



# **“IT’S A POOR SAILOR I AM !”**

Notes on Donald Sellers Naval Service  
and Aviation Interest

Nicholas Sellers



## Introduction

The idea for this volume had its genesis, whilst I was looking at a dozen or so photos of my late father, Donald Sellers, from when he was in the Fleet Air Arm.

It occurred to me that I knew very little about his service, other than one or two anecdotes.

Loosely, the idea took hold to attempt to gather more information about those dozen photos.

The first stage of which was to obtain his record of service. Having now got a list of the locations he served at, and the duration of his 'Draft's', I began to research the squadrons based at those locations during his time there.

What had started as a modest information gathering exercise? Rapidly, turned into a much more complex affair. Using, reference books and the internet, I was able to identify the specific aircraft captured in his photos, and even date the events recorded.

It was at that point I decided to gather as many photos of aircraft that were stationed, where, and when, he served.

Similarly, I decided to add some details about the use of those aircraft and the organisations he was attached to. At which point the amount of information gathered, grew, significantly.

Knowing how fond he was of his time in Malta, I wanted to try to paint a picture of his service there. I hope I have succeeded.

The format of the volume was intended to be chronological. However, there are occasions when I have been flexible with chronology, in order to illustrate points of interest. Having obtained other documents, I decided to include, some, references to his 'post service' interest in Naval Aviation, and aviation in general.

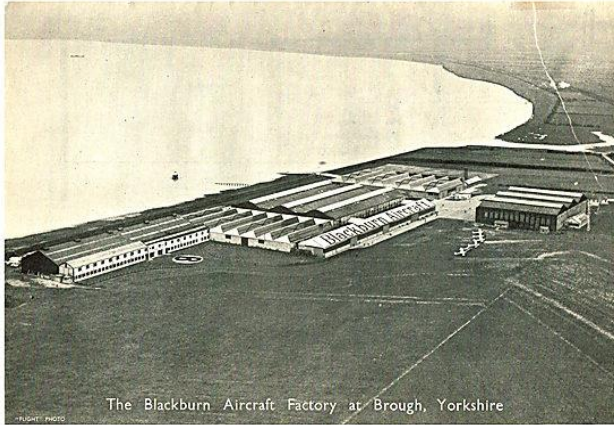
It has been an enjoyable exercise, and revealed a number of surprises. Not least, the number of interrelated, recurring experiences, which almost appear to have a cyclical nature.

I hope you enjoy the reading of this, as much as I have done the compiling of it. I certainly feel I know a bit more about his service now.....



## Brough, and the Blackburn Aircraft Company

In 1941, aged 14, Donald Sellers (Dad) began working for the Blackburn Aircraft Company, just down the road from his home in Blackburn Avenue, Brough , East Yorkshire.



**Blackburn Aircraft Company factory, Brough, East Riding 1935.**Note the Seaplane ramp connecting the factory to the Water.*Web*

The Factory, and its location by the Humber estuary, was a significant part of his childhood. The very first photo Donald took was looking over the estuary behind the Factory.



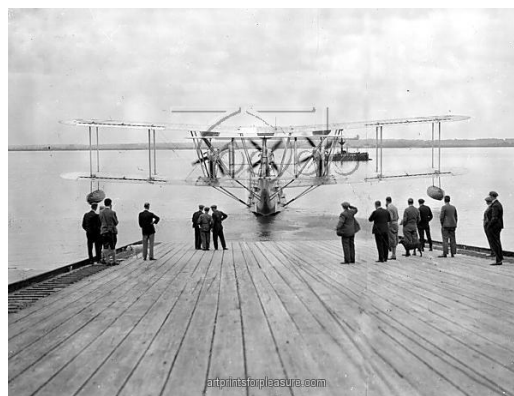
**Donald's recreation of his first photo. This time taken in the mid 1980's.**The Seaplane ramp still extant. Donald and his cousins ,on the estuary path by the Factory, circa 1930 *Donald Sellers*

The family moved from nearby Skillings Lane , following damage to their house as a result of an air raid on the Aircraft factory. Strangely, the Sellers' family owned this property, but never returned to it. Installing tenants, instead. No doubt benefitting from the additional financial income, to pay the rent, on the house in Blackburn Avenue. One of the tenants was Marjorie, whom dad got to know well, later lodging with her and her husband in Westbury on Trym. The nature of Donalds (war) work is unknown to us, sadly. By this time Donalds father, Jim, was well into his second period of Employment at the same factory.



Jim Sellers, in the back garden at Blackburn Avenue, with the family cat. The cat was famously scorched, when the shock wave from the Bomb that fell outside the house, travelled down the chimney, and blew the fire onto the rug it was sat on. Donald, apparently, slept through the whole episode !*Donald Sellers*

Jim was previously employed by Blackburn's as a skilled shipwright in the 1920's, using his woodworking skills in the, planing hull, of flying boats and seaplane floats. Technology overtook him, though. The wooden Hull of a flying boat would absorb water, if left afloat too long; sometimes adding hundreds of pounds to the weight of the aircraft. Blackburn was the first Aircraft Company to manufacture a metal hulled flying Boat, The Iris. With significant improvements in load carrying and range (over 1000 miles) the Iris was viewed as a significant step forward in technology. In 1931, Blackburn Iris N185 was returned to Brough to have its three, Rolls Royce Condor, engines replaced; with two forward facing, and a central rearward facing Rolls Royce leopard Radial engines. The purpose being to investigate the cooling effects of tractor, or pusher, radial engines. The Iris went on to set a number of records for all up weights and long distance flights.



One of Jim Sellers photos (left) of Blackburn Iris IV N185 , being worked on at Brough 1931.*Donald Sellers* Aa stock image of the same Iris on the ramp at brough. *Web*

With the change in technology, and the depression, Jim had been laid off. Only to be re-employed, making parts for numerous Aircraft, as a machine operator; when the preparations for war led to an increase in aircraft production.

Having completed his schooling, Donald left Brough in 1944, travelling to the south of England for engineering training. His destination was the huge Ford car plant at Dagenham, where he had been accepted for an apprenticeship.



Donald "Don" Sellers, aged approximately 17 yrs. *Donald Sellers*

Planning of the huge Dagenham plant began in the early 1920s, a time when Lorries were small and road networks little developed. In the UK, bulk supplies were still delivered by water transport, so the Dagenham plant needed good water access. Dagenham on the southern estuarial edge of Essex offered the prospect of a deep-water port which would allow for bulk deliveries of coal and steel. The drive for self-reliance within the Dagenham plant meant they had their own steel foundry and power station within the, mile long site.



The huge Ford plant at Dagenham. A large factory on a low lying estuary ? echoes of Brough. *Francisfrith.com*



In 1970 Ford flies its millionth Cortina over its Dagenham plant , courtesy of a Bristow Helicopters, Westland Wessex 60 . *Daily Telegraph*

Wartime production, at the plant, included large numbers of vans and trucks along with Bren gun carriers for the military. The plant produced numerous 'special purpose' engines. Agricultural vehicles were also an important element: at one point, the Fordson tractor represented 95% of UK tractor production

Donald was in 'Digs, in Leyton, East London. Whilst the Blitz of London was largely over, danger lurked; there was, still, a war on.

I recall him telling me how he used to hear the V1 "Doodlebugs" flying over the east of London, having been launched from sites in northern France and Belgium. Informing me that the danger wasn't from, hearing the pulse jet, "it was when you heard it, and then it stopped. That meant it was going to descend, and detonate !".



A V1, pilotless bomb, descending on London. *Web*

Notwithstanding the ongoing pressures, life continued for everyone. Donald was visited by his parents, no doubt eager to see how their son was progressing. Included in this was a trip down to Southend on sea. Documented, in the following photos.



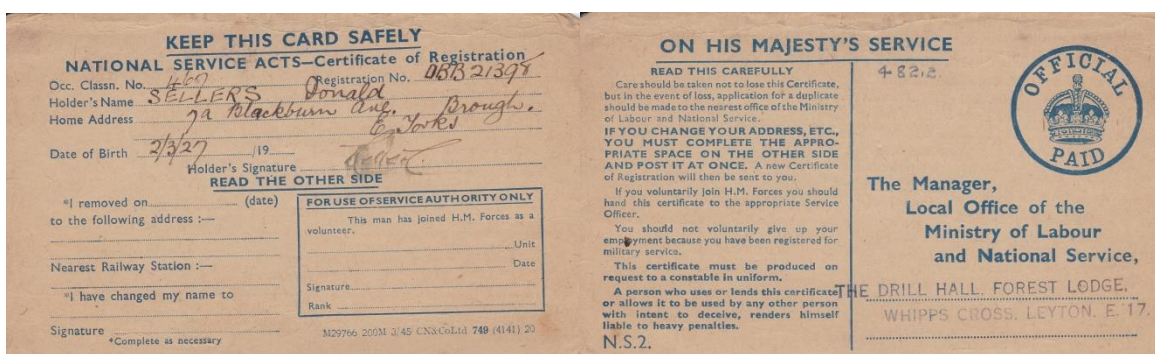


A trip to Southend on sea, during the visit of Donald’s parents (pictured above), circa 1945. Donald sellers

By the time he was eighteen, Donald was nearing the end of his Engineering Training at Fords, knowing, he would soon be eligible for National Service.

Holding to the notion that Conscripted personnel had a poor experience, and not wishing to take part in the lottery that resulted in Army, Naval, or, Royal Air Force service; Donald elected for a fixed term service. Knowing it would be longer than the 18 months of National service( extended to two years, during the Korean War ), but also benefitting from better pay and conditions, Donald decided on a seven year length of service in the Royal navy. Utilising his experience at the Blackburn Aircraft Company and Fords, whilst also accommodating his interest in Aviation, Donald expected to become an “Engine Fitter” in the Fleet Air Arm

Whilst still resident in East London, Donald Registered for his Military service at the Drill Hall , Whipps Cross in Leyton , East London.

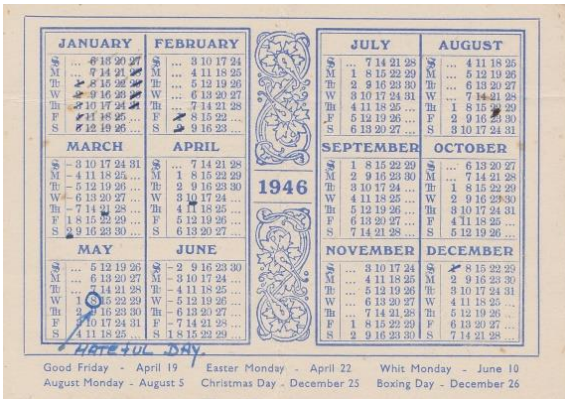


The rear, and front, view of Donalds Certificate of registration for National Service. Donald Sellers

The process of selection for naval service was not easy. Pre entrance tests, and medical examination, ruled out many potential recruits. It’s likely that Donald’s completion of the Engineering Apprenticeship at Fords ( Dagenham), and his desire to pursue the “trade” of Engines (E) in the role of Air Mechanic, aided in his selection.

When asked why he joined the Navy, Donald, alluding to his tense relationship with Jim, replied “If I didn’t move out, my father, would’ve been dead!”.

Despite signing on for 7 years, there were clearly mixed feelings for Donald. As evidenced by this entry in his pocket calendar for 1946.



"HATEFUL DAY" reads the note for the day of Donalds starting his Naval Service. *Donald Sellers*

### HMS Glendower 8/5/46 – 18/7/46

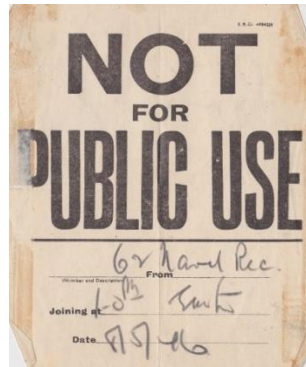


HMS Glendower ,Recruitment Assessment Camp, Pwllheli.web

HMS Glendower was a Recruitment Assessment Camp, (a shore based, training establishment) based in Butlins, Pwllheli, holiday camp.

During WWII, the Admiralty, which had already taken over Billy Butlin’s camp at Filey, asked Butlin to construct two new camps; one in North Wales and the other in Scotland. Butlin bought 150 acres of farm land on the Lleyn Peninsula in North Wales, and the camp was constructed. Using, partially, the initial naval recruits as labour.

In late 1946, after the war, Butlin took back ownership of the camp from the Admiralty, and Butlins Pwllheli was opened to the public after some reconstruction work. Doreen Sellers would also have reason to spend time in one of Billy Butlins camps !



Donalds Travel certificate for getting to Penychain Railway station, the closest to HMS Glendower. Donald sellers

On the 8<sup>th</sup> May 1946, after arrival at the nearby railway station, Donald was amongst many new recruits herded through the Iron gates of HMS Glendower. One of the last intake of recruits, before HMS Glendower decommissioned.

Commencing basic seamanship training, recruits were from different backgrounds, with very few having, “been to sea”. Accommodation was in chalets, each holding eight ratings. It was not uncommon to find fellow ratings that had been in trouble with the authorities, and many found the introduction to coarse language a shock.

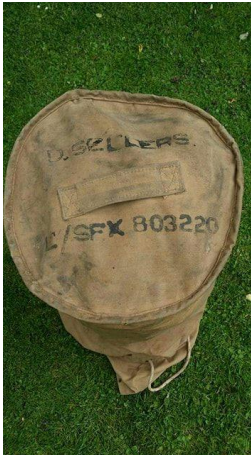
Shortly after arrival, ratings were given their service number, in Donald’s case **SFX/803220** and kitted. Here are some of the things in their kit:

|  |
|--|
| 1 large khaki kit bag - (thought to have been made by prisoners!) 1 sewing kit (containing darning wool, cotton, needles etc), Clasp Knife, 1 Dog tag, and a Military gas mask       |
| 2 Navy blue single breasted jimets with black buttons  |
| 2 pairs of navy bellbottom trousers  |
| 2 sets of underwear  |
| 3 white shirts with separate collars and studs   |
| 3 pairs of thick black woollen socks   |
| 3 handkerchiefs  |
| 2 black ties   |
| 1 navy blue peaked cap   |
| 2 white cotton cap covers  |
| 2 navy collars   |
| 1 pair of big black boots and black shoe polish and brushes  |
| They were also handed a giant piece of canvas with large brass eyelets spaced evenly at each end, a mass of rope – which was the hammock – together with two rough woollen blankets. |

They were given a large wooden rubber stamp with letters about 1” high with their name on, complete with a large ink pad.

There then followed a “make and mend day” .The recruits ( sprogs) were told to get their kit sorted out and, stamp your names on your kit bag, hammock, blankets, shirts and underwear etc . Then, when that is done - get into uniform. You are now, in the Navy. “so lets see you all looking like it!”

They went back to their chalet to carry out instructions and stamp their names on their kit etc. It was hard work, and some fared better than others, as it was hard to get a good result - especially on the kit bag! They were to retain their kitbag for the length of their service, or until it wore out.



Bruce Sellers still has Donald's Kitbag

with his name and number on. Donald Sellers

People tried to work out what to do with the pieces of canvas and ropes they had been given, but got into a hopeless mess. Obviously, it was part of a hammock, but what did they need a hammock for when they had bunk beds to sleep in! Once changed into Naval uniform, all the recruits clothing/possessions they arrived in, were handed over. To be posted back to their home address. This would account for Donald finding all those documents etc when he and Doreen (his wife) emptied the family home in 1982, after Jim's Death.

Mess Training to become an Air Mechanic, 2nd class, involved the usual drilling. With discipline, in all things. Gunnery Officers, scaring the living daylights out of them, were teaching them to use the 303 Rifle, along with the Bren gun. Many mundane tasks such as painting rocks white, cleaning out the Heads (Toilets) and the mess, when on duty rounds. Recruits would do their own Dhobying (Washing Clothes) with pussers hard (a large lump of soap that could well have lasted as long as the kitbag) and ironing. And if you did not conform in being personally clean; that's body and underwear, said rating would be placed in a bath and scrubbed raw with pussers hard, using a stiff bristle broom, a lesson learned. There would be no more smellies in the mess. Hygiene was always the order of the day.

Recruits were taught how to use the various items in their sewing roll, clothing and kit was to be well maintained and they were expected to be self-sufficient.



Donalds Sellers Sewing Roll, containing assorted needles, patches, threads and buttons to maintain kit. Bruce Sellers



Donalds Sellers Sewing Roll, unrolled to reveal contents. Mystery surrounds the woolen doll..... Bruce Sellers

Exercises were tasked, to repair materials and learn to use the darning materials. Donald Still had a mysterious, red woollen doll worn as a badge. Doubtless this was handmade by him, although the story behind it is long since lost.

The Recruits were taught the regulation knots (some with hands behind your back, to ensure they could be done in the dark) and how to use the clasp knife referred to as a "Pussers Dirk". "Pusser" is Royal Navy slang for a purser, a ship's supply officer, now called a Logistics Officer. Thus the word came to connote "one hundred per cent Service," as in "pusser's issue." "Pusser's issue" applies to anything supplied by the Royal Navy, such as a "pusser's grip", a canvas bag that sailors may use instead of a suitcase (it folds flat and is thus easy to stow on board ship).



A Pussers Dirk, like Donald still had at Martins Grove. As a child, the author often pondered on this strange tool, and in particular what that spike was for? Web

The Marline spike, on the "Dirk" was invaluable for splicing ropes. Something Donald could still do, with skill, many years later.

Recruits were issued with many manuals and books about the navy, and naval discipline. First sea experience was pulling an oar in a clumsy old cutter, in the camp swimming pool ! Only going to sea, when the instructors deemed it safe.

Ratings could earn an extra thruppence per day by forgoing the daily “grog” (rum ration).



The Daily tot of Rum (Grog) was dispensed from a large Barrel, ranks lower than Petty Officers had theirs diluted , two parts water to one part Rum. *Donald Sellers*

When deemed fit, the recruits passed out and were sent to other establishments for further “Trade” training, or allocated a draft. Some going straight to sea.



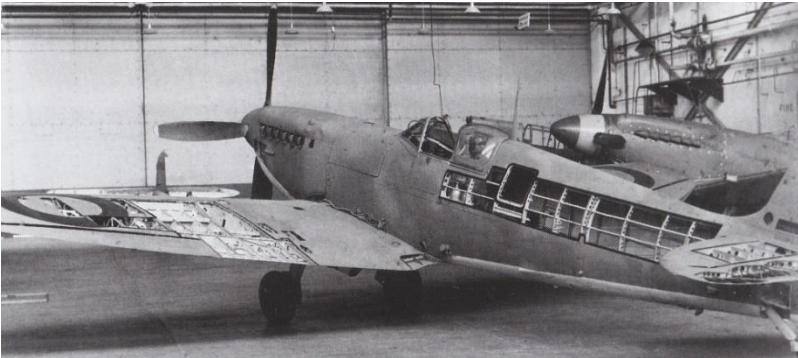
Donald, back row 2<sup>nd</sup> right, and his fellow recruits upon completion of the Basic Seamanship Training. HMS Glendower July 1947. *Donald Sellers*

Donald completed his training on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1946 and was transported to HMS Heron, Somerset, to complete the signing of his Certificate of Service for 7 years continuous service, and to Swear allegiance to the King and Country.

After that “formality”, he commenced the six months training to become an Air mechanic (Engines) at HMS Heron (Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton).

## HMS Heron 19/7/46 – 4/2/47

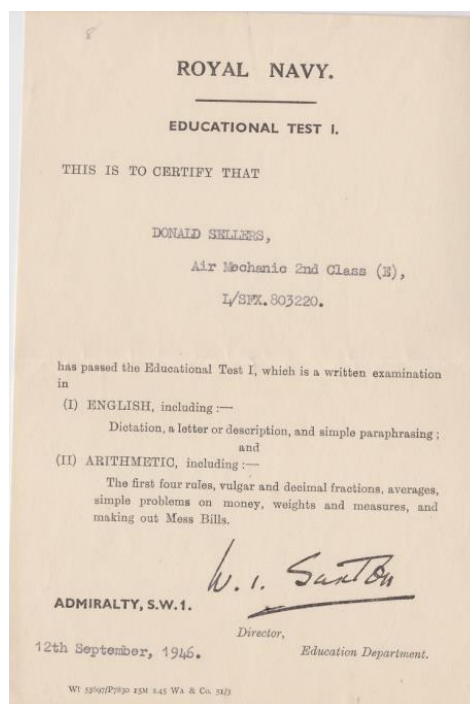
As well as being an active Fleet Air Arm Base, HMS Heron (Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton) accommodated the School of Aircraft Maintenance, where Naval Airman Mechanic (six months) training took place. The Airman Mechanic "trade" (A=Airframes, E=Engines) training prepared new recruits for their given trade. The School of Aircraft Maintenance also offered short-course training in individual types of aircraft, engines, electrics, and was given to ratings of any grade as well as to officers. Which Donald would benefit from, later, in his service.



Seafire III , Seafire F.XV and Firefly at the School of Aircraft Maintenance HMS Heron. The airframes are partially stripped, for educational purposes. FAAM

HMS Heron was also home to the Air Ordnance School, whose primary function was providing specialist training for Naval Airman Mechanics (O) (Ordnance, guns, missiles, bombs etc). Guns, and ceremonial, have always gone together in the Royal Navy. As such, the Air Ordnance School was also responsible for the morale, ceremonial and disciplinary, training of all ratings drafted to HMS Heron.

September 1946 saw Donald qualify as an Air Mechanic (E) 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. Working on various worn out aircraft types, such as early Seafires and fireflies, as well as obsolete types such as the Fairey Fulmar.



The first stage completed, Donald becomes an Air Mechanic (E) 2<sup>nd</sup> Class. Donald Sellers



Passing out at the successful conclusion of trade training, HMS Heron 1948. Donald Sellers, seated 2<sup>nd</sup> from right. *Donald Sellers*

Newly qualified Airman Mechanics were issued with their own personal toolkit. Containing a collection of tools relevant, to their trade. As with all personal kit, it had to be marked with the personnel's details and service number.



Donald Sellers Airman Mechanic Toolkit. Containing his original tools, and some later additions ( including a 1970's pipe tobacco tin for odds and ends, and , his fathers try square from The Blackburn Aircraft Company ! ) *Bruce Sellers*

Many years after leaving the service, Donald still used his Toolkit. Kept in the garden shed at Martins Grove.



Undoubtedly, Donald's previous engineering experience, assisted considerably in his completion of, Trade, training. Qualifying as an Air Mechanic (E), on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1947.

Donald left HMS Heron on the 4<sup>th</sup> February. His destination, HMS Daedalus ( RNAS Lee on Solent).

### **HMS Daedalus ( RNAS Lee on Solent ) 5/2/47 – 16/2/47**

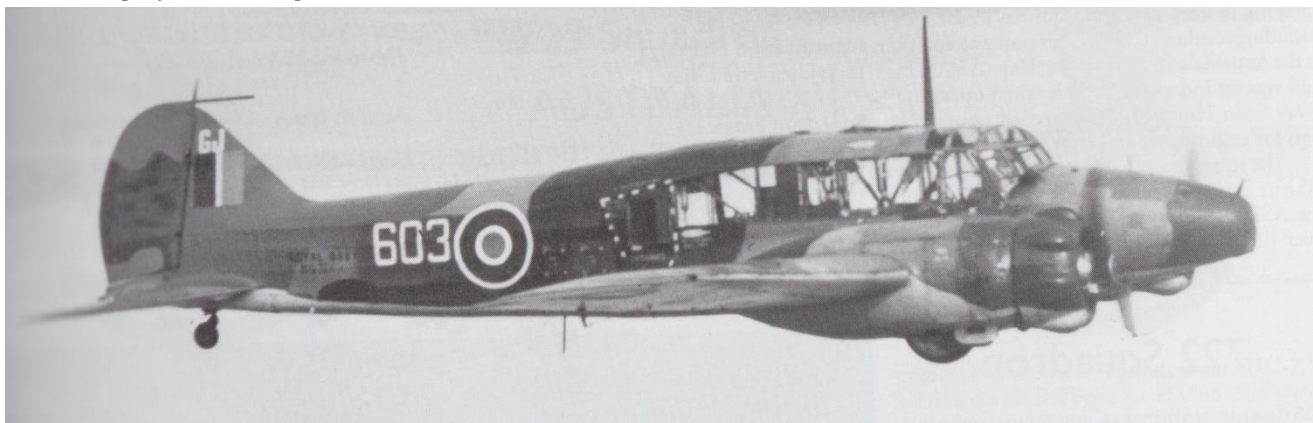
HMS Daedalus was the Air station for a communication squadron, supporting the nearby naval base HMS Nelson, Portsmouth.

