

RNAS LOSSIEMOUTH, HMS FULMAR

The history of Lossiemouth as an airfield began just prior to the outbreak of World War II, when there emerged a vital need to establish airfields in the North of Scotland to protect the northern approaches and to provide easier access to the Scandinavian countries. The southern low lying coastal strip of the Moray Firth was selected and Dalcross, Kinloss and Lossiemouth were established as air bases.

On the outbreak of war, No. 15 Flying Training School was in residence, but by May, 1940, this unit was replaced by No. 20 (Bomber) Operational Training Unit which remained until the cessation of hostilities.

In pursuit of its role as a forward base for air operations against Axis shipping in northern waters, numbers 21 and 57 Squadrons equipped with Blenheims and number 83 Squadron with Hampdens were detached to Lossiemouth and for the first year were actively engaged in mine laying and other anti-shipping operations.

Undoubtedly the most famous attack mounted from Lossiemouth was on the 12th December, 1944, when 31 Lancasters of RAF Bomber Command, after earlier attacks carried out by carrier borne aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm, finally destroyed the German Battleship TIRPITZ in a massive bombing raid. This was achieved by bombing from height using specially constructed bombs, the target having been moved further North after being already been badly damaged by the Royal Navy's X-Craft attack and by the effective strike on the ship by Fleet Air Arm aircraft on Operation TUNGSTEN flying from the fleet carriers HMS Victorious, HMS Furious and a number of escort carriers. Interestingly enough the Captain of one of the X-Craft, Lieutenant Godfrey Place, awarded the Victoria Cross for his attack on TIRPITZ, would later train and fly as a Fleet Air Arm pilot.

Less than a year later, on 28th July, 1945, the Station became a satellite of Milltown and was transferred to Number 17 Group Coastal Command.

This was not to be for long, for on Tuesday, 2nd July 1946 the Royal Air Force Stations of Lossiemouth and Milltown were transferred to the Royal Navy. A short ceremony took place at Lossiemouth with music provided by the Royal Marine Band of HMS THESEUS. The Royal Air Force Ensign was lowered and the White Ensign hoisted as Wing

Commander E. A. Johnston formally handed over command to Captain D. MacIntyre, Royal Navy. The Royal Naval Air Station was commissioned as HMS FULMAR on the 7th July, 1946, and the first Naval Squadron to set up residence was 766 equipped with Fireflies and Seafires.

The operational flying training task of 766 Naval Air Squadron constituted the Station role in these formative years. Pilots were trained for the Strike and Fighter roles in the two aircraft types and subsequently moved on to the Deck Landing Training School at Milltown. Lieutenant L. D. Empson (later Vice-Admiral Empson, the Second Sea Lord) was a Squadron Commanding Officer of the DLTS in those early days.

On a cold 28th September day 1946 just over 5,000 people took advantage of an open invitation to attend the first Lossiemouth Air Day. As it turned out, that day was an unfortunate choice as thick banks of fog crept in from the Moray Firth and seriously curtailed the flying display by Fireflies, Seafires Mk11 and Sea Furies. However despite the fog the planned rocket-assisted launch of a Barracuda was highly successful, and an aerial attack on a dummy ship by a Sea Otter received wide acclaim!

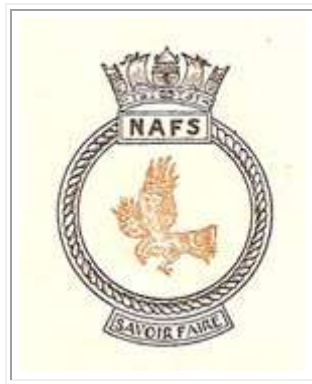
The aircraft carrier HMS THESEUS was a regular visitor to Moray waters in the late 1940s and made her deck available for practice landings by Seafires and Fireflies piloted by the more advanced student pilots from Lossiemouth. In March, 1949, after a cruise in the Arctic, HMS VENGEANCE disembarked her front line squadrons, 814 Squadron Fireflies and 802 Squadron Sea Furies, which staged through Lossiemouth en route to RNAS Culdrose.

By this time the Navy had established its name in Morayshire sporting circles and further evidence of this was shown in June, 1949, when HMS FULMAR became Morayshire Junior League Football Champions and then winners of the North of Scotland Cricket Championships in September of the same year. In March, 1950, FULMAR retained the Elgin and District Table Tennis Championship for the third consecutive year.

