

# Scribbblings...

*From The Pen*

*Journal of The Pen & Sword Club*

*February 2025*

*Editor: Mike Peters*

## NATO StratCom Director reinforces calls for shift to a wartime mindset

ECHOING NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte's warning that NATO is not ready to meet security challenges and calls for increased defence spending, Jay Janzen, the Strategic Communications Director at SHAPE in Brussels and a Pen & Sword Club Executive Council member added: "These words apply as much to the strategic communications, military public affairs, psychological operations and information operations community as they do to any other branch of the armed forces.

"In fact, the Global Economic Forum has released a report on global risks ranked by severity. Over a two-year time span, the consensus of experts was that misinformation, and disinformation was the most severe and serious risk we collectively face.

"Yet StratCom capabilities continue to face underinvestment, lack of trained personnel, lack of representation at senior rank levels, and a lack of a warfighting ethos as part of a wider multi-domain team.

"The good news is that there are several initiatives ongoing across the NATO Alliance that have great promise.

"I am confident that 2025 can be a landmark year in terms of enhancing cognitive capabilities across Allied militaries and integrating these into wider whole of government capacity.



**"We have a lot of work to do, but together we are moving forward! If you are an information practitioner, please do a self-assessment on your readiness for warfighting. Check your resilience, your operational skills, your knowledge of the wider warfighting profession."**

## **NATO is not prepared says Secretary General**

**In his first major speech since taking office in October, the NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte has called for an urgent "shift to a wartime mindset," warning that the alliance's members are not prepared enough for an increasing security threat posed by Russia.**



**Mr. Rutte said: "To prevent war, we need to prepare for it. It's time to shift to a wartime mindset, and this means we need to strengthen our defences even more by spending more on defence and producing more and better defence capabilities."**

**The Secretary General highlighted that Moscow is preparing for a "long-term confrontation "with Ukraine and NATO, describing the current security landscape as the most perilous in his lifetime.**

**"We are not ready for what is coming our way in four to five years," he cautioned, adding that NATO nations must 'turbocharge' their defence spending to adapt to the new reality."**

**He also noted what officials have warned is an increasingly present diverse security landscape with, "cyber-attacks, assassination attempts, acts of sabotage, and more," carried out by Russia.**

**"We used to call this hybrid, but these are destabilisation actions and campaigns. Russia is hard at work to weaken our democracies and chip away at our freedom, and it is not alone - it has China, North Korea, and Iran by its side."**

**He concluded by supporting Ukraine and emphasising the critical importance of helping Kyiv shift the war's trajectory. "We all want the war to end, but above all, we want peace to last," he said.**

***Jay H. Janzen is a strategic communications professional with over two decades of multinational and military experience. He serves on The Pen's managing body and represents all our members serving in NATO's armed forces. Prior to his current role at SHAPE, Jay was a Brigadier-General in the Canadian Armed Forces, where he led efforts to enhance strategic***



***communication and military public affairs capabilities.***

***Earlier in his career he deployed to Bosnia and twice to Afghanistan, where he was involved in communications.***

***His previous notable positions include Director of Public Affairs for the Canadian Army, the Chief***

***of Media Operations at SHAPE and the Director General StratCom for the Canadian Armed Forces. He is a graduate of Royal Roads Military College, NATO Defence College, and the Canadian National Security Programme. He was awarded the NATO Meritorious Service Medal and was appointed as an Officer in the Canadian Order of Military Merit.***

# *Scribblings says.....Time for a re-think*

NATO is encouraging what The Pen & Sword Club advocates! Last month our Immediate Past President and former Chief of Public Relations at the UK Ministry of Defence, Hugh Colver said: “The decline in defence communications which we have all observed over the last far too many years is a disgrace and is indeed shocking.

“ As an organisation that stands for the importance of defence communications, and the need for quality people with the right training and experience, it was sad to see the Pen & Sword Club members Derek Plews, Mike Evans and Mark Laity savaging the current UK defence communications scene.

“We should sit up and take notice. These three know a great deal about how this should work. They told an uncomfortable truth. They also, though, reflected that the UK is behind other nations in this area - and we used to be good at this.”

Earlier, Lt Colonel Derek Plews, once a member of the now defunct British Army Media Operations Group (Volunteers) who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and also served at a senior level in the Government Communications Service in the Cabinet Office also added his opinion: “The British Army’s ability to deliver ‘soft effects’ through traditional or mainstream media outlets has been degraded as a new generation of practitioners switch focus to social media channels. This sad state of affairs has been exacerbated by 77 Brigade’s apparent fixation with Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities or CEMA.

He added: “77 Brigade is supposed to provide army commanders with specialist information warfare capabilities, including media operations, psychological operations and cyber but many insiders claim the Brigade does not understand media operations, and has become obsessed with CEMA, leaving the other important elements of Information Operations to wither.

