 1571966
CHRISTIAN NAMES Walter
Date of enlistment/enrolment 21 Jan. 1942 Terms of enlistment/enrolment D. of P.S.
(a) Date reported for regular service 9th January 1942
(b) Branch of Air Force in which enlisted R.A.F.V.C. R.A.F. trade Master 44 (A)
Date of discharge 2-MAY 1945 Rank ...
(c) Cause of discharge Discharged under
(Para. 492 Clause 22 King's Regulations and Air Council Instructions.) on enlistment in R.N.
(d) General character (i) during service Very Good (ii) on discharge Very Good
(e) Degree of trade proficiency:— A Bat. B -
Special qualifications Nil
(f) Medals, Clasps, Decorations, Mentions in Despatches, Special Commendations, etc. Nil

The corner of this certificate to be cut off if the airman/airwoman is discharged with a "bad" character, or with disgrace or if specially directed by the Air Council.

DESCRIPTION OF ABOVE-NAMED AIRMAN/AIRWOMAN ON DISCHARGE.

Date of birth 28 March 1921 Marks or scars Scar left knee
Height 5 ft. 7 ins.
Complexion Fair
Colour of eyes Blue Colour of hair Brown
Airman's or airwoman's signature W Prince

(g) Brief statement of Trade Qualifications and General Conduct:—

The above airman has been employed in the trade stated and has shown average skill.

Unit RAF Admin. ...
Date 2 MAY 1945
Stamp RAF BRANDBURG LES-BOULET
(Signed) W. Bailey
Commanding Officer ... Royal Air Force.
Attention is directed to Notes (a) to (g) on reverse.

Air Mechanic (A) Walter Prince Walter was discharged from the RAF on 2nd May 1945 and had to report the next day at 00.01 hours at HMS Gosling for service in the R.N. After three days induction and kitting out he went to HMS Blackcap.

1 April, 1945.

RELEASE DOCUMENTS.

PULLEN J.G.

Rank or Rating **P.O. Wren** O.N. **26557**

Address.....
(To be completed by Holder).

The following documents have been supplied to you for your release or discharge, and are enclosed in this envelope:-

- Order for Release;
- Railway Warrant;
- Ration Card for 14 days;
- Application for National Registration, Clothing Coupons and Ration Book;
- Application form for Medical Treatment (not to uninsured officers);
- Health Insurance Contribution Card (not to uninsured officers);
- Label for return of uniform (not to officers or W.R.N.S.);
- S. 450. Officer's Certificate (not to W.R.N.S. officers);
- Civilian Clothing Warrant (not to W.R.N.S.);
- S. 1006. Income Tax Form;
- S. 1595. Officer's Claim for War Gratuity (if not already completed).

NOT TO CLASS B.

- Form for claiming Disability Pension;
- Pamphlet "For Your Guidance";
- Application for Reinstatement in Civil Employment (R.E. 1);
- Leaflet with regard to Reinstatement Rights (R.E.L. 2).

CLASS B ONLY.

- Leaflet with regard to Reinstatement Rights (R.E.L. 5).

In addition, you should have your History Sheet and Trade Certificate, if you are not an officer or in the W.R.N.S. If you have been dispersed from a R.N. Barracks or the P.S.C.D., Lowestoft, you should have an Unemployment Book. If you have not been dispersed from a Barracks or the P.S.C.D., Lowestoft, an Unemployment Book will be sent to you.



J Kerr

S. 1517 (REVISED MARCH, 1941) 1236 46124/0135 304 1/42 JP 14/705/1 73

WOMEN'S ROYAL NAVAL SERVICE.

Certificate of Service of

NAME PULLEN JOYCE GERTRUDE Official No. **10567**

Date of Birth **31. 5. 23** Nearest known Relative or Friend (to be noted in pencil).
 Religious Denomination **NONCONFORMIST** Relationship **MOTHER**
 Home Address **213. LONDON ROAD** Name **G. J. PULLEN**
CHIPPENHAM Address **213. LONDON ROAD**
WILTS. **CHIPPENHAM**
WILTS.

National Registration Identity No. **4882 11. 14** **6/12**

DESCRIPTION ON ENTRY.

Height	Colour of				Scars, Marks, etc.	Date of Enrolment	27 9. 42	
Feet	Inch	Hair	Eyes	Complexion		Date of Commencing Duty	9 9. 42	
5	4	Auburn	Grey	pale		Period of Engagement	Duration of War	

Establishment	Rating	Specialised or Un-specialised	Category (A.F.O. 1587/41)	Mobile or Im-mobile	From	To	Cause of Discharge
<i>incl. Port Training Depot</i>	<i>PO: Wren</i>	<i>Unspc.</i>	<i>Probationer</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>9/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	
<i>incl. Dictyng III</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>Supply Assistant</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>Drifted to in further low down's (R.N. P.O. 42) Royal Navy Wren</i>
<i>incl. Dictyng III</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>Supply Assistant (F/A)</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	
<i>incl. Bredford</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>Supply Assistant (F/A)</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	
<i>---</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>---</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	
<i>---</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>---</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	
<i>H.M.S. Blackcap</i>	<i>Wren</i>	<i>Spec.</i>	<i>Air Stores</i>	<i>Mobile</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>27/9/42</i>	<i>14th Release Class A</i>

Wren P. O. (Air Stores) Joyce Pullen Joyce was only at HMS Blackcap for 14 months but her service certificate shows how she commenced duty in the W.R.N.S. on 9th Sept 1942 for the 'Duration of the war' and other 'Ships' she served in.



CONFIDENTIAL. By Command of the Commissioners for
 Executing the Office of Lord High
 Admiral of the United Kingdom, &c.
 N.C.W. 516 (44/1/55)

To *Lieutenant Commander K.W.A. Roberts, R.N.*

THE Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty hereby appoint
 you *Lieutenant Commander R.N.*
 of Her Majesty's Ship *SANDERLING* addl. for *R.N. Air Str.*
Stretton as *Officer in charge.*
 and direct you to repair to your duties at
 on

Your appointment is to take effect from that date *31.12.58*

You are to acknowledge the receipt of this Appointment
 forthwith, addressing your letter to the
 taking care to furnish your address.

By Command of their Lordships,
J.G. Lang

R.N. Air Str.
Stretton

(*Appointments. Time of Joining.—Officers appointed to ships at home are to join by 0900 on the day of appointment, with the exception that officers appointed to shore courses are to join after noon on the previous day unless otherwise ordered.—Q.R. & A.I. Art. 0205.)

Admiralty, S.W.1. 17/11/58.

Wt. 51727 Gp. 885

Lt. Commander Kenneth Roberts R.N. Although not appointed as Officer-in-Charge for R.N.A.S. Stretton until 31 December 1958 he was in fact working there previously for a few months. He designed and ran a training course for ratings who were about to be discharged.

PRE-FLIGHT BRIEFING FORM SERIAL No. **1390**
R.N. AIR STATION, STRETTON.

Route and Briefing Section
 Aircraft Type and No. **ANSON MH 119** Destination **ANTHORN** Date **7-2-46**
 E.T.D. **1000A** E.T.A. **1050A** Speed **136** Hours of Fuel **3 1/2**
 Pilot **L.T. CDR BLAKE** I.F. Category **S** No. of Self-Authorising Cert. **A1**
 Call Sign **ANTHORN** Radio **(H/F, V/H/F) (A, B, C, D) (W/F)** Frequency (YG) **Channel 4 - "JB"**
 Names of Passengers (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

Route (Tracks and Distances) **346°(T) 112 miles to transfer station via St. Brev. Hd 23°(T) 92 miles then 029°(T) 32 miles**
 Destination, Serviceability and Special Instructions **Land out & stand - fully S. WIP**
P.T. - I.C.T. if P.T. fails V.F.R. apply.

Meteorological Section
 (A) Contact Conditions. Forecast Period from **1000** To **1400** Time of Issue **0930**
 Wind at Surface **300° 20** Wind at 2,000 ft. **300° 20**
 General Synoptic Situation **Diffuse, scattered cumulus, overcast, heavy rain.**
 Meteorological Officer **[Signature]**

(B) Limited Contact.		(C) I.F. Conditions.		Time of Issue
Stage	From Stretton	To Anthorn		
Wind	Surface 355-55W 20	2,000 ft. 300° 20		
Weather	Scattered cumulus becoming overcast with drizzle, rain at times. Wind freshening to gale force.			
Cloud amounts and height above M.S.L.	Little or no cloud at first increasing to 7-10/10 at 1500, 2000/10 becoming 6-7/10 at 2000.			
Visibility	3-6 miles, decreasing to 1/2 mile at 2000.			
Freezing level above M.S.L.	7,000'			
Icing conditions	High			
Estimated M.S.L. Pressure	at Stretton	at Anthorn	at 1000	at 1000
	10.067 mbs.	10.067 mbs.	10.067 mbs.	10.067 mbs.
	0930 hrs.	0930 hrs.	0930 hrs.	0930 hrs.

Other Remarks **I.F. in doubt - heavy rain.**
 Meteorological Officer **[Signature]**

Authorization and Clearance Section **[Signature]**

Pre Flight Briefing Form

Part of this form is reproduced by courtesy of the Fleet Air Arm Museum to give an idea of the procedure that pilots had to go through before take off.

Courtesy of Fleet Air Arm Museum

YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
1948		Type	No.			
MONTH	DATE					TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
Aug	18	Dominie	NF 879	Lt Tubby	Self.	STRETTON - COLHAM.
---	18	Sea Hawk	VR 850	Self	---	COLHAM - STRETTON.
---	18	Dominie	X 7397	Self	CPO. Peake Sea Cadets	Local
---	19	Sea Fury	VW 231	Self	---	Test.
---	19	Sea Fury	VR 951	Self	---	Test
---	19	Dominie	NR 669	Self	Naval Airman	Local
---	20	Sea Fury	IR 752	Self	---	Test
---	20	Sea Fury	VR 952	Self	---	Test
---	21	Sea Fury	VR 950	Self	---	Test.
---	22	Dominie	NR 669	S/Lt Pugh	Self 5 Pass.	STRETTON - WADDINGTON.
---	23	Avon	NR 29	Self	---	WADDINGTON - STRETTON.
---	23	Firebrand	EK 787	Self	---	1st Famil.
---	23	Firebrand	EK 787	Self	---	2nd Famil.
---	24	Mosquito	TW 246	Self	PO. Young.	Test.
---	25	Oxford	HM 747	Self	2 Pass.	Air Display "HMS. Ariel"
---	26	Dominie	NR 669	Self	Lt de Bombon 3 Pass.	STRETTON - COLDOSE.
---	26	Dominie	NR 669	Self	4 Pass.	COLDOSE - STRETTON
---	27	Dominie	NR 679	Self	3 Pass.	STRETTON - COLHAM
---	27	Dominie	NR 679	Self	1 Pass.	COLHAM - STRETTON.
---	27	Sea Fury	TF 988	Self	---	Test.
---	30	Oxford	PA 979	Self	P.O. Fox.	Test
---	31	Seafire	ST 201	Self	---	Test
GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)]						TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD
8.13 Hrs. 20 Mins.						

Flying Log of Sub-Lt. Basil Nash

This is a copy of the left-hand page of Basil's log for part of August 1948. It records all the flights he made as a test pilot and for other purposes such as ferrying aircraft or personnel. The right-hand page was used to record the number of hours he flew. They were categorised to show the hours flown in different types of aircraft, whether as first or second pilot or as passenger and also hours of instrument flying in cloud.

OFF DUTY

This section is an attempt to show what the personnel at Stretton did when they were off duty and what leisure activities there were. Obviously with several thousand people passing through over 16 years. There were all sorts of activities, hobbies and pastimes indulged in. Most of the information and photographs given to us have covered the common things but there are a few unusual ones.

Availability of cash was a limiting factor on many activities. The pay for ordinary ratings from 1945 to 1950 was about £2 per week. Petty Officers received little more and the average civilian manual pay was £10 – 15 per week. Two perks were the daily tot of rum and duty free cigarettes. The latter cost about 6d/20 with an allowance of 300 per month.

As might be expected pubs and dances featured heavily in the off duty activities of all personnel. From the start of the war The Thorn at Appleton was the most popular hostelry, being within staggering distance of all male accommodation. It was initially used for surveyors, contractors and service personnel as lodging. After that it was the “local watering hole” with different ranks and trades drinking in their own groups. For several years after 1958 there was a naval atmosphere in the pub with squadron badges all over the walls. Nowadays there is no trace and little interest in BLACKCAP unless you find a surviving local.