Signs of the apparent permanency of RNAS Lossiemouth were beginning to emerge with the construction of the Naval Married Quarters estates. The first ten of seven hundred houses were opened on 7th October, 1949 by Rear Admiral Anstice, and were sited at Grays

Walk, Bishopmill, Elgin. The Air Station itself, like most Service establishments of the time, remained an austere and uninspiring conglomeration of wooden buildings which provided only the minimum of essentials in its living and working accommodation. Consolidation had been achieved; now was the time for expansion. From the comparative tranquility of the immediate post-war years, the 1950s saw Lossiemouth mushroom with activity.

In 1952 the flying task was transferred to Milltown when the decision was taken to transfer the Naval Air Fighter School from RNAS Culdrose to RNAS Lossiemouth. To meet this new commitment, a works programme was initiated, which included the extension of two of the three runways (23/05 from 5,720 feet to 9,140 feet and 29/11 from 4,050 feet to 6,068 feet), the construction of new hardstandings, taxiways, fuel installations and improved radio aids. By May 1953 the squadrons were able to return from Milltown and in the autumn 766 Squadron split into two, 766 (Fireflies) and 764 (Seafires), before moving south in preparation for operation "Solitaire" the movement of 738 Squadron Sea Furies and 759 Squadron Meteors from RNAS Culdrose. In late 1954 759 Squadron was disbanded and by March 1955 the Sea Furies of 738 Squadron were replaced by Vampire T22s while 736 Squadron received Seahawks. The two Squadrons were to form the Naval Air Fighter School for some time.



These were the years that were dominated by the rapid emergence of jet aircraft in the Fleet Air Arm. The Attacker had been pioneered into operational service by 800 Squadron and had provided valuable experience for the front line squadrons in fighter techniques. The knowledge acquired was put to good use as the Attacker jets gradually gave way to the more popular Seahawks, and in a ten-month period

during 1955 and 1956 no fewer than five front line Naval Squadrons of Seahawks, 801, 802, 804, 810 and 811 were commissioned into service at Lossiemouth. Their arrival signalled the gradual emergence of Lossiemouth as an increasingly important Naval Air Station.

The role of Naval helicopters in times of local distress has long been a principal factor in cementing the foundations of Community Relations and Lossiemouth's SAR crews contributed in no small way. During heavy blizzards in January 1955 they responded to the SOS call from the Convener of Caithness County with the now famous "Operation Snowdrop." Three helicopters were detached to Wick and for days on end, from dawn to dusk, they dropped fodder to herds of animals cut off by the snowdrifts. Phase 2 of "Snowdrop" commenced in February but was more commonly referred to as "Operation Shovel" as 400 sailors at any one time were employed keeping the runways clear.

However it was not all work in those days and a lighter recollection is that of 7th March 1955, when a touching and colourful ceremony was held. This was to comply with the Admiralty Fleet Order which removed the distinctive coloured lace from the uniform sleeves of Supply, Engineering, Electrical and Instructor branches. Four small coffins were slow marched to the burial ground where a heartrending soliloquy was delivered by Commander Griffith (Cdr. 'L') on the passing of the Navy's years old colour bar.

A Royal day for Lossiemouth was the 18th May 1956 when the Ship's Company received HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on his first official visit during a tour of all Royal Naval Air Stations. The following month Lieutenant J. R. Palmer and Commissioned Pilot R. H. Williams were appointed Members of the Military Division of the Order of the British Empire in recognition of the parts they played in the helicopter rescue, when the Norwegian tanker DOVREFJLL grounded in the Pentland Skerries. They rescued 32 from a crew of 41 in what was known at the time as the largest ever air sea rescue. The two Fulmar helicopter crews were subsequently awarded the Boyd Trophy for their part in the dramatic rescue.

On Wednesday, 29th May 1957, a day of glorious sunshine as befitted the occasion, the Station was honoured by the presence of Her Majesty the Queen accompanied by His Royal Highness, Prince Philip. Her Majesty disembarked from the Royal Barge in Lossiemouth harbour where the local dignitaries were presented. The Royal Party

then drove through the streets lined with cheering crowds to the Air Station. At 1500 the Royal Standard was broken at the masthead as Her Majesty's car entered the Main Gate. Her Majesty and His Royal Highness then drove through the lines of cheering sailors to the airfield. Here the Commanding Officer, Captain F. M. A. Torrens Spence, DSO, DSC, AFC, and the Commander and Commander (Air) were presented, after which Her Majesty boarded a Heron of the Queen's Flight and departed for London.