“One former Media Operations practitioner claimed Media Ops is not a skill recognised in 77 Brigade, and another noted that Media Ops was ‘all but wiped out’ when the formation came into being”

Wing Commander (retd) Peter Clarke, right, former Commanding Officer of the Royal Air Force 7644 Squadron - which was raised in WW2 to manage light blue public affairs - and later took to a communications career in NATO, said on LinkedIn: “The Secretary General’s address is another key step forward in shaping the understanding of the importance of readiness amongst senior leaders. Without capability and credibility there is no deterrence - but without communication the adversary is unaware.

Peter, now a Director of The StratCom Academy stressed: “ The time for gifted amateurs and reserve components alone is gone - the Alliance needs full time, trained, experienced, and skilled communicators now to make sure we deter, and if needed, defeat threats to alliance security and interests.

“The need for those capabilities is already endorsed by the North Atlantic Council through the defence planning process. It’s time for military senior leaders to march to those drums.”

Scribblings says: The time has come to support those who are calling for recognition of defence communications postings as a career enhancement.



Experienced media officers who have deployed on operational communications deployments are advising the restoration of a deployable media operations capability with the skills that can only come from trained, qualified and experienced practitioners. The UK boasts international communications skills in commerce and industry. These can be fully utilised by the military through the Reserves.

It's time to recognise strategic communications skills and the value of media operations in the battlespace. It's time to revive the former Army Media Operations Group to provide strength on the ground in support of operations and to boost the RAF and RNR media reserves. Let's mobilise the advantages of 21<sup>st</sup> century defence communications.

Considering the threat, particularly from Russia's information machine the availability of deployable communicators led by fully trained and media-savvy Regular officers is vital if we are to participate in the modern battlespace – and survive, let alone succeed.

Russia military media operations are highly effective at controlling narratives and in sowing confusion abroad. The UK, like Ukraine should develop a superior, professionally based, media team with a strategy which understands Western mainstream journalism and have the ability for rapid counter messaging and transparency in battlefield updates.

Ukraine has largely outmanoeuvred Russia in the information war. The UK could learn much from these two adversaries and by studying the Israeli Defence Force by treating media operations as a core skill rather than a poor relation or, in some circles, as an afterthought.

It is time too for The Ministry of Defence to recall what General Sir Michael Rose, right, once said: 'British officers will march cheerfully into the jaws of death but put them in front of a journalist and they turn to jelly.'



This was certainly a truism some decades ago, but the armed forces surely have learned the lesson of not seeing the media as a threat but as a potential ally. The broad idea that the military fear scrutiny more than combat must be tempered. The reluctance to engage unless there is control is misplaced. The mainstream media is neutral – within the rules of the game.

And the game is not new. The roots of journalism can be traced back thousands of years. Even in ancient Rome the *Acta Diurna* (*Daily Acts*), a daily news release ordered by that great general Julius Caesar, was in place. Centuries earlier Chinese officials faced up to the *Bao*, a form of government bulletin. The arrival of the printing press sparked modern journalism and the rise of The Penny Press – cheap, mass printed newspapers.

Today the armed forces face the complexities and pressures of instant journalism and pictures and comments beamed world-wide by satellites and the web in a flash - plus the potential toxicity of social media and the rise of citizen journalism. It can be managed!

In war time the British have excelled in deception, propaganda, and psy ops but has sometimes mishandled the mainstream media by preferring to think they can manage or even avoid journalists. This reluctance to engage with the defence press is wrong. As is an over reliance on social media and internal communications which breeds a sceptical or even adversarial press.

Media Operations is at the heart of defence communications and information operations. This fact needs to be fostered. The time has come to persuade the doubters. Defence communications is not the career killer that some believe.



Look at the former military Directors of Public Relations who were raised to star rank and when there knew, and valued, contact with the mainstream media.

The Kremlin views media operations as a weapon of war. Its approach combines state controlled messaging, deception, and psychological operations to shape public perception. The public can be fooled some of the time, but an educated western civilisation needs a more careful and thoughtful handling.

Military communicators should recognise the advantages of mainstream media over the often unreliable and dangerous landscape of citizen journalism on social platforms for several key reasons. Mainstream media outlets, despite their flaws, generally adhere to journalistic standards, plus editorial oversight, and fact-checking. In contrast, citizen journalism on social media often lacks verification, making it vulnerable to misinformation, disinformation, and manipulation by hostile actors.

Engaging with professional journalists allows the military to shape the narrative in a controlled, authoritative way. Social media is unpredictable - once a message is released, it can be distorted, taken out of context, or co-opted by adversaries.

Established media outlets – even those who are said to have political leanings - have a broad and influential audience, including policymakers, industry leaders, and international partners. Social media can be a useful tool, but relying on it almost exclusively risks amplifying voices that may lack context, nuance, or credibility.

Adversaries, particularly state-backed actors, weaponise social media to spread falsehoods and undermine trust. The best defence against this is working with mainstream media to provide verified, context-rich reporting rather than engaging in the chaos of online rumour mills.



Social media thrives on virality, often reducing complex military matters to simplistic soundbites, clickbait, or emotional reactions.

Professional journalists, while not perfect, are more likely to present balanced, in-depth analyses that help the public understand military operations, strategy, and risks.