Other pubs used in the area were the ‘Cat & Lion’, Stretton, the ‘Bear’s Paw’, High Legh and the ‘Mill’ in Grimsditch Lane, Whitley. The latter was apparently well frequented by local girls.

The aforementioned premises, apart from the ‘Bear’s Paw’, were also venues for dances for male ratings and Wrens.

Similarly pubs in Warrington, Lymm, Manchester and Liverpool provided this sort of entertainment, if the cash and transport were available. There was even the Carlton Club above Burtons in Sankey Street, Warrington where Harry Jarman’s dance band played regularly.



William Clelland and ? Simmons
off duty in Manchester ca 1948

The N.A.A.F.I. was well used by junior ratings who couldn’t afford or didn’t want to ‘go ashore’. Senior rates and officers had their own facilities for socialising.

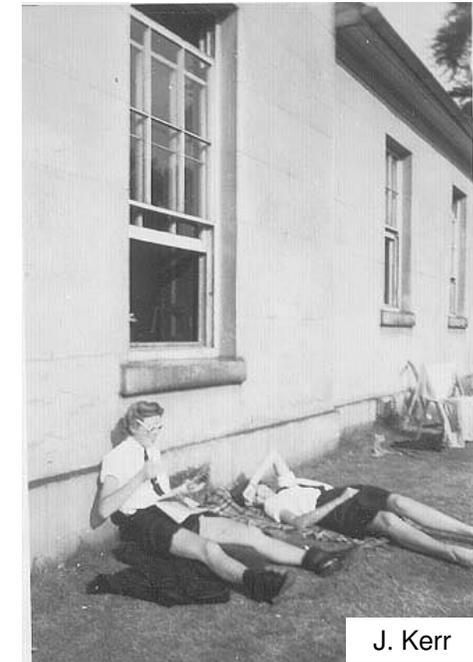
Naval rations could be supplemented in the N.A.A.F.I. and so could the 'tot' with a pint or three of 'Scrumpy' (rough cider). In 1953 it cost 10d per pint but in 1954 was withdrawn on orders of the C-in-C due to its dire effects on some of its consumers.

Socials were also held in this building and dances in the theatre/cinema. Both also took place in the C.P.O.'s and P.O.s' messes and the Officers Wardroom.

An unofficial service by the N.A.A.F.I. in 1948 is revealed by A.M. (L) William Clelland " There was always a warm welcome for the NAAFI van each morning, not only for the food it provided but also for the fact that the NAAFI girl collected the daily horse racing bets and paid out the winnings from the previous day. Bets were usually sixpenny or one-shilling accumulators and winnings were limited to 200-1". Although the Wrens went to many of the dances and socials they were less likely to go to the N.A.A.F.I. while they were living at Grappenhall Heyes or Hall. Audrey Hulme who worked in the Aircraft Receipt and Transfer Office recalls a lot of time spent letter writing, embroidering, reading and playing table tennis. On the other hand she says that they went to parties and dances at Burtonwood and other service establishments. There were also some lively times at the Heyes and Hall including an occasion when a beer barrel was rolled down the grand staircase at the former place. Another leisure venue was the station gym where Betty Barnish played squash etc.

Similarly the male ratings had their quiet times, reading or writing in the mess or playing darts and snooker. They also indulged in general fooling around and personal interests like bodybuilding.

Joyce Pullen and Mona ?
Sunbathing at the Heyes
ca 1945

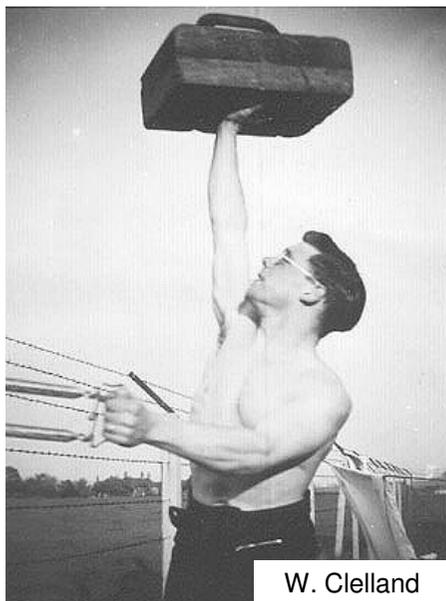


J. Kerr



C. Gibson

A mock marriage
ceremony



W. Clelland

A.M. Charles Wise, health and fitness enthusiast lifting full tool box.

Although it can hardly be described as leisure a number of ratings worked on surrounding farms at busy times when they were off duty. Clarrie Gibson was one of those who did this and he enjoyed it very much. He worked at Booth's Farm in Barleycastle Lane in 1953/54 when it was in possession of Richard Barber. As well as the enjoyment and wages there was fresh milk and sandwiches at 'Standeasy'.

A few other individuals craved a bit more excitement. One reportedly went into Warrington quite frequently, 'borrowed' a lorry from a

parking area and went for a joy ride. He was never found out and he said this was because the drivers were at the pictures for the whole evening.

A C.P.O. took the station fire engine one night, probably after a few drinks and set off down Lumbrook Lane. A bit later one of the Fire Crew searching for him shouted out "Here he is lads, in the lake". This was the pond at the junction with New Lane, now known as the 'Lily Pit'. The ensuing disciplinary action when he was reduced to the ranks in front of the whole ship's company with the accompanying reading of King's Rules and Regulations was a salutary experience for all present.



The Lily Pit

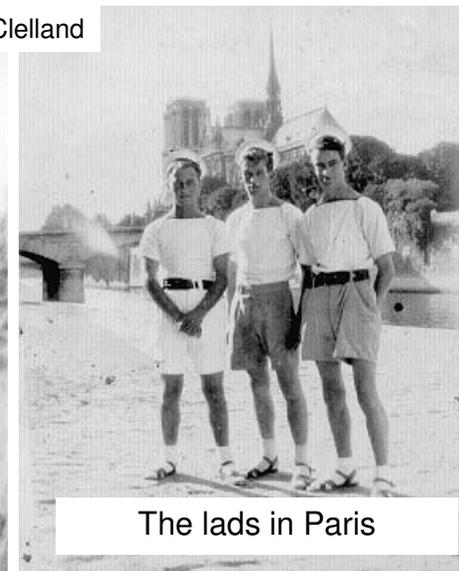
D. Enfield

In the summer of 1949 one would hardly have thought of servicemen having foreign holidays. Air Mechanics Venables and Clelland with one other however spent their leave sight seeing in Paris. After hitchhiking from Boulogne to Amiens they took the train the rest of the way.



W. Clelland

Hitchhiking through France



The lads in Paris

In the later years opportunities and pay were greater and Naval Airman J. Taylor (Buck) records for 1955/56 "I had a motorbike and as I lived in Sheffield I used to get home as often as I could. I remember my fastest time was 54 mins. door to door. There were several of us with bikes and we visited Manchester, Blackpool and other local hot spots. We also had coach trips to the Bolton Palais quite often and we went ice-skating in Manchester. Warrington was a popular place although we had competition from the Yanks at Burtonwood and the R.A.F. lads at Padgate but we managed quite well even so."

The cinema/theatre played a major part in the off-duty life of the station. Films were extremely popular and many plays and pantomimes were performed here.



Station cinema/theatre



Concert party in theatre

There were also many similar attractions in Warrington and other towns. The following extracts from AA4 Tony Perrett's diary are a comprehensive record of theatre and cinema in this era and full of memories for those who experienced them.

"My three years at RNAS Stretton are recalled with some of the happiest memories of my service life despite writing in my diary on the day of arrival 'first impressions not so good'! Having arrived there on the 29th June 1949 I was to remain, apart from a six weeks course in Wiltshire and leave periods, until departing again on draft on the 5th July 1952.

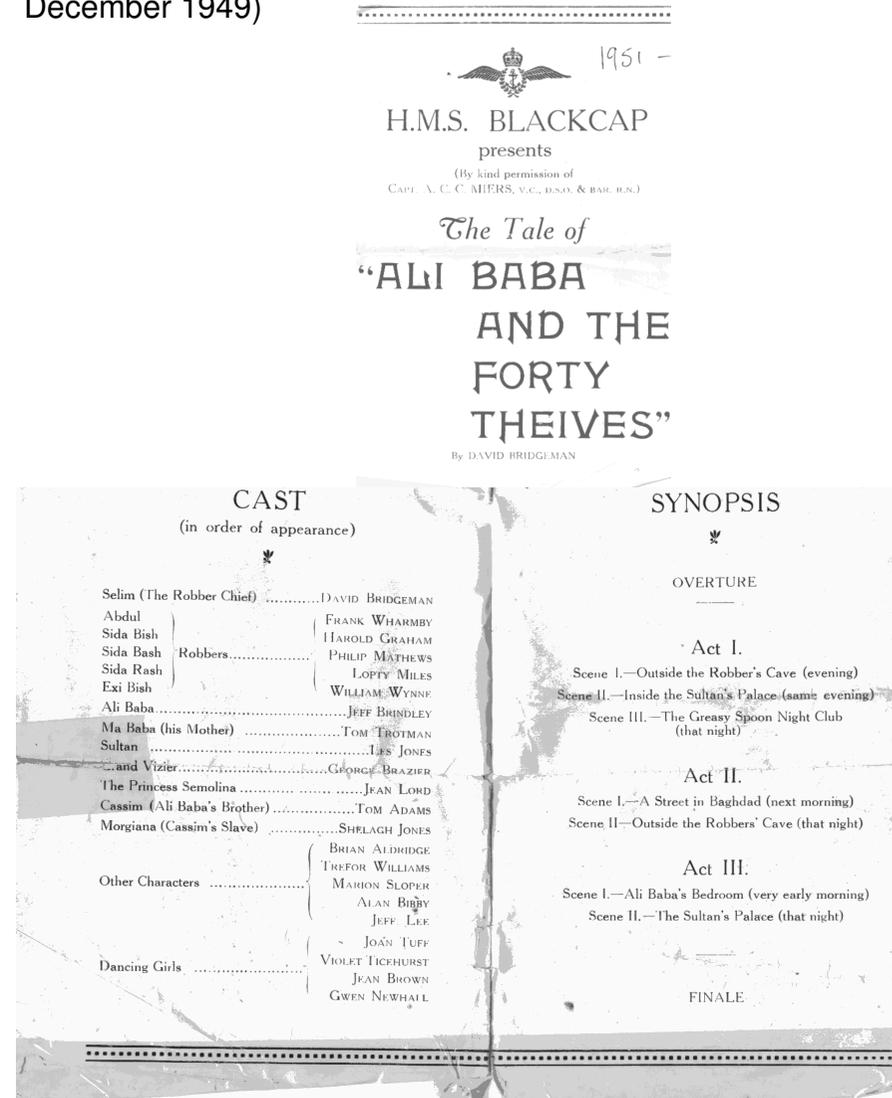
.....On my fourth day there, a Saturday, I went into Warrington in the afternoon for a walkabout, which quite impressed me, and saw the film 'Queen of Spades' at the Ritz cinema.....

Friday brought the fortnightly 'Payment Divisions', plus a lecture in the afternoon; then off into town again that evening for another film show - 'Let's live a little' - which was quite appropriate at that time, having come out of our restrictive four years training! On duty that Saturday and unable to go 'ashore' again I could at least make my first visit to the camp cinema to see the film 'Sky Devils', little realising at the time that it would be here on this very stage that I would later make my theatrical debut as an adult performer! As a boy I had taken part in school productions, church nativity plays and local concerts, including one for the wartime troops at the nearby Military Police Barracks organised by bandleader George Melachrino who was serving as a Sergeant during WW2. My brother Hugh played the piano accordion and I the piano.

.....My first excursion into Liverpool by train from Warrington (Central) occurred on Saturday 23rd, and the first of many such visits, most of which ended up at either the Royal Court or Empire Theatres, then the late train back and a bus out to the camp. Things were certainly now looking promising!

I made the first of many visits into Manchester by train on November 12th, seeing the musical 'Wild Violets' at the Palace Theatre. I was still doing a fairly frequent series of AFO's Rounds, Drying Room Sentry and Gangway Leading Hand' duties, and meantime seeing lots of films in both Warrington and the camp cinemas. The latter, besides being also our theatre, became a dance hall as required, and after attending the 'Grand Christmas Dance' on the 21st December I went on leave again the next morning.

