



## **My Flying Life Air Marshal Sir John Sutton**

By way of an introduction to this article. It is developed from Sir Johns talk to the Rutland RAFA AGM in 2012. Following the meeting he kindly gave me his notes with a view to creating a few articles for future Flying Horseshoes that may be of interest to members. I briefly wrote a small piece for the March 2012 Flying Horseshoe but now the time has come to attack the whole presentation.

Peter



Like most 18 year olds in 1950 I was called up for two years National Service. I didn't come from a

service family and chose the Royal Air Force simply because I was brought up in Lincolnshire where in those days there were many RAF Stations. At that time there was growing concern about the Korean War and the RAF had decided to expand and accept national servicemen for pilot training- and I became one of them. The pilot training had to be completed within the two years so that one could leave as a fully operational pilot and serve on an auxiliary squadron. So before I was 20 I was flying Meteors on a fighter squadron at Leuchars on the East Coast of Scotland.

Flying jet fighters and being paid for it was, very obviously, a wonderful experience for a young man and so I decided to stay on in the RAF and I actually served for 39 years. I was on 6 squadrons in all- all on fighters except for a tour on Canberra's in Cyprus. The RAF had decided that the Canberra should no longer operate as a high level bomber but operate in formations at low level carrying rockets and bombs. This was quite a change and so I and several others with a fighter background were sent to Cyprus to help introduce this rather different way of operating. The Canberra was a rather slow old lady but it had long

legs and we were able to operate over a wide area - all around the Mediterranean and the Gulf where in those days we had many bases. We also went to Malaysia where we operated from a jungle strip during what was called Confrontation with Indonesia.



I was lucky enough to be a squadron commander twice, once as a squadron leader and then again as a wing commander. My last squadron tour was at Bruggen on 14 Squadron equipped with Phantoms. The Phantom was a very powerful and very strong airplane and it was exhilarating to fly. I suspect that some of you will know the difficulty some twin engined aircraft used to have if one engine failed, especially with undercarriage and flaps down. Even though it was still in the early 70's we had no such difficulties with the Phantom. On one engine, with undercarriage and flaps down, it would climb at 6000 feet a minute- albeit using the afterburner. Being originally a naval aeroplane it had a hook which fortunately the Air Staff did not remove although I gather some idiot did suggest it. We did not of course land on carriers but each airfield had a wire near the runway threshold and in any emergency - lack of brakes, hydraulic problems, ice on the runway or whatever, one

merely lowered the hook, engaged the wire and was brought to a gentle stop in 1200 feet.

Editors Note, I had one account with the Phantom, I ran Station Flight on one unit and during a station exercise I was sent with my team up to the flight to receive what we thought would be a paper Phantom as part of the exercise. Only to hear the roar of two large jet engines, shock took over as it turned out that none of us had previously seen one let alone serviced the aircraft. The pilot saved the day. Sorry I digress back to Sir John.

I said the aircraft was very strong and Bob Honey, later an AVM but who was on the same conversion course as me at RAF Coningsby, proved it. He was looking at his leader- anxious not to fall behind after a low level mock attack in Scotland, and flew through a tree. I don't mean he clipped the top of the tree - I mean he flew right through it. As a result the drop tanks were torn off and branches of the tree were sticking out of the wings. The assessment, by the horrified staff member who flew alongside, was that the Phantom would not fly below 200 knots. So Bob diverted to Leuchars, lowered the hook, took the wire at 200 knots and was brought to the usual gentle halt on the runway. The hook was a great piece of kit.





# THE RUTLAND FLYING HORSESHOE

**April Speaker**  
**Air Commodore**  
**Peter Gover MBE AFC**  
**DL RAF (Retd).**

**Life Membership of RAFA**  
(Thoughts of the Branch Secretary)

Our April Speaker was Air Commodore Peter Gover who is not only a member of this Branch but is also Chairman of Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR). I think as a VAR Trustee that it's a good idea from time to time to be reminded what VAR has to offer especially with the new changes in Government Legislation. I asked Peter to come along and speak to us and by the numbers of members attending appeared to be a popular topic.



Peter started his presentation with something of the history of the organisation. Voluntary Action Rutland started in 1984 as Rutland Volunteer Bureau founded, based in Gaol Street which was volunteer led. It moved a couple more times with various changes of staff until in 1998 it moved in to the current building to create the Rutland Volunteer Centre hosting other charities offices and affordable meeting space. Finally to bring it up to date 2013 where VAR is an essential role in promoting, developing, consulting and supporting the Rutland Voluntary and Community Sector with 3 full time, 3 part time staff & 1 project officer. During it's history VAR has been graced by two visits from HRH The Princess Anne the latest one in 2009 at the opening of the Gover Centre.