Towards the middle of 1957 a third training squadron was added to the establishment. 764 Squadron arrived from the Royal Naval Air Station Ford with their Seahawks. The Air Station at this time was not only beginning to play an ever increasingly important role in the Naval Air Command, but the remoteness of the airfield from the busy commercial air lanes and its excellent flying weather conditions made it a very attractive base for major exercises. One of these, the large NATO exercise STRIKEBACK took place in September 1957. During this period the air station was bulging with the influx of 24 Neptunes and the 300 Americans in support, together with RAF Shackletons and Hunters which combined with 764 Squadron Seahawks to present a force of considerable magnitude. It also highlighted the real problem of accommodation and the Americans had to be quartered in Lossiemouth's Stotfield and Marine Hotels.

At last in the following year hope was given by the Ministry of Defence that the old war time accommodation would not have to be endured for much longer. An announcement was made that over the next eight years 3,000,000 pounds was going to be spent in bringing the living accommodation of all ranks up to modern standards.

It was also in 1958 that, just 13 years after the end of the war, RNAS Lossiemouth, the airfield built to combat the German threat, welcomed the first German Naval Air Squadron to be trained in this country. In May Number 1 Squadron formed with 12 Seahawks and was commissioned by Vice Admiral Ruge, Inspector General of the Federal German Navy in the presence of the German Ambassador. This was to be the start of a very close and friendly relationship with the German Naval Air Force.

Another Squadron to receive Seahawks in 1958 was to be 738 which re-equipped during this period with Seahawks and Sea Venoms. In the second half of the year the Station entered the age of the supersonic jet fighter with Lossiemouth's 803 and 807 Squadrons

becoming the first two of the four front line squadrons to be equipped with the new Supermarine Scimitars. They were commissioned in June and October respectively, by Rear Admiral D R F Campbell the Flag Officer Flying Training. Despite the nickname of "Dragmaster," the pilots formed an attachment to these fast high powered aircraft. Although not successful in their designed fighter role, they proved an effective and flexible addition to the strike/ground attack armoury. In 1959 Scimitars began to replace the training Seahawk aircraft held by 736 Squadron, while 738 Squadron, now involved exclusively with an all weather syllabus, had phased out its Seahawks and re-equipped with Sea Venoms and Vampires. 764 Squadron acquired the first of its Hunter T8s.

A bright revolutionary extension to the NAAFI amenities of Lossiemouth came into being when the Fulmar Club formally opened in November, the ceremony being carried out by Captain M. F. Fell, the Commanding Officer. The new club concept was run on the lines of a private club, governed by a committee and a complete contrast to the rather more austere bar and restaurant which was more familiar to Service personnel at that time.

The flying task for 1959 is worthy of mention. During this year over 16,000 flying hours were achieved, making it the largest single effort in the Home Air Command. Not to be forgotten is the role it also played for long-range navigation exercises as well as the service it offered for those in the South who wished to obtain fresh fish, prawns and malt.



796 NAS Firefly from RNAS Culdrose refuelling at Lossiemouth 1955

This then was the situation as the Air Station moved into the 60s.

The first half of 1960 saw FULMAR providing the necessary training for Indian officers of the future 300 Squadron Indian Navy. Prior to commissioning this squadron of six Seahawks in June at RNAS Brawdy the officers were put through the CO, SP and AWI Courses at Lossiemouth. The squadron's eventual destination was to be the Indian Navy carrier VIKRANT. Meanwhile the resident squadrons had yet another change when 738 became the Advanced Flying School with Seahawks and Vampires, 736 Squadron an OFS with Scimitars, and 764 Squadron with Hunter T8s ran courses for AWI training, for CO and SPs designate together with swept wing conversions.