(Note. Tony helped backstage in the production of the pantomime 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves' during December 1949)



The following Monday (9th January 1950) something happened to change my life-style thereafter. CPO (ERA) David Bridgeman, who ran amateur dramatics in the camp, suggested that I join his merry band of players, which I did that same evening. At the auditions three days later, however, I failed to get a part in the new play and was asked to be 'prompter' instead! Saturday the 4th March was the dress rehearsal for the short one act play 'Rose and Crown' for which I was prompting, and it went on the following evening in the camp cinema before the showing of the film 'The Emperor Waltz' starring Bing Crosby and Joan Fontaine. We took the play to HMS Ariel, at Padgate on the outskirts of Warrington, the next evening. I remember little about the play, which obviously took part in a pub, except that the introductory music was 'The Warsaw Concerto' which was currently popular as theme music in the wartime film 'Dangerous Moonlight'! The play then went to RAF Sealand, near Chester, and RAF Wilmslow (now Manchester Airport), after which a party and dance gave us a late arrival back in 'Blackcap', where the following evening the play was again performed for the adjudicator of the RN Drama Festival (result not known!). Fame would come my way on the 20th March when I successfully auditioned for the all male pantomime 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs' as the Prince! Another first came on Saturday the 22nd July buying my first wristwatch in town, which cost me £7 10s 0d and was guaranteed for 5 years! Two days later, and following about 14 weeks preparation, came the Dress Rehearsal for my first play, Agatha Christie's 'Ten Little Niggers', which years later was renamed (for political correctness) 'Ten Little Indians', but then after Indians complained it became 'And Then There Were None'!

We opened the following evening on the stage of the camp cinema, it lasted from 2000 to 2220 and was apparently a great success! I, aged just twenty years, played the elderly retired Doctor Armstrong, which was a challenge to the make-up department and resulted in masses of silver dust in my hair! No time to bask in my glory however as it was back to work, and 'Duty Hangar PO' next day, then a repeat performance of the play in the evening! It was now time for summer leave and so I went home from the 2nd to 17th of August. Within a few days after returning I was auditioning again for the drama group and got the part of a young man this time in a one-act play 'Storm in a Loving Cup', playing opposite my current girl-friend Wren Thelma (Linn) Vaughan. (This romance, like so many others that I recall, was rather short lived!).

Some evenings I went to an EVT course in camp learning how to repair shoes, and I had also been in the church choir for some time; then on Sunday the 3rd September I was asked to play the organ as the regular organist was away, and although I only play by ear, I got away with it alright somehow! September 14th was my 21st birthday which I celebrated by going to the Ritz cinema in Warrington with Linn and fellow Wren friend Rita Jones, another Drama Club member, to see 'The Dancing Years' film, and next day went home on weekend leave where I was given a gold signet ring with my initials on, by my father. The play 'Storm in a Loving Cup' went on before the film show on the evenings of 26th and 27th that month, and whilst my diary quotes a large audience, at least on the first night, I am not sure if that was due to the play or the following war film 'The Captive Heart'!

On the 3rd October the PO's Mess organised a coach trip to the Blackpool illuminations which I went on and enjoyed, getting back to camp at 0130, and then on the 17th I went with another PO, Stan Farr and his wife Hilda, to the premiere of the new Ivor Novello musical "Gay's The Word" at the Manchester Palace Theatre, which was lively, colourful and very tuneful. It was also notable from the fact that I remember the scenery change getting stuck during one of Lizbeth Webb's big numbers! I don't think Novello would have chosen that title if he could have foreseen the future use of the word 'gay'! There was a play 'Someone at the Door' in the camp theatre on November 8th but I had nothing to do with this one for some reason, but now we started rehearsals for the 'Snow White' panto at long last with Stuart Wagstaff in the title role! This opened at the Bell Hall in Warrington on Thursday 7th December and was apparently so successful that it was full again on the next night there also. It was a charity raising event for the local Sea Scouts.



'Snow White' in the Bell Hall.

Headline in Manchester Chronicle was "SAILORS IN PANTOMIME. Special effort for local Scout troop". The 14th Warrington was the only troop with Sea Scouts.

On the following Monday we played the Barrowmore Hall Sanatorium and then in the camp on the next two evenings, with a children's afternoon performance also on the second day, followed by a tea-party for them. Although basically an all male show, Dave Bridgeman's two stepdaughters, Jose and Susan Bate, added some singing and dancing to it. Very appropriately the camp was covered in snow around this time.

The show 'Oklahoma!', which had started its British run at the Manchester Opera House before its long tenure at London's Drury Lane Theatre in 1947, was now back where it started and having seen it three times in London and once already in Manchester (at the time my favourite musical) I went for the fifth time on Saturday 6th January 1951. After the show I was taken by Alfred Cibelli (playing Jud Fry) to meet the cast back-stage as a reward for my regular attendance! In 1969, I was to meet him again when he was appearing in 'Man of La Mancha' on Broadway now as Renato Cibelli!

Now it was time for Easter Leave once more, from the 20th March to the 4th April, notable only from attending the wedding in Portsmouth of my great friends Peter and Norma Ware one day and seeing the popular naval play 'Seagulls over Sorrento' in London on another. Peter, who had joined up with me in 1945, was serving also at 'BLACKCAP', and Norma was a local girl. On the 9th I was cast for a part in 'Libel' at an audition, but this must have vanished without trace, as I was next selling programmes for 'Murder Without Crime', and in the audience on the 19th!

'The Festival of Britain' opened on May 3rd and we watched the opening ceremony by King George VI on the Mess TV, holding a Social afterwards. I was by now playing the organ in the camp chapel quite regularly on Sunday mornings (they must have been desperate!) as well as doing my shoe repairs still on odd evenings, in between numerous 'Duty PO' rosters. The comedy play 'Arsenic And Old Lace' was cast in the camp on the 15th but I got a very minor part of Mr Harper which I lost just two days later for some unexplained reason! By this time a new man had taken charge of the camp theatrical scene CPO (Air Mech) Stuart Wagstaff, a very forceful and devoted 'thespian' who was later to become a well-known celebrity performer on the Australian theatre circuit, TV and Films and to this day remains a great friend! That play was performed on June 13th and 21st, with Stuart starring, and I believe I helped with the impressive scene set at least! Stuart had just arrived in time for the pantomime in which I partnered him as the Prince, and it was he who now organised the 'Blackcap Theatre Club', the President of which was the Captain - St J R J Tyrwhitt RN; Chairman - Lt (E) Keith Chalmers RN; Hon Treasurer – S/Lt (L) Smith RN and the Hon Secretary - Stuart Wagstaff. We were issued with membership cards and I hold mine (dated 6th May 1951) to this day! The previous organiser of shows, CPO Dave Bridgeman, viewed this set-up rather disdainfully, as his methods were less conventional but he soon left us on draft! Now I was to be cast as the Frenchman in 'While The Sun Shines', which was later abandoned! On Saturday 21st July I paid my first visit to the Lake District, spending the short weekend at the Waverley Hotel in Windermere, boating, walking and coach touring the area before returning to camp on the Sunday night, much impressed.

A 'Navy Day' the following Saturday, when the camp was open to the public, brought in crowds of visitors and Stuart had persuaded me to take part in a demonstration 'Crossing the Line Ceremony' in a static water tank on the airfield site, as a team of 'bears and policemen' etc attended the court of King Neptune (Stuart) in this traditional sea-going ritual - with the water just a bearable temperature!



A. Perrett

Yet another dance in the PO's Mess on the 31st was followed next day by the Summer Leave period during which I visited London's South Bank 'Festival of Britain' site by boat from the Battersea Gardens Funfair, which was part of the Festival, where I had spent the morning. My 22nd birthday was celebrated on the 14th by going into Manchester on the back of Reg Linford's motor-bike for a drink, meal and cinema show (in whatever order!) Reg had joined up with me in Jervis Division and so was also an AA4.

Then next day came a new duty for me . . . 'Duty Bus Inspector', which I remember entailed supervising and selling tickets on an RN bus run from the town's Central Station as a late night service after 'Mrs Naylor's Buses' stopped operating!

Casting of a new play on the 17th gave me a good part of a neurotic vicar in 'Without The Prince', in which Stuart Wagstaff had (naturally) the lead role! Now, although never a great one for sports, other than cross-country running, I took up ice-skating in Manchester (Cheetham Rink) on Saturday 13th October. I believe that I only found the ice rink at Cheetham, a Manchester suburb, through visiting two pals in the hospital there who had been badly injured in a motorbike accident. At a Mess Meeting on the 16th I was elected to be 'Mess Librarian' and recall being given sums of money to go out and buy up a stock of books to then open up for lending at set times of an evening, commencing on the 22nd. When I later left I was presented with a book called 'Top of the Bill' (about the London Palladium) inscribed by the Mess President, which I still have.

Following 'Dress Rehearsals' over the weekend, our play opened the Monday evening (29th) and I recorded it as 'a great success, but poor attendance'! I was also 'Duty Bus Inspector' again that evening, so I must have had a very busy time! A repeat of the show the next night was followed by a party in the Wardroom, and the evening after that it was the PO's Mess 'Halloween Dance' in the cinema, at which I was 'specially selected' (!?) to host Captain Courage RN and his wife. (The conversation I recall included the subject of his family brewery at Alton!). We took the play to Barrowmore Hall the following evening ('a big success' says my diary!) and to the Teacher's College at Padgate the next evening where the reception was (supposedly) even better! .

The final performance was given at Risley Naval Victualling Stores Depot (now a Remand Home!) on Saturday 3rd November.

The revue 'Ducks &- Drakes' produced by Stuart Wagstaff, in which I sang a couple of numbers and acted in a short sketch, went on in the camp the evening of December 11th, but the reports next morning were not very encouraging; however it was repeated the next night with a Wardroom party afterwards, and again at Barrowmore Hall on the 13th. There was one more show to do at Risley on the 17th, but the 'Co-star' (second lead) was taken ill and I had to step in to replace him, with a frantic rehearsal in the morning for my benefit, and I had great difficulty in remembering the lines for one number 'We're a couple of swells' with Stuart but however bad it (possibly) was I would not have worried much as I went away next day on Christmas Leave once more, returning on January 2nd 1952.

Nothing much happened the first week back, except that I got measured for a new serge uniform suit on the 9th in the clothing store, but on the first day of the next week, at auditions for Terence Rattigan's 'The Browning Version', I was given the secondary male role of the headmaster and Stuart the lead as Andrew Crocker-Harris. Unfortunately Stuart then had to go away for a short period for some reason, and I was then offered the prime part. It was to prove one of my best, and most enjoyable roles, as an aged master about to retire, but meantime I was sent on a 'Drama Course' to RNAS Lee-on-Solent on the 31st. H.M.S. DAEDALUS however was only for accommodation and the two day course, starting the next morning, actually took place at the Royal Naval Barracks in Portsmouth, after which I called home on the Saturday evening before returning to camp the next night.

In addition to my sorties into Warrington, Liverpool and Manchester, as well as the many social functions also in the camp, one of my most pleasant memories is of cycling on Sundays on my 'Pusser's Bike', to Pickmere with a mess-mate, where there was a large expanse of water that was very popular.

After helping construct the set for 'The Browning Version' several days beforehand, the play opened in the camp theatre on Monday 17th March as our entry for that year's RN Drama Festival, after which we were entertained in the Wardroom, and did the show again the following evening. Although, again, no results were mentioned (which probably means we didn't win anything!), I did record it as a great success but also mentioned being sick that night and next day!

We were by now well into rehearsals for the farce 'See How They Run' which was being organised and directed by Frieda 'Bubbles' Gibson, the wife of one of our pilot officers whose mother Chloe was a well-known professional theatrical director. Stuart Wagstaff having by now gone off on draft to Malta, his reign here as supreme leader of the pack had ended. When Chloe Gibson visited her son Michael and his wife Frieda, she would come along to our rehearsals to offer advice, and I remember her talking about a promising new young actor that she had given his first stage role in a play called 'Power Without Glory' his name was Dirk Bogarde! Of course, had I not been committed to the RN, I convinced myself that she might have given me that opportunity instead. The hilarious "See How They Run", in which I played the real vicar Lionel Toop, amongst many impostors, went on in camp on July 1st for two nights and another at Risley, then with the applause still ringing in my ears.

I was to leave HMS Blackcap a few days later, on the 8th day of that month.