Citizen journalism can compromise operational security, with individuals

sharing sensitive information unknowingly or recklessly. Mainstream media, when engaged properly, understands, and knows it should respect embargoes, briefings, and national security considerations.

While social media has its place in rapid response and engagement, military communicators should prioritise building strong relationships with reputable journalists who can provide the public with informed, accurate reporting - rather than allowing social media to dictate the information battlefield.

Social media messaging can easily be disrupted or re-directed. It's time to be clever and professional. It's time to re-think (should we add re-learn) the ways of dealing effectively with mainstream media. There are some who would say that on the battlefield it needs to be a partnership.

The bottom line is that ignoring mainstream media in defence communications is a strategic vulnerability. Engaging proactively ensures that defence stories are told accurately, public trust is maintained, and adversarial narratives are contained effectively. Mainstream media remains the primary source of news for large segments of the population.

Engaging with it allows defence professionals to maintain transparency and credibility. Not engaging risks misinformation and speculation to shape the narratives.

Properly assessed and assisted, mainstream media can be a force multiplier ensuring key messages reach a wide audience which is critical for deterrence, reassurance to allies, and demonstrating military readiness. Mainstream media plays a key role in countering adversarial disinformation. If military communicators engage proactively, they can shape the information space rather than react to it.

Democratic governments require public backing for military action. Mainstream media shapes the public discourse around defence policy, military interventions, and national security. Failure to engage can lead to a loss of public trust, scrutiny over funding, and reduced political will to support military operations. Defence editors and reporters with established credibility can provide informed, responsible coverage that balances operational security with public interest. If journalists are sidelined, coverage is often driven by social media speculation, which can be misleading or outright dangerous.

It's time for a re-think on battlespace communications!

## Who's Who in The Pen?



*Mike Peters, with microphone, fronts up the British Army of the Rhine TV team on the lake at St Moritz as the Army's four man bobsleigh team prepare for a Winter Olympics. There was little snow in the Alps that year. The story of four soldiers of the Queens Dragoon Guards aiming for Olympic Gold was aired on BBC just before a Welsh Rugby International. Also in the picture, centre, is the late Major Tim Wakefield, Welsh Guards, a club member who exploited his military public affairs skills in broadcasting on retirement. The cameraman is the legendary Gerd Medoch, who educated many an information officer in the art of seeing a story through a lens.*

THE EDITOR of Scribblings is Colonel (retd) Mike Peters, currently The Pen's Senior Executive Vice President and formerly the first National Chair. He was appointed at the club's rebirth as an international organisation some 16 years ago. "I took over with about a dozen or less active members and no plans for the future," he said.

"Within two years The Pen was an international purple organisation with an aim to spread the doctrine of defence communications as a necessary military skill in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today we have near 500 members and a thriving 500 plus group on LinkedIn, which we use as a tool for maintaining contact with our members who now range from Australia to North America and NATO countries in between."

**Mike has been a communications player in Whitehall and Westminster and the international aviation, defence, security, and chemical industries for many years. He held senior appointments in the UK Ministry of Defence and Department of Employment, the British Army and for UK blue-chip defence companies BAE Systems, Lucas Industries, Rolls Royce and the Westland Group as well as AkzoNobel, the chemical and coatings giant.**

**An award winning journalist, Mike started his writing career on one of the UK's oldest weekly newspapers, the Brecon & Radnor Express in Mid Wales. He also worked on weekly and daily publications in the Westcountry and the West Midlands before moving into corporate communications.**



**As Features Editor of the Hereford Evening News his work was singled out in a winning submission as Britain's Best Designed evening newspaper. He twice won national prizes in the production of employee communications publications. Previously a member of the City of London Livery Company of Communicators, Mike also achieved full membership of both the Institute of Public Relations and the British Association of Industrial Editors.**

**As a government information officer, Mike worked in British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) and in Ulster at the height of the Northern Ireland Troubles. He was the Senior Army Press Desk Officer in the MoD during the Falklands War and then accompanied the Governor on his return to the Islands where he briefed and escorted the international media on tours of the Falklands and Ascension Islands.**

**Mike was selected to deploy on the Multinational Force operations in the Sinai Desert in 1981 and war-torn Beirut in 1983 during Operation Hyperion. He was later to be Chief Press Officer at the Department of Employment where he was also Editor-in-Chief of the government's journal of record, Employment Gazette and also sat on Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's iconic "banana skin" committee under Press Secretary, Bernard Ingham.**

**Mike travelled world-wide promoting the defence industry during which he built a book of media contacts – many of whom are still friends. He was Corporate Communications Executive at British Aerospace and BAE Systems where he handled the Eurofighter Typhoon, Hawk, Nimrod, and Airbus A400M programmes and led the media relations team.**

**He earlier ran publicity campaigns for Rolls Royce and Bristol Siddeley covering the Olympus 593 engine for Concorde and the Eagle diesel engine for the Challenger main battle tank.**



**With Westland Helicopters he managed the winning publicity teams for the Longbow Apache attack helicopter, the EH101 Merlin multi-role rotorcraft and what was then the world's fastest helicopter, the Lynx.**

