The Royal Navy’s Fleet Air Arm is working at full stretch deployed on operations around the world but this year’s Centenary of Naval Aviation has provided a brief respite and an opportunity to reflect on past and present glories, a remarkable history and an indomitable spirit that remains as strong today as it was 100 years ago.

The celebrations have taken place on flight decks and battlefields, in the heart of the City of London, in the Far East and on the glories of Kandahar.

The Fleet Air Arm now deploys 99% of its personnel and aircraft on operations, making the task of putting on a centenary celebration quite an achievement. The Centenary year has been marked with a display on board the new aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious in London, a magnificent service in St Paul’s Cathedral and a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace attended by 6000 members of the Naval aviation community.

A Proud Year
for The Fleet Air Arm

“Working hard and playing hard has always been the Fleet Air Arm ethos,” said Chief Engineering Technician Neil Copeland, 845 A Flight in Kandahar. “It has been pretty challenging in Afghanistan in recent months and while we have missed the celebrations in the UK, the sense of our company is extremely strong. Elements of 846 and 848 have been operating out here since 2007. We are proud to be Royal Navy. The Fleet Air Arm is making a real difference out here.”

This year’s celebrations have included a fly past over Whitehall in London, a magnificent service in St Paul’s Cathedral and a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace attended by 6000 members of the Naval aviation community. Speaking after the service in St Paul’s, Commander Ade Orchard OBE said: “This year’s celebrations have really brought the Fleet Air Arm family together. Over the past 100 years the Fleet Air Arm has quietly got on with the job rarely attracting the recognition that it deserves but this year there has been an overwhelming respect for what we do. The nation’s gratitude for the sacrifices being made by those serving on front line operations has been very humbling.”

Delivering operational capability on all fronts
An Important and Proud Year for The Fleet Air Arm

2009 has been an important and proud year for the Fleet Air Arm. Our Fleet Air Arm squadrons have been continuously deployed on operations and a joint force of forces from the Northern Arabian Sea. The Royal Navy Sea Kings deployed to Afghanistan continue to do an outstanding job in Afghanistan.

Royal Navy Sea Kings are also in Afghanistan supported by forces from Fleet Support Unit. The Fleet Air Arm’s role is to be found whenever there is work to do and this year the Fleet Air Arm has contributed to operations.

The aircraft are providing significant numbers of Operational Honours and Awards and the Fly Navy 100 trophy for best flying demonstration.

The Royal Navy Sea King helicopter has proved invaluable in the fight against the Taliban, Royal Navy Sea King ASaC7 Airborne Surveillance and Control helicopters from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose are providing critical support to the joint force.

The Fleet Air Arm has also received an unprecedented number of Operational Honours and Awards and the Fly Navy 100 trophy for best flying demonstration.

The Fleet Air Arm is to be found wherever there is work to do.

The Fleet Air Arm is celebrating its centenary this year and we are proud to announce that the Royal Navy Sea Kings deployed to Afghanistan.

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The Fleet Air Arm is to be found wherever there is work to do.
**Centenary Celebrations in Kandahar**

“Meet you at Raffles”

Centenary Cheers!

The nation’s thirst for its Naval aviation heritage is being met up and down the country by Wadworth’s Swordfish Beer, launched by the Fly Navy Heritage Trust and the Royal Navy Historic Trust. The beer, with its subtle hint of Pusser’s Rum, is also an exceedingly good Ale! The Celebrations continued with a dinner in the world famous Raffles Hotel. The evening was punctuated with tales of daring deeds throughout the 100 years of Naval aviation and was rounded off in time for beds.

**Singapore**

Singapore and Singapore. Singapore prior to conducting a joint air and sea exercise with HMS Ocean, HMS Somerset, RFA Wave Ruler and HMNZS Te Mana, in the company of 815, 820 Naval Air Squadrons and a range of pub chains. When asked why Swordfish? Admiral Terry Loughran, Chairman of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust said “the Fairey Swordfish is available from the brewery on 01905 756211, Tross and major pub chains. The Swordfish is the Fleet Air Arm’s aircraft! It was designed to take off from a ship underway.”