In March 1961 a new phase in the life of the air station was started when the Buccaneer was introduced to replace the Scimitar. Rear Admiral W F Hopkins, FOFT commissioned 700Z Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Commander A J Leahy, to carry out the

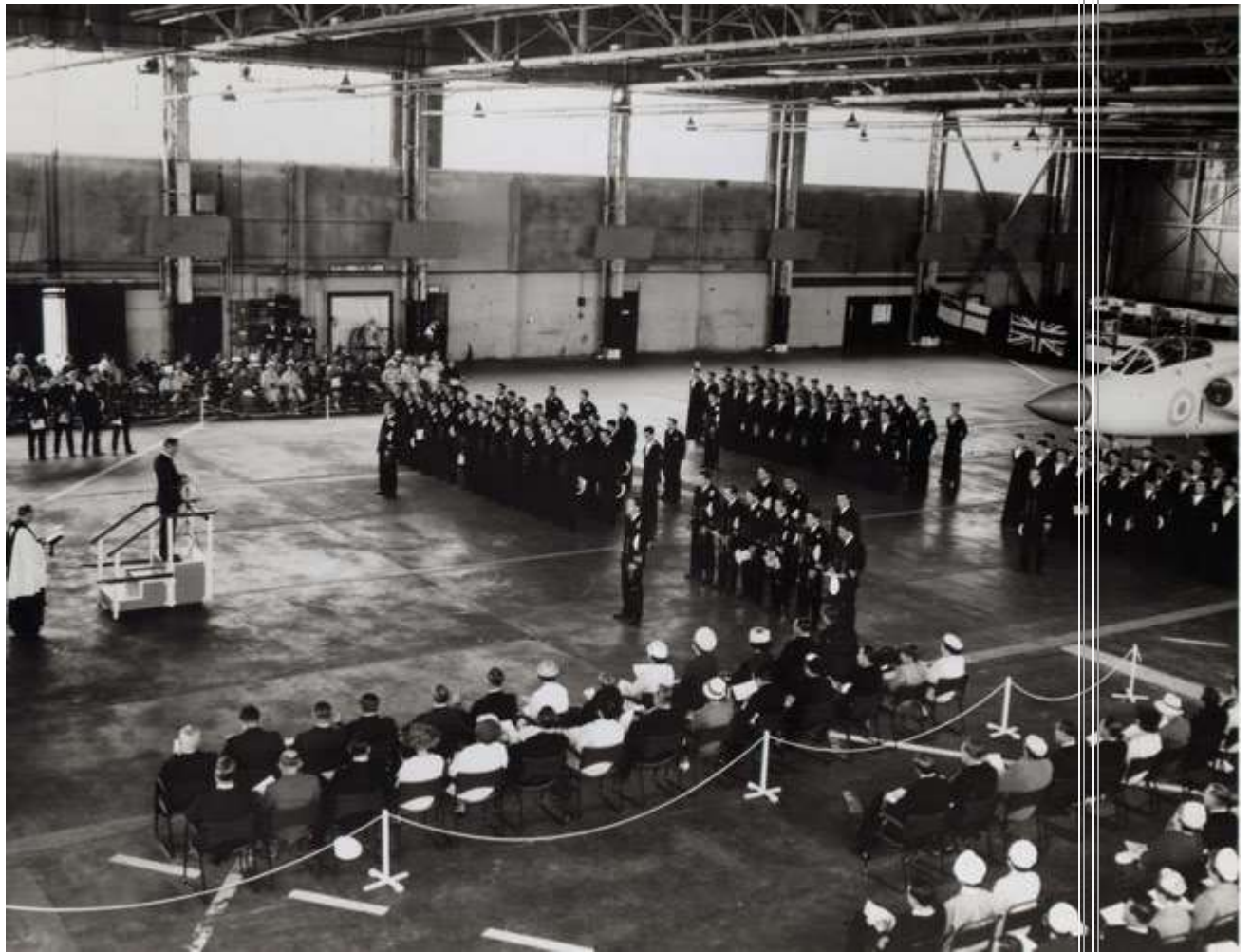
intensive flying trials on this highly complex aircraft, the first of its kind to be specially designed for operations in the low level strike role.

The Lossiemouth Ladies stole the headlines on the 16th May when they formed up to welcome Her Royal Highness Princess Marina, the Duchess of Kent, Commandant of the WRNS. All 100 of the Fulmar Wrens were on parade to welcome this Royal visitor.

Scimitar aerobatics over Moray were a regular occurrence throughout the summer of 1961 as Lossiemouth's 800 Squadron had been selected as the Royal Naval Aeros Team '61 with displays at "24th Salon de L'Aeronautique" (Paris Air Show), four RNAS Air Days, one Navy Day and finally the SBAC Farnborough Air Show.