**As a Reservist, Mike finished his near 40-year service in volunteer uniform on the staff of Director Public Relations (Army) in the Ministry of Defence. He was the first Commanding Officer of the British Army's Media Operations Group after leading the TA Pool of Information Officers (TAPIO). Prior to that he served as a company commander in 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The Light Infantry (V) and as the operations officer of 116 Provost Company, the army's largest Royal Military Police unit. Both units had roles in BAOR.**

He has advised on publicity for the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association in the West Midlands, the Westcountry and the South East of the UK,

Mike has worn both light blue and khaki during his uniformed service. As a member of the Royal Observer Corps he twice won the coveted Spitfire award before becoming a Group Officer. He acted as Public Relations Officer for both 10 & 12 Groups in the Westcountry and the West Midlands.

Says Mike: I firmly believe the Pen's policy of membership growth by invitation has proved to be correct. We now have defence communicators on our books drawn from government, navies, armies and air forces, politics, newspapers, magazines, television and broadcasting, the defence industries, academia and publishing.

"The Club boasts a depth of knowledge and experience from its members many of whom have used their skills on operational deployments around the world including Iraq, Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, the Falklands, the Gulf Wars, the Balkans, Cyprus, Borneo and with Multinational Forces in Lebanon and the Sinai."

## What's On?



## Tea on the Thames terrace...an invitation to Westminster

A DATE for your diary! July 18, 2025. After the overwhelming number of requests for places on our visit to the House of Lords last year the Pen & Sword Club invites members and friends to Take Tea on The Thames Terrace at the Palace of Westminster this summer.

This afternoon event in the centre of London is one for the bucket list of great things to do on a visit to the capital. Impressive views and superb conviviality are on the menu plus something a little stronger at the cash bar while overlooking the mighty Thames. Great company is guaranteed. Why not make it a champagne event?

We cannot control the weather, but the Executive Council can promise good and professional company. There is much to talk about as The Pen continues to grow and influence the defence communications community. Our affiliate organisations, including SSAFA and HighGround military charities, are being invited to join us once again and we plan VIP guests too!

Tickets are £45 per head. To ensure your attendance make early contact with the Club Secretary, Major Doreen Cadwallader. [doreen.cadwallader@virginmedia.com](mailto:doreen.cadwallader@virginmedia.com) Payment in advance is required to ensure places at the table. Last year the visit to the Lords was massively oversubscribed and we resorted to a waiting list. So please book early.



# The Horrors of Bergen-Belsen

THE PEN continues its 2025 guest speaker networking lunches in March at The Little Ship Club in London with the harrowing tale of the Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) cameramen who played a crucial role in documenting the horrors of Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. They captured some of the most disturbing visual evidence of Nazi crimes during World War 2. Their footage and photographs not only served the Allied war effort but also became vital evidence in the Nuremberg Trials and a permanent record of the Holocaust.



Our speaker on March 12 is Oliver Carter-Wakefield, an historian whose research focuses on the relationship between the armed forces, the media, and society particularly in the realm of visual culture.

He gained his PhD in October 2023 as part of a Combined Doctoral Partnership conducted in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum and the Institute of Historical Research funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. He is currently working with the Imperial War Museum and the Borzello Trust on a large scale project documenting the wartime service and professional careers of members of the AFPU.'

Oliver completed his thesis, titled: 'The Cameraman's Experience of the Second World: A Study of the Army Film and Photographic Unit's Dope Sheets, 1939-1945. His research uses the so called 'Dope Sheets' as a springboard to explore wider issues of image and identity within Britain's wartime Army.

Drawing on a wide variety of sources ranging from archival documents and oral history interviews to Mass Observation reports and parliamentary debates, Oliver's thesis examines the formation of the AFPU within the wider historic relationship between the Army and the press.

In showing how and why the AFPU was created, exploring the backgrounds of its members, and demonstrating how the influence of the contemporary media environment, as much as the limitations of their equipment, dictated the type of images its cameramen produced, Oliver's work makes a valuable contribution to histories of wartime film and photography as well as to our understanding of how the British Army responded to the societal and cultural challenges of total war.

## Photos used at War Crimes Trials

AFPU arrived at Belsen in 15 April 1945, the day British forces liberated the camp. They filmed and photographed mass graves, starving prisoners, and the inhumane conditions inside the camp. Their images became some of the most defining visual records of the Holocaust.

The AFPU Association an affiliate of the Pen & Sword Club and has been invited to attend the event when we will remember the men behind the cameras and take a look at the last few months of the publicity war.

The AFPU team included Sergeant Ian Grant , who took some of the most well-known photographs of the camp, capturing the suffering of the survivors and the mass graves. Sergeant Mike Lewis filmed moving images of corpses, skeletal prisoners, and the overwhelmed British troops reacting to what they had found. Also in the team was Lieutenant Alan Whicker who was later to become a famous journalist. Major Hugh Stewart led the AFPU team and helped compile their footage for the British government.

