



PRESS RELEASE



Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose

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750 NAVAL AIR SQUADRON BRING BACK MALTA MEMORIES

RNAS Culdrose 750 Naval Air Squadron's recent visit to Malta brought back warm memories from some of the Mediterranean Islanders who had worked on the squadron, over 50 years ago.

Stationed at Royal Naval Air Station Hal Far, also known as HMS Falcon, 750 NAS arrived in 1959 as part of the Fleet Air Arm's Observer School, conducting Observer training with nine Percival Sea Prince T.1 flying classrooms. Its main task was providing basic training to officers before they moved on to specialist operational flying Units at various Naval Air Stations across the UK. Observer School students were expected to achieve at least 100 flying hours in the Sea Prince and by the end of their course would have attained a high standard in air navigation, simple radar operations and communications. In 1960, the squadron added Sea Venoms and Sea Vampires for some Fleet requirements work, but were mainly used for high level navigation, on which students would get some 30 hours basic experience in all-weather jet flying.

"It was remarkable to see where the squadron used to operate from in the early sixties", said Lieutenant Rich Thorpe, an Instructor on 750's King Air Avenger aircraft. "Back in the day, Observer training was conducted on the Island at RNAS Hal Far because of the fairer climate and a lot of the Fleet was actually based around the Mediterranean, so there were plenty of targets."

The Squadron visited the Island as part of a long range flying exercise for one of its pilots as well as the Malta Airshow. The old Naval Air Station site at Hal Far is now occupied by a large sprawling industrial estate helping Malta's export figures, but traces of the Royal Navy's presence can still be found.

"As we flew over you can still make out the Base, its runways, one of its control towers (it had three!) and the fire station", continued Rich Thorpe. "During those days it would have been the main shore base for carrier-borne aircraft working from the Mediterranean Fleet's Aircraft Carriers. I was amazed that the Maltese people still remembered the squadron from all those years ago."

RNAS Hal Far was always the most popular and busiest airfield in the entire Fleet Air Arm and the last overseas Naval Air Station when it closed in 1965. The Observer School and 750 NAS relocated back to the UK, taking up residence at RNAS Lossiemouth in Scotland, before its present move to RNAS Culdrose in 1972.

The squadron now trains both commissioned and non-commissioned aircrew from the RN and more recently the RAF using the latest technology found on the King Air Avenger, which entered service in 2012. The aircraft are provided by the 'Training Service Provider' Ascent; the industry partner jointly

responsible for the delivery of the UKMFTS (United Kingdom Military Flying Training System) programme alongside the MOD and 22 Training Group.

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Pictures attached:

- RNAS Hal Far Malta 001 – 750 NAS at RNAS Hal Far. Sea Princes, Sea Venoms and Sea Vampires
- RNAS Hal Far Malta 002 – Station Parade at RNAS Hal Far
- RNAS Hal Far Malta 007 – Staff of the Observer School at Hal Far Malta
- RNAS Hal Far Malta 004 – RNAS Hal Far Malta
- CU10310 – 750 NAS King Air Avenger
- DR140018163 – 750 NAS King Air Avengers At RNAS Culdrose

Notes to editors:

Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose is one of Europe’s largest Naval Air Bases. It delivers highly capable Helicopter Squadrons specialising in Anti-Submarine Warfare, Anti-Surface Warfare and Airborne Surveillance and Control. Frontline Squadrons from the Base regularly deploy to ships all over the world to support the Royal Navy in its global operations. Hawk Fast Jets also operate from the Base providing airborne threat simulations against Royal Navy ships undergoing realistic training at sea. Back at the Air Station, trainee Aircrew, Engineers, Air Traffic Controllers, Fire-fighters and Flight Deck crews undergo intensive training prior to joining Naval Air Squadrons for duties at sea. Additionally, the ‘Search and Rescue’ Squadron is on constant standby 365-days a year to react to emergencies throughout the Southwest region. Its red and grey helicopters can be seen braving all types of weather responding to calls for help on land and sea.

About Ascent

Ascent Flight Training Ltd is a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Babcock designed specifically to deliver UK Military Flying Training System in partnership with the UK Ministry of Defence to sustain military flying training out to 2033. Find out more about Ascent: www.ascentflighttraining.net

Ascent is a special purpose vehicle and solely exists to deliver advanced military flying training capability to the UK armed forces; under this remit Ascent was appointed by the MOD to deliver an integrated, coherent tri-service training solution including: training needs analysis, acquisition of training aircraft, training design and curriculum development, provision of site facilities, hangars, classrooms, training devices and simulators and most importantly - a world class military flying training system.

The training of RN and RAF Observers sits under the Rear Crew Stage 1 element of the UKMFTS programme, furthermore the hugely successful SOLIC (Sensor Operator Lead In Course) is also delivered to RN and RAF students as part of UKMFTS – with the first successful course and graduation being completed earlier this year. The number of students put through basic training is increasing, whilst the capability of the King Air is broadening, for example support to Exercise Joint Warrior in Scotland this year.

For more information, please contact Ascent Press Office on 07590 600 643

For further information about Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, please contact:

Emma Relton (Public Relations Officer)	01326 552461	NAVYCU-EXECPRPRO1@MOD.UK
Pete Wooldridge (Public Relations Officer)	01326 552460	NAVYCU-EXECPRPRO2@MOD.UK
Charlotte Overton (Community Relations Officer)	01326 552520	NAVYCU-EXECPRCRO@MOD.UK