Alongside the units concerned with the communication squadron, HMS Daedalus was the main depot for Naval Air Ratings. The FAA drafting Authority was responsible for drafting of all FAA ratings. Hence, Donald's short stay, likely pending commencement of further training or next draft. Donald departed HMS Daedalus on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1947 heading for HMS Peregrine ( RNAS Ford ).

### **HMS Peregrine ( RNAS Ford ) 17/2/47 – 03/10/47**

HMS Peregrine had a capacity of fifty aircraft, and was used mainly for second line squadrons (700 series) engaged in service trials for new aircraft/operating procedures, and fleet support. The second line squadrons, using a variety of aircraft types, were as follows.

Photographic duties (720 sqn) using Avro Anson I's (2 x Armstrong Siddeley Cheetah IX 350hp) as flying classrooms for Photographic training.



Avro Anson I MG721 603/GJ 720 Sqn.FAAM

The Heavy twin conversion unit (762 Sqn ) was, as the name suggests, for converting pilots from single engine types to larger/twin engine types. During Donald's time at HMS Peregrine 762 operated De Havilland Mosquito T.IIIs, FB.VIs and B.25s. The Mosquito T Mk III was a two-seat trainer. This version, powered by two Rolls-Royce Merlin 21s, 1280 hp, was unarmed and had a modified cockpit fitted with dual control arrangements. The FB Mk VI, was a fully fledged fighter bomber, although not used in that capacity by 762 Sqn. Powered by two, 1,460 hp (1,090 kW) Merlin 21s, or 1,635 hp (1,219 kW) Merlin 25s. The Mosquito B Mk 25 was a, Canadian built, improved version of the Mosquito B Mk XX Bomber aircraft, itself based on the successful MK VI Fighter Bomber. The B Mk 25 was powered by two 1,620 hp (1,210 kW) Packard Merlin 225 piston engines (225 being the Packard designation that equates to the Rolls' produced Merlin 25).

During the war, Packard took Rolls Royce design for a hand built engine, which was difficult to service in the field, because most close tolerance parts had to be hand adjusted/fitted; Re-blue printed it for mass production, and

quickly stole the field with a greatly improved and much more field serviceable engine, that found its way into many aircraft. The Packard Merlin's were sought after by Airman Mechanics, on account of each replacement engine came with a very high quality tool roll. These became an essential part of many Airman Mechanic (E) s personal toolkits.



Tool Roll for Packard built Merlin Engines.web

Fighter Direction Duties, for the Fighter Direction School at HMS Heron, were undertaken from RNAS Ford by 771 Sqn . Whilst 771 Sqn and its single engine types were actually based at Gosport, its Grass runway was unsuitable for the Larger Mosquito. Hence, their De Havilland Sea Mosquito TR.33s were based at HMS Peregrine. Fighter Direction was a crucial task in the FAA. Personnel needed to be trained in how to separate the Main Air Display Plot, or how the air picture was built up, from the Intercept Plot(s), from which the fighters were controlled. Hence, the need for credible aircraft that could perform this function, to mimic, frontline aircraft.

The Sea Mosquito TR Mk 33, with folding wings, arrestor hook, thimble nose radome and a new oleo-pneumatic landing gear rather than the standard rubber-in-compression gear; was fully navalised , However, it never went to sea .It was powered by two Merlin 25 engines, 1620 hp, with four-bladed propellers . Out of front line service by 1947, this formidable fighter bomber was reduced to fighter direction duties

We have the Legendary Charles E Brown to thank for this rare colour slide of one.



De Havilland Mosquito TR.33 TW256 593/LP 771 flying out of Lee on Solent Sqn 27<sup>th</sup> October 1947. RAF Museum/Charles E Brown

778 Sqn , as the Service Trials Unit was a very busy Squadron. Engaged in a wide variety of trials, and evaluation, of new service aircraft. Operating a large mixture of aircraft (See Index at rear) during Donald's brief service At RNAS

Ford. A welcome addition were The Blackburn Firebrand TF.5s (Bristol Centaurus IX), built at the Brough factory where Donald had worked between 1941 and 1944.



Blackburn Firebrand TF.5 EK780 121/FD 827 Sqn Ford. *uncredited*

Doubtless Donald was aware of the progress of Blackburn types in naval service, as the Brough employees took a keen interest in “their” aircraft. Evidenced, years later, by Jim’s interest in a Short Sunderland, Flying Boat model, I was building as a teenager. I recall Jim, proudly informing me, that, he used to make parts for them at, “The Factory”. The markedly approachable, older, Jim, was in stark contrast to his previous taciturn self. Seeing his grandchildren’s interest in aircraft, he had helped construct, pleased Jim.



RAF Museum 1979. Short Sunderland Flying Boat. *Donald Sellers*

Buccaneer production at Brough. *Bae Systems*

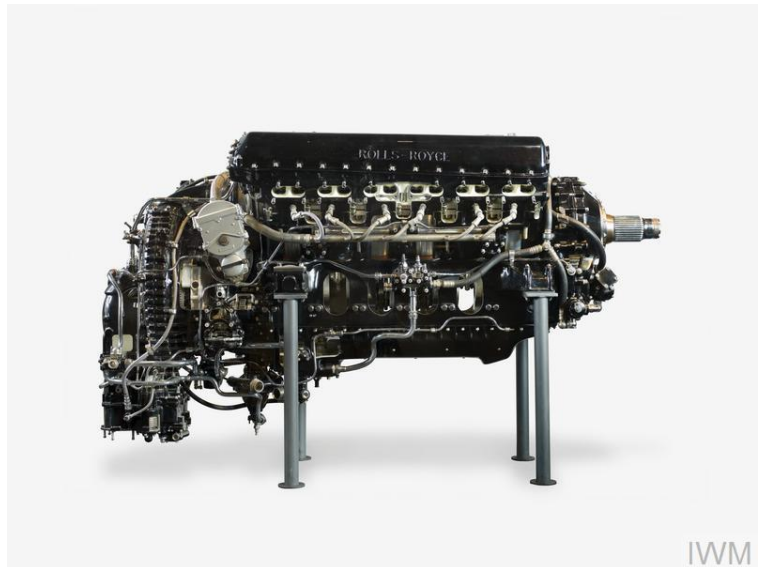
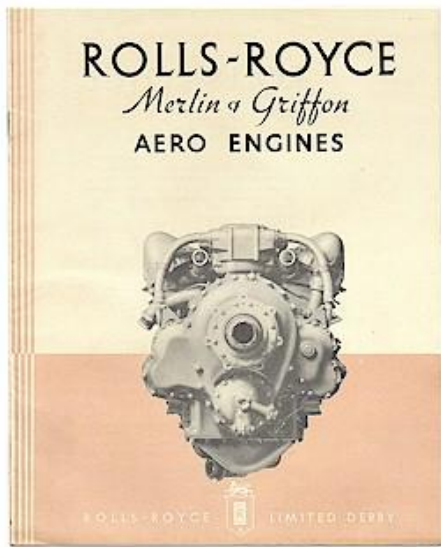
to her Barnes address so that all I know I trust  
 the Twins enjoyed their birthday, and would like to  
 thank them for their letters thanking me for their  
 Birthday gift. it is rather difficult to know what to  
 send any way I am thinking of getting them a Model  
 of the 'Buccaneer' to make up. I don't think they  
 have one? I saw them in the shops here in Hull.



*web*

Jim’s letter to Donald, Doreen and family July 1978, Making reference to the Buccaneer kit, he bought the Twins. Jim and Donald were both very proud of the Blackburn Buccaneer. Designed and built in the factory, it was, Brough’s own Bomber!  
*Donald Sellers*

Amongst the varied aircraft operated by 778 Sqn were many Rolls Royce Merlin, and Griffon engined types. These engines were a prominent part of Donald's training and it's clear he worked on multiple aircraft types, powered by various Mk's of these engines.



A contemporary manual for the Merlin and Griffon Engines, published by Rolls Royce. Web Alongside a Rolls Royce Merlin 25. Imperial War Museum

Below we have a photo of two of his Mates whilst working on the Merlin 25 Engine of a 778 Sqn Mosquito TR.33, at RNAS Ford .



Two of Donald's mates pose next to a Merlin 25 fitted to a Mosquito TR.33, inside a hangar, a necessity, with the English Weather. Donald Sellers

Notably, the small number of Supermarine Seafire F.46s procured, were tested by 778 Sqn at HMS Peregrine, During Donald's service there. Marking a step change in the design and reliability of the Seafire, The F.46 would lead to the

final, and most capable variant, The Seafire FR.47. But not before more trials and development had been undertaken.



Supermarine Seafire F.46 LA550 015/FD 778 Sqn 47 RNAS Ford 1947. Peter R Arnold

The F.46, as the first, Contra rotating, propeller driven Seafire would later lead to the fully navalised FR.47, which Donald spent a lot of time working on. The F.46 was an interim design, only partially “navalised” it never went to sea, but was noteworthy for the Introduction of the 2375hhp Rolls Royce Griffon 85, offering another 300hp.

HMS Peregrine had a role in the formation of first line squadrons (800 series). July 1947 saw 801 sqn stand up, with the new De Havilland Sea Hornet F.20. The Sea Hornet was powered by two , 2030hp Rolls Royce Merlin 134/135s . Each engine rotating in different directions, to counteract the others torque. This would have been Donald’s first sight, of an aircraft he would later work on. An aircraft he maintained a great fondness for.

He was not alone in this assessment. The Legendary test Pilot, Captain Eric ‘Winkle’ Brown described the Sea Hornet as follows *“in my book the Sea Hornet ranks second to none for harmony of control, performance characteristics and, perhaps most important, in inspiring confidence in its pilot. For sheer exhilarating flying enjoyment, no aircraft has ever made a deeper impression on me than did this outstanding filly from the de Havilland stable.”*



De Havilland Sea Hornet F.20. TT200 151/FD 801 Sqn webCharles E brown



801 Sqn was the only frontline squadron to operate the De Havilland Sea Hornet F.20. TT200 151/FD 801 Sqn forming with two others over the south coast of England. *webCharles E brown*

The other first line squadron at Ford was 813 Sqn, also equipped with the Blackburn Firebrand TF.5. Although considerably more capable than early marks, the Firebrand TF.5 continued to be troublesome.



Illustrative picture of Blackburn Firebrand TF.IVs, 813 Sqn, RNAS Ford 1946. Before re-equipping with the TF.V (5) in 1947. *FAAM*

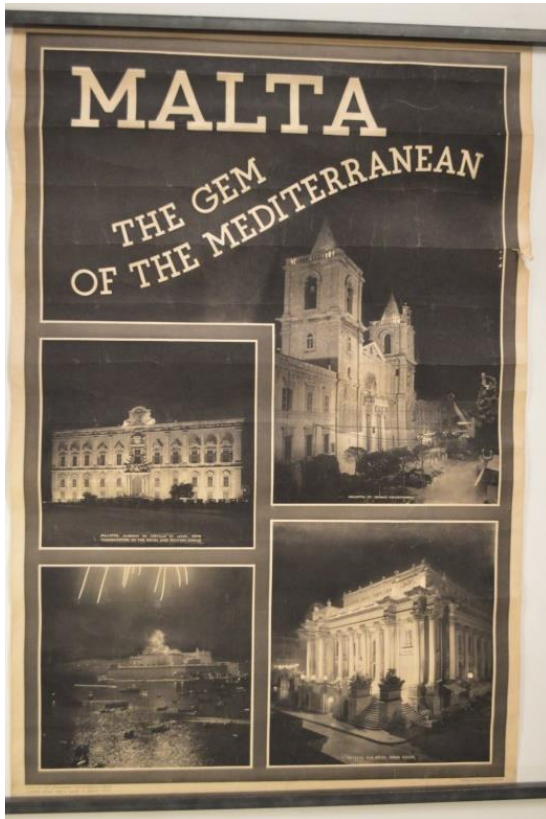
Doubtless, 813 Sqn personnel benefitted from the close proximity to 778 Sqn who continued to evaluate the flawed aircraft. Very fast, and powerful looking, the Firebrand never met its expectations and had a short service life.

Donald spent seven months at RNAS Ford. During which he was rated Air Mechanic (E) First Class on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1947.

For the first few months, there is no record of attachment to a specific squadron or unit, likely he was seconded to units/aircraft as needed. However by 28<sup>th</sup> August he was recorded as attached to 762 squadron. Years later, I recall his description of working on Mosquito's, at RNAS Ford.

As Donald's posting to HMS peregrine concluded, good fortune was to intervene next. He returned to HMS Daedalus on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1947, to await his next draft. And, what a posting!

After a short period of leave, on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1947, he departed the UK. Bound for, HMS Falcon, (RNAS Hal Far) Malta !



A tourist information poster and coloured postcard from Malta in the late 1940's. *Web*

During 1947-49 RNAS Hal Far (HMS Falcon) was a busy FAA airfield reverting to its old role of, shore base, for carrier-borne aircraft. Doubtless, Donald benefitted from this. Leaving the autumn of England, to head for sunnier climes.

Donald sailed on the merchant vessel "Tsarevich", likely from Portsmouth.

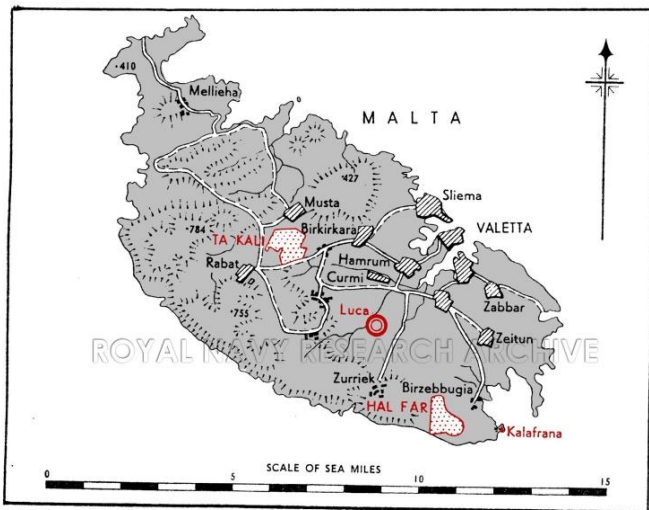
In 1982, whilst we watched a horse of the same name in the Grand National. Donald informed me that, Tsarevich, was the term for the Tsar in waiting. Donald then went on to tell me that this was the name of the ship that took him to Malta.



Tsarevich, in the 1982 Grand national at Aintree racecourse. *Web*

With Malta being one of the most popular drafts in the Navy. Donald must have been excited about what the future would hold.

**Hal far HMS Falcon 11/10/47- 15/3/50**



Map of Malta showing the location of Air Stations, in Red .*Royal Naval Research*

*Archive*

All of the military, and much of the civil, installations on Malta had received considerable damage during the war. There was still a palpable sense of gratitude, toward the British military personnel, from the Maltese population; who were, rightly, proud of the unique bestowing of a George Cross on them, for valour, during the wartime siege of Malta.

Grand Harbour, Valetta, Malta, was the largest Royal Naval base in the Mediterranean. Accommodating numerous anchorages and dockyard facilities, it provided a significant resource for the Royal navy Mediterranean fleet.



Beautiful Aerial photograph of Donald's, showing HMS Ocean , HMS Triumph and numerous cruisers/smaller vessels, in Grand Harbour. The absence of airframe/glazing in the picture, suggests it was taken from either the Station Flight Tiger moth, Harvard or Sea Otter.*Donald Sellers*

N.b it was around this time, that the Fleet Air Arm went from using Roman Numerals, to Arabic numbers, to denote aircraft MK's. Hence the Seafire F.XVII coming into service would become known as the Seafire FR.17. Although, confusion with nomenclature, would persist for some time.



aircraft Mk's. Hence the Seafire F.XVII coming into service would become known as the Seafire FR.17. Although, confusion with nomenclature, would persist for some time.

As well as HMS Falcon, the FAA had two, satellite, air installations on Malta. HMS Goldfinch (RNAS Ta Kali) air station was in "care and maintenance" for the duration of Donald's service. Whilst the FAA had a presence at RAF Kalafrana , using it as an Aircraft Holding Unit.

Nearby RAF Luqa was a large RAF base, accommodating various Fighter, Bomber and Maritime Reconnaissance Squadrons. Some of which can be seen in one of Donald's photo's below.

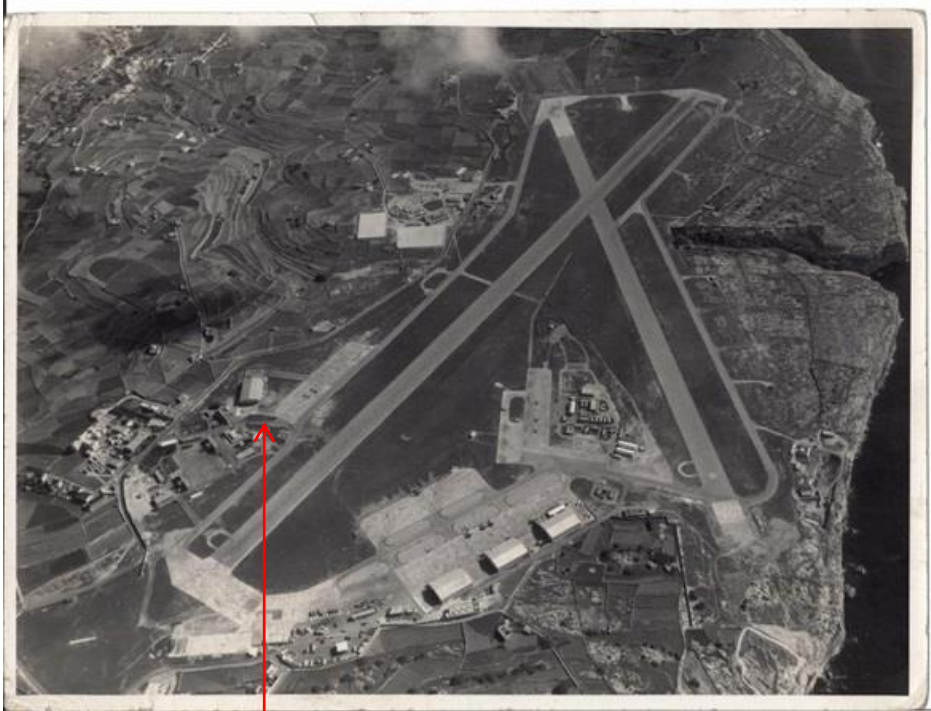


An RAF Vampire of 73 Sqn, at RAF Ta Kali. We'll hear more of the vampire later. Note the Lancasters in the rear of the photo. *Donald Sellers*



HMS Falcon Control tower. *web*

HMS FALCON was, the Mediterranean fleets, main Air Station. Providing facilities to maintain disembarked squadrons from the (usually two) Carrier Air Groups, on station in, or transiting the Mediterranean. As well as disembarked squadrons, RNAS Hal Far housed a Fleet Requirements Unit, 728 Sqn.



Aerial view of Hal Far . 728 FRU hangar/apron arrowed. *Web*



728 Squadron

The crest for 728 squadron, incorporating the cross of St George, and an arrowed target. Indicating its location on Malta, and its role as a Fleet Requirements Unit.

No 728 FRU, Hal Far, was a busy Fleet requirements Unit. Providing Aerial target towing duties, Fighter direction and exercises, radar calibration and verification runs, amongst other duties, to ships, and aircraft, of the Mediterranean fleet.

In order to achieve this, 728 squadron operated a variety of aircraft during Donald's time at Hal Far.



Illustrative photo of Miles Martinet TT.I EM658 M85 728 sqn RNAS Ta Kali prior to Donald's arrival at Hal far. *Phil Butler*

Numerous, Miles Martinet TT.1s were transferred to the FAA from the RAF during the war. Many of them remained in service as Target Tugs. Powered by an 870hp Bristol Mercury 20 or 30, they were showing their age by the time Donald arrived at Malta.

There were two different types of mosquito used by 728 Sqn at this time. The Mosquito B Mk 25 fighter bomber, and the dual seat trainer Mosquito T.III. Although both were used for FRU work, the T.III was also useful for pilot training within 728 Sqn.



Well- worn De Havilland Mosquito B.25 KA959 521/HF of 728 Sqn Hal far. Note the red/white spinners *FAAM*

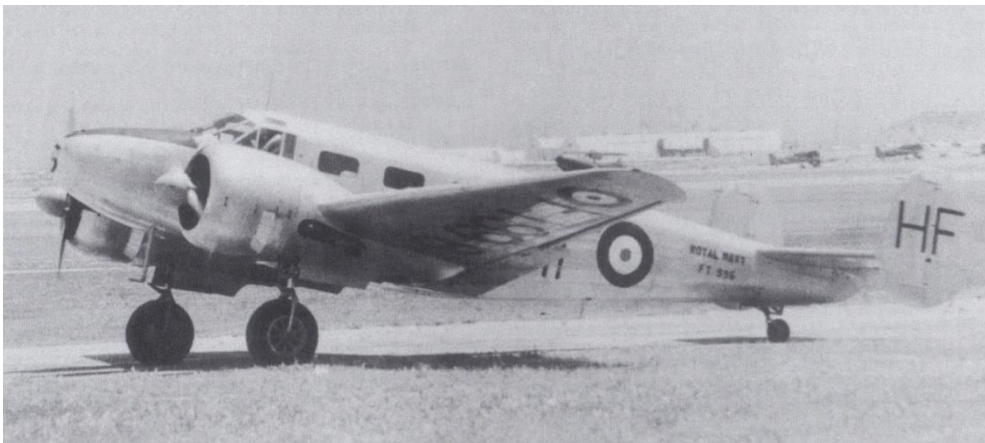


De Havilland Mosquito B.25 KA974 524/HF of 728 sqn ,Hal Far. With different spinners again. FAAM

The tired Mosquito B.25s were soon supplemented by PR 16s (XVI) equipped with two, 1680 hp Rolls Royce Merlin 72 or 73s. Transferred from the RAF, these were Photo reconnaissance aircraft, but used primarily for FRU duties.



Illustrative picture of, Far East, RAF ground crew , preparing for the physically demanding job of installing a new Rolls Royce Merlin in a Mosquito PR.XVI. Removing one of these was no easy task, weighing ¾ of a ton, and requiring a crane .At least this was possible, outside a hangar, at Hal Far IWM



Beech Expediter C.II FT996, 811/HF, 728 sqn, Hal Far in 1948. FAAM

For passenger, and freight duties around the Mediterranean, 728 Sqn operated two Beech Expediter C.IIs. A stylish looking aeroplane, with twin tail fins and 2 × Pratt & Whitney R-985-AN-1 "Wasp Junior" radial engines, 450 hp; they were supplied from the United States under a Lend Lease arrangement. Certainly a more comfortable ride than the old Anson's .

For fighter direction duties 728 squadron were equipped with Supermarine Seafire F.XV (15)s.

The F.XV was the first Seafire powered by a Rolls Royce Griffon Engine, in this instance the 1850 hp Griffon VI (6). A marked improvement on the previous Seafires, The F.XV still suffered from issues with the undercarriage, supercharger boost and a lower line of thrust. The latter rendering them prone to tip up on the nose when starting up. Hence Airman Mechanic (A)'s were required to sit on the tail, while the Airman Mechanic (E) started up the Engine.

All of the above rendering the Seafire F.XV unreliable for deck operations, at that time, pending resolution of multiple issues.

728 Sqn's Seafire F.XVs were surplus aircraft from 805 Sqn, having disembarked HMS Ocean to Hal Far on arrival at Malta in 1946.



Still wearing 805 Sqn markings, Seafire F.XV SR602 being worked on at Ta Kali 1947. Prior to commencing service with 728 FRU. note the Air Mechanic (E) working on the RR Griffon, this would have been Donald in a few months time.*web*

805 Sqn had rejoined Ocean on 18 September 1946, but left their Seafires at Hal Far. With the supercharger clutch slipping and effecting Boost, The Admiralty had placed a ban on Seafire XV deck operations in July. 805 Sqn were, temporarily equipped with Firefly FR 1s, which they had to use as single-seat fighters until they re-equipped with Seafire F.17s in April 47.



