1912 1982

70th ANNIVERSARY

Message from the Station Commander
Group Captain G.A. Smart MBE. AFC. RAF

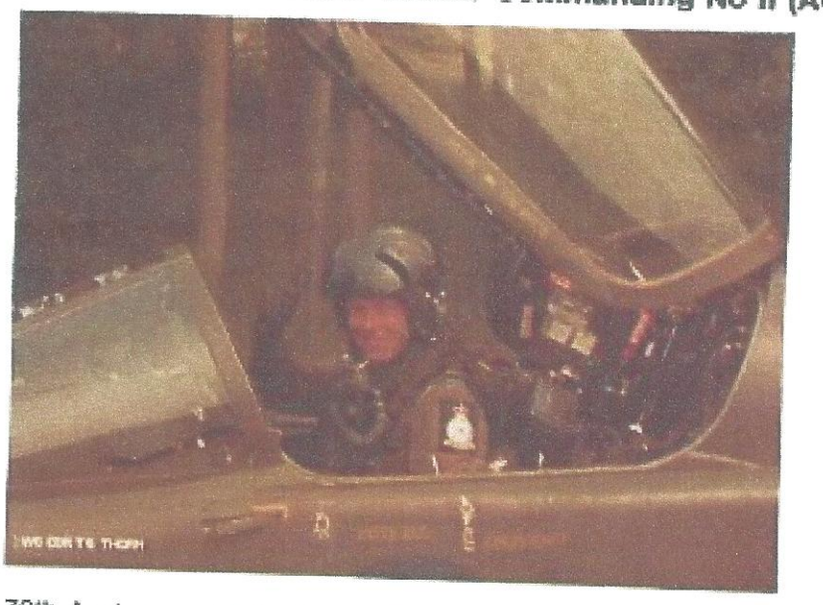
No II(AC) Squadron is seventy years old this year and is thus one of the oldest fixed-wing flying units in the world, if not the oldest. Since those early days, when man had only been flying for a few years, the aeroplane has come a long way and, in the process, evolved into the powerful, flexible weapon that you see examples of around you today.

Together with Nos XV and 16 Squadron here at Laarbruch, No II (AC) Squadron play their part in the NATO shield that runs through Europe from Norway in the North to Turkey in the South. This shield is made up of men and equipment of many different nations, united in a common and vital purpose - the defence of our way of life.

I would like to thank our visiting British and NATO friends for joining us this weekend and I am sure that they would join me and all the officers, NCOs, airmen and airwomen at Laarbruch in welcoming our local friends to our birthday party for No II (AC) Squadron.

FOREWORD

by Wing Commander T G Thorn RAF Officer Commanding No II (AC) Squadron



"1982 marks the 70th Anniversary of the formation of No II (Army Co-operation) Squadron. Due to operational commitments we were unable to celebrate this remarkable event on the 13 May. Nevertheless, it gives me great pleasure on behalf of all members of No II (AC) Squadron to welcome this afternoon our ex-members, guests and families to RAF Laarbruch to share and enjoy our ground and air displays. How delighted we all are that so many old members of No II (AC) Squadron have made such efforts to be with us this weekend. For many of us, it is a unique experience to meet you all and listen to the reminiscences of days of yore, particularly as I know some of you served with the Squadron as far back as 13 May 1912!

Many words have been spoken and written covering the contention as to which "fixed wing" Squadron was formally formed first – was it No 1(F) Squadron (but surely they flew balloons in 1912!), or could it have been No 3(F) Squadron (who believe they were the first) or even No 4(F) Squadron? There appears to be no definite confirmation from either the Air Historical Branch or other well known sources as to who was the first. However, the fact is, history recalls that all four Squadrons were formed on the same day within minutes of each other and I would only propound that strict sequential numbering would have been the order of the day! As apocryphal is the alteration of the Squadrons's number from arabic to roman numerals during the period the Squadron operated the Phantom aircraft – the excogitation of this deed still remains a total mystery! Perhaps these quandaries will be solved over this weekend by our distinguished ex-members of the Squadron.