I had served here under three Captains - Anthony Miers VC RN (submariner); R H Courage OBE DSO RN and ST. J R J Tyrwhitt DSO DSC RN; and despite my initial misgivings, had a really great time with lots of good friendships made, seen many good shows and famous people at the Liverpool and Manchester theatres - including Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Orson Wells, Jack Buchannan, George Formby, Richard Attenborough, Noel Coward and dancers Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin. Now I was on draft again by rail - back to Scotland and bound for RNAS Lossiemouth in Morayshire. “

A further communication from Tony

.....the only three places of live entertainment I knew in Warrington were the Parr Hall, Bell Hall and the Royal Court Theatre which during my time there (1949 - 52) the latter had a Rep Company that included Philip Stainton (well known in a number of British films, usually playing a policeman, as in the comedy "The Lady Killers" (staring Peter Sellars and Alec Guinness). Philip emigrated to Australia later and I met him in Sydney in 1960 where he was appearing in the old melodrama 'East Lynne' and had married the Australian Bette Bailey, a former chorus lady in several musicals, and now playing opposite him in this musical melodrama. When this show transferred to Melbourne, Philip died on stage during a performance in 1961.

Sport was a big feature at Stretton in its time as it was in all Naval establishments. Football, rugby, hockey, cricket and boxing were popular sports. There was a football and a rugby pitch behind Burley Heyes Farm. The rugby pitch had a reputation as being the finest in the Fleet Air Arm.



Station Football team 1942/43

There was also another football pitch and a hockey pitch off Pepper Street as part of 'Courageous' site. Apparently different sections had their own teams and William Clelland records that Ferry Flight was one of them. He particularly remembers playing football at left back against Capt. A.C.C. Miers V.C., D.S.O. and Bar who was right-winger for the Officers. In spite of his somewhat fearsome reputation Capt. Miers took the defeat calmly. A picture of the Supply and Secretariat athletics team appears in the 'Work' chapter but it is the only information about athletics received.

A big football occasion took place on May 4th 1946 when neighbouring 'ARIEL' played 'BLACKCAP' in the Depot Cup Final.



There is probably an account of this match in the 'Warrington Guardian' files but the photographs given to us speak for themselves we think.



Kick-off



All photos—A. Smith



Wren "Micky"
Flynn, Wren Pat
Underwood,
Margaret (civvy)



Left to right
A.B. Mails,
P.O. Young,
C.P.O. "Jack" Warner,
C.P.O. "Jock" McLashen,
C.P.O. "Buck" Taylor,
E.R.A. "Joe" Walton,
C.P.O. Jimmy Webb.



Presentation by Mayor of Warrington to BLACKCAP
captain, Arthur Smith

Photos—A.Smith

H.M.S. BLACKCAP – Winners of the Depot
Cup 1945/46)



Blackcap Gliding Club

Gliding was a sport practised regularly.

Nev Boulton says "I was quite keen on gliding at the time having done some as an apprentice, so with the aid of one of our pilots started a gliding club.

We bought a single seat rather primitive 'Primary' glider from RNAS Lossiemouth (£10.00!) and started to teach various people to fly it. Our instructional methods were pretty crude because we only had this single seat machine. The students sat in the glider which was pointed into wind and were taught to keep the wings level. Once this skill was mastered I towed them across the airfield with a Bedford 15 cwt truck. When the students got airborne I could control their rate of climb (or descent) by varying the speed of the truck. Needless to say this was a pretty hairy exercise! One weekend I was towing the Chief Cook across the airfield when the newly joined Captain observed the glider's wild gyrations and when he was told what we were doing was somewhat appalled. When we explained that there was no two-seater instructional machine available he rang around the local breweries and raised some £700 to buy a kit for a Slingsby T31 from the makers at Kirby Moorside in Yorkshire. Three artificers were detailed to build the machine in the Chippie's (Shipwright's) Shop as an evolution! John Sliney and 'Scabs' Scarborough did most of the work whilst I removed the superstructure of an old furniture wagon and mounted an ex-RAF balloon winch onto the back –we also fitted a VHF radio so that we could talk to the Control Tower. After about 3 months in 1956 we were ready for a test flight and as I had the most gliding experience (and lost the toss!) I flew it.

After 3 test flights (each one more daring than the last!) I climbed out of the front seat into the back and put the first student into the front cockpit. That was a wonderful day for everybody.



N. Boulton

Nev Boulton founder of the Blackcap Gliding Club alongside a Cadet Mk1 glider on the airfield at Stretton with hangars in the background



Duke of Edinburgh with Commander Hay watching the gliders in action at the Blackcap Gliding Club. AA4 Nev Boulton is driving the winch.

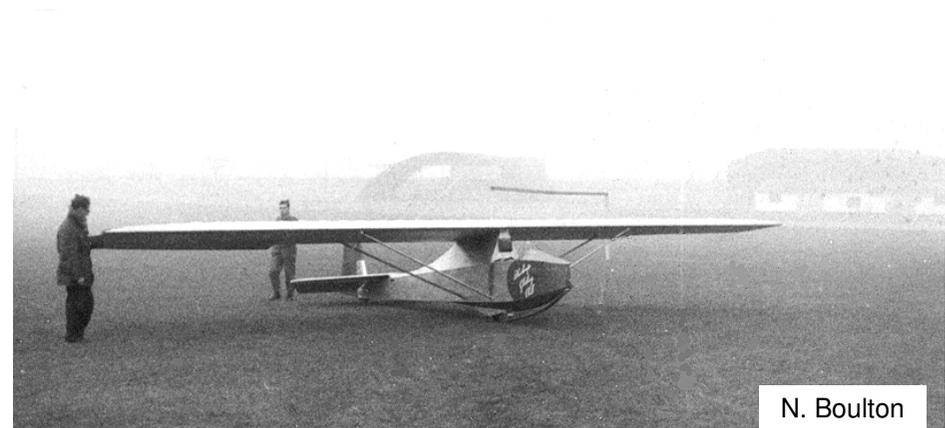
The Duke of Edinburgh visited Stretton around 1956 and the gliding club put on a display for him. The club went from strength to strength and encouraged by Commander Hay we bought another glider (Cadet MK1) from the RAF Feltwell down Norfolk way. One of the Naval Pilots landed the Cadet short into the airfield perimeter fence and broke it. However we soon mended it and he was unhurt. At the end of 1956 I was drafted to 719 Squadron (Gannets),

RNAS Eglington, Northern Ireland and soon after the Stretton Gliding Club folded.

It is recorded however by William Clelland that gliding was practised back in 1948/49. He says, " Lt. Nash who flew the Mosquito and Sea Hornet aircraft, as well as nearly every other type of Naval aircraft, survived many a scary landing. He was the instructor for gliding and could land his glider on the grass adjacent to the hangar to make it easy for the ratings to take the glider inside. That glider crashed at Carlisle killing the Wren pilot, so ending gliding at Stretton whilst I was stationed there.

A.M. (E) Brian Freeman, a nephew of Wee Georgie Wood, the English performer, was an ever-so-keen glider pilot and was solo flying before the accident at Carlisle".

Further to this it is known that 187 Gliding School was at Stretton from 1945 until 1947 when it had to stop due to the arrival of 1831 Squadron, R.N.V.R.



Full view of the Cadet Mk 1 glider 1956



Duke of Edinburgh standing next to Commander Hay inspecting the Blackcap Gliding Club.
Airman `Dolly` Gray and AA4 Nev Boulton are on the extreme left of the picture.

PERSONAL MEMORIES

BLACKCAP and the Locals

After school we would go to the end of the runway on Arley Road with a bottle of water. If we were lucky we had a bottle of pop from Ma Parr's and watched the planes come in to land and take off. One night a little plane came in and the pilot waved us over. We got in and he took us over to the hanger.

A night to remember!

Bernard Hampton

After the Fleet Air Arm arrived quite a lot of farmland was commissioned for barracks, runways etc. So of course where we could go in the village was restricted. Part of the camp housed a Cinema – if the film was suitable we were allowed to go in. Providing you could get a sailor to take you in. But that was if you were lucky enough to have a sixpence.

I delivered papers for Ma Parr, which had gone from a small village store to a very busy shop full of servicemen.

If anyone had a minor accident we were able to be treated at the sickbay.

After the war if the sailors had ice cream on Sunday one or two would bring them out for the children, which was very much appreciated. Also going to church on Sunday was different when the navy arrived. The church was always full and I remember one of the hymns was always "Eternal Father strong to save---".

On VE day I remember flares being sent up as a sort of firework display. As we lived in a thatched cottage (Cabbage Hall), mother was terrified that the flares were going to set the thatch on fire.

My older sister went to ask if they would stop firing the flares, which they did. They were very kind and considerate to the people of the village.

June Brown (Nee Leigh)
Late of Cabbage Hall
Appleton

BLACKCAP Personnel

George Chadwick, A.A.4, 14th December 1942 to April 1943

MY FIRST STRETCH AT STRETTON

On reflection at this time, being the 60th anniversary year of the commissioning of RNAS Stretton, H.M.S. BLACKCAP, my RNFAA service included being victualled on the station in 1942 and in 1957, the year prior to the de-commissioning. Over five and a half years of my time in the mob were spread over four periods on the base.

I first arrived at H.M.S. BLACKCAP on the 14th of December by Albacore (827 squadron), along with the other eleven aircraft. All personnel on the base at that time had turned out to line the perimeter track to guide the squadron to the hard standing and hangar allotted to us. The approach to the hangar doubled back off the perimeter track, this led the Senior Pilot (the C.O. being an Observer) to think that he could take a short cut across the grass. This was fine until the wheels started to sink in to the soft ground bringing the aircraft to a halt as the wheels reached axle depth.

Sadly most of the other aircraft playing at 'follow my leader' found themselves in the same pickle. On a number of occasions during the three months the squadron was detached at H.M.S. BLACKCAP the petrol bowser and tractor became bogged down in the soft ground- a bane to operations.

A week or so prior to us joining H.M.S. BLACKCAP the squadron was at Lee-On-Solent (H.M.S. DAEDALUS) on a Sunday morning in the blitzed hangar. While cleaning and greasing the flying wires, involving all air and ground crews being excused divisions, a sub-lieutenant came out of the office with a newsflash. Our squadron was to be the lead of TBR squadrons in converting to the Barracuda. Spontaneous frolic and revelry followed, save for the aircraft servicing crews still working on the flying wires.

At BLACKCAP the station was not yet fenced, construction work of buildings was on-going, and the Appleton Thorn pub was effectively the mess for all the squadron officers, TAGs, POs and Ratings, all in their respective enclaves. The Publican with family assistance, including Grandma, going flat out to cope.

After our first run into Warrington, returned by the bus which indicated Stretton and disembarked at the Cat and Lion Pub not then knowing that Stretton was nearly two miles from HMS BLACKCAP! On a pitch-black night wondering where we had landed! on the squadron and in our party that night there were three Janner (Devonport) pensioner POs as we set off along the road to the base - we hoped. When passing a row of houses just a bit down the road a man was espied at his garden gate who, we learned, was awaiting his daughter's return.

When we inquired of him for directions he, noting the maturity of the party, invited us into his house for tea and butties. The Janners hesitated and enquired of me "What are butties?" I explained to them what the man was talking about and we all followed him into his home for some welcome eats.

By the end of March 1943, the squadron had taken charge of its full complement of fourteen Barra's and at the beginning of April 1943, departed Stretton for Lee-on-Solent. On that occasion I was Acting Aircraft Artificer 4th Class, in charge of squadron maintenance organisation.

Barbara Joyce Gait, civilian, 1947 to 1954 and 1956 to 1958

My parents moved to No.34 Chapel Lane, Appleton, when I was 5 years old (in 1937). The Air Station was built around the row of houses where my family lived, however I cannot remember the year it all started. I went to the Village School at Appleton and upon leaving (at the age of 14) continued my education at Marshall's Commercial College in Warrington for 12 months or so after this. When I left there I joined the Civil Service (at the recommendation of an Aunt who was already a Civil Servant). My first job was at The Royal Naval Store Depot at Risley. I joined the typing pool there but had qualified as a shorthand/typist. From there I was what we today call 'head-hunted' by the Personnel Officer of RNAS Stretton, to do a similar job on the Air Station and I agreed to this transfer as it would save me a lot of travelling time and waiting for buses in bad weather (in those days we relied on buses).

Our next-door neighbours at this time were called Hampton. (Mrs Hampton became a widow and later married the Master at Arms of the Station.) Incidentally the Hampton Family were the Landlords of the local hostelry, the THORN INN for many years, that is Mrs Hampton's in-laws; which was quite important for the lads night out. The cottage next-door but two to us became the Ships Tailor (I used to sew a few badges, buttons, and some slight alterations for him in my spare time.)