Typical scene at Hal Far, on the 728 Sqn apron. Martinet, Harvard's and a Mosquito. *Donald Sellers*

An integral part of 728 Sqn was the Hal Far Station flight. Providing aircraft for communications, between Shore establishments and ships, as well as continuation flights.

The smallest aircraft on charge with the Station Flight was De Havilland D.H.82A Tiger Moth, P4709. This aircraft had an unusual history, prior to arrival at Hal far. Starting off life, as a D.H 82B Queen Bee.



The service history of De Havilland D.H.82A Tiger Moth, P4709 dates this photo ( with Donald by the propeller) between October 1947 and August 1948. *Donald Sellers*

The Queen Bee was devised as a low-cost radio-controlled target aircraft, for realistic anti-aircraft (AA) gunnery training. If it survived the shooting (as intended, by offset aiming), its controller would attempt to recover it for re-use. The Queen Bee used the engine, unslatted wings, under-carriage and tailplane of a Tiger Moth. But instead of a

Tiger Moth fabric-covered metal frame fuselage, it used a wooden (spruce and plywood) Moth Major fuselage since this was cheaper and offered buoyancy in the event of a ditching.

Having survived life as a target aircraft, (and, the second world war!) by October 1947 the Aircraft was in use as a communications "Hack" with Hal far Station Flight. Only serving till august the following year, when it was struck off charge.



Donald's photo of the Station Flight Tiger Moth, Over Hal Far. *Donald Sellers*

A more robust airframe operated by the Station Flight was the North American Harvard III. Powered by the 550 hp Pratt & Whitney R-1340-ANI radial engine. The Harvard's engine was famously reliable. Being in production from 1925 until 1960.



The Harvard was popular with pilots, numerous different airframes were used by 728 Sqn during Donald's time on station.



North American Harvard III EZ348 911/HF, Station Flight, Hal Far 1947. The aircraft is natural metal all over, with fabric covered flying control surfaces still in wartime camouflage. *mick Burrow*



North American Harvard III E2348 911/HF, Station Flight, Airborne at Hal Far 1947. Note the placement of the station code, within the fin marking, unique to the Harvards in use. *FAAM*

The remaining aircraft in use by the Hal Far station flight, was the Supermarine Sea Otter ASR II. Powered by a 850 hp Bristol Mercury 30, unlike its predecessor, the Supermarine Walrus, this engine was mounted forward of the wing, as a tractor. This flying boat (amphibian) was used for search and rescue and communications duties with the fleet at sea. Unlike other Sea Otters, this version carried no Air to Surface Radar, as it was not expected to be used for anti submarine use. The extra weight saved, enabled further personnel/stores to be carried. Numerous examples were lost/damaged when trying to rescue downed pilots, around Malta. It was Supermarine's last, in a long line of, Biplane flying boats.



An Unidentified Supermarine Sea Otter ASR II overflying Malta Harbour. *JWM*





**Two of Donald's colleagues, names unknown sadly, on the station flight's Sea Otter .Donald Sellers**

As well as the routine work of 728 FRU at Hal Far, visiting Aircraft provided much variety for the personnel stationed.

Among the early visitors to Hal far, after Donald arrived, were 802 Naval Air Squadron, normally based at RNAS Abbotsinch (HMS Sanderling). 802 sqn arrived with Seafire MK XV's (15), in November 1947. Having resolved the previous problem, with supercharger Boost, they arrived in the Mediterranean embarked aboard HMS Vengeance. Donald would later have further contact with HMS Vengeance when stationed at HMS Sanderling.



**Supermarine Seafire F.XV SW916 100/Q 802 Sqn HMS Vengeance flying over Malta November 1947.note the earlier style canopy.Eddie Fereday**

The Air Group of both HMS Triumph and HMS Ocean spent varying Periods at Hal Far throughout 1947-50. It's clear from Donald's photos, that he also worked on such, disembarked visiting aircraft at Hal far. As we shall see, not only was Donald able to work on the Carrier Air Group aircraft, when disembarked at Hal Far, he would go on to spend time at sea as well, working in the very different confines of the ships aircraft hangar.



Supermarine Seafire f.XVII SX271 105/O and SX185 107/O, embarked in HMS Ocean over Malta 1947. *peter Cook*

Life on Malta wasn't all work though. Inter service cricket matches, and football tournaments, took place regularly. Some of which Donald took part in. Mum has the clipping from the Maltese paper, which Donald posted home, recording his cricketing prowess.



Playtime. Some of Donald's shipmates, on the football pitch at Hal far. In the top left photograph, George Williams on the right, back row. Bottom right, it's the 'Mess 30' Model Gliding Club. *Donald Sellers*

Donald kept in touch with events back home in Brough. His parents writing and posting him newspapers, plus copies of the In-house magazine, for the Blackburn Aircraft company. Clearly, Donald was impressed with the production. Making his feelings known, in a letter of congratulations. It must have been a surprise to see his letter, published in the following edition!

REPORTAGE

CHORAL SOCIETY

As reported previously the Choir had an enjoyable outing to Blackpool Music Festival on Saturday, November 8th. Although the highest marks were not attained, valuable experience was gained, and we wish our singers better luck next time.

A résumé of the day's happenings has been outlined by our "Poet Laureate" as follows :

RHYMES OF THE TIMES

We rubbed our eyes, then with a yawn,  
Off to the bus we crept.  
We counted up the motley crew,  
But one had overslept.

Poor Noel left us in the cart,  
We can't think why he did.  
But somehow with a bit of luck,  
We roped in Old Ralph Widd.

And Ralph sat quiet as a mouse,  
The whole way in the bus,  
He learnt his lines all by himself,  
And did it all for us.

Old "Tip"  
He looked  
He'd lost his  
So he dra

I wonder, to  
Without a  
Hot water bo  
Besides an

The judge's  
We though  
We'd scored  
As "City"

And when the  
We all felt  
We wandered  
To find som

TENNIS DANC  
On Friday,  
season Dance  
laid the founda  
or so precedin  
than 200 dance

Speculation  
Nobody, if see  
However, the unknown combination proved themselves to be a very good Band and they also contributed largely to the evening's success.

A most amusing feature of the evening's entertainment was the topical Tennis Ball Dance, during which the "customers" were asked to dance a medley carrying a tennis ball between their knees! The contortions of the dancers, to say nothing of their faces, had to be seen to be believed.

We take this opportunity of thanking Mrs. A. F. Jopling who, during the interval, presented prizes to the following Tennis winners:

Ladies' Singles Handicap—  
Winner: Miss "Femmy" Nutt. Runner-up: Miss Joan Douglas.

Gents' Singles Handicap—  
Winner: Mr. Johnny Richards. Runner-up: Mr. David Bainbridge. J.B.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

L/SFX 803220 D. SELLERS, A.M.E.,  
Mess 30,  
H.M.S. Falcon,  
Hal-Far,  
Malta G.C.  
Thursday, November 20th, 1947.

TO THE EDITOR, *Blackburn Aircraft Courier*,

From the George Cross Island may I, as an ex-employee (1941-1944) offer congratulations on a very well-turned-out first edition. It only remains for you to keep up the high standard you have already set up and the success of the journal is assured. The next issue should prove interesting if some of the scandal fiends can overcome their false modesty and put the more harmless news in black and white. Would it be possible in future editions to print photographs of Blackburn aircraft of years gone by as per "Flashback"? In any case here's wishing the *Courier* a long and popular run.

Sincerely yours,  
D. SELLERS (ex Op. 212).

Thank you D. Sellers for your interest. We are glad to see that the *Courier* is reaching the outposts of the Empire. Yes, we intend to publish "Flashbacks," but prefer to do so as and when topical events lead our thoughts back to our earlier aeroplanes. Our best wishes and hope that you will be back among us soon.

November 10th, 1947.

TO THE EDITOR, *Blackburn Aircraft Courier*.

I would like to congratulate you on the production of your edition of the *Blackburn Aircraft Courier*. This is truly a very democratic journal and I hope that it will continue to progress. It fills a very great need and will enable all sides of the organisation to keep in touch with one another far better than has been the case in the past.

I do however think the article which you print on page 6 is a little unfortunate, as I went along in the bus with a very happy and very sociable party—never during the whole day did I see anyone who was other than happy, and on the return journey again this spirit was uppermost, and I can assure you that it was not "Dutch courage," as you would suggest, that brought this spirit to the top, but the fact that the day had been really enjoyable and that all were very satisfied with the outing.

(Signed) L. JOHNSON  
(Chief Cost Accountant).

We apologise, Mr. Johnson, if our remarks gave the wrong impression and we are glad to know that we were misinformed. We consider that such outings are a very good thing and do a great deal to bring all employees together more. We are sure that the effort which you put into making it a successful day for all was greatly appreciated, and so we confronted our correspondent with your remarks and received the reply, "Well, he wasn't on our bus, and our party didn't see him all day." So as this person seems content just to have a grumble we will leave the matter with the major portion of the party who certainly *did* have an enjoyable time and round off these remarks by hoping there will be many more of them.



"We don't want your Christmas Pudd!"

THEY SAY THAT . . . . .

A bachelor is a man who's not fit to be tied.  
Happiness is what you have when trouble lets up.  
Not all women are interested in pleasing a man. Some are married.  
Most people would like to tell the truth, but they would rather be courteous.  
Speech is free in this country—most of it isn't worth any more.  
Marriage is like poker. You start with a pair and may finish with a full house.

Donald's letter, published in "The Courier". The In-house magazine of The Blackburn Aircraft Company. Donald Sellers

With the coming summer, Donald and his mates descended on one of Malta's most famous beauty spots, Ghain Tuffieha Beach. Not far from the attached live gunnery ranges.



7. Malta - Ghain Tuffieha

Ghain Tuffieha beach. Web

A “Banyan” party was a welcome break, where the Matelots would bury their soft drinks where the water came in, when there was no tide, to keep them cool. Just a shame Donald never learnt to swim, so he could enjoy the clear waters and colourful fishes. Certainly better than looking out over the Humber estuary at Brough !



In the preceding photo's, at Ghain Tuffieha Beach. Donald is on the left in the Dark trunks, George Williams in the white, and an unknown colleague in the light trunks. *Donald sellers*

For those willing to visit, at night, less innocent pleasures were available back in Valetta.

Nicknamed “the Gut” by English sailors and “la Sada” by Italians, Strait Street was Malta’s first experience of a contemporary melting-pot between social classes, nationalities and radically divergent walks of life. A long, narrow street, that ran from one end of Valetta to the other.



A long way from home, "The Gut" offered, all manner of things, to young sailors out for a good time. *web*

One can only imagine the reaction of young sailors when the street came alive each night with music and chatter. The mixture of Italian and English, the coining of new words and the slow transformation of dialect to a unique patois, combined with the drinking culture that sustained Strait Street's reputation. Accounts of women, who teased sailors from England and America, are legendary, holding out for long enough to get themselves a new dress and then vanishing down a darkened alley. Not to mention the lodging houses and prostitution.

The musicians, local men of talent, filled the halls with jazz melodies they had only ever heard on records brought over from the US. Then there's the bar owners, men and women who kept the street going with a characteristic mixture of haughtiness and open-hearted hospitality. It's not difficult to see why Donald held a fondness for Malta.

Summers in Malta were hot. Naturally, there was no air conditioning in the mess decks/huts.

If you worked a night shift and tried to sleep during the day, you could watch the Gekko's crawling across the ceiling and walls. Flies were active, too.



Donald asleep in mess deck 30, Hal Far. *Donald Sellers*

At certain times of the year you had the Xirok (scirocco), the hot dusty wind up from Africa. Grit covered everything. While it never froze nor snowed, it got REALLY cold and wet in the winter.



*Inside a typical mess deck. Brian Sherman*  
the photo Donald has written , "Couldn't care less old man !" Donald Sellers



**Not Quite a regulation Salute. Maybe, one for Mountbatten? On the back of**

The huts were heated with simple kerosene stoves, but fuel was limited. In summer, no heating was required...



**Sadly, blurred, photo of Donald enjoying a pipe in the hot Mess. Donald Sellers**

The Navy ran a church bus down the hill to Kalafrana every Sunday morning. The bus was a beautiful thing, all polished and dark blue. But it always smelled like smoked kippers and tobacco. You could catch a Maltese bus right outside the gate. Busses were colour coded, according to the town from which they originated, and all the runs converged on the capital city, Valletta. Buses were gaudily decorated with chrome horns and bumpers, colourful icons and saint's pictures, hand striping, and suchlike. The rigidly sprung bus would rattle off over the rough road, passengers sitting on a hard unpadded wooden seat. A conductor would collect something like sixpence for the trip.



**"Hotel Phoenicia in the background and the natives idea of a Bus Station", reads the back of the photo. The opening of the Hotel in 1948 was big news on the island. Donald Sellers**

The Spring Festival in March 1948, was a triumph of colour and extravagance. With the locals parading numerous carnival floats with effigies and dancers on. Judging by the number of photos Donald took, he clearly enjoyed this display of celebratory extravagance.



**Three of Donald's, many, photos of the spring festival in Valetta. Donald Sellers**

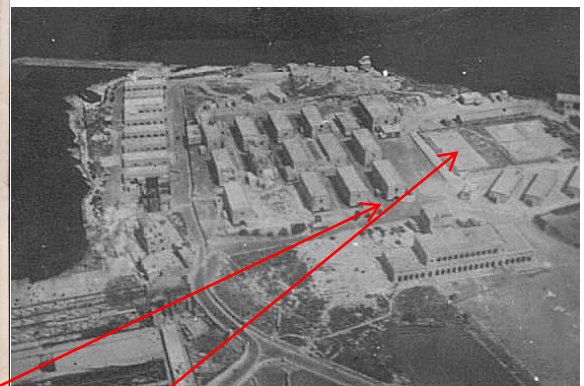
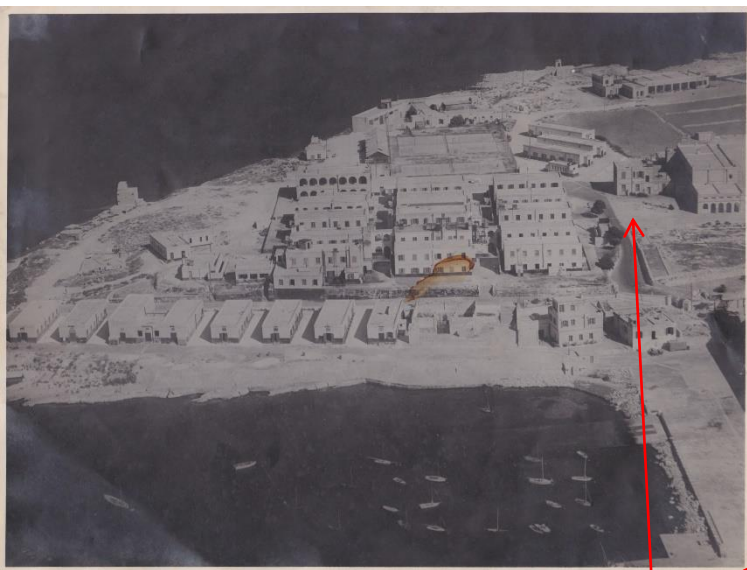
Back on duty at Hal Far, Donald would have been engaged in routine servicing of aircraft, ad hoc repairs and other, more mundane Naval Duties.



Dhoby Day at Mess 30. *Donald Sellers*



Donald on parade in Kalafrana, Hal Far. front row, second from right. Class II uniform. Sailors, with guns.....? He doesn't look like he's enjoying it ....*Donald Sellers*



Two views of Kalafrana (headquarters of Hal Far) showing the location of Dad's guard duty, and the Football Pitches. *Donald Sellers and Web L to R*





No tropical uniform, this time. The reverse of the photo states "One of the MANY guard duties done, this time for Mountbatten". Mountbatten was the First Sea Lord, and Uncle of Prince Phillip, Donald disliked him for both reasons! I recall Donald railing against Mountbatten, on TV, attempting to take the credit for the introduction of Helicopters into the Royal Navy. Fortunately, we had no swear box at the time... *Donald Sellers*

### HMS Triumph and Ocean

Through 1947 till 1950, both Aircraft Carriers were based in the Mediterranean .



HMS Triumph in Valetta harbour Malta 1948. note the awnings on deck, to provide shade and cool for the crew. With no air conditioning, likely that, below decks were far from comfortable in the Mediterranean summer. Deck lifts lowered, to facilitate airflow. The damaged Admiralty Floating Dock is visible in the background. *web*



HMS Ocean at Gibraltar. Seafires, Fireflies and the Sea Otter on deck. *Web*

Both ships were Colossus class aircraft carriers. A light aircraft carrier, designed by the Royal Navy during the Second World War. They were constructed by civilian shipyards to serve as an intermediate step between the expensive, full-size fleet aircraft carriers and the less expensive but limited-capability escort carriers. Capable of operating up to 30+ aircraft at a time, they usually carried just under 30.

HMS Triumph was the lead ship of the 13<sup>th</sup> Carrier Air group and HMS Ocean the 20<sup>th</sup> CAG respectively. Operating separately, and joining on several occasions for combined exercises. The air groups spent numerous periods ashore at Hal far. Not only for rest, but also to use the shore installations and ranges for live weapons practice.

The Air Groups changed over time, with different squadrons arriving/departing. While the aircraft Marks changed, the Aircraft types participating remained largely the same. Each ship had two squadrons embarked. One squadron, of Supermarine Seafires, for fighter duties. The other, Fairey Fireflys for Fighter Bomber/Anti Submarine/Night fighter duty. The Ship also carried a Supermarine Sea Otter seaplane, attached to the ships flight for Carrier on Board delivery, and Search and Rescue. Donald reported having worked on all three of the types embarked.



Supermarine Sea Otter ASR.II ships flight HMS Triumph 1948. *Lee Howard*

Donald's place of work on board ship, would have been below decks in the aircraft Hangar.

The accompanying photo depicts a scene from the hangar of HMS Implacable. Its worth noting, that the hangars on HMS Ocean and HMS Triumph were smaller, resulting in more cramped conditions. Working in the confines of the hangar was required, in order to free up the flight deck for air operations. A hot aircraft hangar in the med' was not the most comfortable place to work.



Seafire XVII's and Firefly FR.I's below decks in HMS Implacable. *FAA Museum*

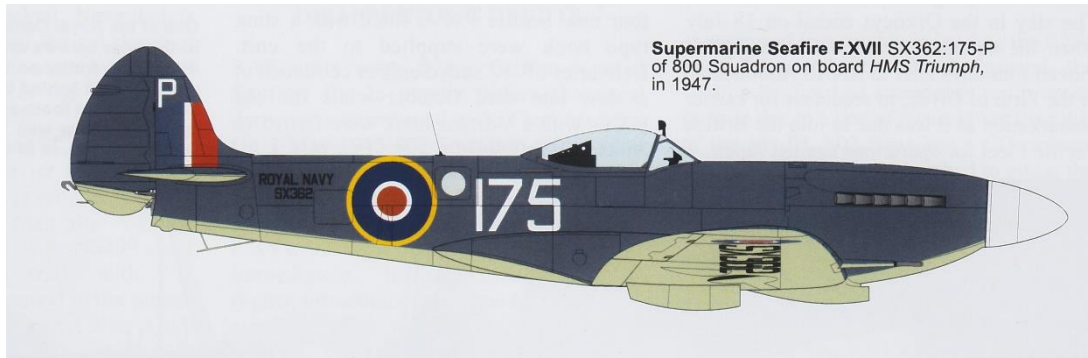
The Lucky Air Mechanic, below, managed to secure a much more comfortable place to work.



Firefly FR.I being repaired on the deck of HMS Ocean. *J J Agnew*

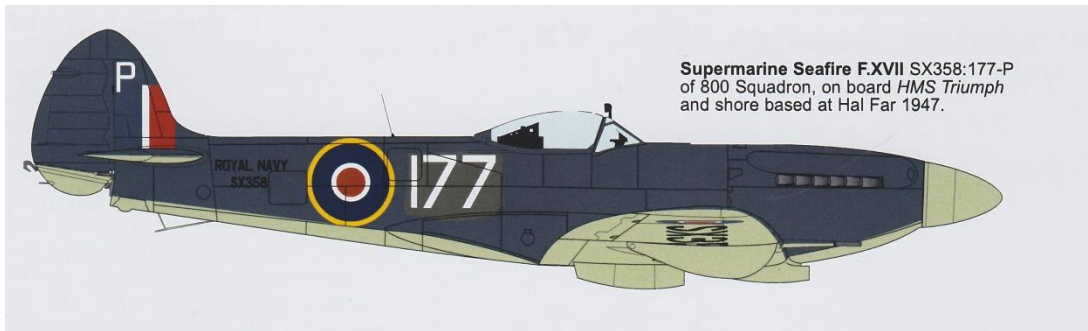
The Supermarine Seafire F.XXVII, whilst keeping with the same 1850 hp Griffon VI (6), was a significant development of the earlier Seafire F.XV, outwardly differing by the adoption of the teardrop canopy. However the Seafire F.XVII (17) incorporated numerous other improvements. Stronger undercarriage with a longer stroke, created greater ground clearance for the propeller and reduced the previous tendency for "rebounding", as well as permitting greater loads to be carried. The wings were strengthened to allow for additional ordnance, as was the fuselage to allow for Rocket Assisted Take Off Gear. The capacity for a pair of permanently mounted cameras in the, cut down, rear fuselage provided a valuable Photo Reconnaissance ability. Hence the later adoption of FR.17 (Fighter Reconnaissance) designation.

By this time, the Seafire was not only a capable fighter aircraft, tasked with the protection of the fleet, but also boasted a significant capability against ship and ground targets.



Supermarine Seafire F.XVII SX362:175-P of 800 Squadron on board *HMS Triumph*, in 1947.

Seafire XVII SX362 "175/P" HMS Triumph 1947. Note the white Spinner. It was very common for FAA a/c to have red,white or yellow coloured spinners. *D Howley*



Supermarine Seafire F.XVII SX358:177-P of 800 Squadron, on board *HMS Triumph* and shore based at Hal Far 1947.

Seafire XVII SX358 "177/P" HMS Triumph and shore based at Hal Far 1947.still showing some earlier Disruptive Camouflage pattern. *D Howley*



Seafire XVII's of 800 sqdn and 827 Firefly FR.I's on *HMS Triumph*.*Lee Howard*

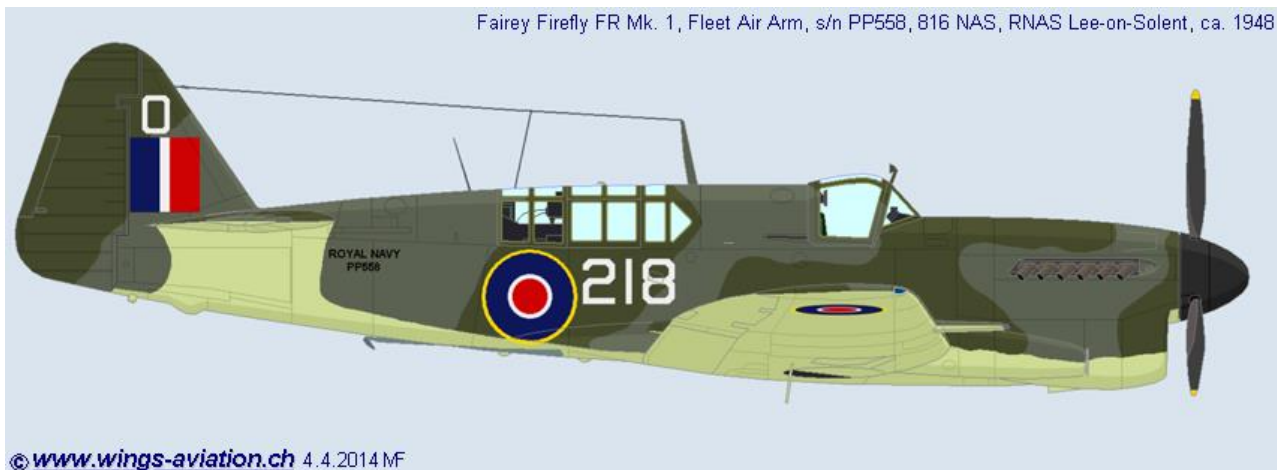
Alongside the new marks of Seafire , both *HMS Triumph* and *HMS Ocean* operated a variety of Mk's of Fairey Fireflies. Designed to the wartime FAA concept of a two-seat fleet reconnaissance/fighter, the pilot and navigator/weapons

officer were housed in separate stations. It was superior in performance and firepower to its predecessor, the Fulmar, but entered operational service only towards the end of the war when it was no longer competitive as a fighter. The limitations of a single engine in a heavy airframe reduced its performance, but it proved to be sturdy, long-ranged, and docile in carrier operations for the air to surface role. Long serving, in a variety of Mk's and roles, the Firefly was a popular aircraft with its crew.