On to 1962 and another Royal a visit, albeit a short one, when His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Charles arrived in a Heron of the Queen's Flight. The Prince was about to commence his first term at Gordonstoun and this visit presaged similar arrivals and departures over the next few years. Another important visitor was to follow a few months later in June when the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Caspar John opened the new 650,000 pounds accommodation block. The Admiral had commanded HMS FULMAR 14 years previously at a time when the accommodation consisted entirely of wooden huts.

Lossiemouth was now the permanent home of the Buccaneer and the Strike role. The first front line Squadron to be equipped with the new aircraft was 801 Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Commander E. R. Anson, Royal Navy.



801 Naval Air Squadron, the first Buccaneer squadron Commissions
at RNAS Lossiemouth 17 July 1962



801 Naval Air Squadron on formation.

Lieutenants Clive Pattison (Asst Engineer), Pat Cummusky (O), Nick Wilkinson (P), "Polly" Perkins (O), Brian Giffin (P), Roy Bigland (O), Peter Hoare (P), Peter Rickard (O), and Terry Willis (P). Lieutenant Commanders Duncan Ellin (O), John de Winton (SP), Mike Clapp (Sen O), Ted Anson (CO). Lieutenants Geoff Homan (O), Bill Ryce (P), Tony Walsh (O), John Cary (P), Pete Hazelton (O), Mike Hornblower (P), and "Sandy" Saunders (Asst Engineer). Lieutenant Commander John Dunphy (AEO) sits in the front cockpit and Lieutenant John Lewcock (DAEO) in the rear.

During this year the Seahawk and the Vampire were finally withdrawn from Squadron service when 738 re-equipped with Hunter T8s and GA11s.

At the same time as the Buccaneer was introduced RNAS Lossiemouth found itself elevated to the status of a Master Diversion Airfield. This brought about a dramatic increase in the number of ATCOs, Met men and fire crews to provide the required 24 hour service 365 days a

year.

It was not long before Lossiemouth began to become an aircraft spotters' dream. The variety of aircraft using the facility were numerous: Civil aircraft complete with passengers: 'V' bombers: Americans from Iceland: Canadians on Atlantic patrol: all were provided for day or night.

The popularity of the air station spread and apart from the Master Diversion Airfield facilities, NATO was anxious to make use of the excellent ranges at Tain, Rosehearty and Garvie, and also the two adjacent low flying areas.

Perhaps one of the strangest stories arising from the MDA status was that which occurred on the 30th June 1963.

At approximately 1830 Air Traffic was informed by Scottish Centre that a light aircraft was having difficulty getting into Kirkwall (Orkneys) due to low cloud and sea fog. An immediate diversion was advised. Some 50 minutes later a brand-new single engined Beechcraft Musketeer appeared over the hedge out of the murk. Nothing abnormal so far, except that the Swedish Ferry Pilot Mr. S. Englund had taken off 25 hours previously from St. Piene Island, a small French possession just south of Newfoundland, heading for Hamburg on a non-stop delivery flight. Far from being a unique experience, this was the sixth crossing of a series in a similar aircraft by this intrepid aviator whose landfalls for these flights had stretched from the Faroes to the French coast.

The Queen's Colour of the Fleet Air Arm was transferred from HMS ARIEL, RNAS Lee-on-Solent to HMS FULMAR on 9th October, 1962, and was received with full honours. The Colour had been presented to the Fleet Air Arm by Her Majesty the Queen on the 30th July 1956, at Lee-on-Solent, where it had remained until this time. It was transferred to enable the Royal Naval Guard from Lossiemouth to parade it in Edinburgh on the occasion of the State visit of His Majesty King Olaf of Norway on 16th October. The Royal Guard was not Lossiemouth's only contribution as six Scimitars of 736 Squadron provided a flypast in the King's honour over the Royal Yacht NORGE as she entered Leith Harbour.

A last nostalgic event occurred in 1962 when on the 18th December the Fulmar made its last flight. The historic aircraft staggered back after a 45 minute breathtaking flight (mainly due to the Avgas fumes)

and an extremely reluctant Merlin coughed to a protesting stop in Station Flight Dispersal. From that day the aircraft, which was built in 1939 was not to fly again and it was assigned to new owners at the Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton.