On the Air Station I did copy typing, Duty Rosters, Planned Maintenance Programmes, etc. also I worked for Cdr. (E) and Lt. Cdr. (E) taking shorthand notes. Occasionally taking shorthand notes from The Commander of the Air Station, i.e. during a Court Martial; and the Captain when his scribe was on leave (incidentally one Captain there was Captain Courage (from the Courage Ale family I believe). As you are no doubt aware, people were drafted about every two years. The Test Pilots frequently came into the office in search of a mug of coffee, as we usually had a pot bubbling away on top of the old bogey-type heater. There were also three other female civilians working in the Department. We had exchange Pilots from Canada, Australia, etc. on the Station, they stayed for several months at a time (maybe 2 years, I cannot properly remember).

There was a Marine Band there for some time. The band used to play for the seasonal dances, which were held in the Cinema. Obviously concerts were also held in the Cinema. I remember the last concert held there which closed with BYE BYE BLACKCAP (instead of blackbird). After having a baby in 1955 I went back to work in the Technical Library as my previous job there had obviously been filled by someone else.

The planes were repaired just outside the hangar and our office window, often virtually deafening us when the engines reached maximum revs, prior to test flight. The spare tail wheel from one of the smaller aircraft was used as a door-stop to Cdr (E)'s office - the inner tube from which was used blown up as a rubber ring for one of the Electrical Officers in the next office, for the duration of a boil on his bottom!

There was also a unit called M.A.R.U. (Mobile Aircraft Repair Unit) to which my first husband was drafted. This unit went out to several air crashes up and down the country, repaired what was possible and transported the planes back on the 'Queen Mary' (a very long low lorry).

As mentioned on the telephone, Prince Philip visited the Station on one occasion, and yes we served him with a cup of our coffee, together with custard cream biscuits sent over from the Wardroom (we were unable to buy those in the shops and of course rationing was on. I am second from the right in the photograph, with the long 'new look' skirt).



B. Gait

William McClelland, Air Mechanic (L), Summer 1948 to November 1949

Prior to joining the Royal Naval Air Service in October 1947 as a National Serviceman I worked as a meteorologist at Prestwick Airport, Scotland. After initial training at H.M.S. ROYAL ARTHUR at Bath I studied aircraft electrics at H.M.S. ARIEL, Warrington and H.M.S. GAMECOCK, Nuneaton before being drafted to BLACKCAP in the summer of 1948.



Probationary Air Mechanic (L)
William McClelland 1947

I was a member of Ferry Flight under Lt. De Bourbon and was appointed to Duty Crew on the apron. There were three crews each consisting of a Petty Officer, an electrician, a rigger and a fitter. I was demobbed from H.M.S. DAEDALUS, Lee-on-Solent in November 1949.



Some Duty Crew personnel.
A.M. (L) Fletcher, A.D. (A) Williams, P.O. Poynton
A.M. (E) Whittaker, A.M. (L) McClelland

Some of my memories of H.M.S. BLACKCAP

1. There was no 'grog' issue to ratings under 20 years old. Once when the order 'Splice the mainbrace' was given for a royal occasion the partaking members of the Duty Crew fell asleep after lunch and slept it off in the Crew Room while the junior members attended to aircraft on the apron.
2. Lt. Campbell Brown used to drive his open-topped powerful car at speed and relied on the hangar doors to stop him if his brakes failed, as they often did. One poor rating died as a result of having his head caught between the very heavy hard-to-push doors as they were shut.

3. Lt. Ricky Thomas, a dashing dare-devil pilot used to make very steep banking turns after leaving the runway in any plane he flew. He used to fly in the turkeys from N. Ireland at Christmas in the Dominie aircraft. They were for Wardroom use only, I'm afraid, as half the ratings were on Christmas leave and the other half on New Year's leave.

4. Lt. De Bourbon was a descendant of French nobility and was a very efficient Commanding Officer of Ferry Flight. He was sympathetic to any request for compassionate leave and was held in very high respect by Ferry Flight mechanics.

5. We had Wren radio mechanics at the station and one accused a mechanic of molesting her as she crawled along the inside of an aircraft to reach the radio equipment. The case was later dropped.

6. I was standing in front of the Sea Fury aircraft that tipped up on its nose, shattering its propeller and sending pieces of it half the length of the apron and into a parked Anson. The Duty Crew rigger had to patch up its ripped fabric. The pieces missed me but I kept a twisted shard of metal as a lucky keepsake. It was customary for Sea Fury pilots to fast run their aircraft before switching the engine off. The pilot had run this one so fast that the tail had lifted off the tarmac.

7. It was great fun but hard work cranking up the engines of Sea Otter and Walrus and hoping that on the order 'contact' the engine would burst into life and nearly blast the mechanic off the running board.

The Duty Crew was qualified to swing the propellers of small single-engined aircraft like the Auster. If the mechanic slipped and the engine started he had to roll away from underneath it.

One I started had been set at full throttle and the plane's tail went up and it was ready to go, fortunately the brakes held. The pilot apologised for setting it at full throttle.

8. Rationing of certain items was still in force and sweet coupons were often exchanged for tobacco, 'tickler' as it was called. Non-smokers could bargain their tobacco for cash or other goods.

Pay was £3-10-0 per fortnight and this was spent mostly on buying meals in the NAAFI canteen and washing them down with rough cider, 'Scrumpy' as it was called.

9. In the summer of 1949 Naval Airman (Handlers) were introduced to Stretton. They did not wear blue shirts and overalls but were in normal naval clothes with white belts, gaiters and boots. Duty Crew had to allow these handlers to position aircraft on the apron. At first their attempts at positioning between the tie-down rings were so poor that Duty Crew had to manhandle the aircraft or start them up and re-position them.

The handlers were not allowed to walk on aircraft wings with boots on so were restricted to positioning.

10. Aircraft often confused Stretton with Burtonwood and it was panic stations as they approached and had to be warned off with red flares. Occasionally a Dakota would land and would then be asked to leave on the short runway.



Dakota from Burtonwood 1949

One day whilst doing an electrical check on a Mosquito I could see a U.S. Dakota approaching Burtonwood on the horizon. For a lark I lined him up in the gun sight and pressed the button. There was a roar as the air pressure was released and those around wondered if I had really fired the gun but no ammo was aboard, thankfully.

Coffman starter cartridges, which had refused to fire, were usually ignited by match after we returned to our mess. Some budding rocket enthusiasts used to fire them into the farmer's field but most rockets flew horizontally amongst the cattle's legs.

11. The Duty Crew tractor, a yellow Fordson with no seat, just a stand-on platform was the pride and joy of the Crew. It was great fun to chug along to and from the galley to fetch the 4 o'clock tea for the Control Tower and Duty Crew. Our hamper was usually toasted bread and hot runny syrup whilst the Control Tower had bread rolls filled with sausages. This didn't go down too well with the Crew.

Supper was normally over by the time we arrived to be fed but normally the cooks had set aside suppers for us. It paid to be late as the quantity given to us was more than the average rating got. A whole tray of Manchester tart between six of us was delicious.

12. The Church of England Nissen hut was across the road from Duty Crew mess and next to our shower block. Ratings regularly crossed naked from the showers much to the embarrassment of the Wrens and Officers attending church. Eventually a more suitable site for the church was found.

The stove positioned in the centre of our mess was a welcome source of heat in winter. After rounds at 2100 it was filled until it was red well up the stovepipe. Often Solo was played at a table next to the stove whilst others participated in their letter writing or hobbies such as reading, sketching or making small carpets.

13. Local farmers used to request ratings to help with such jobs as singling rows of cabbages or turnips in late spring or potato lifting in autumn. Many ratings were only too willing to help to get that little bit of extra cash.

14. Duty Watch had occasional Town Patrols to perform where the task was to rescue BLACKCAP ratings from dance hall fights with the American G.I.s who were very rich and could offer gum, cigarettes and nylons.

15. The saddest moment was seeing wounded men from H.M.S. AMETHYST being transferred to ambulances to be taken to Manchester hospitals. Some were walking with plasters on but others were on stretchers.

Quotes from life and Daily Orders at BLACKCAP

“ Anyone knowing the whereabouts of HENRY, the bulldog, report to the Regulating Office”
Henry was a mascot and was never seen again.

“Mushrooms growing on the airfield are Admiralty property and are for the exclusive use of the Wardroom”.....
Regulating Office
“You can have what’s left after we find ours in the early morning mist”..Duty Crew

“You will salute my car if the pennant is flying, whether I am in it or not” “My band” “My guard”
.....Capt. A.C. Miers V.C., D.S.O. and Bar
“Where the hell is my aircraft? I ordered it for 0900”.....Capt. A.C. Miers V.C., D.S.O. and Bar
“The aircraft was delayed for a slight alteration and is now approaching. This was for your safety, Sir”
.....Lt. de Bourbon, Ferry Flight
“Damn my safety”
.....Capt. A.C. Miers V.C., D.S.O. and Bar

“Duty Crew away and play cricket outside”Petty Officer in charge of Crew.
A Wren rating had just come to visit from the Control Tower.

“Look out! Dive! Get out!”.....member of Duty Crew.
It had been raining and a landing Firefly aircraft slewed off the runway onto the grass and was heading at speed for the Crew room and Control Tower. Luckily the pilot managed to slew the plane again and avoided a collision.

“We never got any apples or pears. There was a billy-goat in the orchard”....Duty Crew back from a scrumping raid.

“Sir! See what you have done”..... Duty Crew member to pilot who tipped Sea Fury on to its nose.

“For God’s sake boy stop shaking”.....Surgeon Commander Dentist dealing with first patient after lunch.

“Duty Crew to end of runway immediately”.....Control Tower
Incoming Sea Walrus or Otter had to have their wing tips held down by ratings in high winds as they were liable to blow over.

“Emergency landing. Emergency landing. Mosquito coming in to land”....Control Tower
Runway was too short and pilots had to up undercarriage on the grass at the end. Sea Hornets had same problem.

Clarrie Gibson, ex Stores Asst. February 1953 to April 1954

Old Drafty must have thought I was homesick as just ten months after leaving Warrington for Winchester he sent me back there. I didn't mind, I lived only 60 miles away as the crow flies from R.N.A.S. Stretton, an awkward 60 miles though across the Pennines.

On 9th February 1953 I made my way to Waterloo from Winchester and there met up with a Stores Chief yet once again with whom I was due to serve, this was the second occasion I'd been sent on draft with a Stores Chief to Warrington. He was S.C.P.O.(S) Ginger Neale and after having a few words we chucked our kit into the back of an R.N. lorry to take us to Euston for the Warrington train.

I believe we arrived at Bank Quay Station where transport was waiting to take us to Stretton and deliver us to Eagle Site, which was the accommodation and feeding part of the camp. After collecting our kit we said our farewells for the time being and were to see lots of each other in the months ahead as he was to be my boss. Joining Routine was completed next day and then I reported for work at the Naval Air Stores Office in the Aircraft Maintenance Yard (A.M.Y.). I was to work in both Naval and Air Stores as well as in the office plus two hours each morning in the Inflammables Store where dope was stored as well as liquid envelope that was used for cocooning aircraft in the Embalming Section close by. There was a very large amount of highly inflammable paint in the store and I was always pleased to return to the A.M.Y. across the airfield at the end of 2 hours.

There was no heating in the Inflamm. Store and of course smoking was not allowed so it was a pleasure to return to base.

I think I am right in remembering the C.O.'s name being Captain David Trentham for all my Service Documents are signed by Kenneth Buckley who may have been the Supply Officer but of this I'm not certain. The Deputy Supply Officer was Lt.Cdr. J.P. Barnicott who was a real gent of an officer and very well liked by the troops. Lt.Cdr. Hawcroft who used to come to work on his motorbike across the airfield from his Married Quarter relieved him. The Stores Officer was Sub. Lieut. Uden whose desk was alongside S.C.P.O. (S) Neale's who controlled the staff and workload. Another Store's Chief was Whacker Payne who occupied that chair prior to the arrival of Ginger Neale and then revised various work in the storerooms. He was not very well liked by most but I found him easy to get on with for all he was a stickler for discipline and the correct procedure being carried out. Working on Permanent Ledgers and Permanent Loan Lists was S.P.O.(S) Speakman from Liverpool who was later relieved by S.P.O.(S) Derek Hodgson and was a far more civil man to get on with than his predecessor and was respected by the lads. There were too many ratings on the staff at Stretton for me to remember all their names but some of them who come to mind are: L.S.A.s (Leading Stores Assts.) Johnno Johnson, Ron Knox, Les Mirfin, Geordie Reay, Tommy Hood, Knocker Norris and an old salt Jan Cox from Plymouth. Some of the thirty or so of the SA.s were Ray Thomason, Mick Weiland, Andy Hough, Scouse Larsen, Clarrie Gibson, Brian Welch and Scouse Rainford plus many more whose faces I can see but cannot put names to them.

