

FEATURE



80 years of the Royal Air Force

Some personal recollections

The Royal Air Force came into being on April 1, 1918, as a merger between the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps.

Both the RNAS and the RFC had an element in Malta and most of the personnel then formed a nucleus of what became the Royal Air Force in Malta.

For quite some years before April 1, 1918, sea planes had been

landing and taking off in Kalafrana bay, which was designated a sea plane base. The first commanding officer of the base from July 1816 to February 1918 was Squadron Commander J.D. Maude.

In overall command at Malta we

had 33 officers, spanning a period of 61 years. It is quite likely that the first 13 had originally been either RNAS or RFC fliers.

Of particular interest is the fact that the first officer commanding RAF Malta was Wing Commander A.M. Longmore who, as AOC-in-C Middle East, then having reached the rank of Air Chief Marshal, was responsible for the defence of Malta up to November 1940.

Yesterday the Royal Air Force celebrated its 80th year. I was in continuous employment with the RAF for 42 years.

Among a few pre-WWII names I recall Group Captain R.L.G. Marix who was an RNAS Flight Lieutenant during the latter part of WW1. He was flying a single seater Sopwith Tabloid biplane when he bombed an airship shed at Dusseldorf.

When his bomb found its mark, the shed erupted in flames. Group Captain Marix was, for some time, Commander RAF Station, Kalafrana and later Hal Far.

Among other officers stationed at Kalafrana, were Squadron Leader F.M.F. West, V.C., M.C. During WWII, as Air Commodore, he was air attache in Switzerland.

Charles Rumney Samson, C.M.G., D.S.O., A.F.C., as his decorations indicate, was a daredevil during WW1. He was an RNAS commander and became a Group Captain in the RAF. Fortunately, in 1930, he published his biography 'Flights and Flights', a record of his adventures. Sadly, he died a year later at the age of 33.

Air Commodore R. Leckie, flying a D.H.4, attacked and shot down in flames in the sea a German Zeppelin L.70, on August 5, 1918.

The stories of WWII have been written at length in various articles and books but one name in particular that attracted me was that of a night fighter pilot Wing Commander G. Stainforth who commanded No. 89 (NF) Beaufighter Squadron.

Wing Commander Stainforth achieved a world speed record in 1931 of 388 mph, which enabled Great Britain to hold on to the Schneider Trophy, having won the trophy on three successive occasions. Although a Beaufighter pilot, Wing Commander Stainforth borrowed a Spitfire and, in the company of Squadron Lovell, shot down a J.U. 88 in flames.

John A. Agius

Officers commanding Royal Air Force Malta

Wing Commander A.M. Longmore	Apr 18 - Apr 19
Air Commodore O. Swann, CB, CBE	Apr 19 - Jun 20
Group Captain E.L. Gerrard CMG DSO	Jun 20 - Aug 21
Group Captain C.R. Samson CMG, DSO, AFC	Aug 21 - Mar 23
Group Captain A.W. Bigsworth CMG, DSO, AFC	Mar 23 - Nov 23
Air Commodore R.H. Clark Hall CMG, DSO	Nov 23 - Feb 29
Air Commodore J.L. Forbes OBE	Feb 29 - Jan 32
Air Commodore C.F.N. Rathbone DSO	Jan 32 - Jan 35
Air Commodore P.C. Maltby DSO, AFC	Jan 35 - Dec 38
Air Commodore R. Leckie DSO, DSC, DFC	Dec 38 - Jan 40
Air Vice Marshal F.H.M. Maynard CB, AFC	Jan 40 - May 41
Air Vice Marshal Sir H.P. Lloyd KCB, CBE, MC, DFC	May 41 - Jul 42
Air Vice Marshal K.R. Park CB, MC, DFC	Jul 42 - Jan 44
Air Commodore J.R. Scarlett Streatfield CBE	Jan 44 - Feb 44
Air Vice Marshal A.H. Wann	Feb 44 - Mar 44
Air Vice Marshal R.M. Foster DFC	Mar 44 - Oct 44
Air Vice Marshal K.B. Lloyd CBE, AFC	Oct 44 - Jan 47
Air Vice Marshal C.R. Steele CB, DFC	Jan 47 - Nov 49
Air Vice Marshal N.H. D'Aeth CB, CBE	Nov 49 - Sep 52
Air Vice Marshal B.V. Reynolds CBE	Sep 52 - Nov 53
Air Marshal B.V. Reynolds CB, CBE	Nov 53 - Jan 56
(Also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Marshal G.E. Nicholls CB, AFC	Jan 56 - Oct 57
(also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Marshal C.E. Chilton CB, CBE	Oct 57 - May 59
(also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Marshal W.G. Cheshire CB, CBE	May 59 - Dec 61
Air Vice Marshal J.G. Davis CB, OBE	Dec 61 - May 63
(Also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Vice Marshal D.C. McKinley CBE, DFC, AFC	May 63 - Oct 65
(Also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Vice Marshal Gordon Jones CB, CBE, DSO, DFC	Nov 65 - Nov 66
(Also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Vice Marshal R. Deacon Elliott CB, OBE, DFC	Nov 66 - Jun 68
(Also Deputy C-in-C (Air) Allied Forces Mediterranean)	
Air Commodore C.V. Winn CBE, DSO, DFC	Jun 68 - Mar 71
(Air Commander Malta)	
Air Commodore W.E. Colahan CBE, DFC	Mar 71 - Sep 73
(Air Commander Malta)	
Air Commodore A.N. Mawer DFC	Sep 73 - May 75
(Air Commander Malta)	
Air Commodore A.G. Steele CBE, AFC	Jun 75 - Mar 77
(Air Commander Malta)	
Air Commodore H.D. Hall CB, CBE, AFC, ADC, MBIM	Mar 77 - Mar 79

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MARCIA FUNEBRE	Alla Memoria Di Mro. A. Vessella	V. Ciappara
PRELUDIO	Parsifal	R. Wagner
OVERTURE	La Forza Del Destino	G. Verdi
MARCIA FUNEBRE	Alla Memoria Di Mons Enrico Dandria	C. Botti
INTERMEZZO	L'Amico Fritz	P. Mascagni
MARCIA FUNEBRE	Nenia Funebre	E. Mattioli
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Conductor: Joseph Sammut

Soloist: Albertina Dalla Chiara



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