Royal Navy and Royal Marines analysts and engineers serving as part of the UK Joint Helicopter Group in operations in Afghanistan were present for their Centenary celebrations. Key speakers included Admiral George Zambellas DSC, for a commemorative photograph and slice of birthday cake for all UK helicopters in Afghanistan said “We felt it was important to mark the occasion and capture the significant contribution being made by our forebears, demonstrating their ‘can do’ ethos on the ground and in the air.”

**Tribute to the Pioneering Spirit of Naval Aviation**

On 1 March 1911, the first four Naval Officer/Aviators selected for flying training assembled at the Royal Naval Air Station Eastchurch. There was a flypast of Naval Strike Wing Harriers, Hawks and Falcons and a historic de Havilland Sea Vixen.

**The Fleet Air Arm Association**

In the beginning of Naval aviation and pay their respects to the achievements and spirit of adventure of the early Naval pilots at the Pioneer Memorial in the centre of the town. The occasion was marked by a flypast of Royal Navy and Royal Marine Wardens, Hands and Falcons and a historic de Havilland Sea Vixen.

The Fleet Air Arm Association worked hard to actively support this year’s Centenary by funding a flypast for the Fleet Air Arm Memorial Church, the Fly Navy Heritage Trust and the Royal Navy Historic Trust in May to celebrate the beginning of Naval aviation and pay their respects to the achievements and spirit of adventure of the early Naval pilots at the Pioneer Memorial in the centre of the town. The occasion was marked by a flypast of Royal Navy Strike Wing Harriers, Hands and Falcons and a historic de Havilland Sea Vixen.

The Association’s President, Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Usher KCB, CBE, ADC said: “The Fleet Air Arm Association was established in 1913 and as such is the oldest in the UK. It has supported our UK helicopter forces since their creation and continues to do so today.”

The Association Secretary and Past President of the Royal Navy Historic Trust said: “The Fairey Swordfish is available from the brewery on 01905 756211, Tross and major pub chains. When asked why Swordfish? Admiral Terry Loughran, Chairman of the Fly Navy Heritage Trust said “the Fairey Swordfish is available from the brewery on 01905 756211, Tross and major pub chains. The Swordfish is the Fleet Air Arm’s aircraft! It was designed to take off from a ship underway.”

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“Swordfish is the name of Naval Aviation and we will always be grateful to the people of Eastchurch for giving us a fair wind and a flying start,” said Admiral Charter. He also thanked the Fleet Air Arm Association for their ongoing support. The Fleet Air Arm Association standardized the Royal Navy Strike Wing Harriers, Hands and Falcons and a historic de Havilland Sea Vixen.

The nation’s thirst for its Naval aviation heritage is being met up and down the country by Wadworth’s Swordfish Beer, launched by the Fly Navy Heritage Trust and the Royal Navy Historic Trust. The beer, with its subtle hint of Pusser’s Rum, is also an exceedingly good Ale! The Celebrations continued with a dinner in the world famous Raffles Hotel. The evening was punctuated with tales of daring deeds throughout the 100 years of Naval aviation and was rounded off in time for beds.

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The Fleet Air Arm motto, ‘Find, Fix and Strike’ has stood the test of time. On 7 May 2009, 100 years to the day on which the Royal Navy ordered its first airship, the celebrations onboard HMS Illustrious moored in The Thames at Greenwich were a splendid and fitting tribute to the enduring strengths of Naval aviation.

"Today is a glorious moment in Naval history" said First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope. "The bravery, tenacity and accomplishments of the Royal Naval Air Service and Fleet Air Arm have proved the case, time and time again, for Naval Aviation. Today the Fleet Air Arm has never been in greater demand and our aircraft are delivering operational capability on all fronts."