If you wish to attend – seats are limited – please contact the club secretary Major Doreen Cadwallader as soon as possible. [doreencadwallader@virginmedia.com](mailto:doreencadwallader@virginmedia.com)

Further events will be notified to members shortly. Work is progressing on the annual general meeting, a media symposium themed on strategic communications development in the information age which is open to all defence communicators in June.



## New Pin Badge makes its debut

A NEW pin badge has been appearing at media functions around the country in the last month.

Launched by The Pen as the result of popular demand the first batch has started to disappear rapidly of the shelves of the club secretary's storeroom.

The badge, pictured here, is priced at £3 plus £1.50 postage. Please contact Doreen Cadwallader on the e mail address above.

## Members in the news...

USING his regular column in the magazine Critic, Lt Colonel (retd) Peter Caddick-Adams writes about WW2 Arctic convoys but also hits a topical note summing up winter operations that are in the news. He wrote on February 9:

“At this time of year, as a military historian I am frequently asked about wartime winters. They are the most difficult time for service personnel, far from the families and battling with the elements as well as their enemies.

In days gone by, this was when troops withdrew into winter quarters, the front lines moved little, routine and boredom lay heavy on soldiers' hands, the novelty and excitement of combat long since gone.

This year, those in Syria are celebrating the unexpected present of the departure of the Putin-supported murderous Assad regime, though we have yet to discover whether its replacement will be more tolerant.

Brave Georgians, out on their freezing streets each night in Tbilisi, frequently pummelled by riot police, are hoping winter brings the downfall of the pro-Moscow Georgian Dream government, and its anti-Western leader Mikheil Kavelashvili, whom the outgoing pro-EU and NATO president, Salome Zourabichvili, refuses to recognise.

Romanians pray for a better result after the annulment of their recent presidential elections, which the Constitutional Court deemed were dominated by Russian cyber activities.

Stoic Ukrainians soldier on, under fire in their trenches and streets from Kremlin drone, missile, and rocket attacks, wishing the season will bring better news than of late and that outside interference will not force them into a peace deal they do not want. I salute them all.

Each will re-emerge in the spring to battle anew with the long arm of the Kremlin, and it is easy to see linguistically how *Martius*, god of conflict, seen by the Romans as the first month of the year, and marking the time of a return to farming and military campaigning, soon became Mars, Marzo, Maart, Marts, or our own March.



*Peter is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, he previously lectured at Oxford and Birmingham Universities and now addresses staff colleges around the world on military history, doctrine, terrorism, psychological and media operations. His most recent book is **Snow and Steel: The Battle of the Bulge 1944-45 (2014)**. This, along with his previous works, **Monty, and Rommel: Parallel Lives (2011)** and **Monte Cassino: Ten Armies in Hell (2012)** are best sellers and **Monte Cassino** is now the basis for a movie for which he is the historical consultant. Peter was commissioned in 1979 and joined the Reserves in 1985. He has extensive experience of various war zones, including the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan.*

## CGS Honours Army Information Operations Expert

**LIEUTENANT COLONEL James Chandler, Light Dragoons**, was awarded a Chief of the General's Staff commendation in the 2025 New Year Honours for his work in Army Communications & Engagement and especially in his work designing and executing the CGS strategic engagement event at Army Expo last year.

James has operational experience in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Iraq. As well as a graduate of the UK's Advanced Command & Staff College he has also been a Chief of the General Staff Academic Fellow on three occasions.

He completed an MPhil in International Relations at Cambridge in 2008-09, was the Army's inaugural Visiting Fellow at Chatham House in 2015 and completed a full-time PhD with King's College London (2018-22) on Information Operations.

He has served as Head of the Research Unit with 77 Brigade and recently returned from Baghdad where he was Chief of Strategic Communications for the Combined Joint Taskforce - Operation Inherent Resolve.



James has spent much of the last decade studying and working in information operations. During a King's College seminar *New Voices in Global Security Studies*, he explored issues relating to the role of information operations and joint commands to military campaigns, with a particular focus on the UK military. Information operations are of increasing importance to the conduct of military campaigns.

Using interviews with retired and serving military personnel and an analysis of over 6000 pages of official documents from the Iraq War (2003-2009), James covered the planning and execution of British information operations during Operation TELIC and offered an assessment of how information operations can be a meaningful component of future British military campaigns.

## Paul celebrates 21 years supporting SSAFA

**PAUL Beaver**, strategy consultant, historian, author, former soldier, vintage aircraft pilot, broadcaster, presenter, Honorary Group Captain of No 601 Squadron, and Founding Ace of the National Spitfire Project is celebrating 21 years of support for the services charity, SSAFA while following Lawrence of Arabia's renowned 685 miles desert trek in World War 1.

Scribblings caught up with Paul in Jordan – courtesy of What's App – as he supported four UK Special Forces veterans who set out to retrace the historic route taken from Sherif Nasir, Auda Abu Tayi and Nesib el Bekri in 1917.