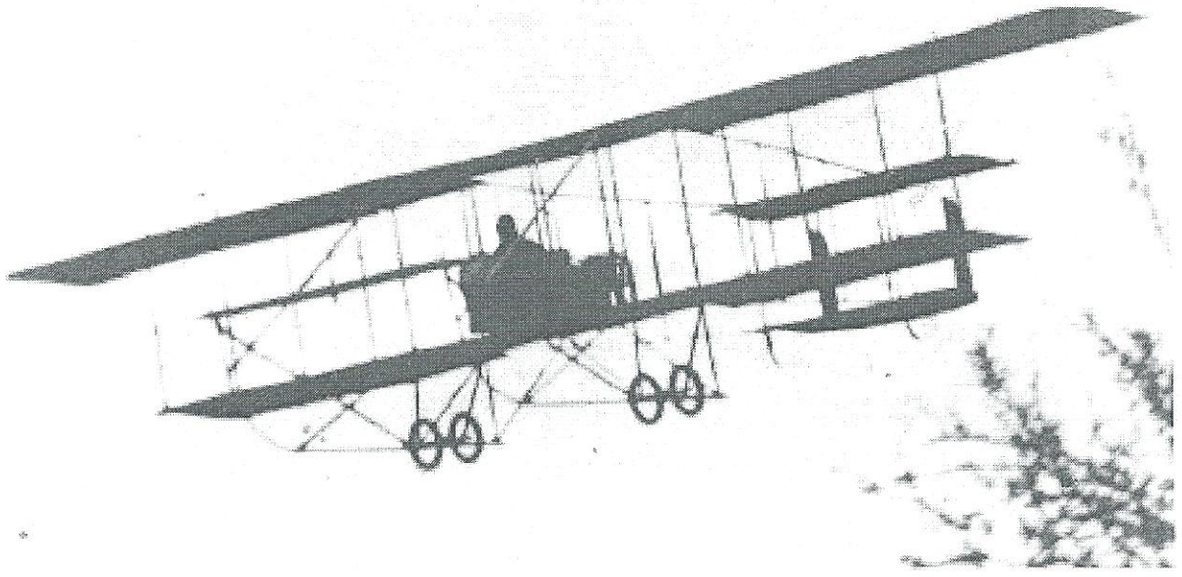
The Squadron does have many confirmed firsts in military aviation, of which I wish to recall only two. No II (AC) Squadron was the first in history to fly across the sea to war – Dover to Amiens – 13 August 1914, and through the gallantry and courage of one of our officers – Second Lieutenant Will Rhodes-Moorhouse – gained the first Royal Flying Corps Victoria Cross for a bombing raid over Courtrai, Belgium. To commemorate this latter event in this special year, the Royal Air Force Museum has issued a First Day Commemorative Stamp Cover painted by John Young and all 15,000 envelopes were flown on 26 July in a Jaguar of this Squadron over the original site of the raid at Courtrai Railway Station, by two post-war Squadron Commanders. Three thousand special covers have been personally signed by the two pilots and by Air Commodore Freddie West VC, the only surviving Victoria Cross holder of World War 1. These covers are available for purchase to raise funds, much needed by the Museum – which after all, is part of our heritage.

Our past history speaks for itself – but what of the future? No II (AC) Squadron will serve at RAF Laarbruch operating the Jaguar aircraft up until at least 1986. But from then the future is not certain, although it is hoped we will re-equip with the Tornado and continue in the Reconnaissance/Attack role into the year 2000.

Finally, I wish to thank those organisations who so generously donated gifts to the Squadron, and the many personnel who have worked so hard in organising our celebrations."

NO II (AC) Squadron History

After 70 years of unbroken Service from the very beginning of military aviation, No II (AC) Squadron, this afternoon celebrates this remarkable event in aviation history.
No II(Army Co-operation) Squadron was formed on 13 May 1912 together with Nos 1 and 3 Squadrons. No 1 Squadron was detailed to fly balloons and so No II (AC) Squadron became the first to fly aeroplanes for the Royal Flying Corps which itself had been formed 13 days previously.
The Squadron's first Commanding Officer, Major C J Burke, on secondment from the Royal Irish Regiment, presided over a mixture of BE, Maurice Farman, Breguet and Cody machines based at Farnborough. During the two years before the commencement of hostilities with Germany, Major Burke spent the time training his Squadron in its role of reconnaissance for which the Royal Flying Corps had been formed. This training proved its worth when the Squadron put up a very good performance in Irish maneouvres which took place during 1913, and involved two crossings of the Irish sea, both of which were successful.



Maurice Farman at Upper Dysart 1913

The day before war was declared in 1914, the Squadron started its move to Dover where all RFC Squadrons were assembling prior to crossing to France. During the crossing we scored another 'first' when Lieutenant H D Harvey Kelly landed at Amiens, his being the first RFC machine to land on French soil in support of the British Expeditionary Force. It was not long before the Squadron distinguished itself by one of its pilots being the first to force an enemy aircraft to land in allied territory. The pilot then landed close to his quarry and continued the pursuit on foot, however his adversary escaped into a wood.
After the retreat from Mons the Squadron was used in a number of major battles providing both pre and post attack reconnaissance. These battles included the two at Ypres and the battle of Neuve Chapelle where for the first time the Squadron used cameras to record the enemy trench system. For the battle of Loos the Squadron was re-equipped with Twelve BE2Cs and one Bristol Scout, these being a considerable improvement on the previous motley collection of training machines.
It soon became clear that aircraft could be used not only for reconnaissance but also to drop bombs. One such bombing mission was carried out on 26th April 1915 by Second Lieutenant Rhodes Moorhouse over the railway junction at Courtrai from a height of 300 feet. After dropping his bombs Rhodes-Moorhouse came under heavy machine gun fire from the Courtrai Church belfry. The pilot received several wounds but successfully returned to base and refused medical attention until he had given a full report. The following day Rhodes-Moorhouse died of his wounds, and for his gallantry and courage he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the first to be gained by the Royal Flying Corps.