HRH The Duke of York, Commodore in Chief of the Fleet Air Arm was guest of honour onboard HMS Illustrious as a formation of Merlin, Sea King and Lynx helicopters, as well as Hawk and Jetstream aircraft flew proudly over the ship defying the grey leaden skies. The Duke spoke warmly of his service in the Fleet Air Arm and described his pleasure at being part of the celebrations. "Flying at sea is challenging but it is not just the aircrew who deserve recognition." he said. "The engineers, handlers and everyone onboard ship are just as much a part of the Fleet Air Arm’s illustrious history."

Guests at the celebrations onboard HMS Illustrious included current and former serving Fleet Air Arm personnel including Captain Eric Brown, the Navy’s celebrated Test Pilot whose services to Naval Aviation are unsurpassed, Sir George Martin, pictured top left, who was a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm before he found fame in the music industry and Members of Parliament, including the Secretary of State for Defence, former Chiefs of the Naval Staff and Flag Officers of Naval Aviation together with the Chief of the Air Staff and representatives from industry and the City.

"I remember flying into that hail of fire as if it was yesterday" said Lt Cdr John Moffat. "We flew in really close and waited until the very last minute to drop our torpedoes. Landing back on afterwards was just as bad. The waves were up to 60 foot high. Ark Royal’s deck was rising and falling over 50 feet!"

"It is stories like these on which the ethos of the Fleet Air Arm is founded" said Rear Admiral Simon Charlier. "It was sheer magic... I have worked with so many good people in the Fleet Air Arm, many of them geniuses in their time."

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Commodore-in-Chief Visits Yeovilton and Culdrose

The Duke of York KG, Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm, has given huge support to this year’s Centenary, taking part in all the major events and visiting both Royal Naval Air Stations and the Fleet Air Arm Museum.

He joined a crowd of 32,000 at Yeovilton International Air Day in early August, particularly enjoying the dynamic display by the Sea King and French Rafale and the impressive formation assaults. During the visit to Culdrose he met fellow aviators he had served with in 888 squadron during the Falklands conflict, visited the Meridian simulation suite in the simulator complex and was brands at the Sea King Attack, he was also presented with an impressive trophy to commemorate the Centenary of Naval Aviation – a Sea King blader that had been meticulously reconditioned in brass and wood, well fitting in the newSenior Room there.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old: youth shall not be ashamed though Time is on the wing.

Duke of Edinburgh Opens New Exhibition

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh opened an impressive new exhibition hall at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton in July. The exhibition entitled ‘Celebration of Naval Aviation’ coincides with this year’s Centenary of Naval Aviation and includes many exciting new exhibits including a replica of a Shorts S27 bi-plane, the Sea King which was flown by HRH The Duke of York during the Falklands Conflict and a battle proven Sea Harrier.

As an avid fan of aviation, the Duke took the opportunity to talk to the staff and current and former serving members of the Fleet Air Arm. Chairman of the Trustees of the Museum, Admiral Sir Adrian Johns, said: “We are delighted to be welcoming the Duke of Edinburgh to the Museum to open our new exhibition hall, which is the culmination of our Naval Aviation heritage, unrivaled among the world’s leading maritime nations.”

The opening of the new exhibition was also timed to coincide with the celebrations surrounding Armed Forces Day 2009. The Duke of Edinburgh was accompanied by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, HRH The Princess Royal, HRH The Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal Family.

Service at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial, Lee-on-Solent

This year the Telegraphist Air Gunners Association annual memorial service at the Fleet Air Arm Memorial, Lee-on-Solent, was attended by over 20,000 people. The service was attended by the Duke of Edinburgh and HRH The Prince of Wales.

Commodore-in-Chief

Visits Yeovilton

HRH The Duke of York KG, Commodore-in-Chief of the Fleet Air Arm, visited Yeovilton on the first day of the Yeovilton International Air Day and the opening of the FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM.

The opening ceremony was attended by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Leahy, and was led by the Commodore-in-Chief, HRH The Duke of York KG. The event was also attended by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Lord Leahy, and was led by the Commodore-in-Chief, HRH The Duke of York KG. The event was also attended by HRH The Prince of Wales, HRH The Duchess of Cornwall, HRH The Princess Royal and other members of the Royal Family.