At the time of writing these notes it is 43 years ago since I last saw most of the lads, I met up with a few but no doubt you'll appreciate the pain caused to my brain by conjuring up the names already mentioned. The civilian stores lorry driver was Fred Chisholm.

I was housed in Eagle 28 Mess initially but as time went by we were all moved around to other huts. The messes were Nissen huts with corrugated tin roofs and sides and heating was from a coke stove in the hut. Coke was strictly rationed and a sentry guarded the Compound where the coke was kept. Often the compound would be raided for an illegal bucket or two but it was easy to spot the culprit Mess, as it would be the warmest hut in the camp. I used to make toast around the stove after Officer of the Day's rounds at 2100 and open up a tin of baked beans. A covered walkway led to the washroom on the opposite side of a roadway from the messes.

Duty-free cigarettes were allowed and issued each month in bulk to the cigarette store. We were allowed 300 a month, which cost 6/6d or a choice of three one quarter pound tins of cigarette tobacco (tickler) or a similar quantity of pipe tobacco. The cigarettes had a blue line along them, as did the packets of 20, which showed up on x-ray and was supposed to counteract smuggling. The Buffer looked after our rations in the cigarette store and would dish out a packet of 20 per day until such times as your allowance had been used up. At main leave times you were allowed to take 200 fags or the equivalent in tobacco.

The Dining Hall was situated near the Main Gate on Eagle Site and was approximately a 3 day camel ride from our Mess which was the farthest away, you quickly became soaked on a rainy day, as was also the case when going to the NAAFI.

In dry weather we had to march to the A.M.Y. from Eagle Site along a country lane and back again at dinnertime. The same much afterwards then back again when Secure was sounded at 1600. Transport was only provided when wet weather routine had been decided and R N. coaches took us down to our places of toil. Duty watch came round one in four which entailed checking the ledger entries for the day and balances then scrubbing out the offices after all the paper transactions had been verified. There were four storerooms in the A.M.Y. and masses of paperwork passed through each day then passed through to the office for actioning. Issue centres were also sited in the hangars where regular store items were available without the accounting necessary as they were everyday use. These items such as nuts, bolts and washers were issued in bulk from the Naval Air Stores and the Squadron SA was responsible for their replenishment.

767, 1831 and 1841 were the Squadrons stationed at Stretton. The runway in front of the Control Tower was painted to represent the flight deck of an aircraft carrier and the trainee pilots would go round in orbit all day long practising deck landings. Most of them would get the ok, some would be waved off and given the equivalent of "You stupid *****" and some would be the cause of the alarm bells ringing and over the Tannoy would come 'crash on the airfield, crash crews close up' and off would go the Rescue tenders and lifting crane with the ambulance also in attendance.

On one occasion I saw a big American Airforce Flying box car come ambling in during the deck landing practices, flares went shooting up from the Control Tower to warn them off after they'd mistaken Stretton for Burtonwood which wasn't very far from Stretton. I suppose it was relatively easy to mistake the airfield after flying across the Atlantic but boy oh boy did they cause some panics!

It was the habit to answer a phone call with some daft comment such as "Hell Fire-Duty Devil" or "City Desk-Hank Jansen". One morning an SA in the Store gave it 'Bar XB Ranch Hoppalong Cassidy speaking'. Then the answer came back, "Then grab yourself a sombrero. This is the Supply Officer, I will see you in my office". I can't remember the outcome but I believe it was all taken in good spirit by the hierarchy.

If your action working dress (No.8s) became a bit threadbare and required a patch then there was a service run by the Safety Equipment Section who would complete the repair for 2/- a patch. It was comical to see some of the gear being worn, they were nothing but patches but it wasn't long before the practice was stopped by threats from upon high.

About 400 yards or so up the road from the Main Gate was the local watering hole, the Thorn Inn at Appleton. I didn't frequent the pub very often as my spare dosh was needed for getting home at the weekends when possible. No doubt it'll remain the meetinghouse for many hundreds of ex-ratings whenever a reunion is held.

(In the late nineties I had occasion to visit Liverpool and on the trip called in at the Thorn at Appleton and expected there being a book for visitors ex-BLACKCAP so that the record could be looked through to search for any former pals who served there

No one in the pub seemed interested, no interest whatsoever which surprised me, but forty years is a long time for everything to remain unchanged I suppose. I took a little walk towards the spot where the Main Gate used to be and it was the entrance to a young offender's prison, this is the case at CERES I understand. I couldn't even find the farm where I used to earn a few bob, as the M56 had cut the camp in two, what a disappointment!)

A pint of rough (very rough as a matter of fact) cider could be had in the NAAFI for 10d per pint but I recall that orders were received from the C-in-C to stop selling it eventually as it was driving some of the lads round the bend. I do remember having three pints of the stuff one night and later tried to give a matey a lift back down to the Mess on the back of a pussers red devil but in less than ten yards the bike ended up on top of us and we couldn't move for laughing. The booze was the source of a flying visit to the heads that I had to try and make during the night but alas I couldn't make it and had to settle for the grass - what a relief!

I had to go to R.A.F. Padgate in Warrington one day to have a varicose vein in my right leg drained, I was told by the MO, to put my foot up on a chair and watched him stick the syringe into the vein and start draining the blood off. It was hot and airless in the room, no window open and I asked if I could have a drink of water but was refused as the job was practically finished. The next thing I knew was that I was lying on a table after having flaked out. I looked at my Medical History Sheet later and it was noted, "Cure not guaranteed as the patient fainted".

I'm sure that if I'd been allowed that glass of water then it wouldn't have happened, as I'm not a squeamish bloke. Many years later I had the vein stripped in Pinderfields Hospital at Wakefield and I've had no further problems since - touch wood.

8th June 1953 I passed professionally for L.S.A., the 'hook' came three years later in the Far East.

Naval Air Day was planned for one particular Saturday and all the preparations were made for the many thousands of anticipated visitors. My allotted job was to collect the fares from the visitors who came by coach and escort the coach to the designated area for parking. Two lanes had been roped off in this field so that six coaches at a time could be dealt with. It rained on that Saturday for most of the day and the only coach to arrive was full of American Servicemen from whom I was instructed to collect 10/- each but I felt as embarrassed as Hell when taking the cash from the Yanks. All kinds of aircraft were scheduled to fly but throughout the day we only caught a fleeting glimpse of an R.A.F. Vulcan, which was towards the end of the day, the low cloud had kept the rest of the planes grounded. It turned out to be a thoroughly miserable day all round.



Clarrie Gibson
4th July 1953

I received a rare treat one day when I was sent to the R.N. Store Depot at Risley on the other side of Warrington with the Stores lorry for some equipment that was urgently required. Mention of Risley brings to mind that the place has since shut down as a Stores Depot and is now a prison for those on remand.

In the camp cinema a concert was held one night and the star of the show was Douglas Cardew Robinson (Cardew the Cad). I thought his show was a load of rubbish but what I do remember it for was that I'd previously given up smoking and watching the show made me so bored that I asked for a cigarette and this led me back on the smoker's trail.

There was a farm just off the airfield and one evening after work Brian Welch and I called at the farm to ask if they needed any help with the haymaking etc. as it was that time of year. The farmer was very pleased to have some assistance and it wasn't long before we each had a tractor and trailer which we would load up with hay in the field and return to off-load and stow away in the barn, at the farm. We both enjoyed the work very much plus of course the financial reward at the end of the week, which helped us both with travelling expenses when going home. The farmer needed our help with all sorts of work until the darker nights arrived but he would have us go for just one hour topping turnips in the field or doing any job he wanted doing. We'd have fresh milk and sandwiches at 'Stand Easy' from the farmer's wife. They were most kind to us all the time we worked for them. Somewhere amongst my possessions I have a photograph of me driving the little Ferguson tractor and another one of my mate driving the Ferguson Major.

Brian Welch was a National Serviceman who hailed from Gidea Park in Essex and later became a cinema manager in Romford, I took him home one weekend and to this day my wife remembers him as being a gentleman. We had some good times working on the farm, hard work but we were young and could take it, especially working for such nice people who appreciated our work as much as they did. The day arrived for Christmas Leave and 'Secure' sounded at 1145 and we marched up the road from the A.M.Y. towards Eagle Site ready to prepare for leave. I'd bought a cockerel from the farm to take home for the Christmas Dinner and I slung this over my shoulder as we marched along. It must have looked a bit of a weird sight seeing about 50-odd matelots marching up the country road and one of them with a fowl trailing at the slope. It was quite windy and raining so I put on my Burberry. Because the P.O. in charge had not declared wet weather routine he apparently told me three times to take my Burberry off. Three times I never heard him which I swear to this day. On arrival at Eagle Site he put me on a charge for disobeying an order and I went before the Officer-of-the-Day who gave me a caution. I wasn't satisfied and asked to see the Commander and instead of us all being on our way home for leave I'd caused several men to be late in getting there. But justice needed to be done in my opinion. This was eventually done and the Commander gave me three days' stoppage of leave but I was allowed to proceed on Christmas leave straight away as I suspect the Commander knew the P.O. well enough to support him with the charge but then gave him two fingers behind his back for being so petty on a festive occasion. It was always a bit of a nightmare travelling those 60 miles across the Pennines to get home from Stretton.

You could travel North or South easily in this country but it was always a problem going East or West. When rich enough to make the comfortable journey it was a case of bus from the camp into Warrington, train to Manchester Exchange Station, cross the road just outside the Station, to the Bus Station to catch a bus for over the top to Barnsley where it was then a local bus home. It was always a dash to catch the connections and normally I'd arrive home at about 5pm. On many occasions I'd hitchhike which was often quicker than the bus. I've ridden in heavy goods lorries, cars, bread vans, and an empty lorry that'd delivered spuds in Lancashire and was returning to Lincolnshire. On the back of the lorry all three Services were well represented but the woman driver would not let any of us sit in the cab, which was understandable. She dropped me off about a mile from where I wanted to be and I was very grateful to her for the lift, as prior to her picking me up I'd walked for miles over the moors. One day I was coming home on the bus from Manchester and climbing the hill at the Lancashire side the bus broke down and wouldn't go any further. I decided not to wait for the relief bus as I calculated that it would take ages so I thumbed it and made steady progress before my luck ran out and I couldn't hitch a ride any further. Eventually along came the relief bus an hour late but it stopped for me and I hopped on amidst laughter from the other passengers who thought the whole escapade was funny. The most amusing lift I ever had was when two of us were walking through Stockport and had just finished eating a bag of fish and chips making our way out of the town to the outskirts as no-one would normally stop to offer a lift in the centre when suddenly a vehicle pulled up alongside which we hadn't thumbed and the driver called ~ "Hop in lads, I know where you're going".

I couldn't remember having been run-over or anything similar and being on my way out but the vehicle was a hearse and I thought what a nice way to travel to Heaven. The driver had seen us on previous weekends as he made the journey regularly but just imagine the scene - a hearse with an Undertaker driving and two jolly jacks in uniform sat alongside him in the front. I was very glad that he was not in the same frame of mind as the lady driver with the spud lorry and insisted we travelled in the back. He was a most cheerful bloke and to him I owe a debt of thanks as like the spud lorry he dropped us off at the same spot near Barnsley. The return journey to Stretton always left me undecided which route to travel. If I decided to go by bus the last one from Barnsley for Manchester left at 7.45pm which would eventually mean a night in bed, this being the more sensible way to return. Other than hitch-hiking (which I never did on the way back), the alternative was the 10.15pm train from Cudworth up to Leeds, change station for the mail train across to Manchester, change stations again for the train to Warrington where the R.N. bus would meet us to take us back to 'Rancho Diablo' as I called it. There were always many Yanks on the Warrington train from Manchester who were returning to Burtonwood. The pusser's bus would arrive in camp at 6.55am at the Regulating Office for us to pick up our station cards then call in the dining hall for our breakfasts. The menu was the same every Monday morning - herrings in tomato sauce which initially made me shudder after an all-night journey but as time went on I acquired a palate for them and even looked forward to them during the cold return journeys in the wintertime.