The Squadron's primary role however, was to provide the vitally important reconnaissance so badly needed by the trench bound army. It was on one such sortie that Second Lieutenant MacLeod also earned a VC when his aircraft was attacked by eight enemy triplanes while flying at low level. MacLeod, by skilful manoeuvring, enabled his Observer, Lieutenant A W Hammond to shoot down three of the enemy. By this time MacLeod had received five wounds and during the engagement a bullet entered the machine's petrol tank, setting it alight and forcing him to stand on the lower wing whilst flying the machine in order to escape the flames. The aircraft soon crashed in no-mans land. The observer was badly wounded and Second Lieutenant MacLeod dragged him from the wreckage, into friendly lines during which he was again wounded by a bomb. MacLeod later recovered from his wounds and for his acts of unselfish gallantry he was awarded the Squadron's second Victoria Cross.

Hawker Hector 1937

The Inter-War years were a time of movement and re-equipment for No II(AC) Squadron, and two seperate tours of duty were spent in Ireland, the Squadron being stationed at Oranmore, County Galway and Fermoy, Country Cork. The English bases included Digby, Farnborough, Manston and Hawkinge, but in April 1927 the Squadron was on the move again, this time aboard HMS Hermes bound for Shanghai to lend assistance during the Boxer uprising.

During this period No II (AC) Squadron was variously equipped with Atlas, Audax and Hector aircraft, until the start of the Second World War found the Squadron flying the Westland Lysander.

On 23rd August the then Squadron Commander, Squadron Leader A J W Geddes, received orders to mobilise and by October the Squadron had left its base at Hawkinge and was again back in France based at Drucat near Abbeville in support of the British Expeditionary Force. During the early part of 1940, poor weather and ruts on the airfield limited the flying effort, however, by March the Squadron was again actively involved in photographic work and training in gunnery and bombing.

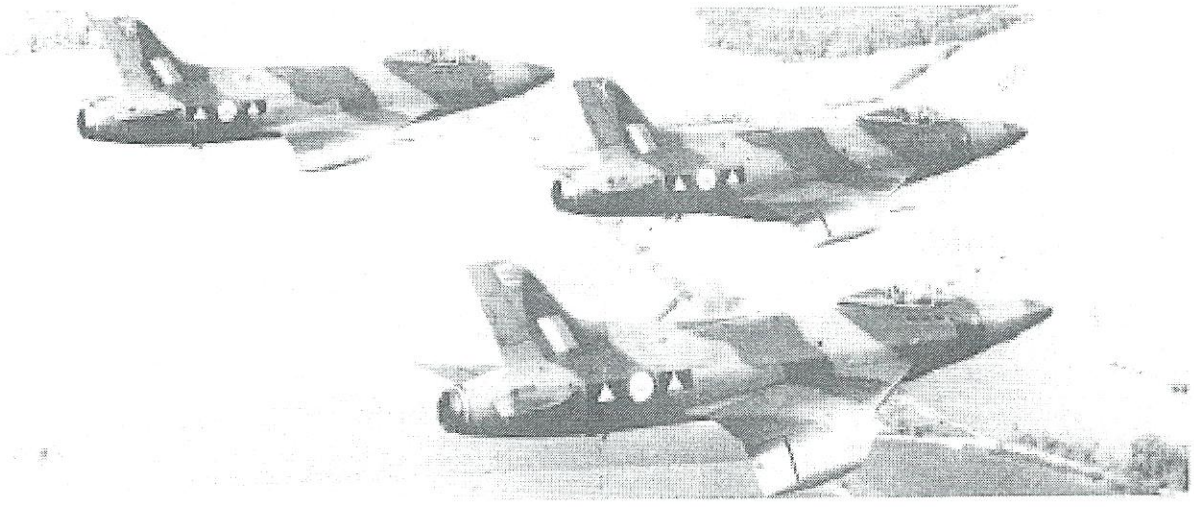
In the wake of the German advance for Dunkirk, No II (AC) Squadron withdrew to Lympne from where it flew tactical reconnaissance and bombing sorties. It was during one such mission that Flying Officer A F Doidge, with Leading Aircraftsman Webbson, attacked and shot down a JU 87. Three days later however the Lysander proved a poor match for the 15 ME 109s that attacked Pilot Officer F M G Scotter and badly damaged his aircraft although he managed to fly it back to Hawkinge where it was classified 'beyond repair'.

The impending fall of Dunkirk forced the Squadron to withdraw to England from where it flew sorties in support of the evacuation of Dunkirk. During the reinforcement of Britain and the preparations for 'D'Day, II(AC) Squadron became involved in some special operations involving the landing of agents into France under cover of darkness. The Squadron also perfected a method of collecting packages from night landing sites, without having to actually land. It was during June 1940 that the Air Ministry selected No II (AC) Squadron as an Army Co-operation Squadron, thus enforcing its links with land based forces to whom it

supplied much of its reconnaissance material. In August 1941 the Squadron started to relinquish its Lysanders in exchange for the Curtis Tomahawk and by December the Squadron had six. The Curtis Tomahawk had many teething troubles and in March 1942 it was itself replaced with the North American Mustang. No II(AC) Squadron played an increasing role in the pre-invasion Reconnaissance programme and the search for V1 launch sites was added to its already large workload. On 'D'Day, 6th June 1944 No II (AC) Squadron was over the beaches when the first landing craft arrived, and by the end of the day, 36 sorties had been flown, most of which were artillery spotting for the naval bombardment.