They were raising funds for the Special Forces Club Benevolent Fund. The team has travelled on camelback, navigating some of the most challenging terrain across the Hejaz Mountains and the Saudi section of the Nefud Plain – a historic achievement. In Jordan their journey takes them to the historic site of Aqaba Fort.





The monumental journey is not only a tribute to the legendary figures of the Arab Revolt but a way to raise money for the Special Forces Club Benevolent Fund (SFCBF).

Paul is a director of the charity which supports former members of the UK and allied Special Forces and Special Intelligence community and their dependents who have fallen on hard times, ill health, or bereavement.

Paul is also a Trustee and Chairman, of the National Spitfire Project which will design, build, and create the National Spitfire Memorial at Southampton, the birthplace of the iconic aeroplane.

Paul is on the Executive Board of the Billy Fiske Foundation, “a coming together of Americans and

Brits who wish to see the special relationship manifest in positive cultural, heritage and charitable activities.” It plans to erect a statue to Billy Fiske, the American volunteer who was the first American to die in the Battle of Britain.”

For 15 years journalist Paul was directly linked to Jane’s, his roles including Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Jane’s Defence Weekly. He made this journal into a household name in 1990 through his broadcasting during the liberation of Kuwait and eventually became a freelance war correspondent for Sky News and a studio ‘expert’ for BBC News and CNN International, for whom he jointly presented the 50th anniversary coverage of D-Day (from Normandy) and VE-Day (from Moscow). During this period Paul wrote more than 40 books on naval and aviation history.

Paul retired from the Army Reserve in 2013 with the rank of Colonel. His service included the Media Operations Group (V). His book celebrating the life of legendary test pilot “Winkle Brown” is reviewed by the Daily Telegraph later in this edition.

## Catherine is inspirational says Ailsa

AILSA Anderson was back in the news in late January when she took part in the Channel 5 two part documentary on The Princess of Wales. Inspirational and extraordinary were two of the compliments Ailsa paid to the future Queen. “Commentators are not necessary. Her actions speak louder than word.” she said.

Ailsa is a former newspaper journalist and was Communications and Press Secretary to The Queen from 2001 until the end of 2013, She spoke about working in the royal sphere to club members at a networking lunch last summer.

Ailsa was awarded with the Royal Victorian Medal by The Queen in 2009.

Ailsa also led on media relations for Princess Anne, The Princess Royal, Prince Edward and The Countess of Wessex and The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester.

She previously worked in Government Communications until 2001, where she was Chief Press Officer at the Cabinet Office. After leaving the Royal Household she was appointed Director of Communications for Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury.





## Philip joins Security Federation board



**THE SECURITY** Industry Federation has announced that Colonel Philip Ingram has joined their board as a non-executive member.

Philip is a widely published journalist, specialising in security, intelligence and geopolitics building on a long and senior career in British Military Intelligence and as a planner with experience in fixing countries ravaged by conflict.

A frequent commentator for News UK, Talk TV and with Sky News Philip can be seen and heard on the BBC, many Arab channels and across the globe. He has presented INTERPOL World TV in Singapore in 2015, 2017 and again in 2019. He has taken part in BBC Inside Out documentaries

on online terrorist grooming, the expose of criminal activities on Craigslist and the murder of Jill Dando for ITV as well as several current affairs programmes on subjects such as the influence of drill music on street crime, the Novichok attack in Salisbury and other security and intelligence related subjects.

Philip now runs his own media company, Grey Hare Media, which specialises in delivering informed content. He was busy in January leading a panel of defence industry experts in a CannyComms organised reputation master class at Farnborough which discussed maximising impact at DSEI later this year. Wiltshire based CannyComms is a communications and marketing consultancy specialising in defence and security,

## Marc reveals the problems of Agent Orange



**CALIFORNIA** based club member and former US National Guard combat journalist Marc Yablonka has been writing in Hmong Daily News about the issue of Agent Orange that has affected not only US veterans but the indigenous people in the countries it was used in during the Vietnam War - Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

He says: “ It especially affected, and continues to affect 50 years later, the ethnic minorities in those countries. Thankfully, American veterans affected by the defoliant have had a supporting voice in the Vietnam Veterans of America organization. The War Legacies Project, founded by Susan Hammond, seeks to be that voice for the people we left behind in Indochina, making every effort to gain for them the medical services they so desperately need.”

Marc has been a military journalist since 1992. Prior to that he filed as a stringer for the Los Angeles Times, National Catholic Register, L.A. bureaus of Reuters and Agence France Presse, Bangkok Post, Japan Times, Jakarta Post, Straits Times (Singapore), South China Morning Post (Hong Kong). His specialties are the Vietnam War, World War II, and Aviation. His website is : [warstoriespress.com](http://warstoriespress.com).

Marc's work has also appeared in the U.S. Military's Stars and Stripes, Army Times, Air Force Times, American Veteran, Vietnam magazine, Airways, Military Heritage, Soldier of Fortune, and many other publications. Between 2001 and 2008, Marc served as a Public Affairs Officer with the 40th Infantry Division Support Brigade and Installation Support Group. During that time, he wrote articles and took photographs in support of soldiers who were mobilizing for and demobilizing from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom.

