

# 43(F) Squadron Association

NEWSLETTER 2025



## Message From The President: Sir Simon Bryant KCB CBE

*Dear Fellow Fighting Cocks,*

*With Christmas in the rear-view mirror, it's time to cast our thoughts forward to our annual reunion in London over the weekend of 16-18 May. Details of the weekend and how to register for the dinner are outlined below. I encourage you all to put the dates in your diary and to make arrangements forthwith, so as not to forget and miss out. Now that we have fallen into a biennial reunion programme, alternating between Leuchars and London, we are keen to have a really good turn-out to mirror the sold-out event at Leuchars last year. Although the last two London dinners have been thoroughly enjoyable evenings, numbers have been down on our historic norm. So, if you value the chance to get together with your old mates at a London venue, then bang the drum and get folks to come along. This year our theme will be the Hunter to mark 70 years since 43 were the first squadron to operate this iconic aircraft with plans to celebrate this exciting era at the dinner. The Committee work hard to make the whole weekend worthwhile so please give them your support and remember it's not just the dinner on the Saturday night, We would love to see you at any point over the weekend. As ever there will be much to discuss as we catch up with old friends from the past and the Committee would welcome your thoughts on any aspect of the reunion programme.*

*Turning to the Committee itself I would like to thank Jim Campbell and Roy MacIntyre for getting to grips with the Secretary and Treasurer roles, never an easy task, particularly at distance from the previous incumbent. I would also like you to join me in wishing Colin McShane all the best for a speedy recovery after his heart operation and that he is fit to join us in May.*

*Look forward to seeing you all in London, Gloria Finis.*

## **Annual Reunion Dinner**

This year's annual reunion dinner will take place on 17<sup>th</sup> May in the RAF Club, Picadilly, London, W1J 7PY.

18:00 for 19:00 meal.

Dress: Lounge suits and Squadron Tie or equivalent

## **Menu Details**

Gin & tonic cured salmon, elderflower gel, compressed cucumber, grapefruit & herb crème fraiche

Corn fed breast of chicken, confit leg croquette, potato gateau, tender stem broccoli, green peppercorn & shallot sauce

Vanilla pannacotta, rhubarb & ginger compote, brandy snap crisp

Coffee & petits fours

**Please Note:** If you need a vegetarian option, contact The RAF Club directly on 020 7399 1000

## **Booking & Payment:**

The cost is **£55** per person.

Please register by making a bank transfer to:-

**Sort Code:** 20-60-55

**Account No:** 80371963

**Account Name:** "No 43(F) Squadron The Fighting Cocks Association"

Please book as soon as you can so we get an early idea of numbers. Use your surname as the reference when transferring money.

E mail Sam Jones (43squadronreunion@gmail.com) when you have made payment.

## Pub Lunch.

There is normally a get together at The Grapes, Shepherds Market, W1J 7QQ, on Saturday afternoon as a prelude to the formal function. All are welcome.

## 2024 Dinner

Saturday 27th April 2024 saw the Fighting Cocks assemble at their old hunting ground, RAF Leuchars.

The Officers Mess, suitably adorned with a RAF theme, was the venue where large numbers of Squadron personnel, including partners, gathered. We were welcomed by the RAF Central Scotland Pipes and Drums who kept the musical greeting going until every guest had arrived.

Arrival drinks consumed, we were piped into the dining room by Pipe Sgt Willie Tait and after a brief welcome from the Chairman, Derek Johnston, Keith Boyd read the Airman's Grace. Menu cards, once again generously provided by Gill Howie and Squadron Prints, detailed the meal and as an added bonus, Gill had donated specially engraved coasters as a memento of the evening. Meal finished, Sam Jones cited the Loyal Toast, Steve Smith gave the Toast to 43(F) Squadron and Jim Campbell led us in the Toast to Absent Friends.

The President, Air Chief Marshal Sir Simon Bryant KCB CBE then gave his address, neatly segueing into the presentation of the Beedle Trophy. This year's most deserving recipient was Alan Johnstone who, after tragically losing his young wife to this devastating illness, has gone on to raise over £100,000 for the Brain Tumour Charity. A worthy winner!

After the applause had died down the Chairman then introduced our guest speaker, Wg Cdr (retd) Mandy Singleton. Mandy recalled her time on 43(F), starting out as an Avionics Technician and 'Liney', having to battle outdated thinking as she strived to prove herself in a predominantly 'Mans World'. She enjoyed her time on the Squadron and stated her experiences, positive and negative, gave her the ability and determination to succeed in her chosen career.

After Mandy, the Gavel came down to conclude the formalities and the bar then became the focal point. Myriad groups sprung up as folk met up with old acquaintances, new friendships were formed, and the air was heavy with the sound of laughter and reminiscence. Everybody had the chance to sample a "Fighting Cock", concocted by The Mixologist (Tina Campbell) ably assisted by the Sorcerer's apprentice Steve Smith, as the familiar call "Is there a Fighting Cock in the house" was answered with a resounding "You bet your sweet ar\*e there is".

Sadly, the evening finished all too soon and as people drifted off, many said that they would love to meet up again. **This year's dinner in London would be an ideal starting point!**





## Reunion Planning

We have noticed a reduction in numbers during the last 2 London based dinners, albeit both held in difficult circumstances. Whilst the Leuchars dinners have been very successful, we would like to hear from you, our members, if a London reunion and dinner is still something you look forward to and would want to attend. Please keep an eye on the Association Facebook page for a survey or contact Jim Campbell ([campbelljim01@gmail.com](mailto:campbelljim01@gmail.com)) or any committee member with thoughts and suggestions.