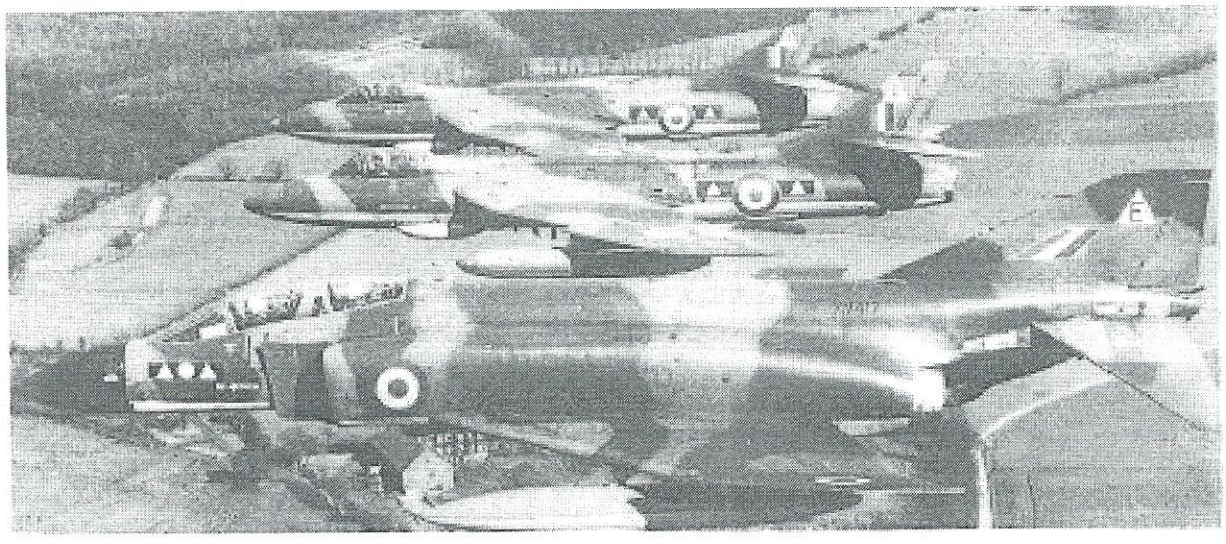
On the 20th of June the Squadron moved to France for the third time in its history and continued tactical reconnaissance of road and rail facilities. The Squadron followed the Army's advance, flying from airfields only a few miles from the front line. While at Duerne airfield near Antwerp, the Squadron received Spitfire Mk XIVs to replace the Mustangs. No II(AC) Squadron continued operations in support of the front line forces until 8th May 1945 when the last operational sortie was flown.

After 1945 the Squadron remained in mainland Europe and operated a two flight system, one flight engaged in high altitude photo reconnaissance, and the other in pure low level tactical reconnaissance. In 1950/51 the Squadron joined the jet-age when it re-equipped with the Gloster Meteor, and at the same time relinquished its high level reconnaissance role.



Supermarine Swift

No II(AC) Squadron continued in its pure reconnaissance role throughout the 1950s and 1960s, operating the ill-fated Supermarine Swift from 1956 to 1961. These years had been spent moving from Station to Station, but in 1961 a move to RAF Gütersloh brought about a change to the Hawker Hunter FR10 and a ten year stay.



Hunters and Phantom FGR-2

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The Engineers

The Squadron Engineering Flight consists of approximately 120 men arranged into two shifts. The average age of the flight as a whole is around 26 years and gives a good indication of the early responsibility squired by an airman today.