The Firefly FR.I (fighter/reconnaissance) were fitted with the ASH detection radar (in an underslung pod) and was powered by the 1,765 hp (1,316 kW) Griffon XII (12) engine, a reliable engine that was also used in the NF.I variant. The NF.I variant had a slightly longer fuselage to accommodate the Airborne Interception Radar. Each of the Firefly Squadrons embarked had a smaller, sub wing, of NF.Is to fulfil the role of night fighter.



Unidentified Firefly FR.I landing on HMS Ocean 1947. *Keith Brooker*



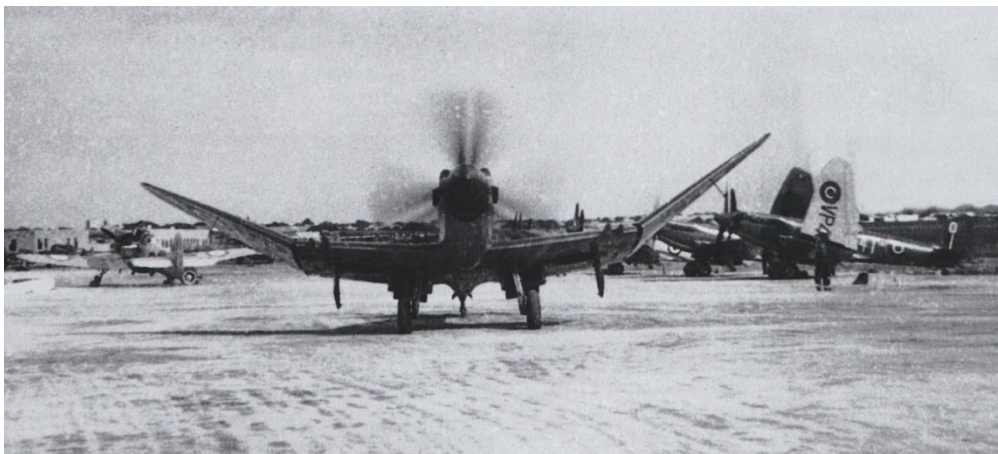
Depiction of the early, disruptive Camouflage scheme for the various Fireflies. This one being Fairey Firefly FR.I PP558, 816 Sqn when operating on HMS Ocean, late 1948. *wings.aviation.ch*



Fairey Firefly FR.I of 816 Sqn . Overflying Malta. The under fuselage Radar, for use in the anti submarine role, identify it as a FR.I. J I Agnew

Both Carriers deployed to support the withdrawal from Palestine in 1948. Leaving Hal Far, briefly, somewhat quieter.

Shortly after this, the Seafire F.XVII began to be replaced by the more capable, and safer to operate at sea, FR.47. Although it was some months before 800 Sqn could replace its Seafire F.XVII's.



The FR.47 was the first of the Griffon engine Seafires to have power-operated folding wings. This one belonging to 804 Sqn HMS Ocean, and shore based at Hal Far, 1948, taxiing out for take off, unfolding the wings in the process. As well as other 804 Sqn Seafires, including one repainted in the new colour scheme, Royal Navy Martinet target tug from 728 Sqn can be seen in the left back ground. Peter Cook

At this point all FAA Aircraft were transitioning from either Extra dark sea Grey and dark Slate Grey disruptive Camouflage, or Extra dark Sea Grey all over, to the sky undersides and Extra dark Sea grey.



Supermarine Seafire FR.47 VP475 140 O HMS Ocean 1948 .R J Caruna

The FR.47 was seen as the "definitive" carrier based Seafire, the FR.47 incorporated several refinements over earlier variants. The FR.47 incorporated hydraulically powered wing folding, the outer wings folding upwards in one piece, without the folding wingtips of earlier marks. All FR.47s adopted the Rotol contra-rotating propellers, driven by the Rolls Royce, 2375 hp, Griffon 88. The FR.47 also featured a long supercharger air-duct, the intake of which started just behind the spinner and a modified curved windscreen, similar to that used on the Mk XVII. Features unique to the FR.47s were spring-loaded elevator tabs, a large inertia weight in the elevator control system and beading on the trailing edges of the elevators. These changes improved longitudinal stability, especially when the aircraft was fully loaded. This, last, Mk of Seafire was well liked by pilots, excelling in climbing and with great control harmony, it was an outstanding combat fighter. Finally, the designers had rendered the Seafire relatively easy to land on deck, although, strangely, it was probably the most difficult to land ashore. Donald openly stated his admiration for this aircraft; I think it was one of the last model plastic aircraft kits he attempted.

Although we have no specific dates for Donald's service at sea. His photographs, on board HMS Ocean and HMS Triumph, document various aircraft in operation on board, and enable some dates to be confirmed.

Squadron service records indicate that 804 Sqn was embarked In HMS Ocean on two occasions in August and September 1948. Narrowing the dates for his time, on board, to either or both, of these periods.



**HMS Ocean again, Seafire FR.47 '138' 804 squadron collides with the Landing Signals Officers Screen. Donald Sellers**

During time 'off watch' , crew members may be fortunate enough to get some time above decks, watching the flying stations on deck. The 'Goofers Deck', on the Island, gave a good view of the activity on deck.



Taken from the "Goofers Deck" of an unknown 804 Sqn Seafire FR.47 landing on HMS Ocean. Note, the LSO screen still not replaced. *Donald Sellers*

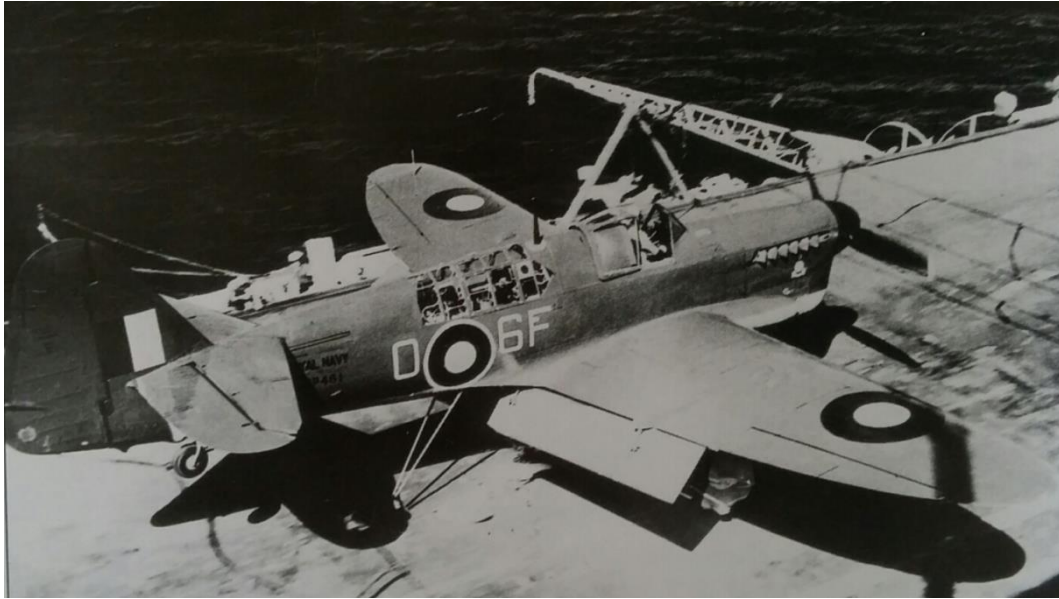
From a distance, the ships looked large, however, the relatively small size, called for exceptional skills from all involved .



A seafire FR.47 landing on HMS Triumph. Taken from the LSO station, illustrates the "island" and "goofers deck" from where Donald's pictures were taken. *FAA Museum*



Naval aviation was a risky business and there were many aircraft and crew losses. Sometimes as a consequence of equipment failure, lack of flying practice or (according to Cdr Geoffrey Higgs) too much hospitality or late nights !



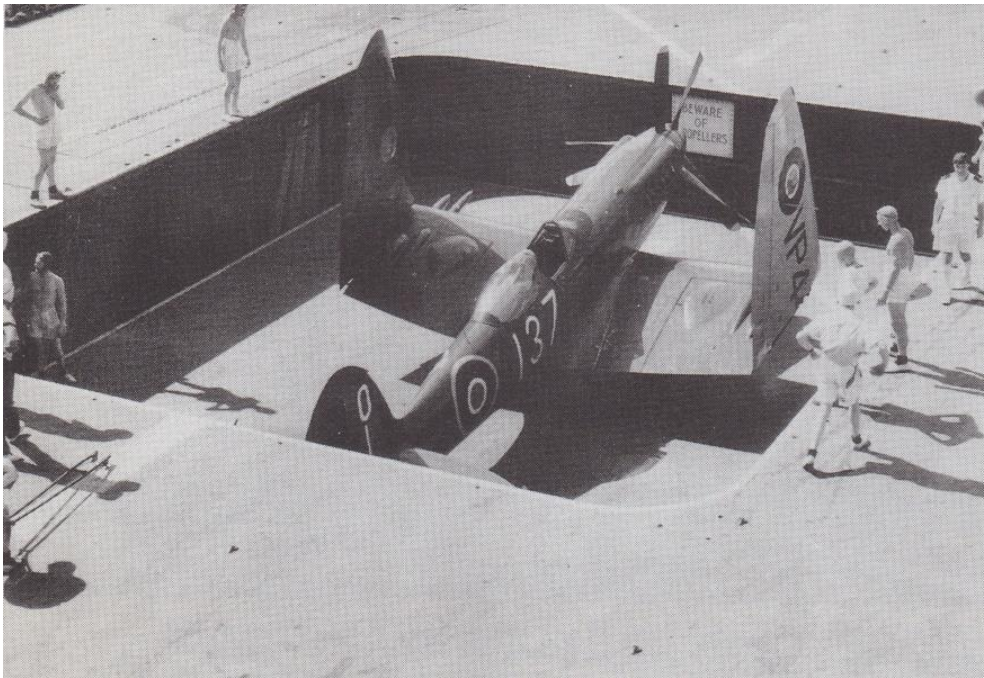
816 Sqn Firefly NF.I about to engage the barrier on HMS Ocean. J I Agnew



Fairey Firefly FR.5 VT438 812 Sqn HMS Ocean during Deck landing training, Caught an arrestor wire. Port u/c collapsed after hard landing. 13/10/48. Donald sellers

The above photo shows one of 812 Sqn's new FR.5 Fireflies after a heavy landing. The Firefly FR.5 was a multi-purpose version of the Firefly that could easily be modified between its three roles. Distinguishable from the FR.I and NF.I by the absence of the chin radiator (instead the radiators were mounted in the wing roots) and the clipped wings. Powered by a 2300 hp Rolls Royce Griffon 72 engine, they looked much more elegant than the earlier Mk's. The back of the photo simply reads " A Firefly Prang ", clearly there was a degree of acceptance to such events.

Research confirming the date of the incident with VT438, suggests Donald's time at sea may have extended over a three month period. Whether this was, a single embarkation or, multiple brief periods, is not clear.



**Seafire FR47 VP431 "137" 804 sqn aboard HMS Ocean 1948. FAA Museum**



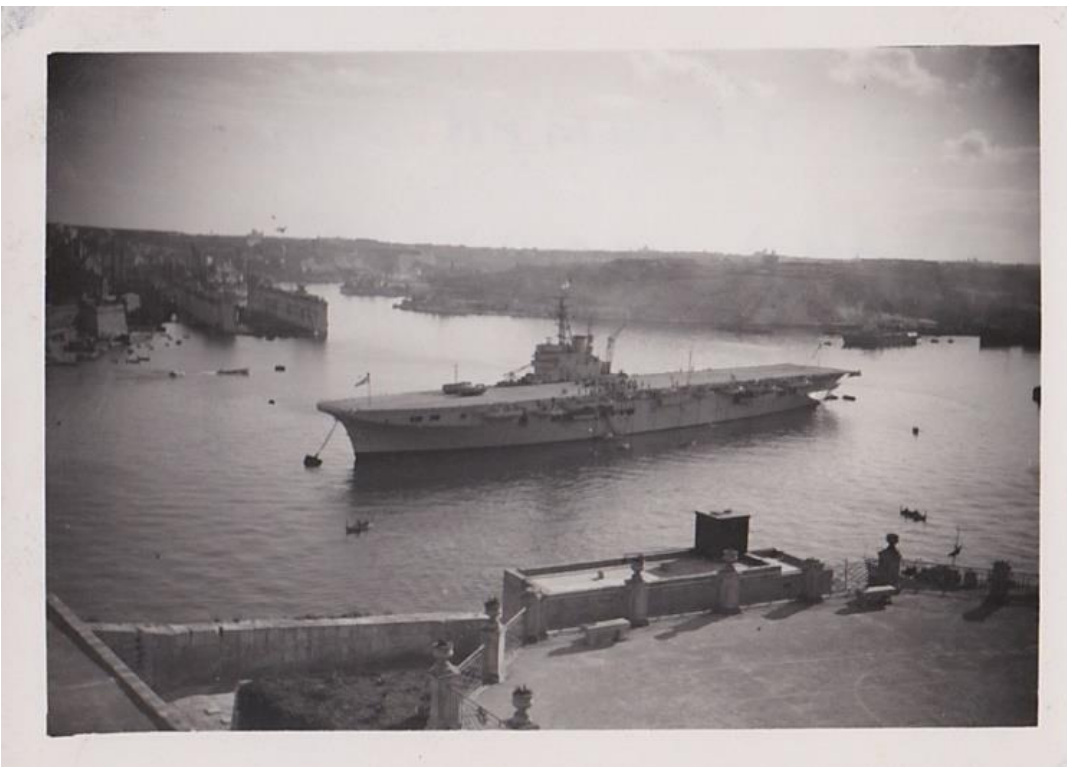
**Grumman Avenger II KE467 Lee on Solent 703 sqn HMS Ocean. Donald Sellers**

Mystery surrounds the presence of a Grumman Avenger II KE467. From Lee on Solent 703 sqn, on HMS Ocean, as captured in Donald's photo. 703 Squadron was a trials squadron, but why it was so far away from its home base has been impossible to establish. It's an interesting visitor nonetheless.



Firefly FR.I PP430 280 827 Sqn the end result was category ZZ damage and it was struck off charge. 22/9/48. *Donald Sellers*

HMS Triumph returned to Malta, in September, for maintenance and to allow the crew time ashore. With the Airgroup disembarking to Hal far. We have no further photographic evidence to suggest a subsequent period at sea for Donald.



HMS Triumph, back at Grand harbour 1948. *Donald Sellers*

Subsequent photos confirm his return to Hal far by the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1948.

On the day in question Donald photographed the aftermath of the following incident, with Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP556, of 827 Sqn, HMS Triumph . During Attempted Dummy Deck Landing's at Hal Far, the aircraft stalled at 50ft on approach, managed to land but hit a wall, after which the starboard u/c and wing broke off. The aircraft then overturned on hitting another wall. The aircraft subsequently caught fire (LT CH Miles slightly Injured).



Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP556, of 827 Sqn, HMS Triumph . Comes to grief, with only minor injuries to pilot, during ADDL's at Hal far. 1/10/48. Donald Sellers

In October 1948 a large scale, defence of Malta, exercise was undertaken. The Seafire MK.XVII's of 800 Sqn ( HMS Triumph) and FR47's of 804 Sqn ( HMS Ocean) , as well as RAF Vampires, confronted a force of some 40 aircraft from the USS F.D Roosevelt.



USS F D Roosevelt, Malta 1948. Web



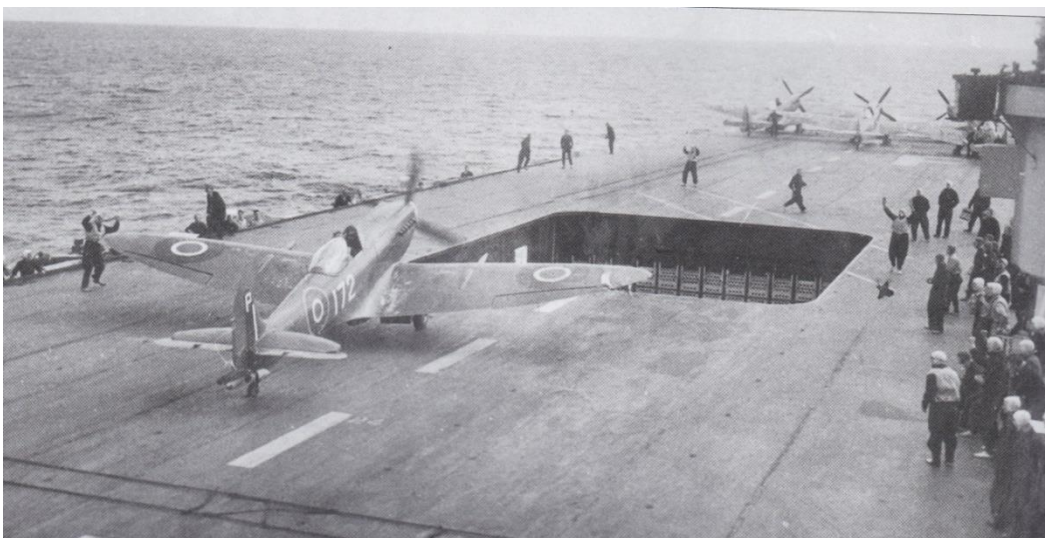
A "fraction" of The USN Air group web

The next day , eight of HMS Ocean's 800 Sqn Seafires escorted Firefly FR.5s from HMS Triumph's 812 Sqn , in a strike on the American carrier.

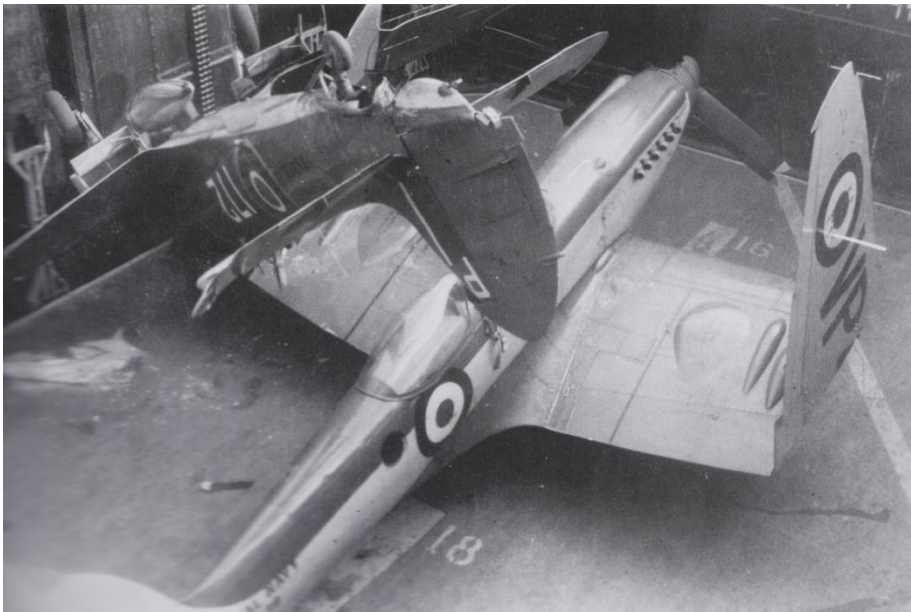
The exercise was repeated in November, with both RN ships launching 19 aircraft against the much larger opposing American fleet. It's reported the US fighters offered little opposition. Although, US Navy heads were lifted, when a Seafire F.XVII had to resort to landing on the 'Roosevelt, after suffering engine problems. A last strike was carried out on the 1<sup>st</sup> December ,with six Seafire F.XVIIIs of 800 Sqn which escorted RAF Lincoln Bombers , flying out of RAF Luka.

The absence of view forward of an aircraft on the deck was illustrated by an incident on HMS Triumph, during this period, on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1948. I will allow Captain Eric " Winkle" Brown to describe the scene depicted in the two following photo's .

*"Seafire F.XXVII SX333 ,having landed on board HMS Triumph, taxied over the barrier and into the forward lift well. The aircraft was a write off . The pilot no doubt blushed. "*



David Hobbs



David Hobbs

Remarkably , the FR47 VP439, ( a visitor from 800 Sqn embarked on HMS Ocean) already ranged in the lift, was untouched in the incident. Only to succumb to a forced landing at Hal Far. In July of 1949 and being stuck off charge shortly after. *David Hobbs*

By the end of the month, Donald, was to witness the aftermath of a tragic accident.

Unusually, Donald's photo's included the following two pictures, without, explanatory notes on the reverse. Research into the aircraft wreckage was possible, only, after recognising the distinctive Fin markings of a North American Harvard III.



Burnt out remains of

North American harvard III,EZ406 of the Station Flight 25/10/48.*Donald Sellers*

On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1948, the Harvard was taking part in an exercise with RAF Vampires from RAF Ta Kali. The Harvard was hit from astern, over Ta Kali, by a 73 sqdn vampire VT808. Resulting in the Harvard losing its starboard wing, and crashing, out of control. The aircraft exploded on impact 2 miles West of Ta Kali. Both Lt A E J Matthews and Lt Marsden were killed. The Vampire pilot landed safely.

Whilst Donald had multiple photos of aircraft “prangs”, this is the only instance of him having photographed the crash site of a fatal accident. The image, of his colleagues sombrely surveying the wreckage, is poignant.

One can only hypothesise, if the Aircrew pictured in another of Donald’s photos was one of the victims ?



Unknown Station Flight Aircrew preparing for a flight in one of their North American Harvard IIIs. *Donald Sellers*

Within days of the recent tragedy, Donald was at work on another, thankfully non fatal, untoward incident at Hal Far.

The fifth of November 1948 saw Supermarine Seafire FR.47 VP446, of 804 Sqn shore based from HMS Ocean come to grief. Upon suffering a heavy landing, the port u/c collapsed, causing damage to the propeller and underside of the aircraft. The aircraft was later shipped back to the UK on HMS Triumph, at the end of her Commission, and returned to service.



Supermarine Seafire FR.47 VP446, 804 Sqn shore based from HMS Ocean. Comes to grief at Hal far 5/11/48 see the following picture for details of the reverse of the photo. *Donald sellers*

I. Seafire 47 planes  
I'm at work on the caterpillar bogie, with my  
head facing.

The rate of attrition for Naval Aircraft, at Hal far, continued to be high.

The 19<sup>th</sup> of November saw another incident. On this occasion, one of the brand new Fairey Firefly FR.5s, VT368,812 Sqn, shore based from HMS Ocean, coming to grief at Hal Far. Suffering from a Hydraulic failure, and therefore flapless, the pilot made a wheels up Landing on the grass beside the runway. The aircraft was returned to flight , by the Aircraft recovery Section at Hal Far. Most impressive.



one of the brand new Fairey Firefly FR.5s, VT368,812 Sqn, shore based from HMS Ocean, coming to grief at Hal Far. Whilst Donald wrestles with the propeller, the pilot attempts to explain events to the senior Officer....Donald sellers

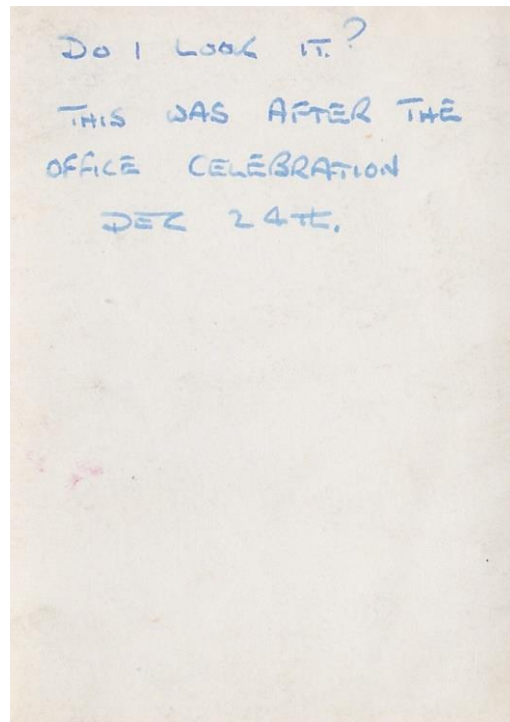


By December of 1948, happier activities were also recorded. With the base preparing for the festivities, the following photo was taken of the Station Flight crew, to send back to loved ones in time for the festivities.