15th January 1963 saw 700Z achieve its front line status when it was commissioned as 809 Squadron by Rear Admiral P D Gick, FOFT. Still under the command of Lieutenant Commander A. J. Leahy, 809 Squadron became the Buccaneer Headquarters Squadron and began the training of No. 1 Conversion Course.

A Royal honeymooning couple Princess Alexandra and the Honourable Angus Ogilvy made a surprise visit to Lossiemouth on the 24th April when their aircraft was diverted from Dyce airport. The newlyweds enjoyed the hospitality of Captain and Mrs. DJ Kirke, while they watched the evening television presentation of their wedding before leaving by car for Birkhall. There were Royal visitors again on 30th June when Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh arrived by air on a private visit to see Prince Charles at Gordonstoun. The Royal Party returned to Edinburgh from Milltown later in the day. The following month we were to see Prince Charles again when he visited the Air Day with a party of his school friends.

An old wartime hangar on the Air Station was converted by means of a 3,500 pounds grant from the Nuffield Trust into a sports complex, which at the time was one of the largest indoor recreational centres in the country. It was opened in 1963 by Vice Admiral J G Hamilton, KBE, CB, the FOA(H) and the following year was inspected by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

Also in 1964, the Flag Officer Naval Air Command, Vice Admiral Sir Richard Smeeton, commissioned HMS EAGLE'S Buccaneer Squadron 800 when he visited the Air Station on 18th March. The Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Commander J. C. Mather.



809 Squadron about to leave Lossie for Yeovilton on 21st May 1964. (see also Bucc S1 "from the cockpit" page 87) to prepare for the FAA Jubilee Review at RNAS Yeovilton. Aircraft 220 is CO John de Winton and SenO Peter Hazelton.

The Air Day for 1964 was up to that date a record, when 17,000 people streamed through the gates; undoubtedly the now established Buccaneer was a main attraction.

By 1965 the improved Buccaneer, the Mk.2, with its Spey engines, was beginning to come on the scene. The task of assessing the capabilities of this more powerful aircraft was given to 700B Flight, which was commissioned under the command of Commander J P Mills, on 9th April 1965 by Rear Admiral A F Turner, Director General of Aircraft.

July 1965, will be remembered for the visit of Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra for the formal opening of the new Wardroom, which

soon became known as the Lossiemouth Hilton. Although it certainly was a very spacious building it was possibly the contrast with the previous wooden Wardroom that earned it this name. However, the old huts and their open fronted stoves will be remembered with affection by all who lived in them and there is undoubtedly a school of thought that the new Wardroom would never see the likes of some of the parties that were staged between its cramped walls.

Shortly after taking over the air station (see later) the RAF demolished the Wardroom and replaced it with a new Officers Mess.





In October 1965 the Public Relations Officer had a field day when a FULMAR Buccaneer Mk. 2 flew nonstop from Goose Bay, Newfoundland, to RNAS Lossiemouth.

Although originally scheduled for 30th September but delayed for operational reasons on Monday, 4th October 1965, Buccaneer Mk. 2 XN 974 (Commander G R Higgs and Lieutenant Commander J A Taylor) flew non-stop from Goose Bay to Lossiemouth in four hours - and twenty minutes.

This 2,000 mile four hour flight flight was an epic: not only was it the first Atlantic crossing in one hop by a Fleet Air Arm aircraft without flight refuelling, but it also gave a glimpse of our very considerable strike capability. No extra fuel was provided for the aircraft other than that available to regular front line squadrons, and the fact that 2,000 nautical miles were flown with ample fuel reserves, reveals an exceptionally large radius of action.

If one takes a pair of compasses to a chart of the Indian Ocean, adds a carrier's mobility of 600 miles per day AND a warning time of a day or two (plus the Buccaneer's flight refuelling capability), it can be easily seen that the Royal Navy's presence in that area, or any other

area for that matter, can be of the utmost military and political importance.



Lieutenant Commander J A Taylor RN and Commander G R Higgs RN



Later on in the month, on 14th October, 801 Squadron was recommissioned by Vice Admiral Sir Richard Smeeton, Flag Officer Naval Air Command, with Buccaneer Mk. 2s, under the command of Lieutenant Commander J. de Winton.