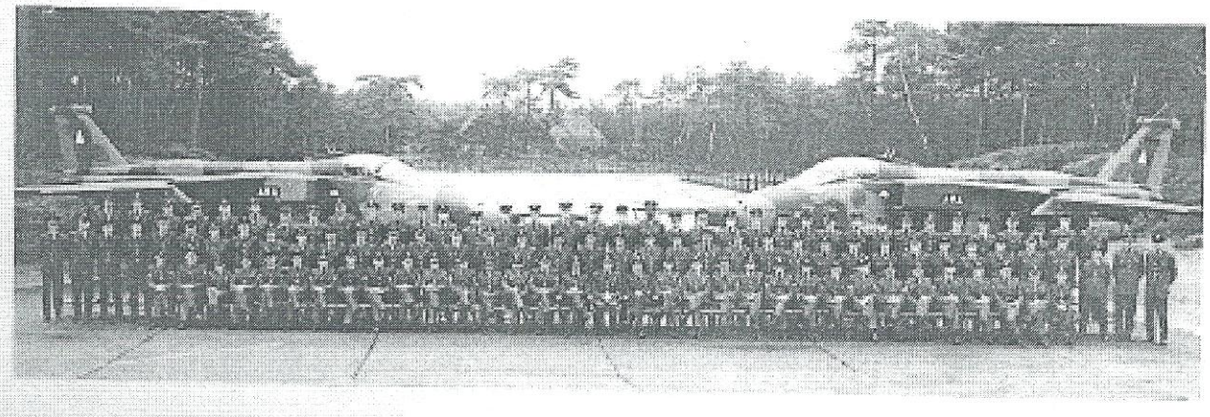
The flight is responsible for providing serviceable aircraft to meet daily flying task and is helped considerably by the reliability of the aircraft itself and its relative ease of maintenance. This takes nothing away from the individual tradesmen however, who have consistantly proved themselves to be amongst the most operationally proficient in the Command.

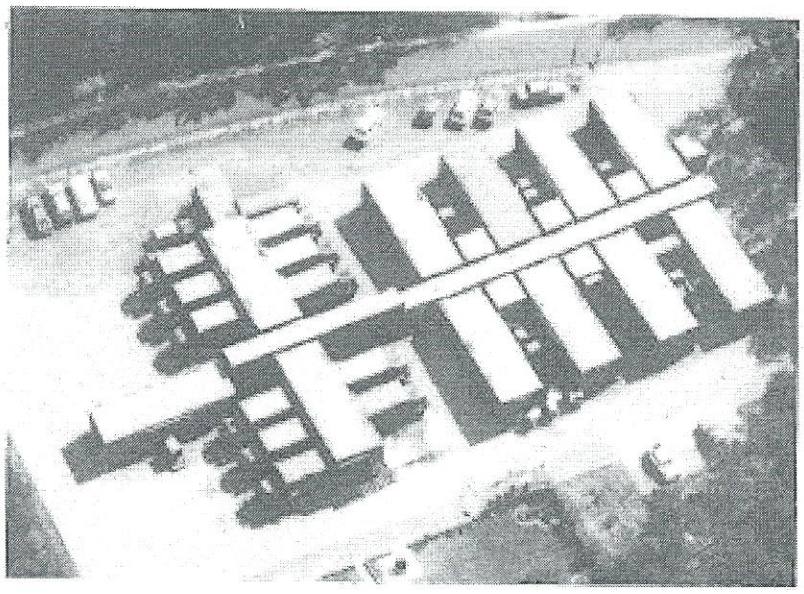
It is interesting to note that in 1918 the Squadron personnel totalled 50 men, 9 of whom were aircrew. With increased sophistication and the more demanding operational requirements, the ratio of Engineering Support to pilots has trebled.

Today, the Engineer must know his trade; be able to defend his sector and survive whilst continuing to operate in a potentially toxic wartime environment. It is not surprising therefore that a great deal of his tour is spent practising and perfecting the various drills and practices necessary to achieve this objective.

The arrival of summer invariably brings a slight change of emphasis with the welcome relief of a few well chosen detachments. Operating from a strange airfield with minimal resources, coupled with the inevitable language difficulties provides a new range of obstacles to overcome. The overwelming success of each detachment to date can be directly attributed to the flexibility of the personnel involved and an overriding willingness to get the job done.

At the time of going to press, it is proposed to fly a 12 aircraft formation during the Air Display. For the pilots it is a challange; for the spectators a spectacle; for the Engineers it is a nightmare but if it comes off ..... we will just have done our job.





RIC

The Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre, better known as the RIC, is an integral part of No II (AC) Squadron and its purpose is to provide a photographic processing and interpretation facility. The RIC began life as an MFPU (Mobile Field Photographic Unit) in the early 50's and it was equipped with a mixture of specialist and 'aquired' vehicles which enabled it to support recce squadrons wherever they were deployed within Western Europe.

By The late 60's No 3 MFPU was based at Laarbruch supporting No 31 Squadron which was equipped with Canberra PR7 aircraft, and No 4 MFPU was at Brüggen helping No II (AC) Squadron reform with the Phantom aircraft. In 1971 No II (AC) Squadron moved to Laarbruch, No 31 Squadron disbanded and Nos 3 und 4 MFPU were amalgamated to form the newly named RIC. The RIC received a complete new set of equipment which was truck-mounted and housed in air portable containers (ATRELs) and also a new semi-permanent base facility (MAREL). Because at this stage the RIC was still an independent unit it was based on the edge of the II (AC) Squadron area so that it could serve station and squadron equally.

In 1974 the RIC was 'taken over' by II (AC) Squadron and formally came under the command of OC II and so when the squadron changed from Phantom to Jaguar in 1976 the RIC remained in place to support the new aircraft. During the 10 years that the RIC has served II (AC) Squadron it has participated in all the major recce meets and competitions such as Royal Flush, Big Click, Best Focus and TAM and has consistently produced winning results.