Donald, back row, first left, with a photo for the families. December 1948. *Donald Sellers*

Judging by the following photo and its rear caption, Station Flight Xmas/'Office Party' must have been memorable.....



December 25<sup>th</sup> 1948, the Matelots have over done the celebrations. *Donald Sellers*

Meanwhile at sea, and with HMS Ocean suffering a recurrence of engine problems, her Air Group had to embark on board HMS Triumph to practice deck landings on 29 and 30 December.



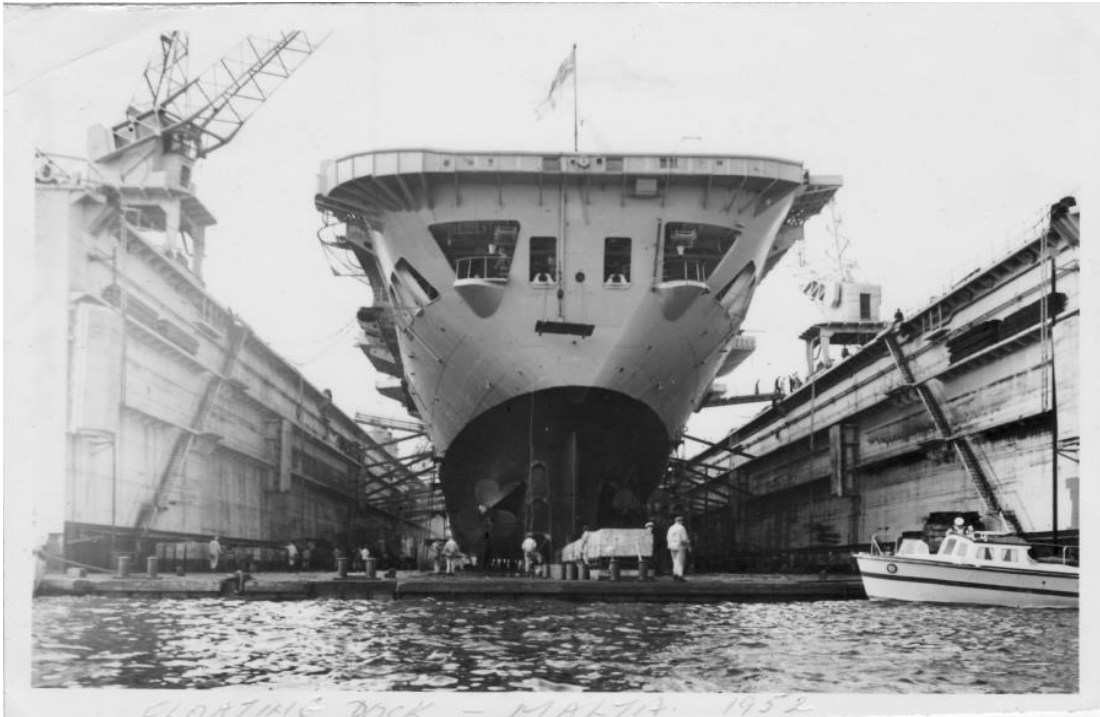
Seafire FR47 VP445 "138", 800 Sqn, from HMS Ocean; onboard HMS Triumph January 1949. *David Hobbs*

The combination of two CAGs on one carrier repeated the unusual sight of both F.XVIIIs and the new FR47 operating alongside each other. However, space was at a premium. So nine Seafires of 804 Sqn and five Fireflies of 812 Sqn went ashore, at Hal Far once more, to relieve the congestion on the small deck of the light fleet carrier



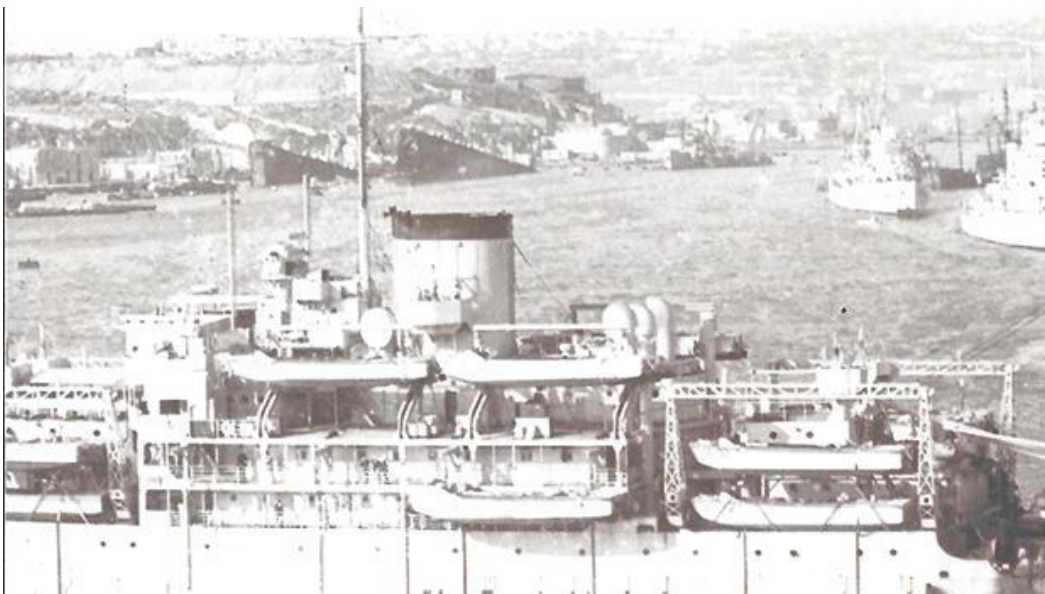
Supermarine Seafire FR.47 VP548 '132/0' 800 Sqn. Ashore at Hal far 1948. Note the new colour scheme. *web*

By now HMS Ocean was in Malta's dry dock, Admiralty Floating Dock – 35, suffering from propeller problems .



HMS Ocean in the floating Dry Dock at Malta. *web*

N.b After the wartime sinking of AFD-8 in grand harbour, no docking facilities had been available for aircraft carriers; before the war, these had been docked on AFD 8, none of the graving docks having been suitable for the purpose.



The partly submerged AFD 8 is seen in the background of this photo. The remains were a local "landmark" (sic) until finally refloated and removed in 1950. *web*

AFD 35, built in Bombay for the Far East Fleet in Trincomalee, had been assigned to Malta in 1947. It was towed in three sections, arriving on May 8, 1947. The journey from India, of this rudder/engineless behemoth, is noteworthy in its own right. The sections were assembled at Boiler Wharf but the dock could not be moored at Corradino because of the, partially submerged, AFD 8. An interim berth was found in Dockyard Creek. HMS Ocean was the first ship docked.

With HMS Ocean's unfortunate reliability record, eight Seafire FR.47's of 804 Sqn and five Firefly FR.5s of 812 Sqn joined the 13<sup>th</sup> CAG on HMS Triumph to provide support for an Army exercise in Libya.

Late January saw the commencement of exercises with the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. The USS Philippine Sea, and USS Midway taking part. With HMS Ocean out of action, the RN had recourse to using HMS Theseus and Implacable to support HMS Triumph. The British were very impressed when the two American carriers could muster some 90 aircraft for a strike ; not to be compared with a FAA's CAG! During the Midways deployment to Malta , Donald had the opportunity to visit, and the sheer scale of this enormous ship was clear to him. Although, the RN contingent was somewhat, unimpressed, with the wooden deck, compared to the steel RN flight deck.



USS Midway off Malta 1948. Twice the Size of the British carriers, and embarking 100 aircraft. Compared to the 12 seafires and 13 Fireflies of the RN Carriers, They were, very, impressive. *Web*



**Grumman F8F Bearcat** *Web*

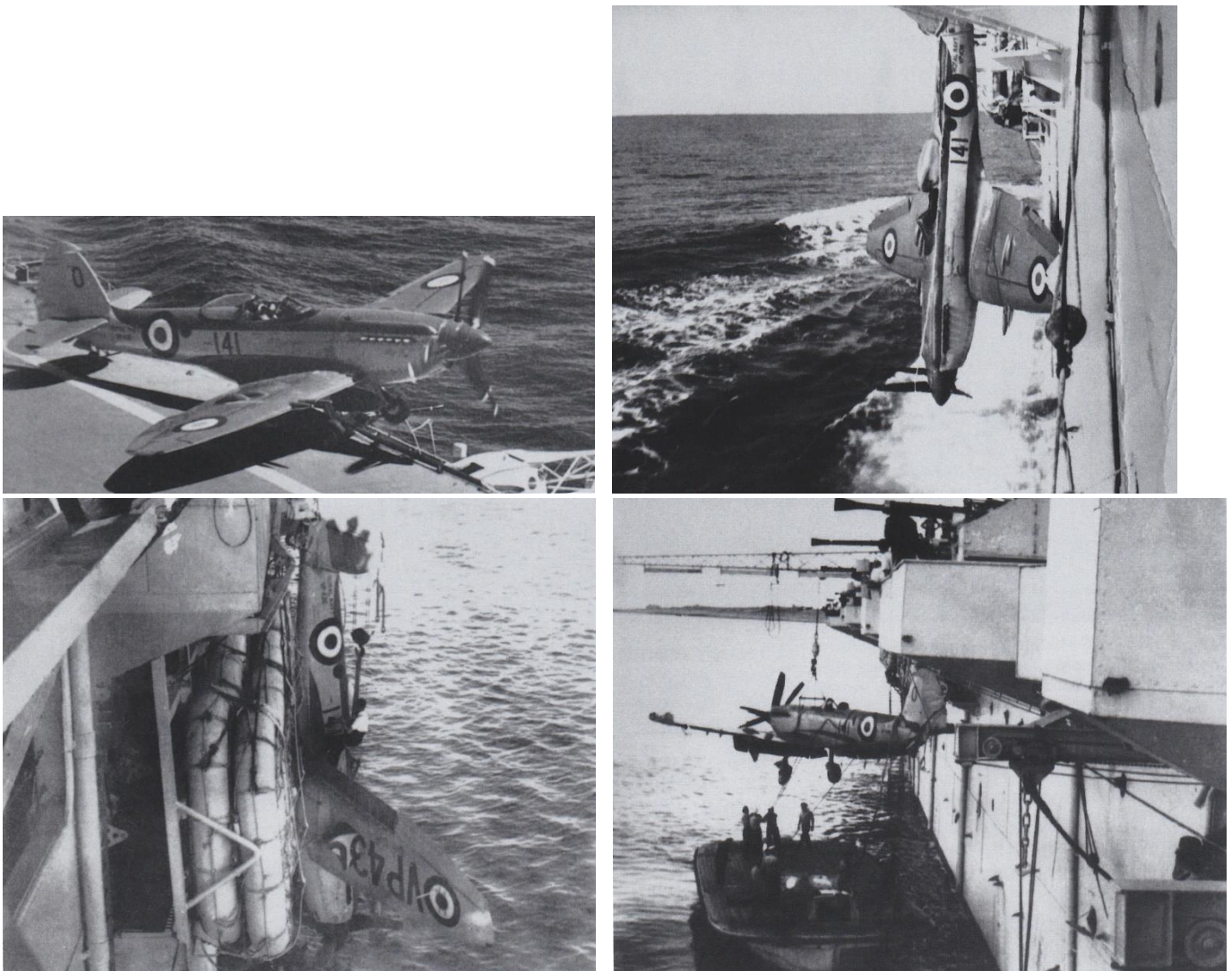
In particular, Donald admired the Grumman F8F Bearcat. Seen as an equivalent aircraft to The Royal Navy's Hawker Sea Fury, which was now being introduced into service, as a replacement for the Seafire FR.47.

Periodically American aircraft were visitors to Hal Far. Donald took a number of photos of Douglas A-26 Invaders, operated by the US Navy. This was before the USN set up a small A-26 invader squadron at Hal far in 1953.



Two of Donald's photos of the visiting USN Douglas A-26 Invaders, at Hal Far. *Donald Sellers*

By the time Donald was back at Hal far, an unusual incident occurred on HMS Ocean in april 1949. Further, illustrating the risks, and occasional good fortune, of Naval Aviation.



21/4/49 804 Sqn Seafire FR.47 VP436, missing the wires and going overboard. Only to catch its tail hook on one of HMS Oceans cranes. Lt Barron, descending on a rope to secure the aircraft. Despite all efforts to retrieve the a/c at sea, HMS Ocean had to return to Grand Harbour, before the a/c could be righted and lowered to a Lighter, for recovery. Usually an aircraft in this situation was ditched. On this occasion, it returned to flight. *Peter Cook*

Back To Hal far and alongside normal duties , all activity was focused on the pending Air Display planned for May 1949. Thanks to AviationInMalta.com for this record of the Air Display that took place in May 1949

*The afternoon programme at Hal Far opened with a fire-fighting competition between teams from the Fire Sections of HMS Falcon and RAF Ta Kali, the latter having itself become a Fleet Air Arm base in 1945 under the name of HMS Goldfinch. The contest consisted of putting out a fire in a Fairey Firefly fuselage that had been set ablaze on the airfield and trying to rescue a dummy pilot strapped in the cockpit. The 'pilot' rescued, rocket projectile--equipped Fairey Firefly NF.1s of 812 NAS and Supermarine Seafire FR.47s of 804 NAS took off from the other end of the runway, their powerful Rolls Royce Griffon piston engines growling above the hubbub of the watching crowds.*

*While the fighters flew out of sight (in order to reappear by surprise later on), a Supermarine Sea Otter ASR.1 amphibian of the Search and Rescue (SAR) Flight then took off with its usual, almost grandmotherly, complacency. It flew over the airfield to drop a dummy parachutist to simulate an airman who had descended in the sea, and then banked round again to drop a dinghy near the 'ditched airman', thus demonstrating its accurately undertaken rescue job.*

*One of the operational services provided by HMS Falcon at the time was aerial target practice by 728 NAS. One of its aircraft, a Miles Martinet TT.1, took part in the air display by taking off while towing a winged target attached to a cable from its fuselage mounted winch. Three Fireflies that demonstrated the method of rapid takeoff as performed from an aircraft carrier followed this act.*

*The Seafire and Firefly fighters, that had taken off earlier in the show then reappeared. Screaming down the airfield in 30' dives, firing rockets and 20mm cannon into the sea at the south-eastern end of the runway. This simulated an attack on an enemy force and was most ably done. Next came the turn of 800 NAS's Seafire FR.47s, normally embarked on the aircraft carrier HMS Triumph but at the time temporarily flying from Hal Far. These performed a rapid takeoff, followed by simulated dogfights, showing off the acrobatic capabilities of the Seafire. Hardly had these ended when 827 NAS's Firefly FR.1s, also off HMS Triumph, came roaring across the airfield at low level to bomb the wreckage of a de Havilland Mosquito at the far end of the runway. The bombing was so accurate that the carcass was set alight with the first stick of bombs.*

*The 1949 air display provided aerial comedy as well. A carload of 'bandits' raced down the runway chased by a low flying de Havilland Tiger Moth biplane, which dropped flour bombs on the bandits who returned the fire with smoke puffs.*



RAF 37 Sqn Avro Lancaster MR.3 taking off from RAF Luqa. Brian Sherman

*This was a Navy show, but the Royal Air Force made its usual appearance, too. RAF Luqa based 37 Squadron sent in one of its Avro Lancaster MR.3, which showed off its manoeuvrability despite its size by a majestic takeoff and by flying down the runway at deck level and then banking sharply to repeat the run from the other direction.*

*73 Squadron, which until 1946 had been based at Hal-Far with Spitfires but which then moved to RAF Ta Qali, came with its de Havilland Vampire F.3 jet fighters. Their tailbooms emblazoned with the yellow and light blue Squadron markings, the Vampires performed a mass takeoff followed by an equally impressive acrobatic display over the airbase.*

*The show was nearing its end when Navy Fireflies taxied out to make a rocket-assisted takeoff as that practised from aircraft carriers. In the meantime Seafires also took off and proceeded to perform aerobatics, the Fireflies ending the act by a dummy carrier deck landing. The 1949 show came to its finale by a flypast of all the aircraft that took part in the air display that day. During the earlier part of the afternoon, a de Havilland Devon was employed to take people for joyrides over Malta, while a static display of aircraft, as well as of technical and safety equipment backed up the flying pageant.*

That must have been a spectacular afternoon.

Whether Donald's time at sea, was spent on secondment to other squadrons, or within a detachment from 728 Sqn is unclear. It is clear that he was back at Hal Far by 15<sup>th</sup> June 1949, as evidenced by his inclusion in the following photographs. Clearly, his work at Hal far, was not restricted to 728 Sqn operations, or aircraft.



**Fairey Firefly FR.1 PP585 827 sqn. 15/6/49. Donald is seen on the nose of the a/c. During Attempted Dummy Deck Landings , Port u/c collapsed, a/c Ground looped, Propeller and Port wing Damaged. Donald Sellers**



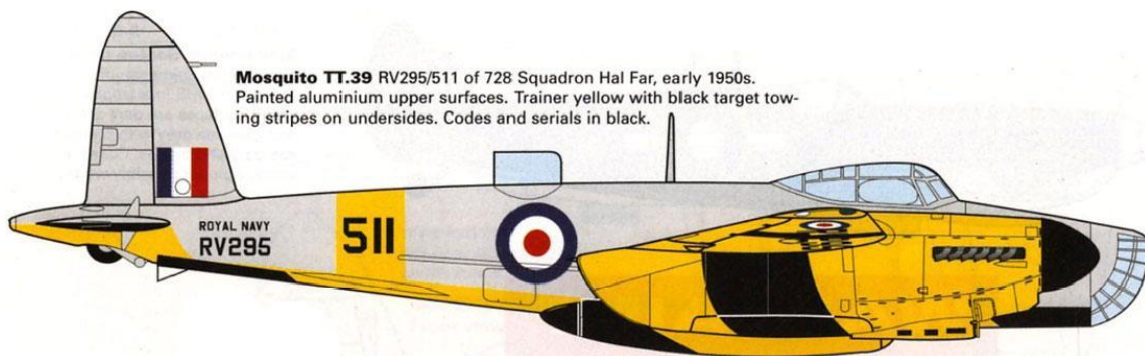
Another view of the same incident. *Donald Sellers*

Hal Far also received civil aircraft, delivering/repatriating military personnel.



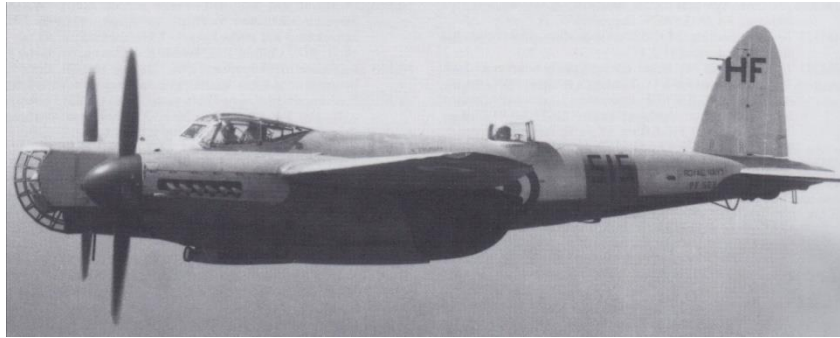
The cutting edge of Passenger Air Transport arrives at Hal far, in the form of a Lockheed Constellation. Of Dutch Airline KLM. *Donald Sellers*

By the summer of 1949 728 Sqn had replaced its obsolete Martinets with De Havilland Mosquito Mk TT.39s. Former RAF BXVI fighter bombers, converted to its new role. Without doubt, the ugliest version of this, handsome, aircraft.



Even the colourful markings of the TT.10, couldn't improve the awful look of the nose extension. *Web*





De havilland Mosquito TT.39 PF522 515/HF 728 Sqn . Overflying Malta 1950. *N Lauchlan*

The conversion provided for two new crew members, a camera operator located in an extended and glazed nose and an observer in a raised dorsal cupola. In addition to its basic Target Towing role, the aircraft could also carry out radar calibration duties. They can be seen in the background of two of Donald's photos, taken primarily as candid photos of his mate George Williams. Who went on to become our Uncle !



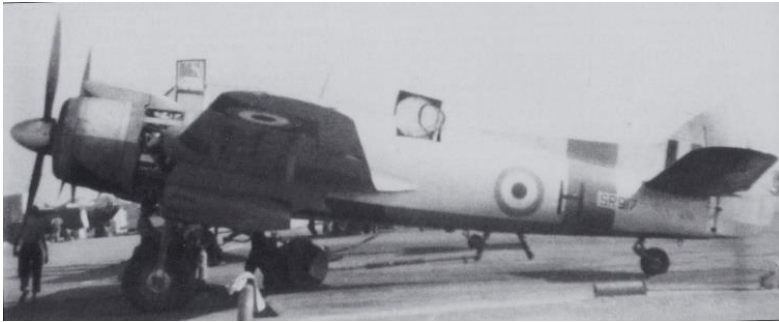
Summer 1949. Two of Donald's fellow Matelots larking about on the roof at Hal Far. Of note are the recently redundant Martinets, with engines/cockpits shrouded, from the ever present sparrows, and the Martinet's replacements, the Mosquito TT.39s. *Donald Sellers*



George Williams at Hal far , after July 1949. As well as the recently arrived Mosquito TT.39s , one of the six Bristol Beaufighters used by 728 Sqn is visible. Its engines shrouded to prevent the birds from nesting ! *Donald Sellers*

June 1949 saw some unusual arrivals at Hal far.

The FAA only operated ten Bristol Beaufighters. Transferred from the RAF, six of the MK X aircraft were modified to TT.10 standard (the only examples) and sent to Hal Far . The arrival of the Beaufighter Target Tugs, and their Bristol Hercules XVII, was a short lived bit of variety. It would appear to have not been successful, as they were all back on charge with the RAF by October.

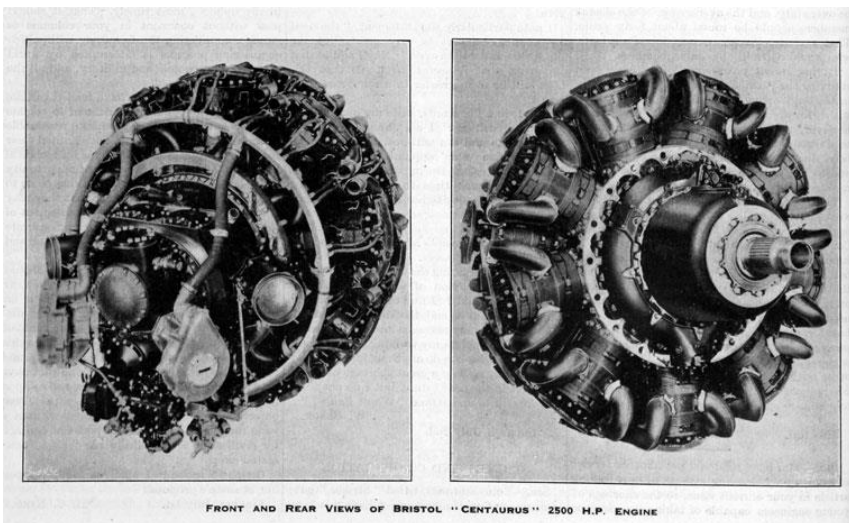


Bristol Beaufighter TT.10 SR917 'H', 728 Sqn at Hal far 1949. P Cook

HMS Ocean's 812 Sqn Firefly FR.5s and 804 Sqn Seafire FR.47s spent the summer of 1949, June to September - ashore at Hal Far, only to return later in the month for another spell. HMS Ocean being utilised as a transport vessel to move men and materiel to the Far East on four, separate, detachments.

With HMS Ocean departing for the UK in June 1949. 804 Sqn, converted to Sea Fury FB.11s whilst shore based at Hal Far, staying ashore no less than five months starting from July 1949 before re-embarking on HMS Glory. The redundant Seafire FR.47s were then either placed in storage, at Kalafrana Aircraft Handling Unit, or handed over to 800 squadron, to replace older machines.