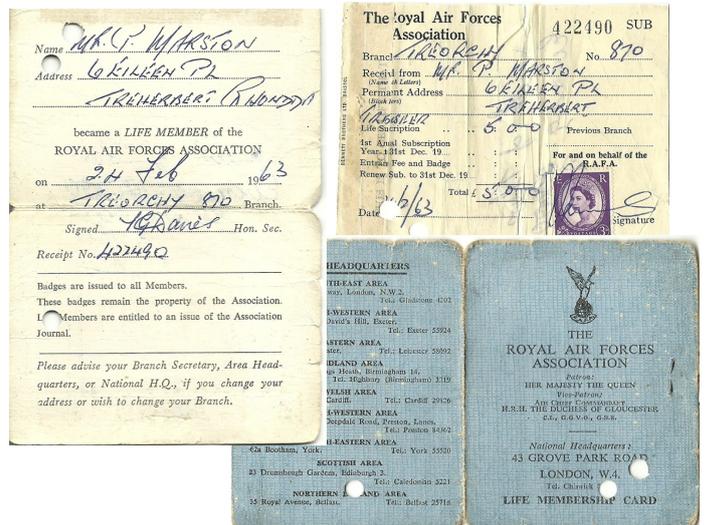
In addition to full time staff the centre would not be able to operate without its volunteers. VAR is a One Stop Shop for volunteers charities and community groups whose objects are To promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of the community in Rutland and it's neighbourhood and in particular, the advancement of education, the protection of health and the relief of poverty, distress and sickness To promote and organise co-operation in the achievement of the above and to bring together representatives of voluntary organisation and statutory authorities. Which I think it achieves.

Perhaps I can add a little about the VAR Transport Operation which is managed by a full time member of staff but operated by Volunteers. We have volunteer transport operators who take the phone calls and allocate the volunteer drivers to the client. To give you some idea of the size of the operation in 2012 there were 52 Volunteer drivers with 6 office planning volunteers who managed 22,500 journeys which included 4807 hospital trips a total of 195,000 miles covered. VAR have their own fleet of vehicles currently 2minibus, 1MPV and 1car adapted for wheelchair passengers. There will be a new minibus joining the fleet at the end of April 2013.

For further information ring VAR on 01572 722622 or for Transport on 01572 724705.  
Peter Hart



There has been a lot of debate within the association recently about the role of Life Members. In 2012 the Association considered charging life members an annual fee because they do not contribute much. However, this was turned down and, as a result, there will no longer be any new life members.



As someone who has been a life member for just over 50 years, I thought I would consider what I had contributed. These pictures above show my original membership card and it shows a cost of £5 (not to mention the 3d stamp). At that time, as an apprentice in the RAF, I was earning £7 per week of which 50% was compulsorily retained in a post office account which I could not access this account without my parents written permission. Over the 50 years I feel that I have contributed a lot to the Association and I regret the present attitude.

**Phil Marston**



Photograph Kathryn Manderson

Phil receives his 50 year badge from the Chairman Duncan Manderson at the April branch meeting.

Please remember that this is your magazine and I'm always happy to include your views or perhaps stories from your past. Get in touch details on page 4.  
Peter

# THE RUTLAND FLYING HORSESHOE



## Local News

### The Royal Air Force Boy Entrants Association (RAFBEA)

On Saturday evening 16<sup>th</sup> March a number of RAFBEA members held a Dinner at the Sun Inn in Cottesmore Village with a view to forming a RAFBEA Branch here in Rutland. Seven members and partners attended the Dinner and agreed to peruse the matter further. They agreed that the next event will take place in early summer where it's hoped to organise a day on the Grand Union Canal. This cruise is open to all.



Any ex Boy Entrants who would like to be involved in a Rutland Branch of the Association are asked to please contact for more information either Gerry Beadle on [juneggb2@aol.com](mailto:juneggb2@aol.com), Derek Bury and Peter Hart whose contact details are at the

### St Georges Barracks to Receive Freedom of Oakham

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> April, St Georges Day our Standard Bearer Francis Humphreys along with his colleague and RAFA member Bob Kirkpatrick MBE the RBL Standard Bearer will take part in a parade to award the Freedom of Entry to Oakham to St George's Barracks. The honour will be conferred during a ceremony in Oakham that will entail a service in All Saints Church at 14.00hrs followed by the presentation of the honour during a parade in the Market Place where the Mayor of Oakham, Alf Dewis, will present an illuminated scroll to the Commanding Officer of 16<sup>th</sup> Regiment Royal Artillery.

The honour is to be granted because of the long standing association of over 70 years between the military base at North Luffenham and the Town of Oakham. It also recognises the service that members of the armed forces located at the base have performed both for their country and for the Town over that period.