The RIC is sub-divided into two flights, Reconnaissance Processing Flight and Photo Interpretation Flight. The Photographic Interpretation (PI) Flight views all the film from both the Jaguar and the many other various NATO reconnaissance aircraft which use Laarbruch. Photographic Interpretation is a very specialised skill which demands a detailed knowledge of military eqipment and installations and their operating procedures; in addition, many other subjects including industries, power production and lines of communication have to be studied.

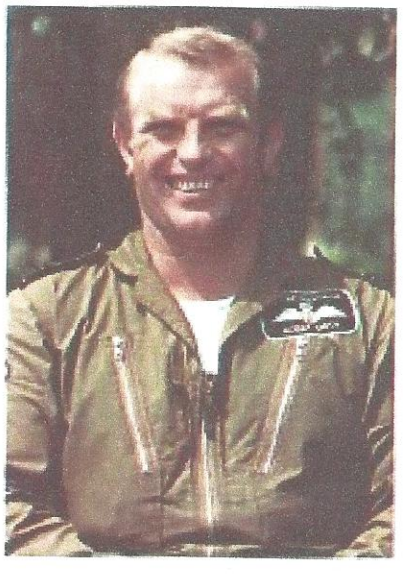
This knowledge combined with intense concentration and the ability to view photography in stereo (3D) enables the photo interpreter to produce a very quick but detailed intelligence report for the military commander who requested the information so that he may plan further operations.

The Processing Flight consists mainly of photographic tradesmen who are responsible for the processing of all air films and the printing of selected target imagery negatives. Unlike the commercial processing and printing establishments the RIC have an extremely tight time-schedule to maintain. In order to keep production time to a minimum and allow the maximum time for imagery evaluation, the films are processed at a speed of 120 feet per minute on the 70mm high speed/high temperature continuous film processing machines. Film processing time obviously depends on the amount of film exposed; however, typical processing times using two process machines is in the order of 5 to 8 minutes per sortie. Printing is achieved in a similarly related time scale using electronic contact or projection printers which have the capability to correct for areas of varying density within each negative automatically. Using Ilfoprint photographic paper, a touch dry print can be obtained after a processing time of 9 seconds which has sufficient permanence to satisfy all military requirements. Other tasks for which this flight is responsible is fault investigation and defect reporting carried out by advanced photographic tradesmen and of course the all-important task of maintaining and servicing the RIC equipments, this is carried out by our small team of GSE tradesmen assisted by the photographers.

The role played by photographic tradesmen in support of photographic reconnaissance is vital. However it must be stressed that a photographic reconnaissance mission is a team effort - aircrew, aircraft engineers, GLO's, PI's, photographic and GSE tradesmen - plus many others all have an inter-related role to perform for the mission to succeed.

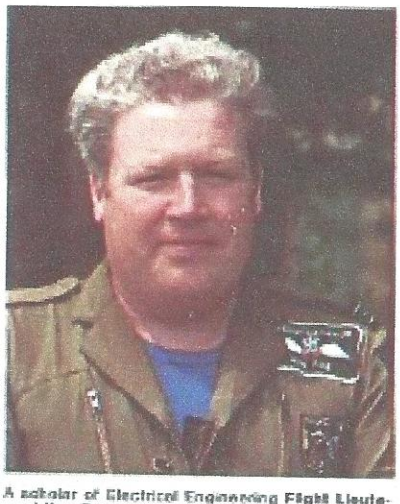
1978

Wing Commander Tim Thorn, a Cranwellian, started his career as a Flying Instructor at RAF Syerston in 1965 before joining No 8 Squadron flying Hunter FGA9's and FR10's at RAF Muharraq. Further fighter recce Hunter tours were completed on No 4 (FR), No II (AC) Squadron and as a Pilot Attack Instructor on 234 (R) Squadron. Promoted in July 1972 he was appointed to HQ 38 Gp as Brigade Air Support Officer where he completed over 100 parachute descents before attending the Indian Staff College, in 1975. He joined No 41 (F) Sqn as a Flight Commander on the Jaguar in 1976 and after completion of the Air Warfare Course was appointed Officer Commanding No II (AC) Squadron in May 1980. He has logged 4950 hours, 1850 on the Jaguar.

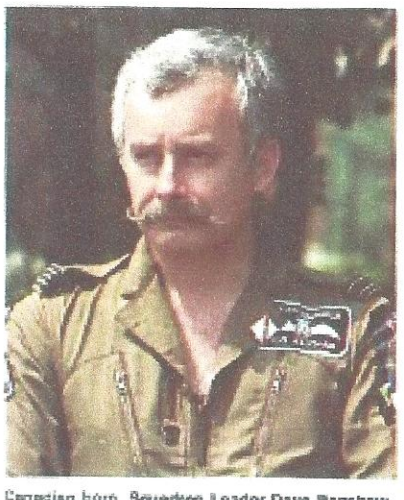


Squadron Leader Roger Smith has a Honours Diploma in Physical Education and taught for three years in Jamaica before joining the RAF in 1968 as a Physical Education Officer. After transferring to flying duties in 1970 he became a QFI, instructing on Gnats and Jaguars as well as flying Jaguars operationally with 31 Squadron. He is presently No II (AC) Squadron's Flight Commander Ops.