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The Few of the Few

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Winston Churchill's words immediately conjure up images of plucky RAF chaps running to their Spitfires to go and give 'em a damn good knacker. However, it is frequently overlooked that the Fleet Air Arm pilots also took part in the Battle of Britain with four becoming 'fighter aces'. Although rarely acknowledged, three Naval pilots also flew with the famous 242 Squadron commanded by the legendary Douglas Bader.

The young Naval aviators who took part in the Battle of Britain between July and October 1940 saw some of the fiercest fighting of the battle. 23 Naval pilots served with number 804 Naval Air Squadron, flying Spitfires and Hurricanes, and another 40 served with 806 and 808, the two Fleet Air Arm Battle of Britain Squadrons who operated under Fighter Command, providing a vital support role.

The fleet Naval fighter air in the battle was based at Wick and Stockwell flew with 804 squadrons. He was followed by Sub Lieutenant Arthur Blake from 808 squadron, who also flew Spitfires, and then Sub Lieutenant John Mahoney, Commander of the two Fleet Air Arm Battle of Britain Squadrons who operated under Fighter Command, providing a vital support role.

The two Fleet Air Arm squadrons, New Zealand Air Force and Canadian and Allied forces, ran their own fleets of aircraft, including the classic Battle of Britain. The contribution made by the Royal Navy is rightly recognized in the iconic painting 'Battle of Britain'.

The Few of the Few

The Few of the Few are the naval airmen who served in the Battle of Britain. The term 'Few' refers to the small number of pilots who flew in the Battle of Britain and their contributions to the Royal Navy.

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Tributes have been pouring in following the death of Henry Allingham in July. Henry, who was born in 1896, joined the fledgling Royal Naval Air Service as an air mechanic in 1915. Less than a year later he saw action at sea in the Battle of Jutland and in 1917 found himself in France flying over the Western Front as an air gunner with the Royal Naval Air Service.

Later in life Henry became an active member of the First World War Veterans Association, the last of a generation commanding huge respect and admiration. His personal memories breathed life into the history books. "We have lost someone very special" said Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns. "Henry was a truly honourable man and a living link with our heritage. He will be greatly missed."

Henry celebrated his 113th birthday in June at a party given by the Fleet Air Arm at HMS President. He was presented with a birthday cake delivered by Royal Marines fast assault craft, a blanket embroidered with Fleet Air Arm wings and a decanter of Pusser's Rum, his favourite tipple.

The aircrew, engineers and support personnel of 845, 846 and 847 Naval Air Squadrons had recently returned from long operational tours in southern Afghanistan and were invited with their wives and families to a very special welcome home reception in London. They marched along the Mall to Clarence House, led by the Commando Helicopter Force a combined Royal Navy and Royal Marines force flying Sea King and Lynx helicopters in support of UK armed forces.

The Commando Helicopter Force is a combined Royal Navy and Royal Marines force flying Sea King and Lynx helicopters in support of UK armed forces. Commanding Officer of the Force, Captain Jon Pentreath, said "At any one time we have at least six Royal Navy helicopters in Helmand working flat out moving troops and equipment around the battlefield. No sooner has one crew come home than another one goes out."

HRH The Prince of Wales has very fond memories of his time as a Jungly pilot. He served as a helicopter pilot in 845 Squadron in 1975 and was the first member of the Royal Family to fly in an operational Fleet Air Arm Squadron.

Editor's Note

I joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1974 and have served at RNAS Yeovilton and RNAS Culdrose and more recently, two operational tours in Afghanistan. At no time in the last 35 years, even during the Falklands conflict, has the Fleet Air Arm been so heavily committed to operations as we are now. The whole military community is involved in Afghanistan with Fleet Air Arm personnel embedded in all areas of the operation. If the lessons of history are to be learned, flexible, adaptable multi-purpose Naval air power – where and when you need it – is key. This has always been the rationale for the Fleet Air Arm and we are delivering it on all fronts. If you have not had a copy of the Centenary edition of Flight Deck or seen the DVD '100 Years of Naval Aviation' please don't hesitate to call or email the Fly Navy 100 office.