His work was published in Soldiers, official magazine of the United States Army, Grizzly, magazine of the California National Guard, the Blade, magazine of the 63rd Regional Readiness Command-U.S. Army Reserves, Hawaii Army Weekly, and Army Magazine, magazine of the Association of the U.S. Army.

Marc also served two tours of duty with the Sar El Unit of the Israeli Defense Forces and holds the Masters of Professional Writing degree earned from the University of Southern California.

## Deborah halts London Traffic



CLUB Vice President and former Master of the Company of Communicators, Deborah Oliver brought London traffic to a halt when she revealed: "I had the best time ever today operating Tower Bridge to let the French naval ship Garonne pass through.

"As a member of the board of City Bridge Foundation which operates five London bridges - including Tower Bridge - I was honoured to be invited to operate the mechanism under the watchful eyes of the Bridge Driver Jaroslav Adamec and Head of Operations & Security Jamie Bottono

"Apart from holding back the rush-hour traffic, it all went very smoothly, and we offered Friendship (French ship 🇫🇷) to FS Garonne and her crew. A highlight is the pride and great care taken by the staff at Tower Bridge. It is not only a

19th century cantilever bridge, and famous London landmark, but also a visitor attraction with exhibition and high level walkways. Thanks to all for making it happen- and for all the team do every day! "

## Tom - just one short of a Telegraph century



A REGULAR columnist in the Daily Telegraph, Commander Tom Sharpe was only four stories short of a ton-up in his contributions to the newspaper in 2024. His journalism is an insight to and often a critique of naval matters although he gives due credit when it becomes due. The Royal Navy is still regarded as the Silent Service in many media quarters, but Tom has pulled aside some of the secrecy in his work.



Tom told Scribblings: “ It’s been a privilege, rewarding and fun to write regularly for the Telegraph in 2024. I’ve written 96 opinion pieces at an average of 1.9 per week. For a side hustle, it appears I’m not short of opinions.

“The spread across topics included the Royal Navy, Red Sea and Black Sea dominating (although readership on Red Sea articles has noticeably waned throughout the year). I wrote surprisingly few on China and the SCS (compared to 2023); might change this year,

“ On average I achieved 275 per article The maximum was 1454, and the lowest 19. Going ‘below the line’ and into the comments is essential if you want to inform the discussion. But I can also see why most

writers do not. It’s hard to have a sustained conversation there and you do suffer some abuse (5-10% of comments, higher if the article is about Russia).

“About an hour after anything I write on Russia the bots appear, often with names like Jack London. They rarely have anything useful to say. As a general rule, the spikier the headline the more comments the article receives. Obvious really but it can lead to a discrepancy between what’s in the text and what’s in the header that can jar.

“Many people still don’t realise the author doesn’t write their own headline. Others yell at the headline without having read the article or get the rage because it’s behind a paywall.

“Over the year, four areas of misunderstanding have repeatedly appeared in the comments: the role of the Royal Navy (or not) in the Channel, how ships far from the UK are still protecting our interests exaggerating the utility of drones (often based on events in Ukraine and in the Black Sea) and underestimating the difficulty of maritime targeting and therefore overestimating their vulnerability to drones, hypersonic etc.

“I’ve addressed each of these at various points but there is still much to do. I wrote something on AUKUS and a comment suggested that our SSNs should be tackling migrants in the channel. There is little correlation between number of comments per article and total number of readers (max 508k). Some of articles that have appeared on the ‘most read’ screen in Telegraph HQ have attracted only modest comment numbers.

Nevertheless, these were the top three for comments:

Date	Header	Topic	Comments
4 Jun 24	Putin’s subs have exposed Ireland’s shameless hypocrisy	Russia	1454
26 Dec 24	The Royal Navy is in a truly pitiable condition	RN	1068
11 Jun 24	Putin may be about to lose Crimea	Black Sea	1047

...and the bottom three:

Date	Header	Topic	Comments
6 Jun 24	As we remember D-Day, let’s not forget the heroes under threat in the Red Sea	Red Sea	19
17 Apr 24	Iran’s attack on Israel means swarm attacks are something we have to think about	Iran	31
10 May 24	Calls to ‘blockade’ Russia in the Baltic don’t make any sense	Other	59

And, of course, this was my favourite - <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/06/30/nuclear-submarines-royal-us-russian-navy-richard-sharpe/>

“In 2025 I plan to start a YouTube channel to reach some different audiences. It will also allow me the chance to diverge from the Tele guardrails into more commercial shipping issues (increasingly the day job) as well as take off the odd sharp edge that writing for a national paper demands. Thank you to the editorial team at the Telegraph who make my stuff better and also to the handful or so of people who I regularly use for advice and questions.