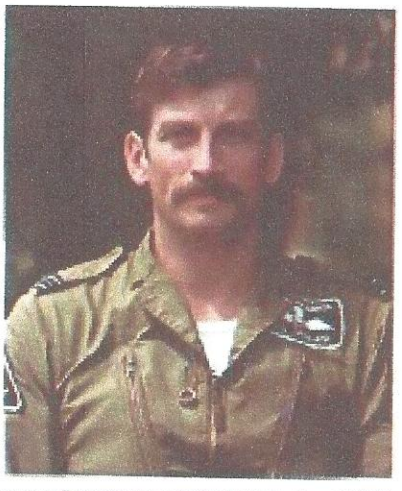
Squadron Leader Phil Sturley was born in County Mayo, Eire in 1950 and studied Aeronautics and Astronautics at University, joining the RAF in 1968. After his training he flew Phantoms with 41 (F) Squadron and Jaguars with No II (AC) Squadron. Following promotion and a ground tour with the Army at HQ 1 (BR) Corps he rejoined No II (AC) Squadron as a Flight Commander in February 1982.



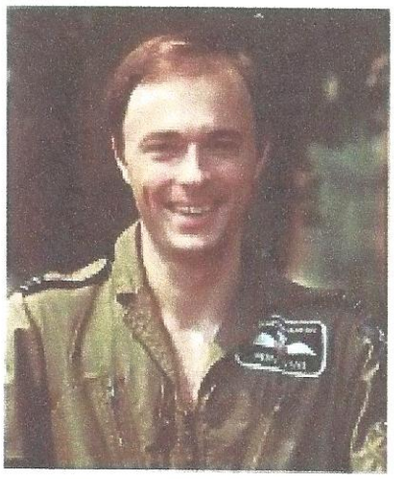
A scholar of Electrical Engineering **Flight Lieutenant Ken Rae** was born in Dundee, and joined the RAF in 1960. He has flown over 4500 hours in, amongst other things, Pistol Provost, Ansons, Vampires, Valiants, Hunters and Jaguars.



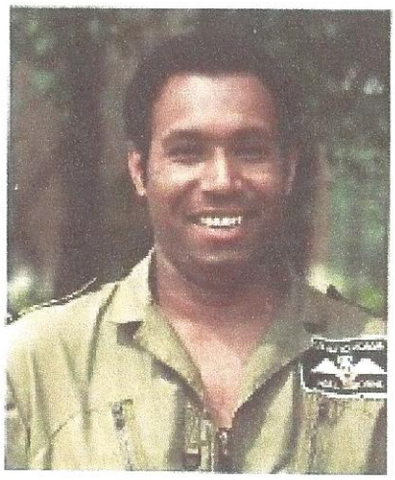
Canadian born, **Squadron Leader Dave Bagshaw,** joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1955 before transferring to the RAF in 1962. With over 7000 hours in his log book he is without doubt one of the RAF's most experienced pilots.



Born in Gala-Shiels in 1947 **Flight Lieutenant Craig Dalgliesh** joined the RAF in 1968. He has clocked over 2500 hours mainly in Canberras and Jaguars and represented the RAF on the Cresta run for three years.

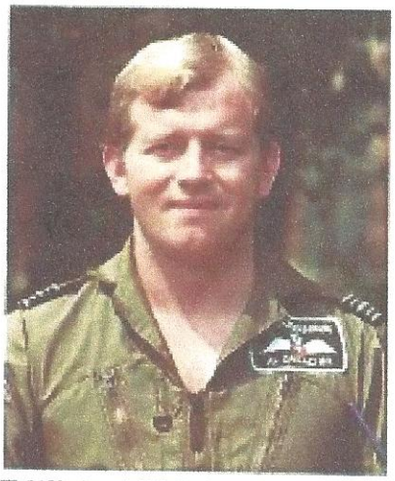


A keen fencer, **Flight Lieutenant Mervyn Evans** joined the RAF 1978 and studied chemistry at Cardiff University. He flew Chipmunks with Wales UAS and has logged over 2000 hours.

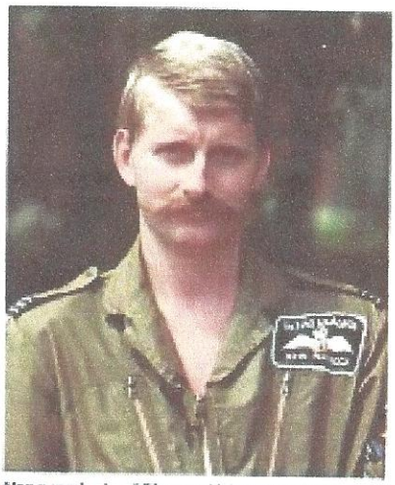


Flight Lieutenant Ozzie Osbourne was born in Blackpool in 1951 and studied Mechanical Engineering at London University. A member of London UAS he joined the RAF in 1970.