FONAC, Vice Admiral Smeeton, presents the Commissioning Warrant to John de Winton at the Re-Commissioning of 801 NAS on 14 October 1965.

It was during this commissioning ceremony that the first hint of impending problems was given when Vice Admiral Smeeton said that "a question mark hung over the future of the strike carrier." 801 Squadron subsequently embarked in HMS VICTORIOUS.

Three months later, 809 Squadron commanded by Lieutenant Commander L E Middleton had re-equipped and on 27th January was recommissioned by Rear Admiral D W Kirke. The timing was a happy coincidence as it was the 25th anniversary of the commissioning of the first 809 which had been equipped with Fairey Fulmars.

Publication of the Government's White Paper on Defence brought Vice Admiral D Gibson to Lossiemouth on the 23rd February 1966. The aim

of his visit was to discuss its implication to the Fleet Air Arm in general and to Lossiemouth in particular. The Air Station personnel at this time stood at a record figure in excess of 2,500 plus 500 civilians. Although 3,000,000 pounds had been spent on modernisation schemes it was recognised that a decision to scale down the role of the Fleet Air Arm by the mid-1970s would be bound to bring changes. How far reaching and vast those changes were to be was still a matter for conjecture.

Also in 1966 the Observer School moved to Lossiemouth into new purpose built accommodation from its sunny stay in Malta and later it would move, yet again, this time back to RNAS Culdrose.



The Observer School, RNAS Lossiemouth

And so 1966 continued with the "Sword of Damocles" poised above but this was of no concern to the record crowd of 23,000 who poured through the gates for the 1966 Air Day which was held on 27th August. Five days later, Franklin Engelmann came "Down Our Way" and helped still further to spread the name of FULMAR abroad.

It is so often the case that in peace time one is never able to demonstrate the full potential of one's weapons but on the 28th March

1967 the Fleet Air Arm was given the golden opportunity to show the world its low level bombing techniques. The oil tanker Torrey Canyon had broken her back on the Seven Stones Reef near Lands End, and her oil threatened widespread pollution for coastal beaches.

The following signals passed between CINC Plymouth and RNAS Lossiemouth.

280900 March. From C in C Plymouth to NAS Lossiemouth. "Let me have your suggestions on how you would rupture oil compartments and ignite contents of TORREY CANYON.

280945 March. From Lossiemouth to C in C Plymouth. "DSL bombing with 1,000 lb. medium capacity high explosive bombs attacking from side to which ship is listing to achieve penetration without ricochets ..."

281200 March. From C in C. "Come to 15 minutes notice to launch from 1300."

281412 March. From C in C. "Execute."

1550. First two Buccaneers on target. 1600. The TORREY CANYON oil on fire.

The aircraft used were Buccaneers from 800 and 736 Squadrons and after the first sorties 23 direct hits were reported from 36 bombs released.

On the 8th July 1967, the Burgh of Lossiemouth and Branderburgh conferred the Freedom of the Burgh upon the Ship's Company of HMS FULMAR "In recognition of 21 years of cordial and fruitful relationship." Captain D G Parker the Commanding Officer, replied, "We are deeply honoured. I accept on behalf of all members of the Ship's Company, past and present, endorsing as it does, the good and friendly relations which have always existed between the Station and people of Lossiemouth."

Few people in the crowd could possibly have thought that in five short years RNAS Lossiemouth would be returning the Freedom Plaque to the Burgh of Lossiemouth for safe keeping, prior to handing the Air Station over to the Royal Air Force.

The building programme continued unabated and the new accommodation block which cost 1,000,000 pounds was officially opened by Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret. The new buildings once again in complete contrast to the wooden huts included a Chief Petty Officers' Mess, Petty Officers' Mess, Wrens Quarters, and a Junior Ratings block. At last Lossiemouth was beginning to look like a modern Air Station as well as having the modern aircraft. Her Royal Highness was conducted on her tour by Vice Admiral D C E F Gibson, Flag Officer Air Command, and Captain D G Parker.

In August 1968, a significant exercise was carried out by four Buccaneers of 803 Squadron who flew from RNAS Lossiemouth to join HMS HERMES in the Indian Ocean. This was to prove the feasibility of providing fast air reinforcement to the Far East Fleet without the need for large Air Stations in the area.