All that remains now in these recollections of R.N.A.S. Stretton is to list some of the many aircraft that I saw there. These were:- Seafires, Sea Furies, Sea Hawks, Sea Vixens, Sea Venoms, Sea Hornets, Sea Princes, Avengers, Dominies, Attackers, Harvards and an odd Swordfish in the R.D.U.

After 14 months I left Stretton on 8th April 1954 bound for Portland where I joined my first ship proper - H.M.S. MAIDSTONE, the submarine depot ship. Many happy days at Stretton for all it wasn't realised at the time.

Petty Officer (AA4) Nev Boulton 1954 to 1956

At the age of 16 I joined the Royal Navy on May 2nd 1949 as an Artificer Apprentice for a 5-year apprenticeship. I 'signed on' for 14 years service.

After 16 months at HMS Fishguard (Plymouth) I specialised as an Aircraft Artificer (airframe and engines.) and I completed the first four years of my training at HMS Condor, Arbroath, Scotland. The final year was 'on-the-job' training on an aircraft carrier (HMS Theseus, 802, 804 and 820 squadrons) and various naval air stations. I was qualified to maintain Sea Furies and Firefly aircraft. In May 1954 I was promoted to AA4 with the rank of Petty Officer, did the P.O's leadership course at HMS Royal Arthur (Corsham, Near Bath) and was drafted to HMS Blackcap, RNAS Stretton, Warrington.

Blackcap was definitely a quiet backwater amongst the Fleet Air Arm stations. Everything was slightly rundown and very little flying went on. There were one or two RN 'Weekender' Squadrons that flew occasionally - but life was very quiet.

There was a fatal crash on 7 October 1956, soon after my arrival – the pilot of a De Havilland Sea Vampire (Lt.Cdr. Tanner – a weekend flyer – Test pilot for AVRO, at Manchester I believe) was buried in the local churchyard. I worked at the Venom & Vampire Receipt and Dispatch Unit under Lieutenant Frank Lloyd. The Chief AA was Tim Hyde. Amongst the fellow AAs that I remember were 'Bing' Chitty and Frank Mundy. Frank Mundy later became a Flight Engineer Officer with me at BOAC, Heathrow. My Naval Airman fitter was 'Dolly' Gray. Shortly after my arrival I was sent to De Havilland's for about two months to do a Maker's Course (airframe and Ghost Engine) on the De Havilland Sea Venom aircraft. Things were very quiet for a while because we did not receive any Venom aircraft from De Havilland Chester. We did various modifications to odd Vampire 5s, rebuilt a private Tiger Moth for an RNVR pilot and eventually started to process the Venom aircraft. Our job in V&V RDU was to carry out Special Technical Instructions and various modifications prior to the aircraft being sent to the Squadrons. Other 'Tradesmen' installed the Guns and Radar. The aircraft were taken by tractor to Station Flight where they were then test flown by Lt. Cdr. Beal. Somewhere about this time I think there was a scandal about some RN aircraft that had been illegally sold to some civilians. Anyway we got a new Commander Air, Ronnie Hay DSC, DSO - he was a really superb officer. In April 1958 I bought myself out of the RN after being made to do seaman's duties and joined BOAC as a Flight Engineer Officer on Britannia 312 aircraft – John Sliney (from Stretton) joined me soon afterwards on Comet 4s. Subsequently I served on VC10s, DC10s and Boeing 747s.

After my retirement from British Airways I got recycled and made a Virgin with Richard Branson's outfit! Altogether I crossed the Atlantic Ocean 1432 times and clocked up over 18,000 flying hours. I finally retired in 1994 and now build miniature sit on and ride steam engines for my garden railway.

Sad Footnote:

Whilst at Stretton I saw some 50 odd Seafire 47 with Rolls Royce Griffin engines with contra rotating props cut up by the scrap merchants. It was awful.

IN MEMORIAM

This section records cases of accidental death of BLACKCAP personnel. All were tragic and no distinction is made of rank or manner of death. The subject is sensitive and we are mindful of the feelings of surviving relatives. Because of this we have used only information sent to us and newspaper reports of incidents. We have carried out no research to determine unknown names or unknown causes of death.

There are eleven 'BLACKCAP' gravestones in the churchyard of St. Cross, Appleton Thorn. Although they are all maintained by The War Graves Commission only three are 'war graves'. The others belong to the Ministry of Defence.



E Haworth

Some of the St. Cross graves

Known details are

Henry G. Tanner, Lt. Commander (A) RNVR, died 7th October 1956 aged 33. Sea Vampire dived almost vertically into ground through cloud at Willington.

C.J. Lavender D.S.C., Lieutenant Commander R.N., died 10th November 1955 aged 34 years. Was making his first flight in an Attacker. Stalled into ground after takeoff.

J.P.D. Garston-Jones, Sub-Lieutenant R.N., died 12th May 1954 aged 23. Harvard crashed and caught fire at Stretton.

Stanley Keane D.S.C., Commander R.N., 12th May 1954 aged 44.
Harvard crashed and caught fire at Stretton.

R.E. Taylor, A.A. 4 . R.N., died 7th October 1952 aged 24.



E Haworth

R.G.J. Phillips, Lieutenant (A) R.N. V.R, died 20th July 1952 aged 27
Attempting slow roll at low altitude at RAF Hawarden.

G.A. Beaumont, Lieutenant (A) R.N.V.R., died 12th February 1950 Aged 24. Seafire exploded and crashed at Adlington, Lancs.)

J.W. Byres, Sub-Lt. (A) R.N.V.R., died 12/7/46
Hit sea during low flying near Blackpool.

KONINKRIJK DER NEDERLANDEN, A.J. Smith, Sergeant V.L.K.M., died 15th March 1944 age 22.
Mid-air collision of two Sea Hellcats over Gt. Budworth

KONINKRIJK DER NEDERLANDEN, P.J. Huyer, Officer VL 3E K.L., K.M.R.T.V., died 15th March 1944 age 19.
Mid-air collision of two Sea Hellcats over Gt. Budworth

A.E. McCormick, Womens Royal Naval Service, died 31st May 1943 age 29
Road traffic accident in Lumbrook Lane

At least one person is buried at St. Cross, in an unmarked grave. A Wren and a male rating also died in separate accidents on the airfield. There may have been others.

At St. Thomas's Churchyard, Stockton Heath:
Barbara May Allender, Wren, died 31st May 1943 age 19
Road traffic accident in Lumbrook Lane
J. W. Philipps Midshipman (A) R.N. V.R., died 20th June 1944 Aged 19
Barracuda dived into sea off Scotland

At Macclesfield Cemetery:

Dorothy Jean Lawton, Wren, died 31st May 1943 age 24
Road traffic accident in Lumbrook Lane
D.C. Twemlow Lt. (A), R.N., died 19th July 1947 age 24
Seafire X120 crashed at High Legh

The following are buried elsewhere or their bodies were never recovered:

J.G.S. Forrest, Lt.(A) R.N.V.R. died 14th September 1942 age 25. Two Spitfires collided over Tabley. Other pilot was in military wing of Dutton Workhouse for months.

Joseph Simpson, Air Mechanic, age 24

Frederick Holden Air Mechanic, age 22

George Bullock, Air Mechanic age 27

died 31st May 1943. Road traffic accident in Lumbrook Lane

Roy Edwin Collingwood, died 5th February 1953 age 22
Attacker crashed at Winwick

F.J. Dyke, Lt. (A), died 12th July 1949.

Seafire crashed into hill near Wildboardclough

E.H.R. Eccles, Lt. (A), died 12th July 1949.

Second Seafire crashed into hill near Wildboardclough

J. Hamer Lt. (A) died 21st November 1954

Sea Fury disappeared on flight to Eglington

E. Jackson Sub Lt., died 21st November 1954

Second Sea Fury disappeared on flight to Eglington

J.S.M. Keys Sub-Lt. (A), died 20th June 1944

Barracuda dived into sea off Scotland

W.D. Hadnutt, Sub Lt. died 25th January 1954

Sea Hawk crashed at Warburton

Some of these people were squadron members at other Air Stations at the time but were attached to BLACKCAP for administrative purposes.

The following accounts are poignant records of two of the incidents.

The Warrington Guardian
Wednesday, June 2nd 1943

6 Die, 12 Hurt When Navy Vehicle Crashes Walton Girl Is Among The Killed

Three Naval air mechanics and three Wrens were killed and 12 other persons injured when, early yesterday (Tuesday) the Service vehicle in which they were travelling overturned and crashed into a field at Wright's Green, Appleton.

One of the Wrens is a Walton girl.

The party was returning from a dance and the crash occurred as the vehicle rounded a bend. Most of the passengers were pinned under the vehicle.

The dead are:-

Wrens, Barbara Allender (20), 3, Mertoun Road, Walton, Warrington; Annie Elizabeth McCormack (29), 36, Dennis Street, Inverness; and Dorothy Jean Lawton (20) 41, Barracks Lane, Macclesfield; Naval Air Mechanics Joseph Simpson (24), 331 Park Lane, Macclesfield; Frederick Holden (22) 13, Campbell Street, Tow Law, Co. Durham; and George Frederick Bullock (27) 279, Deans Road, Heathtown, Wolverhampton.

Of the 12 injured, eight are detained in hospital at Winwick. They are Lieut. R. N. Ward. Air Mechanics Bell, Warrell and Jeffries. Wrens Davies, Major and Burns, and Mrs Bell, a civilian. The other four hurt in the crash are detained elsewhere and their names are not yet available.

The inquest will be opened and adjourned this (Wednesday) afternoon.

The Warrington Guardian
Saturday, June 5, 1943

Naval Honours As Wrens Are Buried

AFTER-DANCE CRASH, "TERRIBLE TRAGEDY"

THERE WERE FULL NAVAL HONOURS YESTERDAY (FRIDAY) WHEN TWO OF THE THREE WRENS, VICTIMS OF THE AFTERDANCE CRASH WHICH KILLED SIX AND INJURED 12 PEOPLE WERE BURIED.

Nineteen year old Wren Barbara May Aliender, 3, Mertoun Road Walton, Warrington, was laid to rest in St. Thomas Churchyard. Previously, there had been a service in the St. Cross Church, Appleton, for her-and also for her orphaned colleague, Wren Annie Elizabeth McCormack of Inverness, who was buried at Appleton. Three Wrens and three naval air mechanics died in the tragedy, which occurred when the service vehicle they were travelling in overturned and crashed into a field at Wrights Green, Appleton, early on Tuesday. The vehicle was rounding a bend. After it overturned most of the passengers were pinned underneath.

"This is a terrible tragedy because these people were so young" said the South West Lancashire Coroner(Mr. Cornelius Bolton) when on Wednesday he opened and adjourned the inquest on the six victims until July 2nd.

The dead are;-

Wren, Barbara May Allender (19) 3, Mertoun Road, Walton, Warrington. Annie Elizabeth McCormack (29), 36 Dennis Street, Inverness; and Dorothy Jean Lawton (20), 41, Barracks Lane, Macclesfield; Naval Air Mechanic Joseph Simpson (24), 331 Park Lane, Macclesfield; Frederick Holden (22) 13, Campbell Street, Tow Law, Co. Durham; and George Bullock (27) 279, Deans Road, Heathtown, Wolverhampton.

Wren Lawton was the daughter of the deputy borough architect of Macclesfield. Air Mechanic Bullock formerly was a well-known professional Association footballer.

Of the 12 injured, eight are detained in hospital at Winwick. They are Air Mechanics, R. N. Ward, Bell, Warrell and Jeffries, Wrens Davies, Major and Burns and Mrs Bell, a civilian.

The other four hurt in the crash are detained elsewhere and their names are not yet available.

DRIVER RECOVERING

Present at the inquest, representing the Cheshire County Police was Chief Inspector J.D. Kettle who said the driver of the vehicle Air Mechanic Wassell and a Wren who rode alongside him in the cab, would be in a condition to give evidence shortly. They were among the patients still receiving medical treatment at two hospitals.

Evidence of identity was given by Lieutenant Cecil Walker, R.N.V.R. and Second Officer Isobel Mure of the W.R.N.S. Both said they visited the mortuary shortly before the inquest opened.

Acting Sergeant Hall of Newton-Le-Willows said in company with Constable S. Makinson he visited the hospital on Tuesday evening, and examined the bodies of the victims.

From their examination they came to the conclusion that in the crash each of the persons who lost their lives received injuries to the back of the neck and head.

The Coroner- it seems to me that they were all dead on admittance.