Born on St George's Day 1954, **Flight Lieutenant Stephen Dalton** studied Aeronautical Engineering at Bath University, flew with Bristol UAS and is currently on his second fighter recce tour.

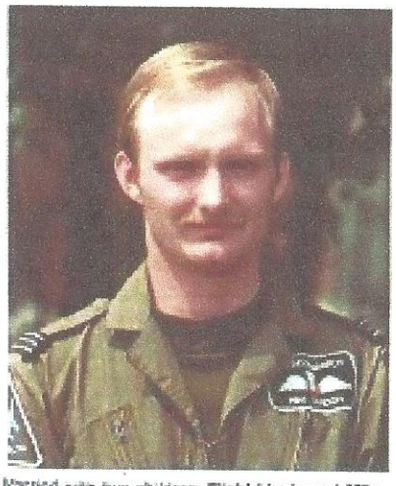


Flight Lieutenant Al Gallacher studied Mechanical Engineering at Glasgow University where he started his flying career, flying the Bulldog with Glasgow University Air Squadron, and is a first tourist with No II (AC) Squadron.

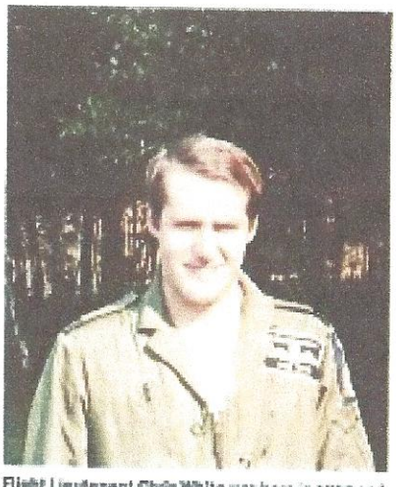


Also a graduate of Glasgow University Air Squadron **Flight Lieutenant John Warnock** joined the RAF in 1978 and has flown the Bulldog, Jet Provost, Hawk, Hunter and Jaguar.

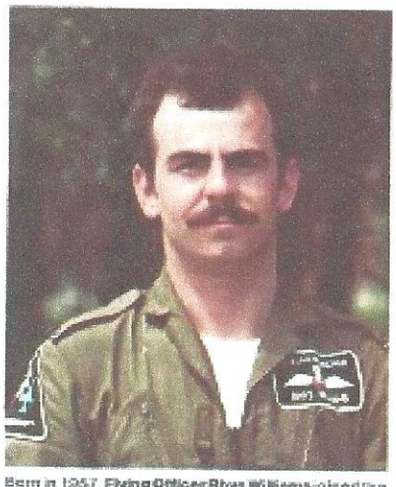
Born in Croydon in 1956 **Flight Lieutenant Howard Davies** studied Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Bath University, worked for Marconi and was a member of Bristol University Air Squadron before joining the RAF in 1978.



Married with two children, **Flight Lieutenant Mike Gordon** is also a graduate and ex Yorkshire UAS flyer. A first tourist on No II (AC) Squadron his main hobbies include plying soccer and making videos.



Flight Lieutenant Chris White was born in 1956 and is also a first tourist on No II (AC) Squadron. His wife Suzanne is an Air Traffic Controller at Lossiemouth.



Born in 1957, **Flying Officer Rhys Williams** joined the RAF in 1978. He is a first tourist on No II (AC) Squadron and is the Squadrons youngest pilot.

In 1970 when invited as guests to an Air Forces North recce competition, 'BIG CLICK', No II (AC) Squadron came first in every section and in view of this achievement the organisers allowed the Squadron to hold all the prizes permanently. Later the same year the Squadron commenced its conversion to the McDonnell Douglas Phantom, when No II(AC) Squadron (Phantoms) was formed at RAF Brüggen and ran concurrently with No II (AC) Squadron (Hunters) at Gütersloh. A decade of Hunter flying came to an end at 0001 hours on 1st March 1971 when No II (AC) Squadron ceased operations from Gütersloh.

The Squadron plus the Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre moved to RAF Laarbruch in May 1971 where it has remained. In 1976 Phantom operations were ceased with the introductionn of the Jaguar, and this marked a unique event as there had been no serious accident throughout the Phantom period.

Since its introduction in 1976 the British Aerospace Jaguar has proved its worth as a tactical reconnaissance aircraft and links this with its impressive attack performance. The Jaguar has proved popular with its pilots, through its high reliability and very good photographic coverage provided by its large reconnaissance pod. No II(AC) Squadron operates today in the day only reconnaissance role with an attack capability. This attack capability was well demonstrated when in 1980 the Squadron participated in Exercise Red Flag in the United States, putting up an impressive performance. In June 1982 the Squadron has again participated in NATO exercises when it took part in the 1982 Tactical Air Meet at GAF Jever, where it successfully demonstrated once again its reconnaissance and attack capabilities.