The Hawker Sea Fury FB.II was the last piston engine fighter aircraft designed and built for the Fleet Air Arm, and one of the fastest production single piston-engined aircraft ever built. Sea Furies were fitted with the powerful Bristol Centaurus XII engine,



**CENTAURUS**

*... latest and greatest sleeve-valve aero-engine achievement ...*

This powerful big brother of the PERSEUS and HERCULES is an 18-cylinder sleeve-valve radial engine developing over 2,500 B.H.P. — a figure established for production engines of which details can now be released. Powers greatly above this figure have been achieved both on test and in aircraft still secret.

**Bristol** ... pioneered & developed the single-sleeve-valve

THE BRISTOL AERODYNAMIC COMPANY LIMITED

While originally developed as a pure aerial fighter aircraft, and armed with four wing-mounted Hispano V cannons, the definitive Sea Fury FB 11 was a fighter-bomber, the design having been found suitable for this mission as well. Pilots loved the enormous power afforded by the Centaurus engine and it handled beautifully.



**Hawker Sea Fury FB.11 WZ632, 155, No.804 Squadron Hal Far (Malta), March 1949.**

Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Sky undersides; black serials and codes. Red/white spinner cap with Extra Dark Sea Grey rear plate; national markings in six positions. Squadron Badge on fin; '5' repeated in black on mainwheel covers.

Hawker Sea Fury FB.II WZ632 155 804 Sqn Hal Far. erroneously reported as present in march 1949. R J Caruna

HMS Ocean returned to home waters in September. The Hawker Sea Furies of 807 NAS disembarked to Hal Far alongside The Firefly FR.4s of 810 NAS. Embarking in HMS Theseus shortly afterward.



**Hawker Sea Fury FB.11 VR952, 123/T, No.807 Squadron HMS Theseus, recorded at Hal Far (Malta), September 1949.**

Extra Dark Sea Grey upper surfaces with Sky undersides; white codes with black serials on fuselage and below the wings. Type 'C' roundels in four wing positions, type 'C1' roundels on fuselage sides. Squadron Badge on fin ahead of fin flash.

Hawker Sea Fury FB.II VR952 123/ T 807 Sqn HMS Theseus. Shore Based at Hal Far 1949. R J Caruana

Donald's training continued and on the 1st September 1949 he was rated Acting Leading Air Mechanic ( E ), successfully passing his exams whilst "aboard" HMS Falcon.

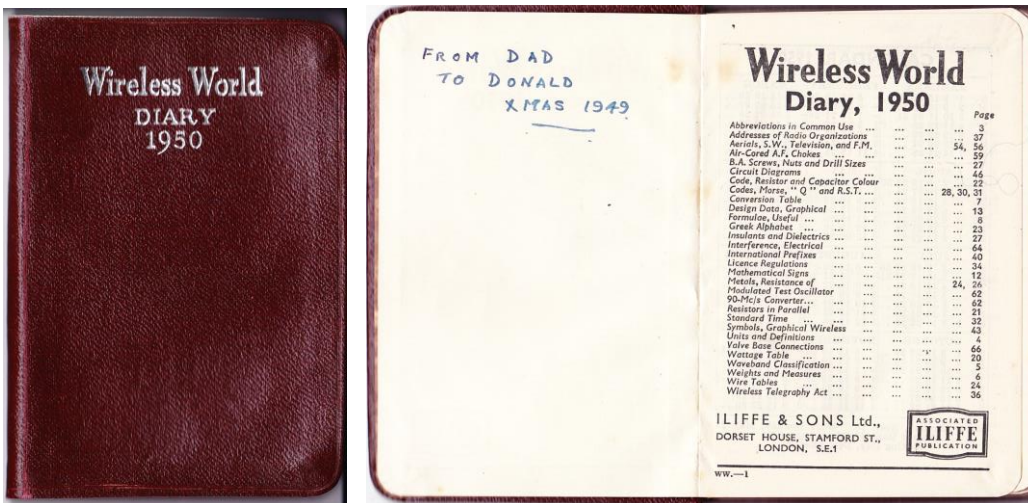
As the front line squadrons began to relinquish their Seafire FR.47s, The older Seafire XVII remained in service with 728 Sqn at Hal Far, having replaced their worn out Seafire XVs.

Some of the Seafire XVIIIs arrived from Storage at Kalafrana, and some direct from 800 Sqn. Some of these aircraft were now with their third unit in three years, and must have been showing their age. No doubt the most serviceable aircraft were sought after, and special cases were made, if, you had the authority to choose your own aircraft.



Supermarine Seafire F Mk XVII SX370 Hal far 1950. All the 728 Sqn aircraft were painted overall silver with yellow bands. *RJ Caruna*

Amongst the mail from home, in December 1949, Donald received this gift of a pocket Diary from his father.

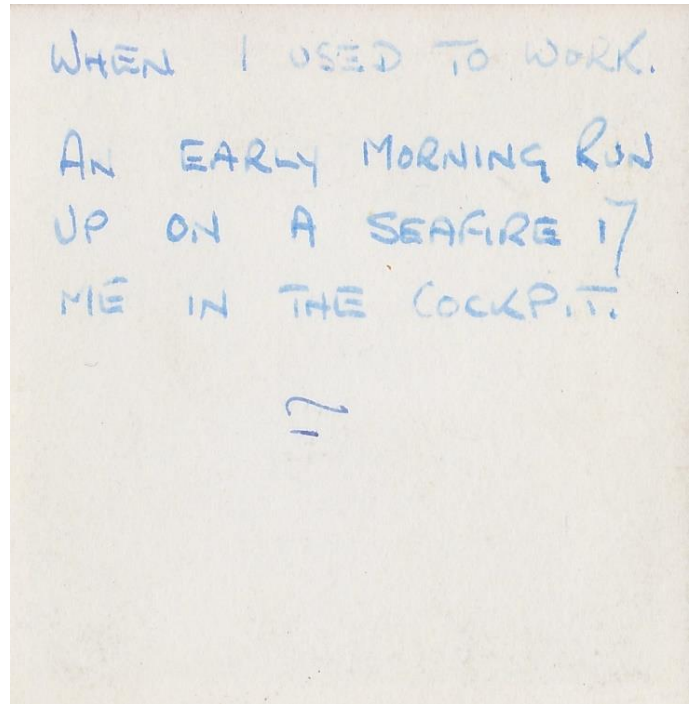


Donald's diary, a Xmas gift from Jim. Which captures some of his reflections on life at Hal Far, and his feelings upon leaving. *Donald Sellers*

There was another, more distinctive, Seafire XVII still in service at Hal far. Albeit, not with either 728 squadron or part of a disembarked CAG.



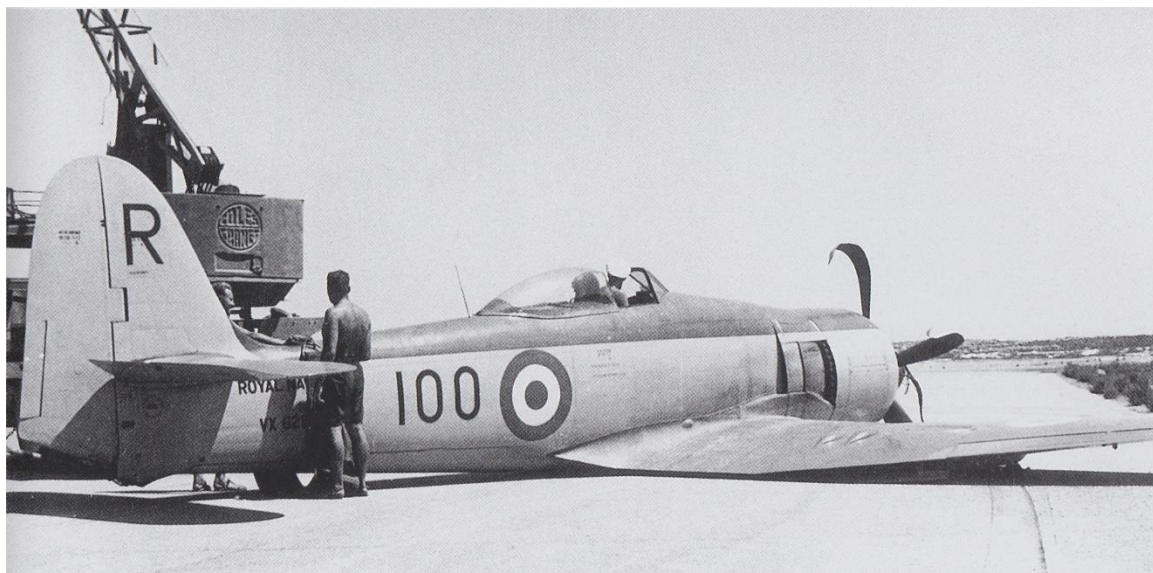
This picture shows Seafire XVII SX161 when in service as The Air Group Commander's aircraft, of the 14<sup>th</sup> CAG. It was stripped of camouflage and left in natural metal (not Silver) unlike any others of its kind. Note the flash under the exhaust stubs. The date was 1950 at Hal Far. One of 804 Sqn's newly acquired Sea Furies appears in the Background. *Peter Cook*



Cpt J I Robertson's, Seafire XVII SX161 again, recognisable by the unique flash painted below the exhaust stubs, makes another appearance. This time, in one of Donald's photos. With Donald making a guest appearance, pictured leaning into the cockpit to run up the engine !  
*Donald Sellers*

With HMS Glory taking over from HMS Triumph, her CAG spent time disembarked at Hal far in early 1950. Whilst the Centaurus XII could power the Sea fury to great speeds, it had issues with reliability. Which persist to this day.

One of the last incidents before Donald left Hal far in march 1950, happened on February the 8<sup>th</sup>.



Visiting Sea Fury FB.II VX628, at Hal far from HMS Glory. Engine cut at 700ft after take off. The pilot climbed to 2000ft on manual priming button, made a glide approach and wheels up landing 8/2/50. The Aircraft was repaired and sold onto the Burmese Airforce

Numerous cherished examples of the Sea Fury, in private hands, have been lost due to engine problems. Resulting in some aircraft being re-engined, with more reliable Pratt and Whitney engines. I recall Donald's delight at the spirited displaying of Spencer Flacks Stunning Sea Fury ,G-Fury, at the Yeovilton Air Display in 1981.

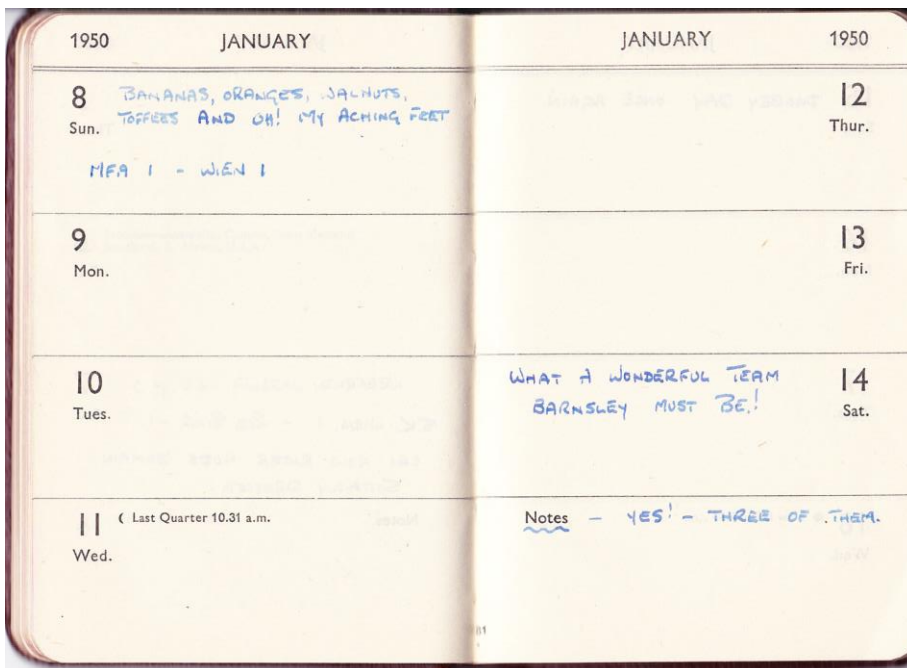


Sea Fury G-Fury, on the flight line, at Yeovilton 1981, prior to its stunning display. *Donald Sellers*



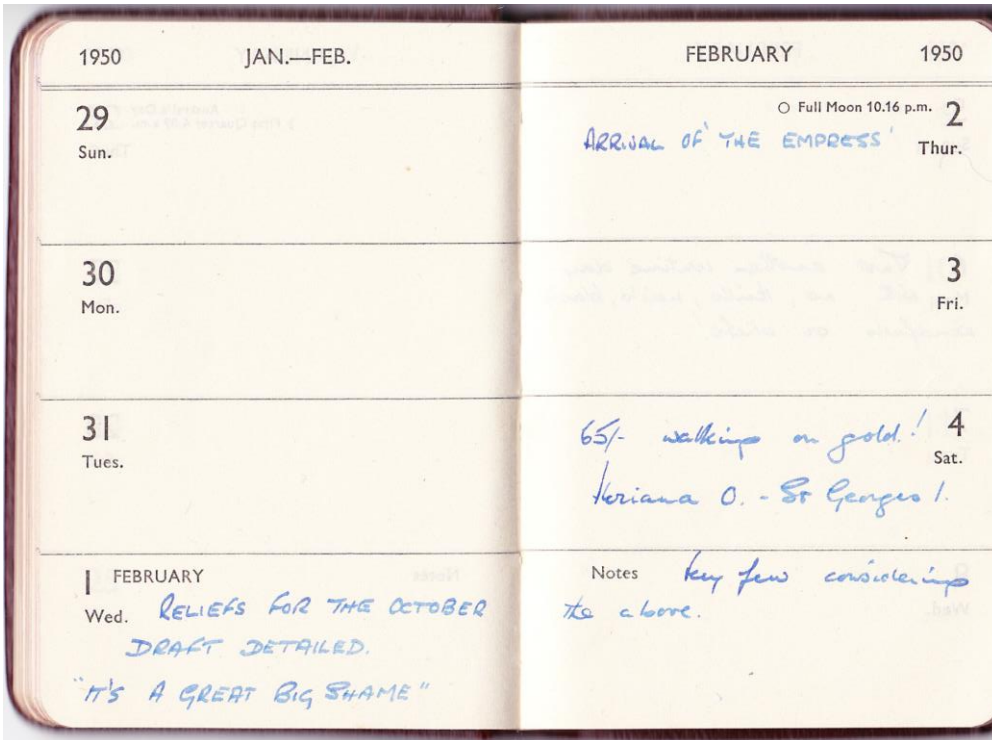
The sad remains of G-Fury following its forced landing after engine problems outside RAF Waddington, a few months later. *Web*

Donald's diary captures some of the detail of his social life at Hal Far. It seems the Donald that we knew, who disliked football, was a regular participant in the same at Hal Far. Taking pleasure in also, following, the local teams.



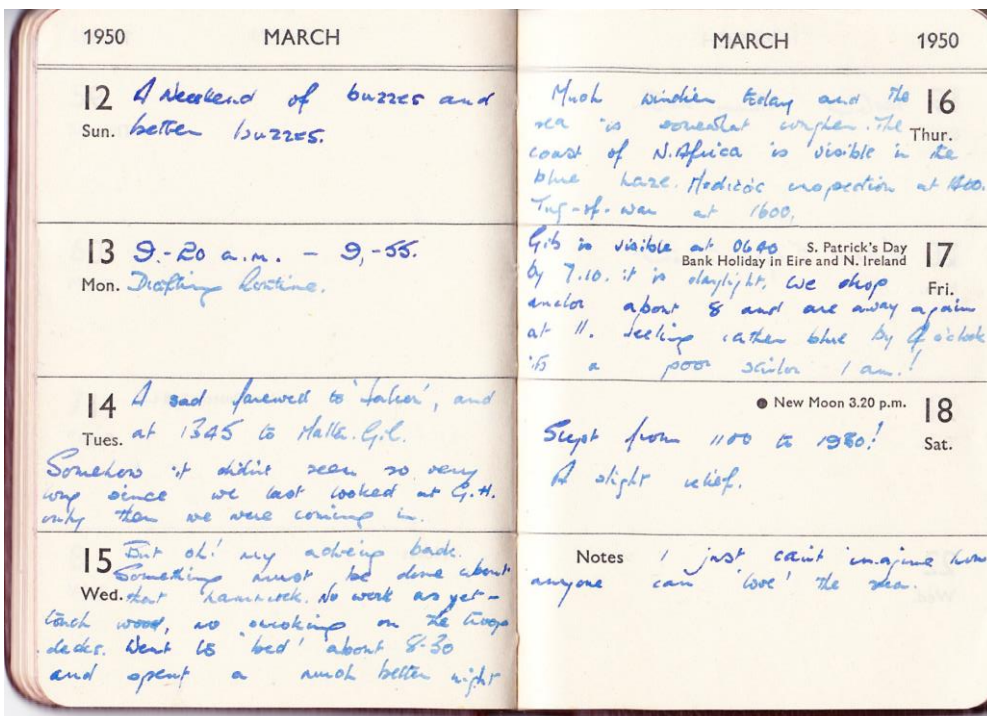
Donald's diary records the last few weeks of his draft to 'the George Cross Island'. With a diet of Mediterranean fruits, nuts, playing and following football, as well as beautiful weather. He was clearly happy at Hal Far. *Donald Sellers*

The news of his departing on the S.S Empress, came as a great disappointment.



"IT'S A GREAT BIG SHAME".... In the space, where Donald usually recorded additional 'Notes', he ruefully records "VERY FEW CONSIDERING THE ABOVE". Donald Sellers

Whilst he was thrilled at the result of his football team over the weekend, and the probable socialising that went with it, his thoughts on leaving HMS Falcon are all too clear. Made worse by the fact that his journey home was marked by significant sea sickness.....



Clearly, Donald's farewell to Malta was heartfelt. As for the journey home ? "IT'S A POOR SAILOR I AM!" Donald Sellers

Donald left Malta on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1950, bringing to an end an eventful, and clearly, much enjoyed, draft.

Doubtless, he was pleased to have avoided the pending formal visit of Princess Elizabeth and her Husband Prince Phillip, which occurred shortly after his departure. With all Naval personnel taking part in formal ceremonial duties, his response would have been, interesting.....

We conclude the notes on Donald's time in Malta, with details of the sole Airworthy Seafire FR.47, located in the USA.

Seafire FR.47VP441 was delivered to No. 804 Sqn at RNAS Ford, coded 139, February 1948. Thereafter, it embarked on HMS Ocean as part of the 14th CAG. August 24, 1948. It was transferred to RNAS Hal Far, November 1948. Requiring repair of damage, caused in an accident on board HMS Ocean; after the propeller struck the deck (pecking) on landing. Thereafter, resuming its flying career. After many years as an instructional airframe, and subsequent vandalism, when left out in the open, it was successfully returned to flight in 2004. Now operated in America, the paint scheme currently employed is identical to the one used on this aircraft during her deployment as part of the 14<sup>th</sup> Carrier Air Group aboard HMS Ocean.

The original Griffon Mk 88 engine was not available for the restoration so a similar Griffon Mk 57 (from an RAF Shackleton) was substituted. The original contra-rotating propellers were likewise not available so propellers from an Avro Shackleton were substituted although the propeller blades were necessarily shortened to 10ft.



Lovely to know that Donald was, not only on HMS Ocean at the time VP441 served on-board, but also back at Hal Far when it was repaired. Meaning, there is a high likelihood he worked on the, sole, remaining airworthy FR.47.



After three years in Malta, and the uncomfortable sailing home, Donald Enjoyed a period of leave at Brough. During which he caught up with friends and family, spent time by the Humber estuary, and watching cars racing on the airfield. Which had a healthy, motor racing scene.

Before long, (or maybe, he was glad to be away from his father?) Donald reported back to HMS Daedalus for his next posting on the 30<sup>th</sup> March. This draft was to be an unusual one.

Donald arrived at RAF Beaulieu, a short distance from Lee on Solent, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1950.

### **RAF Beaulieu 31/5/50 – 14/9/50**

The **Airborne Forces Experimental Establishment (AFEE)** was a branch of the British [Air Ministry](#), that researched and developed non-traditional airborne applications, such as gliders, rotary wing aircraft, and dropping of personnel and equipment by parachute, in the period 1942-1950. using a variety of aircraft and Gliders along with various Handley Page Halifax's for supply-dropping experiments.

For the AFEE was primarily involved in experimental work with transport Aircraft, glider towing and parachute drops, they used the former East Boldre Airfield site on the far side of the Lymington-Beaulieu road as a drop zone. Activities included specialist training of pilots for gliders. Types tested included gliders AW.52, GAL.55, GAL.56, GAL.61, Waco CG-13. Additional support aircraft included Boston, Cierva C.40, Curtiss Commando, Dragonfly, Harvard, Hastings, Lancaster, Valetta.

We do have some, very over exposed photo's from this period, that suggest Donald had a role working off site. Possibly at East Boldre ?



*poor quality photo's of Donald's, Offsite near Beaulieu. Donald Sellers*

Information about AFEE is very difficult to find. We know from his Naval Employment and Ability Record that Donald worked on Horsa Gliders, whilst with AFEE.

AFEE conducted numerous trials with Horsa gliders, testing simultaneous parachuting of troops from a Horsa Glider and its Halifax tug, in a bid to maximise the number of Airborne forces that could be deployed. Although, what a Naval Airman Mechanic (E) was doing on "Gliders" is open to speculation.



Airspeed Horsa glider.web

More likely he was, mostly, involved in the maintenance of the variety of transport aircraft operated by AFEE.



The Handley page Halifax VII used for dropping air loads and as a glider tug. Powered by the Bristol Hercules engine. This is the last Halifax built, at the Handley page factory ,Ringway. Now Manchester Airport. R.A. Scholefield Collection



Like its stable mate the Halifax, the Handley page Hastings was also used for load dropping ,glider towing, and powered by the Bristol Hercules engine.Which Donald would have had previous experience of at Hal far, when the Beaufighters were based there in 1949. Don Hawkins

I know Donald said he was involved in the first testing for parachute dropping the Land Rover. Describing multiple Land Rovers with “broken Backs”, before the combined platform (medium Stressed Platform) and parachute arrangements were perfected. Research suggests the MSP goes back to the early 1950’s and was experimented with using leased USAF Fairchild Boxcars (C-119s). As this was the only aircraft then in service that could jettison combined MSP/Landrovers, in flight. The Halifax could airdrop, an underslung jeep, in that configuration, but the Landrover was too large for All of the available British Transport aircraft.



Illustrative picture of a Fairchild Boxcar, paradropping a vehicle through the rear of the fuselage. To enable this, the clam shell doors would be removed before the flight. *Alamy*



Early Land Rover on an MSP parachute dropping platform. *cheshire steve*

By 1950 AFEE was also responsible for testing and developing helicopters, including captured Luftwaffe machines, the Hafner Rotachute and Rotabuggy. Later helicopters included the Bristol 171, Cierva W.14 Skeeter, Cierva Air Horse, Sikorsky Hoverfly.

By 1950 the primary rotorcraft at Beaulieu was the Sikorsky Hoverfly II. Coming to the end of their service life, these aircraft had been in the vanguard of helicopter trials for the last few years at Beaulieu.



Sikorsky Hoverfly II KN843 at Gosport, prior to its transfer to RAF Beaulieu, at the same time as Donald was stationed there. *Howard, Burrow and Myall*

With an eye to the future, they also had a small quantity of Sikorski S-50 Helicopters, which were being tested as part of Westlands licence build programme. Hoping to sell these, British built variants, to the UK Armed forces.



Sikorsky S-51 VW209, was briefly at RAF Beaulieu in august 1950, for flight testing of the civil Helicopter for Ministry of Civil Aviation, subsequently moving to D squadron Boscombe Down in September. Seen at the RAeS Garden party at Hatfield, 16<sup>th</sup> june 1953, that Donald attended the year before. *Howard, Burrow and Myall*

AFEE was the centre for Helicopter trials, and offered rudimentary training for test pilots on the rotorcraft. The personnel came from all three services, as well as civilian/Ministry of supply staff. Making for a very different working environment from the RNAS Donald had been used to. On the rotary side the Engineer in charge was Mr O.L Fitzwilliams, who would later become the chief Engineer at Westland. One wonders if his and Donald's paths crossed, in later years, when they both worked for Westland.



Sikorsky Hoverfly II KN843 GJ/501, still in its US Airforce colours but with RN Markings.as during its time at Beaulieu. *Howard, Burrow and Myall*

Summer of 1950 saw Donald making a trip to the coast, possibly with his parents? Although the only photo we have is not great quality, its included for completeness.