When Mr. Bolton asked Chief Inspector Kettle whether the principal witnesses would be ready to give evidence in a month's time the Inspector said" I think so".

Adjourning the inquiry until July 2nd, the Coroner offered sympathy with the relatives of the dead persons.

SPORTS GIRL

Miss Allender, who was the only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. Allender volunteered for the W.R.N.S. last October.

She attended Westleigh Girls' High School, Walton and later was employed for a short time by Broadbent and Ainsworth, Sankey Street until she entered into the service of Joseph Crosfield and Sons, Ltd., as a shorthand typist.

Though of a reserved disposition she was keen on all types of sports, mainly swimming, tennis, and hockey. Her other interests were sewing and embroidery. Her father served in the last war when her uncle was killed in action.

Naval officers, sailors and W.R.N.S. were at the large gathering at the funeral yesterday (Friday) at St. Thomas' Church.

Members of the Cheshire Detachment of the British Red Cross Society lined the entrance to the church, when the coffin draped in a Union Jack, was carried in by six naval ratings.

It was a moving scene, when the Vicar, (the Rev. Collins) had concluded the committal, the naval representatives came to attention while a bugler played the 'Reveille' The Vicar was assisted by the Rev. R. N. Goulding R.N. The chief mourners were Mr. and Mrs. Aliender (mother and father) Brian (brother), Mr. C. Hughes (uncle), Mrs. Warburton (aunt), Mr. G. Hughes (uncle), Mrs. Longmore (aunt), Master C. Hughes (cousin), Mrs. Hughes (aunt), Mr. H. Warburton (uncle), Mr. and Mrs. Hulme, Mr. T. Hewitt, M. A. J. Molley, Mr. E. Royal, Mr. and Mrs E. Lloyd, Messer's. H. Sutton, V. Rice, C. Gittoes, T. Worsock and F. Greenwood (friends) A. Maddock and Sons had charge of the funeral arrangements.

The following is a personal account of the circumstances leading up to the above incident.

"A squadron dance had been arranged at a hotel in Lymm. We invited many guests, among them Wrens from the camp and many civilian girls from around the area. Two covered lorries were organised to take our guests and us from Stretton to Lymm. I was in one of them driven by a mate of mine 'Gracie' Fields. We picked up our quota of Wrens from their quarters including of course my own special one. It was a great evening, the food was laid on and the ale flowed. Everyone was mellow!

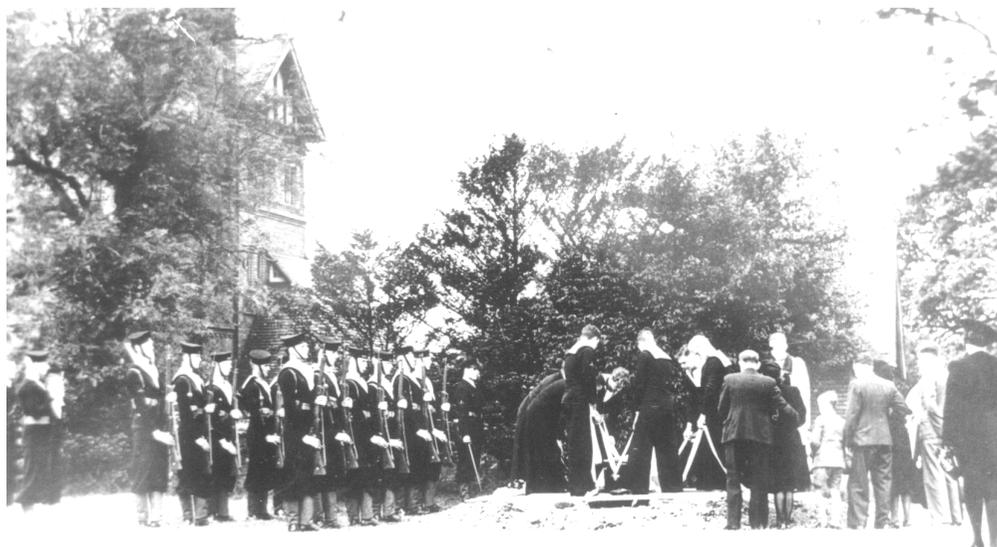
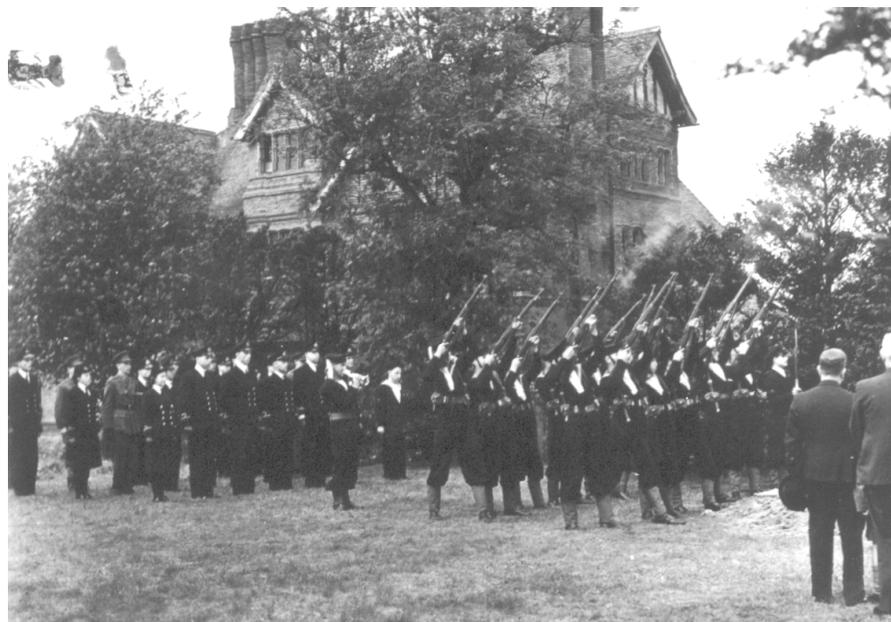
When the evening was over my girlfriend climbed into the back of a lorry along with many others to be driven back to the camp. I took a look at the driver, and not liking what I saw, went round the back and told her to get out. 'Why?' I said ' We are going back with Gracie and he isn't driving this'. The lorry left and for the next hour or more we sat on the stairs in the hotel waiting for our lorry to arrive. But it never did.

What eventually did arrive was another vehicle containing an officer and a Wren officer, and we learned the sorry news. The lorry which had left earlier had overturned into a ditch after leaving the road and rolled down a bank at Wright's Green. There were many casualties. When I got back to camp Gracie told me that he knew he had too much to drink and would not drive his vehicle. He had eventually walked back to camp a distance of five or six miles. The other vehicle from which I had taken my girlfriend was the one now lying in a field. Four sailors, three Wrens and a civilian had been killed.

Many more were hurt. We knew them all. The next week was one of sorrow and pain, which etched a deep invisible scar across our hearts for all time. We buried the dead with full honours in the little churchyard nearby, others in their hometowns. It is inevitable that some must die in battle, but this was unnecessary and in vain. The driver was charged by the police and dealt with but it is pointless to pursue that aspect. He had to live with it too.”



Scene of the accident 2004



Funeral
of
Wren Anne McCormack

St Cross Church
Appleton
2 June 1943

The Warrington Guardian
24th June 1944

**KILLED ON
ACTIVE SERVICE**

MID-SHIPMAN PHILLIPS

Mr. and Mrs. H. W. L. Phillips, Glencour, West Avenue, Stockton Heath, received an official communication on Tuesday informing them that their only son, Midshipman (A) J. W. Phillips had been killed on active service the same day. Nineteen and a half years of age, Midshipman Phillips was educated at Westleigh School, Lower Walton and at Worksop College where he remained for about five years. While still at school he was a flight sergeant in the A.T.C. and a member of the Home Guard. He volunteered for service in the Navy (Fleet Air Arm) under the "Y" scheme and entered in February last year, obtaining his commission as an observer in December.

NAVAL TERMS AND SLANG

This is a short selection of the vast number of words, phrases and expressions used in the Royal Navy. Some of the official terms have been used for centuries whilst the slang is subject to the normal evolution of modern language but can still date back 50 to 100 years.

adrift – late for work or duty

Andrew – nickname for the Royal Navy

Airey Fairey – R.N. name for F.A.A. personnel

ashore – Jack goes ‘ashore’ when he is off-duty and leaves his ‘ship’

blue-liners – R.N. cigarettes. Also D.F.s – duty frees

Bombheads – armourers

Bosun – abbreviation of Boatswain. The Petty Officer who is responsible for efficient seamanship functions of a ‘ship’

Buffer – Chief Bosun’s Mate. He directs the ‘Buffer’s Party’ that maintains the appearance of the ‘ship’

bulkhead – a wall

buzz – a rumour

cap tally – ribbon round cap bearing ship’s name

Chippy – The Shipwright or anyone named Carpenter

Chockheads – aircraft handlers

dhobi – wash one’s clothes

drip – to moan or complain. ‘Putting in a drip-chit’ describes making a complaint in an official way

fanny – a cylindrical or oval metal container for food or rum

Father – nickname for a Captain who is liked and respected

figgy duff – any stodgy pudding

Fish heads – F.A.A. name for R.N. personnel

Friday while – long weekend leave

galley – any area of food preparation. The ‘Main Galley’ is a dining hall

gash – rubbish/refuse, not needed or useless

heads – latrines

Jack – R.N. sailor

Jimmy – The First Lieutenant. Also ‘Jimmy the One’ or ‘Number One’. The Officer who is responsible for the appearance and tidiness of the ‘ship’

Killick – A Leading Hand (equivalent to a Corporal). Also ‘Hooky’ from the anchor badge worn on left arm

kye – hot drink made from grated blocks of unsweetened chocolate

Master-at- Arms – A senior member of the Regulating Branch, similar to a Police Sergeant

nutty – sweets, chocolate etc.

out pipes – order to stop smoking and signifying the end of ‘Stand-easy’

Pusser – derived from Purser, the ship’s Supply Officer(s). Anything R.N. can be described as ‘Pusser’ or ‘Pusser’s’ i.e. belonging to the R.N.

rabbit – a present

rattle – to be ‘in the rattle’ is to be in serious trouble with the authorities

rig – clothing/uniform. ‘Rig of the Day’ is the uniform that must be worn that day

scran-bag – a repository for any personal article found lying around the ship

Stand-easy – equivalent to a civilian ‘break’ at work

tickler – generic name for cigarettes and tobacco

Stringbag – Swordfish aircraft

Uckers – Ludo. A game played universally by all ranks in the R.N. with unique terms and moves

Wavy Navy – Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (R.N.V.R.), from the wavy gold braid on officers’ cuffs

For a comprehensive book on this subject consult ‘Jackspeak’ by Rick Jolly and Tugg.

AFTER BLACKCAP

The following is a brief summary of events after BLACKCAP closed in 1958.

1958 The Admiralty agreed with Cheshire C.C. that the Aircraft Maintenance Yard should be used for commercial warehousing and storage.

1960 All buildings capable of being dismantled were sold except for the main camp site. This was transferred to the Prison Commissioners and an open prison for male offenders was established in November. The prisoners were accommodated in the Nissen huts and officers in the former Admiralty houses in Yewtree Close, Bridge Lane and Dale Lane.

1961 The airfield, apart from the former A.M.Y. was sold to Arley Estates.

1965 Arley Estates sold out to the tenant farmer, Mr Tomlinson of T.V. Seeds and Shell Research Ltd. The latter also leased some land from the former.

1966 Cheshire C.C. gave planning permission for warehousing development to the north west of the perimeter track

1971 The C.C. extended the warehousing, storage and transport area to the whole of the airfield north of the proposed M56.

15th July 1975 M56 opened

1981 Public Enquiry into the Stretton Airfield Local Plan put forward by Warrington Borough Council. The land south of the M56 was designated as Green Belt. Shell Research put forward the case that testing of motor vehicle products was of considerable importance to the company and the nation. Any shortening of the main runway would prevent continuation of the testing programme.

1985 The Young Offenders Institution opened after the prison had been closed in 1981 and demolished.

1986 to 2004 Development has continued north of the M56 including many houses on the former accommodation sites. Some parts of the airfield, with change of owners, are now being developed for the second time.

Our intention had been to include a series of post war maps to show the gradual disappearance of the Air Station buildings etc. This was frustrated by Ordnance Survey being its usual unhelpful self.

On the 1952 1:25000 edition, printed in 1967, the airfield is just shown as blank but similar or 1:10000 maps over the next three decades show the changes well.