# Remembrance Day 2024

November saw Remembrance Parades and church services take place across the country. The Association were represented at the Church of the Holy Rude, Stirling by Mike Reynolds Snr and his partner Carol, who laid a wreath on behalf of the Association. Pipe Major Ian Hughes, ex 43(F), led the RAF Pipes and Drums at the Cenotaph in London. A huge honour as it was the first time the Pipes and Drums have featured at the ceremony.



# 1019 Squadron (City of Stirling) Air Cadets – Falleninch Memorial Parade 2024

Under a very atmospheric back drop of Stirling Castle, Cadets from Stirling and Dunblane took part in a memorial service commemorating the Squadrons formation (15/04/1916). The turnout was superb and plenty of relatives there to support the cadets. A brief address was given by Association Chairman Derek Johnston reminding those present of the importance of recognising the achievements of the Squadron and thanking the cadets and their officers for their continued support. A young piper played the lament under the watchful eye of our own Huggy Hughes and a fly past by a Typhoon of 2(ac) Sqn was a highlight for young and old alike. Well done and thank you to all of those who paraded and supported this tribute to 43(F).



## **Deaths:**

It is with great sadness we notify you of the passing of the following Fighting Cocks:

**Dicky Duff.** Electrical Trade Manager F3

Passed away Apr 24

**Bob Prest.**

Passed Away May 24

**Peter Campbell.** Husband of Katherine Campbell (daughter of Sholto Douglas)

Passed away August 24

**Bob Iles.** Hunter pilot. Association Secretary and Treasurer

Passed Away Sept 24

**Paul Lofting.** Sqn WO F3

Passed away Sep 24

**Dave McGuire.** Engine Mech F4 Phantom

Passed Away Oct 24

**Sqn Ldr Chris Golds.** Hunter Pilot

Passed away Nov 24

**Air Cdre Ian McBride.** OC Squadron 78-80 Association Chairman

Passed Away Jan 25

**Vic Winwright.** MCS Technician Line Controller F4 Phantom

Passed Away Jan 25

**Kev Cahir.** Airframe Technician Early 90's

Passed away Jan 25



## All Change

The committee now consists of:

Derek Johnston: Chairman **Email:** [dh.johnston60@gmail.com](mailto:dh.johnston60@gmail.com)

Roy MacIntyre: Treasurer **Email:** [roymaci43@gmail.com](mailto:roymaci43@gmail.com)

Jim Campbell: Secretary **Email:** [campbelljim01@gmail.com](mailto:campbelljim01@gmail.com)

Sam Jones: Events **Email:** [samjones43@googlemail.com](mailto:samjones43@googlemail.com)

Aaron Wood:

Jules Bourn: **Email:** [julianbourn@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:julianbourn@hotmail.co.uk)

Colin McShane:

As with any organization, we can only continue to produce an informative newsletter if we have the content. To this end, if you have any stories or events which relate to the Squadron, please forward them to the secretary for possible inclusion.

## Web Site

The Committee still plans on updating and improving the web site, a task that is slowly ongoing. If there is anything you would like to see on the site, then please let us know.

## Informal Reunions

The annual **Tornado F3** reunion will take place on Friday **16 May 25** in London, venue tbc.

The annual **Phantom** reunion will take place on **Friday 7 November 25** Venue TBN

## Request For Help

I recently received the following e-mail from David Clarke and wondered if any of you guys from the Hunter era might be able to help out.

“Some time ago I interviewed the aviation historian Robert Jackson, former RAF pilot and author. We touched upon the tricky subject of 'unidentified flying objects’

Robert mentioned an incident that he said was recorded in the Operations Record Book of 43 Squadron in 1955. He said it occurred when 'two Hawker Hunter jet fighters were engaged in mock combat high over the North Sea. When the gun camera film of the attacking Hunter was screened at the exercise debriefing, it showed a ball of bright light that appeared to be solid, drifting into the frame. The ball hung there for several moments, appearing to be pacing the two aircraft, and remained poised about half-way between them before drifting away again. Neither pilot had seen anything.

I recently checked the ORBs covering 43 Squadron's sojourn at Leuchars, where Hunters arrived late 1954-55, without finding any reference to this incident (AIR 27/2612). For good measure I also checked the ORBs of 222 (Natal) Squadron - another Hunter squadron at the same base - and the RAF Leuchars base Operations Record Book, also without success.

Could your colleagues in the association throw any light on this intriguing incident and/or provide information on where the report/reference might originate? Did the squadron keep a daily diary of operations and incidents separate to the Form 540 Operations Record Books that have been preserved at the National Archives? If so where are these records and are they available for inspection?

If you are able to assist my inquiries in tracing this interesting reference it would be greatly appreciated,

Yours Faithfully

--

David Clarke

Freelance Journalist

Tweets: @shuclarke

Mobile 07906 377988

## The Fighting Cocks

The AIM of the Association is to consolidate the spirit of good fellowship and to continue to take pride in the Squadron's past and present achievements.

43(F) Squadron (Fighting Cocks) Association was founded in 1945, immediately after the end of the war. Some of the ground crew had been together for nearly four years.

They decided that the spirit and comradeship that had built up between all the personnel - Officers - Non Commissioned Officers - Airmen - Ground Crew and Aircrew should not be lost.

“The Fighting Cocks, Cocky by name and nature though not offensively so, as the cockiness was not a form of arrogance but the manifestation of an inward self-assurance, the outward display of what it knew to be true; that it could do all things as well as anybody and do a great deal of them better than most. To be posted to 43 Squadron was not merely to join a fighter squadron. It was to become one of a company of men who did everything supremely well because it had been like that for so long that nobody knew of any other way.”

*(A History of the Fighting Cocks J Beedle)*

The Memory of 43(F) and the Association can only keep going with your support. If you have any ideas, events, memories (suitable for publication) please let one of the committee members know so that we can carry on the legacy left to us

## **Gloria Finis**