Donald on a trip to the seaside. *Donald Sellers*

The summer of 1950 saw a flurry of activity at Beaulieu, as four Hoverfly IIs began practicing formation flying for a display at the SBAC Air Display at RAE Farnborough, and other summer events. Formation flying in the, underpowered, somewhat impractical helicopters was not easy. But the displays were performed with some panache.



Disguised as Elephants (?) the AFEE Hoverflys perform for their ringmaster. July 1950. *RAF M*

The team was effectively disbanded with the closure of AFEE Beaulieu in September 1950.

Having been at AFEE for five months, Donald's training continued and he was confirmed as a leading Air Mechanic (E), on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1950. Donald enjoyed his time at Boscombe Down, this is reflected in a photo taken at the time.



Donald and a colleague, relaxing outside their Accommodation, Boscombe Down or Beaulieu 1950. *Donald Sellers*

By this time it had been decided to amalgamate the work of the AFEE and that of the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment at RAF Boscombe Down. With this in mind, on the 14 September 1950, AFEE was disbanded, and most of its equipment and personnel were transferred to the A+ AEE at RAF Boscombe Down. The Helicopters and staff becoming part of "D" Sqn based at Boscombe Down. Helicopter training functions were transferred to RAF Andover. The Hoverflies were listed for disposal by February of the following year.

#### **RAF Boscombe Down 15/9/50 – 02/12/52**

**Boscombe Down** in Wiltshire was the UK's premiere facility for testing aircraft. The facility existed to test, adapt and prove suitable for service, aircraft or equipment accepted for use by any of the three UK armed services.

D Sqn was formed in September 1950 at Boscombe Down as part of the A&AEE. The squadron came into existence as helicopters became ever more prevalent in the UK Armed Forces and consolidated test and evaluation was required. In the early 1950's four testing Sqn's were based at Boscombe Down. A squadron flew fighters, B squadron flew

bombers, C squadron flew Royal Navy types and D squadron investigated helicopters. In addition, the Civil Aircraft Test Squadron, was based here too.

Although it was a Royal Air Force Station, Boscombe Down must have been very difficult to run, from the service point of view. There were many civilians, a large aerodrome without a full perimeter fence and a flying programme of enormous variety. It was no wonder that normal service discipline was practically non-existent, with few duties or parades. Making for another unusual, and stimulating posting for Donald.

Donald arrived at RAF Boscombe Down, as part of "D" Sqn, on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1950.



Amongst many military and civilian types on test at Boscombe Down, when Donald arrived, The Fairey FD.1 must have seemed very advanced. Sadly it crashed within days of his arrival....*Web*



Taken in 1965, Donald was to witness the (heavily modified) Fairey FD.2 , follow on type from the FD.1, at the Farnborough Air Show 15 yrs later.*Donald Sellers*

Donalds arrival coincided with that of another Blackburn Aircraft. The Blackburn Universal Freighter Mk I, for Handling Trials. The Universal Freighter was a huge Transport aircraft, designed for civil and military applications. After modifications, some of which as a result of the works undertaken by AFEE on para dropping stores; this became the Blackburn Beverley, with its impressive short take off and landing/load carrying abilities.



Air-Britain Photographic Images Collection © R.A.Schofield Collection **Blackburn and General Aircraft Universal Freighter Mk I WF320. R.A.Schofield**

During Donald's service at Boscombe Down, D squadron was heavily involved in the Type clearance trials, Flight and performance trials, Lateral Instability and Radio trials of The Westland dragonfly ( licence built Sikorsky S-51) Helicopter ( see earlier photo at Hatfield ). Powered by a 450hp Pratt and Whitney Wasp Junior R-985-B4, the Dragonfly was to go on to provide the FAA with its first effective Helicopter. Donald may well have worked on the Dragonfly, earlier, at RAF Beaulieu .

There would appear to have been some overlap between the work of C and D Sqns. Donald's Employment and Ability Record documents his Employment in D squadron, as do his records; and notes the fixed wing types he serviced there (Firefly, Sturgeon and Sea Fury). Most of the fixed wing Naval Aircraft trials were undertaken by ,C, Sqn. D Squadron was specifically for testing Helicopter/Rotary wing types. Whilst we have no record of Rotary wing types he worked on, when attached to D Sqn, it's clear, something sparked his lifelong interest, and subsequent career, in Helicopters.

Life at Boscombe was relaxed, and Donald's photos capture the atmosphere off duty.



The backs of the top two photo's, taken at Boscombe Down, read '2 of the Navy Boys, 6 footers' and '3 mates in cornfield outside billet at B'. The third photo captures a relaxed Donald and mate, taking a break, sat by the Bedford MWD 15cwt truck. *Donald Sellers*



Fairey Fireflies, and Hawker sea Furys were being tested by C Sqn for a wide variety of trials including Deck landing trials and aids, Rocket Assisted Take Off Trials, cockpit canopy jettisoning devices, and armament development work.

Whilst with D Sqn, Donald obtained these three, stock photo's of Fairey firefly AS.6 whilst it was stationed at Boscombe Down, engaged in trials for the target winch.



Fairey Firefly FR.5 WB406, D Sqn, Boscombe Down. 5/10/50 arrived for clearance Trials of Liffe "C" type winch. later went to Farnborough for arresting and catapult trials with TT mods. *Donald Sellers*

Many surplus Fireflies were used at Hal Far, as late as the 1960's as target tug's and radio controlled target drones. Sadly, ultimately destroyed in the process.

March 1951 would have seen Donald reunited with The De Havilland Sea Hornet, although this time in the Guise of the radar equipped NF.21 variant. VW959 arrived at C squadron for general handling trials, when fitted with Air Sea Rescue containers. Results were satisfactory and the aircraft was cleared to fly up to 350 knots when fitted.



De Havilland Sea Hornet NF.21 VW959 at A&AEE Boscombe Down for ASR trials march 1951. *Web*

As many naval aircraft came through C squadron. Before long Donald was working on Sea Fury's again.



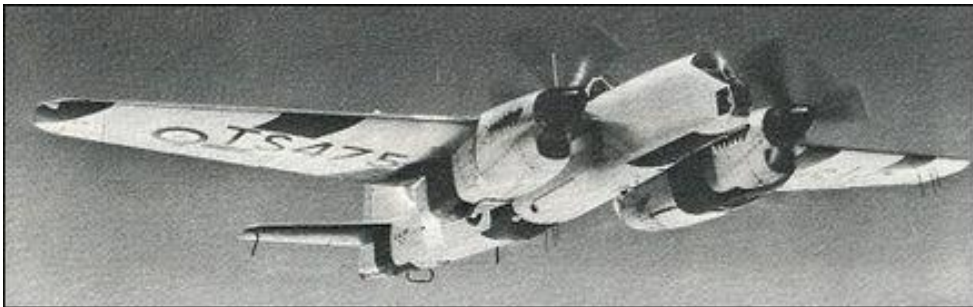
Sea Fury T.Mk 20 prototype VX818 Came to C squadron for trials in April 1951. An ex-Iraqi Sea Fury, this variant first flew on January 15, 1948. Note the strut-mounted periscope viewer for the senior pilot to monitor his student sixty production T.20s were built, and all were land-based and devoid of arrestor hooks. The powerplant was a 2,480 h.p. Bristol Centaurus 18. *Web*



Seeing Sea Fury VZ345, based at Boscombe Down, in 1981's RIAT Airshow, must have bought back memories for Donald. *Donald Sellers*

An unusual visitor to Boscombe Down was the Short Sturgeon. Designed as a high performance torpedo bomber/reconnaissance aircraft for use on the planned, large fleet, aircraft carriers. Powered by two 2080hp Rolls Royce merlin 140 engines, driving Rotol six bladed contra rotating propellers, it could never be regarded as pretty. With the end of the war and the cancelling of the large fleet carriers, the original requirement for the Sturgeon was also cancelled. However, there was a requirement for a Target Towing aircraft for Naval Gunnery training. A limited number of Sturgeon TT.Mk 2's eventually entered service with 728 Sqn, in August 1951, replacing the Mosquito's at Hal far.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 1951, prior to its release to service, a Sturgeon arrived at Boscombe Down for trials with the target towing equipment.



Short Sturgeon TT.3 TS475, arrived at Boscombe Down in June 1951, for Trials of the target towing winch pump cooling, in conjunction with towing Reverse Flow Diverter target, also, later jettison and Float Flame trials. *Web*

A, very unexpected, visitor to The Base, made a dramatic arrival on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 1952.

Whilst on a training flight from Texas, to Turkey, a B.36 Convair Peacemaker had to make a weather diversion. Due to a combination of Snow, and the pilot being unfamiliar with British approach lights, he mistook the 'funnel' lights for the perimeter track. Landing outside of the Airfield, on a disused, adjoining airfield !



Looking very forlorn, The huge Peacemaker, its engine efflux having melted the snow, awaits recovery to RAF Boscombe Down. *Web*



The B-36 'undershot' the airfield by touching down on the old, High Post airfield, and bounced across some frozen fields to end up just outside the Boscombe Down boundary fence.

Legend has it, the ensuing conversation with ATC went something like ... "your airfield is rough" with the reply being "you are not here yet"!! *Web*

The aircraft was recovered the following day, and towed across the road on to the airfield proper with minimal damage. Can you imagine the bus driver having it explained to him that he might not complete his journey, because a plane has gone across the road, only to come round the bend and see that monster in the field!

The Pilot was demoted over the phone, from Colonel to Lieutenant, within minutes of landing, and sent home under arrest by no less than Curtis LeMay, Commander of Strategic Air Command ! Donald later referred to the unplanned arrival, when driving past the airbase with Bruce Sellers.

Donald enjoyed his work at Boscombe Down, a great deal. Attending local motor racing events, and other activities, in his time off duty.



Donald, enjoying life at Boscombe Down .*Donald Sellers*

June 1952 saw Donald attend the Royal Aeronautical Society (RaeS) Garden party, held at the Fairey airfield ,Hayes Middlesex. The first such event, since the beginning of the Second World War. They had been a significant event in the aviation calendar, and this proved no different. Amongst the aircraft that caught Donald's attention was the sole remaining Fairey Fulmar, N1854. This was the first production aircraft, and after trials, had been kept by Fairey to act as a "Hack", only retiring in the late 1950's.



RaeS Garden party, Fairey Airfield ,Hayes, middlesex, june 1952. Last remaining Fairey Fulmar N1854 standing out amongst other wartime types. *Donald Sellers*

Enjoying a period of leave at Brough, during which he made the usual trip to view the Factory and walk alongside the estuary, Donald recorded some interesting types on the Airfield.



Blackburn and General Aircraft Freighter prototype WF320, now in RAF Colours with Bogey Undercarriage, and redundant Blackburn B-48 Firecrest, trials aircraft at Brough. Taken during Donald's leave, July 1952. *Donald Sellers*

The B-48 was a development of the troubled Firebrand, for an improved aircraft, more suited to carrier operations. Three prototypes were ordered with the company designation of B-48 and the informal name of "Firecrest", but only two of them actually flew.

The development of the aircraft was prolonged by significant design changes and slow deliveries of components, but the determination by the Ministry of Supply in 1946 that the airframe did not meet the requirements for a strike fighter doomed the aircraft. Construction of two of the prototypes was continued to gain flight-test data and the third was allocated to strength testing. The two flying aircraft were sold back to Blackburn in 1950 for disposal and the other aircraft (RT656) survived until 1952.



One of the airworthy B-48's alongside RT656 at Brough. *web*

By December of 1952, Donalds seven year, period of naval service was coming to an end.

It was not uncommon for personnel approaching the end of their service, to find their remaining drafts are less exciting than may be the case, should they elect to extend their time in uniform. Certainly, after his varied time in Malta and subsequently with D Sqn, the next posting would not appear as interesting.

### HMS Sanderling 03/12/52 – 13/10/53

HMS Sanderling (RNAS Abbotsinch) was located in Prestwick, Scotland. On the outskirts of Glasgow, conveniently sited, a few miles from the docks at Govan. Reconstructed between 1950 and 1952, and decommissioned in the 1960's. It is now known as Glasgow Airport.

HMS Sanderling's main functions were Reserve Aircraft Storage, and a RN Aircraft Maintenance Yard. The Station had the capacity to store 140 airframes, and by the time of Donald's arrival, it was very busy with preparing stored aircraft, for the Korean War. Many of which were craned onto the decks of Aircraft carriers/Aircraft maintenance ships at the King George V dock in Govan. From November 1952 HMS Sanderling housed Nos 1830 and 1843 Squadrons as part of the newly formed Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (Scottish Air Division) flying, Anti submarine and Trainer, Fairey Fireflies ; As well as Hawker Sea Furies .



Fairey Firefly T.2 MB727, 236/AC, 1830 sqdn, RNVR ScAD. In service at Abbotsinch when Donald was based there. *Lee Howard*

Whilst Donald, may, have had some contact with the RNVR Aircraft, his record states clearly that his role was "preparing A/C for embarkation". Perhaps, with things hotting up in the Korean War, no sign of a peace deal, and most of the British airpower there, being ship based, his posting was of necessity.

Within a short time, after the Korean war Armistice, "Abbots" was seen by many as, "the back end of the Navy". Housing many 'cabs' that previously made up the FAA, that was, over a few years. Many of the other A/C that escaped Abbotsinch, wound up at the fire-pits at Culdrose, or in the local scrap yards. A great number of aircraft were scrapped, on site, by naval ratings. Local aeroplane spotters' recall, as children, seeing miserable ratings stood out in the cold and damp of a Glasgow winter, bemoaning their "rotten posting".

A relatively small number of these airframes have survived. The majority of which are held at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton. Bruce and I visited the museum, many times, with Donald. No doubt evoking strong memories for him, and Grandad (Jim Sellers) on one occasion, when they saw Aircraft that bought back memories of working on/constructing them.

One aircraft, in particular, at the FAAM, went through Abbotsinch, during Donald's time there. Bearing mind his role, there is a very high likelihood that he worked on it.

Having been in storage in the USA, Grumman Avenger TBM-3 XB446 was gifted to the Royal navy in 1953, as part of a Mutual Defence Aid Program. Shipped across the Atlantic on HMS Perseus, it arrived at KGV Dock, Govan, and was

subsequently transported to AHU Abbotsinch on the 21/07/1953. Later being moved, by road, to Scottish Aviation at Prestwick, for conversion to AS5. Powered by a 1,750hp Wright Cyclone R-2600-20, the aircraft was held in high regard by Donald, since he first saw one on HMS Ocean.



Grumman Avenger ECM6B XB446, at the FAAM Yeovilton. *Web*

After one years' service, the aircraft was converted to an Electronic Counter Measures model. Going onto become one of the first airframes exhibited at the FAAM when it opened in 1974. In 1994, the airframe was resprayed into a, non accurate, D-Day scheme ,as part of D-Day commemorations. Here is what she looked like when we saw her on our first visit, shortly after the museum opened.



Grumman Avenger ECM6B XB446, at the FAAM Yeovilton, 1974. *Donald Sellers*

Some years later, Donald had gone back to the museum and recorded this rather moody photograph of the same airframe.



*Donald Sellers*



In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Prestwick locals remember hundreds of aircraft being moved, over months, on giant 'Queen Mary' trailers; and crawling up Renfrew High Street, to the delight of many wee boys !



Two Sea Furys moving through Renfrewshire, on Queen Mary trailers, Headed for RNAS Abbotsinch.*web*

Years later, Donald made reference to his role in such movements.

I recall, in 1982, during the time of the Falklands War, Donald seeing the Argentine Aircraft Carrier on the news. He then said, "Last time I saw that, it was HMS Vengeance, and we were lifting Fireflies onto it!"

To be fair, to Donald's error of recall, it was thirty years since Donald had done this. The Argentine ship, HAD previously been a RN carrier; HMS Venerable, not as Donald recalled erroneously, HMS Vengeance.

When The Royal Australian Navy temporarily acquired HMS Vengeance, due to delays in the preparation of HMAS Sydney, Donald was involved in the movement of the Aircraft from the AHU to the docks, and subsequent embarkation. January 1953, at The King George V dock at Govan.



Fireflies being loaded onto HMS Vengeance at Govan. The Aircraft had been in storage at Abbotsinch AHU. Not only was Donald involved in this, but he would also have prepared the aircraft prior to transit.*Web*



Illustrative photo of a USN transport carrier, unloading Panther jets at The KGV docks Govan. *Web*

When HMAS Sydney was finally ready for transfer to the Royal Australian Navy, its airgroup was made up from stored aircraft at the AHU. One of the Firefly Aircraft allocated remains in airworthy condition.

Fairey Firefly MK.VI WH632 arrived at Abbotsinch, from the Fairey factory at Ringway, in January 1953; following repairs after a heavy landing. By June 1953 she had been taken out of storage and prepared for embarkation, quite likely by Donald. It was retired from the RAN in 1960 and ended up in a museum in New South Wales, Australia. The Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum purchased it from them in 1979. Although a Mk.VI, it has been restored in the colours and markings of a RCN No. 825 Squadron Firefly Mk. V operating from HMCS Magnificent in 1949-50, and regularly performs at air displays in Canada.



Fairey Firefly MK.VI remains airworthy in Canada . Great to think of another Airworthy aircraft that Donald actually worked on. *Web*

Donald's time at RNAS Abbotsinch drew to a close on the 12<sup>th</sup> October 1953.

With his seven year length of service approaching, it was an uncertain time. With many external factors, likely to impact, on a possible extension of service.

From 1952, many ships of the Reserve Fleet were dispersed from the home ports, to commercial ports, around the UK. As a precaution against nuclear attack, by the growing threat of the USSR. The war in Korea had only recently been paused, by the signing of the Armistice in June. With Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve squadrons being re-equipped with Sea Fury and Firefly Mark VI aircraft, his skills were clearly still relevant.

Future use of helicopters, in the anti-submarine role, had been recognised by the Admiralty. Donald's experience of Helicopters, and the Admiralty's decision to augment extension of service, for existing Engagements; anticipated as being for 18 months, made the chance of his length of service being extended was, far, from remote.

He returned to RNAS Lee on Solent on the 13<sup>th</sup> October 1953, to await the conclusion of his service, or otherwise.

Donald was given a months leave at Lee On Solent, He returned to Brough and began the process of deciding "what to do next", before concluding his service on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1953.

KEEP THIS RELEASE ORDER SAFE  
This document is the Naval equivalent of the Army Release Order Book, and must be produced at a Post Office in order to cash the Postal Drafts with which you will be paid.

S.1586 (A)  
(Established—November, 1944.)  
(Revised—September, 1950.)

**ORDER FOR RELEASE FROM NAVAL SERVICE (MEN)**

TO BE CAREFULLY PRESERVED FOR PRODUCTION IF REQUIRED

H.M.S. [REDACTED]  
(Date) 12th October 1953  
(See Note 1)

To Donald Sellers (Name)  
By PO [REDACTED] (Rating)  
Official Number 442113220

1. You are being released from Service, by order made under authority of the Naval and Marine Forces (Temporary Release from Service) Act, 1940.

2. The date of your Release will be 20th November 1953

3. You have been granted leave as follows, starting on the day after the date of this Order:—  
(a) 35 days' foreign service leave expiring on [REDACTED] and  
(b) 35 days' terminal leave expiring on the date of your Release.

4. You are free to take up civil employment at any time after the date of this Order.

5. You may wear civilian clothing while on leave, and you are to cease to wear uniform after the date of your release.

6. After your release you will be regarded as being in Reserve and you will be liable until the end of the present emergency to recall to the Naval Service by revocation of this Order at any time. You will not be recalled, however, except in extreme emergency. (See Note 2.)

7. Your home address is noted in official records as follows:  
74 Blackburn Avenue  
Brough East Yorkshire

You are to report all changes to the Committee of your Depot; if a Royal Marine to the Director of Pay and Pensions, Royal Marines, Mitchell Barracks, Chatham. While you are on leave you should also report any changes of address to the Officer in Charge of the Pay Office from which you were paid.

8. Your Service Certificate will be sent to you as soon as possible.

Donalds Order for Release from Service. Donald Sellers

However, the Navy had not quite relinquished its grip on him. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1953, Donald signed on with the Royal Fleet Reserve. Being available for a return to service should the need arise.

### Post naval service

By autumn 1953, Donald had applied to join The Bristol Aircraft Company, at Filton, near Bristol. Using his Friend Marjory's Husband, William (Bill) Newton as a referee. The Newton's lived in Westbury on Trym, near Bristol, and Donald had remained friends with Marjory since she lived with the Sellers at either Blackburn Avenue, or as a child tenant in the rented house on Skillings Lane, Brough. Donald went onto have a close relationship with Marjory and Bill.

His application was, ultimately, succesfull. Commencing work at the Filton, BAC site.

THE BRISTOL AEROPLANE COMPANY, LIMITED.  
AIRCRAFT DIVISION  
FILTON HOUSE, BRISTOL, ENGLAND

TELEGRAMS  
AVIATION, BRISTOL

TELEPHONE  
BRISTOL, REGD. EXT. 294.

TELEX NO. 88 45001

YOUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.  
OUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.

17th August, 1953.

Mr. D. Sellers,  
R.N.A.S.  
Abbotsinch,  
Paisley, Scotland.

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL.

Dear Sir,

Further to your interview of the 7th instant, we hereby offer you a position as a Trainee Draughtsman in our Training School, at a salary of £7.1.6d. per week, on a standard working week of 38 hours, 5 days per week.

This appointment is for a probationary period of 3 months trial basis, and if at the end of that time your work is not up to the standard required your services will be dispensed with.

In the case of your work being satisfactory at the end of your trial period, you will then be considered for transfer to the Helicopter Drawing Office.

We shall be pleased if you will advise us within the next two weeks if you are interested in this proposal.

You will understand that we have not yet had the opportunity of making the usual enquiries following the supply of references. This offer is therefore subject to our being fully satisfied as to your suitability after making these enquiries and also to a satisfactory medical report after examination by the Company's Doctor.

Yours faithfully,  
*R. W. Turner*  
Design Administration Engineer.

PHONE 41693 *copy*

76 Wellington Hill West,  
Westbury on Trym,  
Bristol

18<sup>th</sup> Aug 1953.

C. K. Bowner Esq.  
A.S. & O.  
B.A.C.

Dear Sir

In answer to your letter of the 17<sup>th</sup> inst. regarding an application by Mr. D. Sellers to R.N.A.S. Abbotsinch, for the position of Trainee Draughtsman, I have pleasure in informing you, that during the seven years I have known the applicant, he has proved himself to be industrious, conscientious and trustworthy; therefore, I have no hesitation in recommending Mr. Sellers for a position within the Company, and feel confident that he would prove to be an asset.

I am  
Yours respectfully,  
*W. Newton*

Offer of employment from The Bristol Aircraft Company, pending reference's and The reference from Bill' Newton. Donald Sellers

THE BRISTOL AEROPLANE COMPANY, LIMITED.  
AIRCRAFT DIVISION  
FILTON HOUSE, BRISTOL, ENGLAND

TELEGRAMS  
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BRISTOL, REGD. EXT. 294.

TELEX NO. 88 45001

YOUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.  
OUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.

31st. August. 1953.

Mr. D. Sellers,  
R.N.A.S. Abbotsinch,  
Paisley,  
Scotland.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of the 27th instant, and we now confirm your appointment as a Trainee Draughtsman in our Training School, at a salary of £7.1.6d. per week.

We shall be pleased if you will advise on which Monday you will be available to take up your duties with the Company, following your release from the Fleet Air Arm.

Yours faithfully,  
*C.K. Bowner*  
For, Design Administration Engineer.

THE BRISTOL AEROPLANE COMPANY, LIMITED.  
AIRCRAFT DIVISION  
FILTON HOUSE, BRISTOL, ENGLAND

TELEGRAMS  
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TELEPHONE  
BRISTOL, REGD. EXT. 294.

TELEX NO. 88 45001

YOUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.  
OUR REF. AIRCRAFT/DO/HWD/EG.

9th September, 1953.

Mr. D. Sellers,  
R.N.A.S. Abbotsinch,  
Paisley,  
Scotland.

Dear Sir,

We thank you for your letter of the 8th instant and confirm that Monday the 23rd November will be quite convenient for you to commence your duties with us.

Will you please report at 8.30. am on that date to the Aircraft Design Drawing Office, bringing with you your National Insurance card and P.45. Income Tax form.