The Lossiemouth Strike force staged through Nicosia, Masirah and Gan and was supported by in-flight refuelling from Victor Tankers. Their mission accomplished, the Buccaneers returned the way they had come. It was a convincing demonstration of the flexibility of these aircraft in supporting the Carriers important role as a powerful striking force in remote and distant areas.

The "Fly Navy" campaign started in 1968 at 809 Squadron's instigation. It first appeared in public at Farnborough and other aviation shows when as a finale, the Buccaneers made their last run and simultaneously revolved their bomb-bays to display "FLY NAVY" to the crowds. The slogan caught the imagination of everyone connected with naval aviation and became a morale boosting motto.

At this time the only apparent Royal Air Force presence at Lossiemouth was within 736 Squadron. This Squadron had for several years been training RAF aircrew in preparation for the RAF receiving their own Buccaneers. In January 1969 the "colour" of 736 Squadron became even paler blue with the arrival of the first batch of RAF maintainers.

By now, in the early months of 1969, it was known that RNAS Lossiemouth was to be handed over to the Royal Air Force in the middle of 1972. Originally the date was to be the 1st August but this was later amended to 28th September. The first Squadron to go was 801, which had disembarked from HMS HERMES on 17th June and was disbanded at Lossiemouth on 21st July after 38 years in commission. Ironically our numbers were swelled in November 1970 when 849

Squadron was evicted from RNAS BRAWDY prior to that air station's demise and arrived at Lossiemouth to set up home. Another disbandment came on 31st May 1971 when the Buccaneer Mk 1 Simulator was officially axed having been in operation since 20th November 1963, and having "flown" a grand total of 3,503 hours. Never have so many "flying" hours contained so many emergencies.

The last Air Day was a sad occasion and finally brought home to the public that the Navy's days at Lossiemouth were fast running out. The excellent weather and the advertised fact that this would be the last made Air Day 71 one of the most successful with over 20,000 people attending.

The following month, September, Lossiemouth played host base to 16 Federal German Navy Starfighters (F 104), who were deployed for six weeks while their own airfield at Eggebeck was being resurfaced. The Squadron, under the command of Commander R. Kiermayr, had a highly successful detachment and was able to return to their home country with many hours on the range to their credit and a thorough understanding of how Whiskey is made after a few distillery visits.

1972 dawned with the knowledge that the sands of time were well and truly running out for Lossiemouth. The first casualty of the year was 800 Squadron which, having disembarked from HMS EAGLE, disbanded on arrival on 27th January. Its final curtain call was to have been a fly past over EAGLE, but this fond farewell was denied to them due to bad weather in the Solent. One month later, 736 Squadron, under the command of Lieutenant Commander L. Wilkinson also disbanded after years of training the men for the front line squadrons.

On 1st April the Royal Naval School of Photography and Aerial Reconnaissance shut shop and moved to RAF Cosford, where it became part of the Joint Services School of Photography. The School has been at Lossiemouth since 1964 and during that time has provided the Basic and Advanced Training for Naval and Army Photographers.

The last major casualty occurred on 27th July when 764 Squadron after years of training COs, SPs and AWIs, completed the last AWI course, dispersed the aircraft, and disbanded. 809 Squadron, the only link left with 12 years of Buccaneer history, flew off for the last time on 4th September to embark in HMS ARK ROYAL, and to subsequently make a new home at RAF Honington.

750 Squadron Sea Princes were to remain at Lossiemouth almost to the very last day, when, on 25th September, they departed to RNAS Culdrose with the Observer School.

This then left 849 Squadron and 849 "B" Flight to be based at RAF Lossiemouth as the only Royal Naval contingent. In time the RAF would operate Jaguars from the airfield which has played such a great part in the last war and the development of the Fleet Air Arm in the post war years.

With the airfield it was also necessary to sadly hand over some of the finest ranges in the United Kingdom and the control of an unsurpassed low flying area.

At HMS FULMAR'S commissioning ceremony in 1946, there was a passage from the prayer read "they are embarking on a road paved with hard work and tests of endurance in the path of duty to provide the defence of this realm."

HMS FULMAR came to the end of this road, but will always be held in high esteem by the many officers and men who have had the good fortune to serve at the Royal Naval Air Station Lossiemouth.

On 29th September 1972, Lossiemouth was transferred from Royal Navy to RAF control.

The RAF station was then closed in 1972/73 for more major alterations.