RAF Cottesmore was awarded the honour jointly by Rutland District Council and Oakham Town Council in 1988.

Following the presentation The Regiment will then exercise its 'Freedom' by marching through Oakham with drums beating, bands playing, colours flying and bayonets fixed. The parade will leave the Market Place and march along the High Street where Dr Lawrence Howard, the Lord Lieutenant, will take the salute at the junction of Church Street and High Street. The parade will continue along High Street turn down Northgate and finish in Church Street.

### COMMEMORATION OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE 'GREAT ESCAPERS'

In March 1944, seventy six Allied POWs, including Australian and New Zealand airmen, broke out of Stalag Luft III, a prison camp in the heart of Nazi Germany. Seventy three were recaptured, and fifty of them were murdered by the Gestapo in a flagrant breach of the Geneva Convention.

As soon as the war ended, a special RAF Police taskforce headed by Squadron Leader Frank McKenna was despatched to Germany to hunt down the men responsible and deliver "exemplary justice"

With more than one hundred Gestapo agents implicated, McKenna's dogged investigation ran for more than two years, exposing him to the full horrors of the Nazi regime.

The sacrifice of the 'fifty' will be commemorated on the date of the escape 25<sup>th</sup> March by the Royal Air Forces Association (Leicester Branch).

Royal Air Forces Association and Royal Air Force Police Association members from across Leicestershire & Rutland have been invited to this event.

Rutland will be represented by our Standard Bearer Francis Humphreys.

Only RAFA and RAFFA Members will be allowed at the screening of the DVD. Further information from Roy Rudham Secretary RAFA Leicester Branch

Email: [secretary@rafaleicester.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rafaleicester.org.uk) or Telephone: 0116 2710052 (Daytime only)

### London Marathon 2013

The Branch Secretary has received the following request from Flt Lt Paul Harrap who is running in the London Marathon in aid of The Royal Air Force Association:-

I would be grateful if you could consider sponsoring me for this event. I am aiming to raise £1,700 for this worthwhile cause.

Pauls address is - Flt Lt Paul Harrap, SO3 Force Gen (O'seas), A1 Ops, HQ Air Command, RAF High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.

Email address is - [prharrap@btinternet.com](mailto:prharrap@btinternet.com)

He can also be sponsored at the following website - <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/fundraiser-web/fundraiser/showFundraiserProfilePage.action?userUrl=PaulHarrap1>

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards  
Paul Harrap





# The Gazette

## Dates For Your Diary



1st May	Loughborough University Student RAF Officer Cadets	Defence Technical, Undergraduate Scheme (DTUS)
5th June	Squadron Leader Mark Hind Battery Commander 49 Inkerman Battery	A Squadron Leader has made History!!!!
3rd July	“Call My Bluff” Quiz Evening	Derek Bury
4th December	Christmas Dinner	Greetham Valley Golf Club

## What's on Forthcoming Events

Friday May 24th	<b>Proposed visit to National Memorial Arboretum</b>	If you are interested in going to any of these events contact Derek Bury for further details tel 01572 755969, email rafarutland923@yahoo.co.uk by 6th March.
-----------------	--	---

### Branch Meeting

Branch Meetings are First Wednesday every month  
Venue: Cottesmore Sports & Social Club 7.00 for 7.30pm

## Branch Committee Members

**President:** Air Marshal Sir John M D Sutton KCB (Retd)

**Chairman:** Duncan Manderson, Pickwell Grange, Whissendine, LE15 7ER, 01664 474274

**Vice Chairman:** Gordon Diffey. Tel 01572 722068

**Branch Secretary:** Phil Marston, 12 Seaton Road, Uppingham, LE15 9QX, 01572 822731

**Treasurer:** Gordon Diffey. Tel 01572 722068

**Editor Flying Horseshoe:** Peter Hart, , Tel 01572756750 peterivy42@btinternet.com

**Speaker Coordinator:**

**Wings Appeal Organiser** Dave Craven: Tel 01572759134, email davecraven@hotmail.com

**Honorary Welfare Officer:** Christine Ward, email christine.e.ward@hotmail.co.uk

**Membership Secretary:** Angie Humphreys, email [angelaandfrancis@talktalk.net](mailto:angelaandfrancis@talktalk.net)

**Meetings Coordinator:** Bob Tacey, Tel 01572 812455, email taceybob@hotmail.com

**Social Secretary:** Derek Bury, Tel 01572 755969, email derek\_bury@hotmail.com

**Standard Bearer:** Francis Humphreys,

**Christmas Dinner Organiser,** Roger Hyde, Tel 01572 813547 email g3zdw@btinternet.com