Also to comply with the "Notification of Vacancies order, 1952" please obtain the requisite card from your local Ministry of Labour office.

Yours faithfully,  
*C.K. Bowner*  
For, Design Administration Engineer.

Further communications from Bristol, making arrangements for his Employment in November 1953. Donald Sellers

In November 1953, Donald started work as a Draughtsman in the Training School (Aircraft), Bristol Aircraft Company, Filton, Near the city of Bristol.



The Bristol Aircraft Company, Filton, note the stone Bristol radial engine motifs on the wall and the Bristol sports car *Bristol Aircraft Company*



One of the Bristol Aircraft company Drawing offices. I suspect the 'Training School', was not as smart ? *Bristol Aircraft Company*

Starting any new job is a daunting prospect. On this occasion, made significantly easier for Donald, by his walking into the Drawing Office, only to be met by his old friend, and former Matelot from Malta, George Williams !

Donald quickly resumed his friendship with George, who helped him settle into Bristol and all its Delights.

Donald had moved into 'Digs', at 67 Wellington Avenue, Westbury on Trym. Lodging with the family friend from Brough, Marjory Newton and her husband Bill'. It was Bill who provided one of the the references dad required to commence employment with the Bristol Aircraft Company. An easy com mute to Filton, from Wellington Avenue, Donald enjoyed his time at 'westbury', attending motor racing events on the airfield and visiting local areas of interest .



**Bill Newton outside 67 Wellington Avenue, Westbury on Trym, Bristol. Marjory Newton in the front Garden and Donald in the Back garden. Donald Sellers**

George, by this time, was recently married, to Margaret Bowness, and Donald spent increasing time in their company.



**George and Margaret Williams on their wedding day in 1953. Susan Williams**

In time, Margaret's sister, Doreen, came to visit her and George. It seemed perfectly appropriate for Donald to accept Georges offer of meeting her, and going out as a 'Foursome'. And that, as the saying goes, is how Mum and Donald met. Well done, George Williams !



Donald with his girlfriend, Doreen Bowness, on a visit to Wem. Visiting the couple Doreen lived with for 6 years , after being evacuated from Liverpool in 1939. *Donald Sellers*

Their relationship blossomed, becoming courtship, and Subsequent Marriage in December 1956.



Donald, and Doreen's wedding Day. LtoR John 'Jack' Bowness, Elsie Sellers, Lucy Bowness, Stanley Bowness, Donald Sellers, Doreen Sellers, Alice Bowness and Jim Sellers. *Donald Sellers*

Donald and Doreen moved into a flat in Caledonia place, Clifton, Bristol. A few doors down, from where George and Margaret lived.



Outside Caledonia Place, Margaret, George, Doreen and Donald, shortly after becoming a 'Foursome' in 1953. Donald Sellers

By now Donald was working in the Helicopters division of the Bristol Aircraft Company.

With the tension in the middle East over the annexation of the Suez Canal, Doreen had grave concerns that Donald may be "called up" for service again. He had continued attending for irregular RFR training courses. But, it was not to be. His last formal contact with the RN was in July 1956, for a week long Training course at HMS Condor, in Arbroath. Studying Gas Turbine Engines. After which, he retired from the RFR.



A 'Pussers Grip' holdall. Naval Issue, they were given to personnel on training courses. Over time, Donald returned with multiple examples. Going on to become a staple of the Sellers family Holiday arrangements. Jim Sellers also was given one. *Web*

Still travelling to Filton' daily, dad would stop and photograph any interesting aircraft movements, at the airfield.





**De havilland Vampire and Gloster Meteor arriving at Filton, approximately 1957. Donald Seller**

With Bristol' sending all of its Helicopter Division to the Oldmixon Factory at Weston Super mare, Mum and Donald accepted the subsidised mortgage offered by Bristol'. Moving, them and their recently born daughter, Jane, to a newly built property in Worle.

Donald remained with Bristol', when they were amalgamated with Various Helicopter manufacturers to become Westland Helicopters. By which time Jane had been joined by brothers Tim, and a few years later, twins Nicholas and Bruce. Jane went onto spend some time living at Brough whilst studying nearby. All Donald's children have happy memories of, visiting Donalds parents, Jane spending some time lodging there in 1979. Walking past the Aircraft Factory and spotting various Aircraft stored externally. making the walk out to the remains of the Sea Plane ramp, the sense of history, was palpable.

Donald visited Jim, and Brough in 1981, his penultimate trip. Revisiting the estuary and walking alongside the factory, possibly for the last time. Blackburn' had long since been subsumed into the Hawker Siddeley Group, much to the disappointment of many, who no longer regarded the factory as fondly. By this time many of the Air raid shelters, we saw as children, had been demolished. Hawker Siddeley often 'bought back' their old aircraft when they were surplus to their owner's requirements. It was these that the boys enjoyed spotting, when visiting. Donald captured these, retired Hunter jets, awaiting refurbishment or disposal.



**One of the Hawker Hunters, bought back from its users, by Hawker Siddeley Aviation ( whom Blackburn's had been amalgamated into by this time ).Donald Sellers**

As part of his role for Westland Helicopters, Donald would make frequent trips to their parent factory in Yeovil. Regularly passing his former posting at HMS Heron, and pausing to photograph aircraft movements.



Fairey Gannet AEW3 ,of 849 Sqn, in the late 1970's .Taken from the roadside outside RNAS Yeovilton.*Donald Sellers*

On occasion Donald stopped to view the aircraft in the FAAM, attached to HMS Heron. Always, happy to see Brough's very own Bomber, Donald was greeted outside the museum by the strikingly posed XK488.



I recall Jim, 'Coo-ing' with pride at the sight of the trials Buccaneer XK488. *Web Donald's photograph of the S MK I Buccaneer in the FAAM.Donald Sellers*

Always stopping on the steps of the museum, to glance at the aircraft of the, Fleet Requirements and Direction Unit. The unit that, then, performed the role, previously provided by 728 FRU Sqn.



Fleet Requirements and Direction Unit Canberras, visible from the FAAM, on the apron at HMS Heron 1980's. *Kev Slade and Don Cheam respectively.*

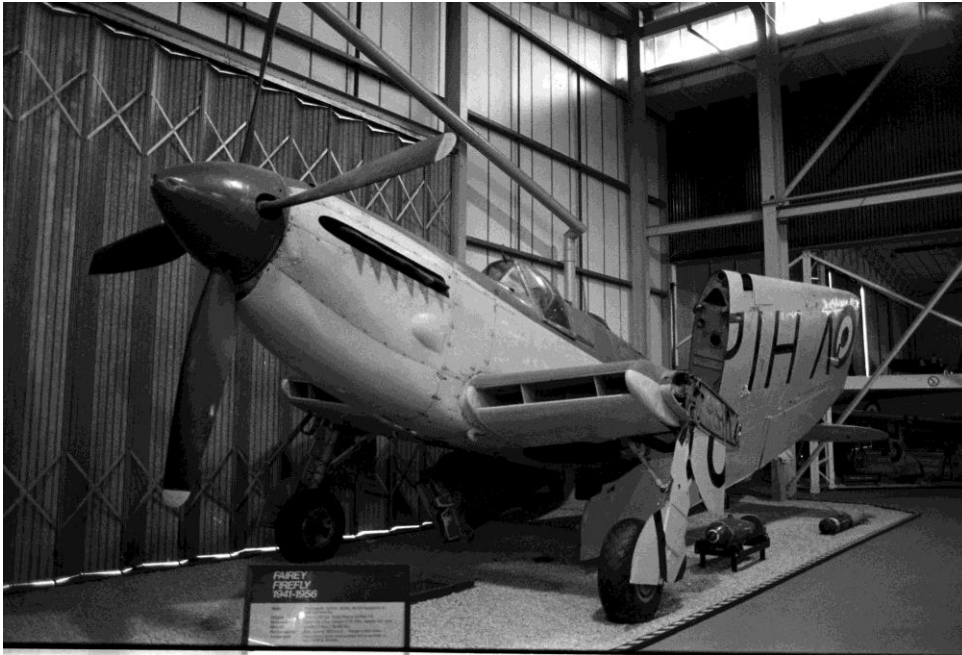


Shameless insertion of a photo of the author/Bruce Sellers and David Snook on the FRADU apron at RNAS Yeovilton air day 1981. Note the markings of FRADU's earlier Nomenclature ( Naval Air Support Unit) remaining on the Apron. *Donald Sellers*

Inside the museum Donald would take photos of "his" aircraft as well as those that flew before, and after, his service, which he retained an interest in. Pictures of some of "his" aircraft are reproduced below, alongside a photograph he took of two of the Aircraft from the Royal Navy Historic flight on his last attendance at the RNAS Yeovilton Air Day in 1981.



The FAAM's Seafire FR.17 and Sea Fury FB.II, in an unusually quiet museum. Doubtless this was on one of Donald's visits on the way back from Yeovil. Likely he was testing a new camera, whilst having a trip down memory lane. *Donald Sellers*



Firefly AS 5 at The FAAM. Donald's fondness for the aircraft types listed herein was clear. *Donald Sellers*



Donald enjoyed the Firefly and Sea Fury combination of the Royal Navy Historic Flight. Photographed here at the 1981 RNAS Yeovilton Air Show. *Donald Sellers*

In writing this, I noticed another aircraft photographed by Donald, during his last visit to the museum, the sole remaining Fairey Fulmar N1854. The, very same, aircraft he saw at the RAeS Garden party in 1952.



Fairey Fulmar N1854 at the FAAM 1987. 32 years since he saw it The RAes Garden Party. *Donald Sellers*

Clearly, in Donald’s relationship with Aviation over the years, there were, many, occasions when he was re-acquainted with places, aircraft types, or even specific airframes. Sometimes, knowingly, others not.

In 1982, it was 25 years since Donald had left the FAA. The Royal Navy, however, still had a need for him.

### Unexpected collaboration

The Falklands Conflict saw a massive surge in the FAA’s helicopter fleet. Aircraft in service were modified with unheard of haste, and stored aircraft/parts were rushed back into service. After the loss of many Westland Wessex HU5 aircraft and spares, on the container ship Atlantic Conveyor, all efforts were explored to replace them. The huge burden on the remaining Wessex HU5 transport helicopters meant their gearboxes were wearing out quickly. The Sellers household was woken by a phone call in the middle of the night, with an urgent question for Donald, from someone in the Admiralty. “Can we fit Wessex HAS.2 gearboxes into a Wessex HU5?”. The answer from Donald? A clear no. Different engines entirely, and not compatible. They would have to find an alternative source of spares.



Westland Wessex HAS.2 anti-submarine helicopter and Westland Wessex HU.5 Transport helicopters at RNAS Yeovilton 1981. *Donald Sellers*

Shortly after the conclusion of the Falklands Conflict, it was announced that Westland Helicopters had been working alongside the FAA, to provide Airborne Early Warning aircraft. An asset the FAA had lost with the retirement of the Fairey Gannet AEW.3 in 1978. Contributing directly to the loss of the Atlantic Conveyor, and other naval assets, in the Conflict.

Under conditions of great secrecy, Westland had modified two, Anti Submarine, Sea King HAS2s with the addition of the Thorn-EMI ARI 5980/3 Searchwater LAST radar attached to the fuselage on a swivel arm and protected by an inflatable dome. This allowed the radar to be lowered below the fuselage during flight and for it to be raised for landing. These prototypes, designated **HAS2 (AEW)**, were taken out of storage, modified and flying within 11 weeks.



The two Sea King HAS.2' modified for AEW in the summer of 1982, flying alongside the last Fairey Gannet AEW3, returned to airworthiness for propellor noise trials by Dowty Rotor . The second image shows a Sea King HAS2 (AEW) still in its original, pre Falklands conflict colour scheme. Both images FAAM

Donald's, aircraft mad twin sons, were very proud when Donald revealed he had some input into this collaborative venture between Westland Helicopters and the FAA.

During his time with Westland Helicopters, Donald often visited naval installations around the country, to support the FAA helicopter operations. On one occasion being stuck in a broken down car, returning from RNAS Fleetlands, with his colleagues. A long wait ensued , and with no food or drink in the car, tensions mounted. Eventually, a clearly aggrieved Donald gave in and said ,” Go on then ! you can have my Chocolate Brazils !!”.

Leap forward to 2014, and the author worked alongside a social worker in a mental health team.

In conversation, it transpired that, prior to being a social worker; she had been in the FAA, based at RNAS Yeovilton. Not only that, but her husband was a FAA officer pilot, and had been decorated for his involvement in the development of the Sea King HAS2 (AEW)!

Donald might have taken comfort, from knowing that the author's colleague, suffered with terrible sea sickness, and was also, “a poor Sailor “.....

## End note

Just as Donald's Naval service, and aviation interest's, captured many moments that connected the present with the past. It appears the same experience, occurs for his children

Whilst writing this, I heard a helicopter fly over the house. A dash outside reveals a Westland Apache, gunship, no less! A rare, visitor to Halifax.

Imagine my delight, a few moments later, whilst trawling through Donalds photos, searching for an unrelated photo, to accidentally come across his picture of the first Westland Apache at his last Farnborough Airshow !



First demonstration flight of The Westland Apache Helicopter Gunship. Farnborough Airshow 1987. *Donald Sellers*

I'm pleased to see that spirit, of, recurring encounters with Donald's experiences persists today, for his children.

I, for one, look forward to many more moments, that prompt me to reflect back, on Donald's own experiences.

## Credits

In the absence of conversation with Donald Sellers, I have had to resort to the, limited anecdotes; he shared with Doreen Sellers and his children. For which I am very grateful, in particular to Doreen, for information pertaining to hers and Donald's time in Bristol. The absence, of the subject of these notes, cannot be overstated; either in terms of availability of information, or, in General.

Anything beyond that captured from the above sources has been an exercise in research, of texts and web based material. For the hard work of all those authors, I am truly indebted.

In compiling these notes, I have benefitted from the numerous reminiscences of former service personnel to be found on the Internet, and in print. Whether they served alongside Donald will never be known, but their recollections have enabled us to paint a much more accurate picture of his time and activities in service. Special thanks go to Bill and Mary Gusky for detail relating to life at Hal Far, whilst based there with the US Navy 1953-58. Thanks also to Tony Atkins for detail regarding his own experience of Basic Seamanship Training at HMS Glendower. Aviationinmalta.com has been a very helpful source of information, not least their excellent account of the 1949 Air Display.

I have attempted to list the sources/copyright holders of all the photographs. But apologise for any unwitting errors on my part. I remain grateful to all those who have shared their photographs.

Photo's credited to *Donald Sellers* are those where we have prints (and, some, negative's) extant. However, there will be some of these photos that originate from Ship's/Official Photographers, where Donald has obtained duplicates. I apologise for any errors in ownership here, and elsewhere, and will amend accordingly in any subsequent issue. There are a small number of photographs used, listed as illustrative. These images may not meet the criteria for inclusion, but are helpful in adding detail.

I apologise, to the Sellers family members. References to family members has been, by necessity, brief; as to record more family detail would take us outside of the, limited, scope of these notes. No slight was intended, and, I sincerely hope, none taken.

Donald's career in rotary winged aviation, post naval service, has sadly, only been touched on here. 24 years of aeronautical engineering, is worthy of a similar volume in its own right, but, that's for another day....

I shall leave the last word to Donald.

Were he to see this record, no doubt he would raise an, exasperated, eyebrow and proclaim ....

**"Jesus Christ! And General Jackson!"**



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The Squadrons and Units of the Fleet Air Arm. Theo Balance, Lee Howard and Ray Sturtivant. Air Britain.

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Wings of the Navy. Capt Eric Brown. Janes.

**Donald Sellers Record of Naval Service**

| Ship Name                | Shore Code | Ship Code | Location               | From     | To       |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|------------------------|----------|----------|
| HMS Glendower            |            |           | Pwllheli, Training est | 08/05/46 | 18/7/46  |
| HMS Heron                | VL         |           | RNAS Yeovilton         | 19/7/46  | 04/2/47  |
| HMS Daedalus             | LP         |           | RNAS Lee on Solent     | 05/2/47  | 16/2/47  |
| HMS Peregrine            | FD         |           | RNAS Ford              | 17/2/47  | 27/8/47  |
| HMS Peregrine (762)      | FD         |           | RNAS Ford              | 28/8/47  | 03/10/47 |
| HMS Daedalus             | LP         |           | RNAS Lee on Solent     | 04/10/47 | 10/10/47 |
| HMS Falcon               | HF         |           | RNAS Hal Far           | 11/10/47 | 31/7/49  |
| HMS Falcon               | HF         |           | RNAS Hal Far           | 01/9/49  | 22/9/49  |
| HMS Falcon               | HF         |           | RNAS Hal Far           | 23/9/49  | 15/3/50  |
| HMS Daedalus             | LP         |           | On passage             | 16/3/49? | 30/5/50  |
| RAF Bealieu (Daedalus)   |            |           | A&AEE                  | 31/5/50  | 14/9/50  |
| Boscombe Down (Daedalus) |            |           | A&AEE                  | 15/9/50  | 02/12/52 |
| HMS Sanderling           |            |           | RNAS Abbotsinch        | 03/12/52 | 12/10/53 |
| HMS Daedalus             | LP         |           | RNAS Lee on Solent     | 13/10/53 | 20/11/53 |
| Enrolled RFR             |            |           | RNAS Lee on Solent     | 21/11/53 | 07/5/58  |
| HMS Condor (RFR Drill)   |            |           | Arbroath               | 23/7/56  | 29/7/56  |



**Ship and Shore codes for Aircraft in the order of Donalds service**

| Ship Name           | Shore Code | Ship Code | Location       | From    | To       | Code                          | Sqn     | Dates | Aircraft           | Example                      |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|---------|----------|-------------------------------|---------|-------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| HMS Heron           | VL         |           | RNAS Yeovilton | 19/7/46 | 04/2/47  | 200-206                       | 700/    | 46-49 | Firefly FR1        | MB401 200VL                  |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               | 767/799 | 46-49 | Harvard III        | EZ284 203/VL                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 300-322                       | 700     | 46/47 | Barracuda III      | RJ766 302/VL                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 701                           | 700     | 47/48 | Sea Otter ASR.2    | JN201 701/VL                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         |       |                    |                              |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         |       |                    |                              |
| Ship Name           | Shore Code | Ship Code | Location       | From    | To       | Code                          | Sqn     | Dates | Aircraft           | Example                      |
| HMS Peregrine       | FD         |           | RNAS Ford      | 17/2/47 | 27/8/47  | 000-042                       | 778     | 46/48 | Barracuda TR.3     | MD989 031                    |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Dominie            | NF871 002                    |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Firefly F.1        | Z1955 026/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Mosquito FB.6      | RF904 042/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Mosquito PR.16     | RG171 042/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Oxford             | PH185 002/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Seafire F.17       | SX305 017/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Seafire F.45       | LA450 012/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Sea Hornet F.20    | WE239 009/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         | 46/48 | Sea Hornet PR.22   | VZ655 005/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 100-103<br>110-113<br>120-123 | 813     | 47    | Firebrand TF.5     | EK766 121/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 150-161                       | 801     | 47/48 | Sea Hornet F.20    | TT204 154/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 501-516                       | 771     | 47/55 | Firefly FR.1       | MB719 508/FD                 |
| HMS Peregrine       | FD         |           | RNAS Ford      | 17/2/47 | 27/8/47  | 501-516                       | 771     | 47/55 | Sea Mosquito TR.33 | TW256 593/LP                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          | 600-603                       | 720     | 46/48 | Anson 1            | MH119 601/FD                 |
|                     |            |           |                |         |          |                               |         |       |                    |                              |
| HMS Peregrine (762) | FD         |           | RNAS Ford      | 28/8/47 | 03/10/47 | 400-411                       | 762     | 47/48 | Anson 1<br>Oxford  | MG725 401/FD<br>PH260 406/FD |

| Ship Name           | Shore Code | Ship Code | Location                 | From      | To        | Code   | Sqn  | Dates  | Aircraft   | Example   |
|---------------------|------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|--|--|--|--|---|
| HMS Peregrine (762) | FD         |           | RNAS Ford                | 28/8/47   | 03/10/47  | 450-459  | 762  | 47/49  | Mosquito T.3   | TW103 450/FD  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 470-476  | 762  | 47/49  | Mosquito FB.VI<br>Sea Mosquito   | RF782 476/FD<br>TW293 472/FD  |
| HMS Falcon          | HF         |           | RAF Hal Far              | 11/10/47  | 15/3/50   | 500-535  | 728  | 48/55<br>48/52<br>45/49<br>49/52<br>48/52<br>46/48<br>48/59<br>47/50 | Martinet TT.1<br>Mosquito PR.16<br>Mosquito B.25<br>Mosquito TT.39<br>Seafire F.17<br>Seafire F.XV<br>Expediter C.II<br>Tiger Moth<br>Harvard III<br>Sea Otter | RH114 513/HF<br>NS742 526/HF<br>KA959 521/HF<br>RV295 511/HF<br>SX294 502/HF<br>PR495<br>KP115 811/HF<br>P4709 HF<br>EZ348 911/HF<br>VR969 901/HF |
| HMS Ocean           |            | O         | Med'<br>CAG 14<br>CAG 20 | Not Known | Not Known | 101-118<br>131-140<br>200-215<br>200-211<br>212-215<br>217 | 805<br>804<br>816<br>812<br>812 NFU<br>812 NFU | 47/48<br>48/49<br>47/48<br>48/49<br>48/49<br>47/48                   | Seafire F.17<br>Seafire FR.47<br>Firefly FR.1<br>Firefly FR.5<br>Firefly NF.1<br>Firefly NF.1  | SZ234 104/O<br>VP444 133/O<br>PP560 205/O<br>VT369 211/O<br>PP555 213/O<br>PP557 217/O  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 801  | 728  | 46/47  | Baltimore IV   | FA435 801/HF  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 811-812  | 728  | 49/55  | Expediter C.2  | FT994 811/HF  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 913  | Stn Flt  | 1948   | Harvard III  | EZ436 913/HF  |
| HMS Triumph         |            | P         | Med'<br>CAG 13           | Not Known | Not Known | 171-182  | 800  | 48/49  | Seafire F.17<br>Seafire FR.47  | SX345 179/P<br>VP438 178/P  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 199  | 13CAG<br>cdr                                   | 48/49  | Seafire F.17   | SX387 199/P<br>VP431 199/P  |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 212-215  | 812 NFU  | 1949   | Firefly NF.1   | PP600 215/P   |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 251-254  | 827  | 46/48  | Firefly FR.1   | PP566 254/P   |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 271-282  | 827  | 47/50  | Firefly FR.1   | PP596 273/P   |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 279-282  | 827 NFU  | 1949   | Firefly NF.1   | PP560 280/P   |
|                     |            |           |                          |           |           | 299  | 13 CAG<br>cdr                                  | 49/50  | Firefly FR.1   | PP648 299/P   |

| Ship Name                        | Shore Code | Ship Code | Location                | From     | To       | Code    | S'p flt       | Dates | Aircraft  | Example  |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------------|----------|----------|---------|---------------|-------|---|--|
| HMS Daedalus (RAF Bealieu)       |            |           | RAF Bealieu Hants       | 31/5/50  | 14/9/50  |         | AFEE          |       | Unclear .RN detachment was involved with glider towing and parachute drop developments. The RN Rotary Wing was based here.? first encounter with Helicopters.           | Unknown  |
| HMS Daedalus (RAF Boscombe Down) |            |           | RAF Boscombe Down       | 15/9/50  | 2/12/52  |         | A&AEE D sqdn' |       | Firefly<br>Sturgeon<br>Sea Fury<br>Horsa Gliders  | Individual aircraft, carried a variety. Too many to list   |
| HMS Sanderling                   | AC         |           | RNAS Abbotsinch Glasgow | 03/12/52 | 12/10/53 | 200-261 | ScAD          | 47/55 | Anson 1<br>Avenger AS.5<br>Firefly FR.1<br>Firefly T.2<br>Firefly FR.4<br>Firefly FR.5<br>Firefly AS.6<br>Harvard IIa<br>Harvard IIc<br>Harvard III<br>Sea Balliol T.21 | XB437 226/AC<br>DK501 206/AC<br>DK489 200/AC<br>TW752 261/AC<br>VX392 222/AC<br>WD881 224/AC<br>EZ272 202/AC<br>KF517 239/AC<br>EZ383 207/AC<br>WP324 206/AC |