



Air Marshal Sir John Sutton, Rutland RAFA President



Shortly before his 45th birthday in 1977, Sir John Sutton was promoted to air vice-marshal to become Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Policy), responsible for the future size and shape of the Royal Air Force. He arranged to move a small team, whose task was to review long-term plans and potential capability gaps, into his policy staff. When, a few months later, his team proposed a package of radical initiatives such as self-defence aids for attack aircraft, in-flight refuelling for some transport aircraft and anti-ship missiles for the anti-submarine force of Nimrods, MoD procurement staff claimed it was too expensive and that trials would take three years. In 1982, as the aircraft were deployed to the Falklands, all the proposals were implemented in 10 days.

John Matthias Dobson Sutton was born on July 9 1932 at Alford, Lincolnshire, where he attended the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School. After a year as a police cadet he was called up for National Service in the RAF. He trained as a pilot, and within two years was flying Meteor day fighters from Leuchars in Fife. He decided to make the RAF his career and spent the next few years flying Hunter fighters in Germany and the UK. Assessed as above average, he joined the staff of the Day Fighter Combat School, teaching advanced fighter tactics and leadership to potential squadron and flight commanders.

In 1964 he took command of No 249 Squadron, stationed at Akrotiri in Cyprus, where he developed a series of trials designed to change the tactics of the four Canberra squadrons based

there by training their crews in ground attack, using rockets and bombs released from low level. The RAF's Canberra squadrons reinforced those of the Far East Air Force during the Indonesian Confrontation and, in 1965, No 249 left for a jungle airstrip at Kuantan on the Malaysian mainland. There, for three months, Sir John and his crews provided a deterrent force and flew operations over Borneo.

After two years, Sir John left for the first of his tours at the MoD when he was appointed to the Secretariat of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. In 1970 he assumed command of No 14 Squadron, the first RAF Phantom squadron to be based in Germany, and on June 1 that year he flew the first aircraft into Bruggen, the RAF's largest operational airfield in West Germany. His time on the Phantom was cut short when he was promoted to group captain and left for the 2nd Tactical Air Force HQ at Rheindahlen, where he was responsible for operational plans.

Sir John returned to the MoD as personal briefing officer to the Chief of Defence Staff, Field Marshal (later Lord) Carver. On promotion to air commodore, he became Commandant of the Central Flying School, where he also had responsibility for the Red Arrows, giving him the opportunity to fly with the aerobatic team.

After his policy appointment at the MoD, in 1980 he returned to RAF Germany as Deputy Commander, responsible for four large RAF stations and 15 operational squadrons. He flew the combat aircraft himself, and mixed with the air and ground crews, giving his men the confidence that their chief understood their business and the pressures they faced. By the late summer of 1982, however, he was back at the ministry as Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff (Commitments), responsible for all operational activities involving more than one service.

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THE RUTLAND FLYING HORSESHOE

While NATO's area was relatively stable, there was considerable activity in the South Atlantic: in the aftermath of the Falklands conflict, it was necessary to decide on permanent force levels on the island and a new strategic airfield. Other important matters included disturbances in Lebanon, and sensitive issues in Belize. After 18 months it was recognised that Sir John's responsibilities were too broad, so a second two-star officer took on responsibility for home defence and NATO, leaving him free to concentrate on everything else.

Sir John's final appointment in the RAF was as Commander-in-Chief of Support Command, with responsibility for all flying and ground training units and specialist professional training establishments.

He was appointed CB in 1981 and KCB in 1986. In 1990, a year after his retirement, Sir John was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Jersey. He expected his duties to be mainly representational, but he was soon involved in a controversy surrounding the removal (orchestrated by Whitehall) of the bailiwick's Deputy Bailiff, which attracted critical local press coverage, leading to Sir John being booed and heckled in the streets. Once the full story of the affair was made public, however, he won praise for his handling of a delicate situation and received a letter of thanks from the Home Office. After five years he settled in Rutland, and chaired the governing body of Northampton University. In 2002 he was appointed president of the Royal Air Force Association.



A picture is worth a thousand words.

John Sutton's marriage in 1954 to Cherry Woodward was dissolved. He married secondly, in 1969, Angela Gray, who survives him with their son and a son and daughter of his first marriage. His youngest son, Mark, parachuted into the

London Olympic Arena at the climax of the official opening of the games by the Queen in 2012. He died in a parachuting accident a year later.

Air Marshal Sir John Sutton, born July 9 1932, died November 21 2014

(We thank the various publications for parts of this Obituary which has been edited by RAFA Rutland.)

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Richard



Your chance to own a
piece of Aviation History



In collaboration between the RAF Association and the Red Arrows RAF Aerobatic Team, this beautiful painting was commissioned to mark the Reds' fiftieth display season. Now you can own a fine art print of the original oil painting by Michael Rondot, signed and numbered by the artist, and also signed by the current ten Red Arrows pilots. All proceeds from sales of the limited-edition 50th Anniversary Red Arrows prints will go to the Royal Air Forces Association.

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If you are interested in owning this stunning piece of aviation history, or for further information, please contact Nicola via email: Nicola.heath@rafa.org.uk or call her on 0116 2688790. For card payments please contact Rishi on 0116 268 8785.

Many thanks to all of your contributions. Perhaps we can print your story next month.

Happy
New Year
2015



The Gazette

Dates For Your Diary



7th January	BLESMA	
4th February	RAF DETAS Cadets Loughborough Uni.	2014 Summer Expeditions to Kenya & Colorado
	TBC	
4th March	TBC	

Personal Notices.

Welcome to new member Mr Nicholas Herd from Oakham.

Sadly two of our members have died Mr Basil Lowe of Oakham, whose family much appreciated the Rutland Branch Standard at this funeral, and of course Sir John Sutton, our former President. We understand a memorial service is being arranged in the New Year.

I am still sending used postage stamps to RAFA Stamp appeal, so if you have any from the busy Christmas post I shall be happy to receive them at meetings.

Angie Humphreys
Membership Secretary

Branch Meeting

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

Branch Committee Members

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