*Editor's note: Tom is an outspoken and well informed columnist for the Daily Telegraph and a communications consultant. He spent 27 years in the Royal Navy rising to the rank of Commander and winning an OBE for his exploits in the 20 years he spent at sea.*

*Tom commanded four ships in his time. He was Captain of the ice patrol vessel HMS Endurance when she sprang a leak in the notorious Magellan Straits, and he drove the Type 23 Frigate HMS St Albans. So you might ask why he came ashore after a great sea going career and was selected as a media and communications officer in the Ministry of Defence.*

## Chris responds to California Fires

COLONEL Richard (Chris) Hyde who retired from the US Army last year is back in media ops harness with the Wyoming National Guard. He has taken up the appointment of Deputy Director Stratcom in Cheyenne where the state's Military Department arranged for three C-130 aircraft, with crew, to contribute to the US wide effort to combat the wildfires in Southern California.

He told Scribblings: "We were grateful to get a bit of coverage from CNN on News Night with Abby Phillip as the aircraft and crew prepared to depart. Our C-130s are equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System - a key capability here in Wyoming for our own fire threat - now made even more important in our small contribution to this epic effort.



"There is a lot of life, limb, and loss out there right now - hoping we're all able to stop the fires as soon as possible and help the people and communities of Southern California find some normalcy."

Chris served in key public affairs billets for 18 years – internationally, on operation, and in garrison. Operationally, he deployed to Diyala, Iraq, in September 2008 with the 1/25th Stryker Brigade Combat Team as the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and served as a planner for the ISAF Joint Command throughout 2011 in Kabul, Afghanistan.

His other public affairs assignments included Media Relations Officer for NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps in the UK, Training with Industry Fellow with Siemens Corporation (NJ), Division Public Affairs Officer for the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division, ROK/US Combined Division in the Republic of Korea, Chief PAO for the U.S. Army's I Corps (Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington), and completed his Army Public Affairs career serving as Chief of Public Affairs and Deputy Director of Strategic Communications at NATO's Allied Command Operations / Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, in Mons, Belgium.

## Want to see a copy of a speech by Canada's top general? Then you'll have to pay

A JOURNALIST writing in the Ottawa Citizen revealed in January that the Canadian public cannot have access to copies of speeches delivered by Canada's top general unless they are willing to pay to attend conferences where the officer is speaking, according to military records.

But former Canadian Forces public affairs officer Colonel (retd) Brett Boudreau, left, told the newspaper that policy is not only wrong but just the latest example of military leaders failing to grasp the need to better communicate with Canadians.

Recently released documents outlined changes in the Canadian Forces public put in place by then Chief of the Defence Staff General. Wayne Eyre.





But military sources say plans are underway to overturn Eyre's policy. In the future, public speeches made by Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan will be posted on the department's website for the public and news media.

Brett told the Ottawa Citizen the decision not to release speeches is just a symptom of the ongoing failure by the forces to connect with Canadians.

"The episode is just the latest in a long series of painful examples showing how far the defence communications enterprise has fallen," he added. "This is a telling snapshot of the current malign mindset toward public communication by defence senior leadership."

Brett served in the Canadian Armed Forces for nearly 30 years, including in the top military public affairs jobs in Canada and in NATO HQ Brussels. He is principal

consultant at Veritas Strategic Communications, a boutique agency specializing in the integration and application of policy, operations and narrative regarding defence, security and whole-of-Government operations and activities.

He is a graduate of the NATO Defence College senior course, and holds an Honours B.A.(Political Science), and an M.A. (Public Administration).

## Paul sets out to allay fears

PAUL Barnes whose staff role includes facilitating international academic and military connections for the British Army told Scribblings in January: " My first foreign trip of 2025 has been to Zagreb for the FINABEL Principal Military Expert's Meeting. Finabel is a European organisation for the promotion of cooperation and interoperability between the national armies of the member states of the European Union.



Founded in 1953, Finabel is controlled by the chiefs of staff of its member states' armies, and the organisation's work agenda consists of studies and working groups. Finabel also has a relatively small permanent secretariat.

"I spoke to senior officers from 26 European nations about the NATO Multi-Domain Operations Concept and what it means for European land forces. Lots of interest, lots of questions, and lots of discussion.

"My take? MDO remains poorly understood and a concern for armies seeking to modernise and re-arm in the face of the threat from the East.

"The work we have been doing with NATO should go a long way to allay those fears...

for the tactical elements of most armies it will mean very little change.!

## Ben to judge 2025 Aviation Media Awards

THE 2025 call for nominations for the Aerospace Media Awards is open and The Pen's Ben Griffiths is once again one of the judges. Journalists, publishers, and industry are invited to send in nominations. The closing deadline is 28th March.

**Ben is a seasoned communicator and media professional in the global aviation, aerospace, and defence sectors, and has connections in media, aviation, military, political, and corporate worlds.**

**With more than 15 years in daily business and financial news, he is currently Group Communications Director for 2Excel Aviation**

**In 2018, Ben took the helm on secondment as Head of Communications at Airbus UK, steering the company through the RAF 100 celebrations and major air shows., Ben's expertise extends to advising warbird operators on strategic communications, media relations and marketing.**



**A Liveryman of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, he also serves as the Honorary Press Officer and contributes as a member of the prestigious Trophies & Awards Committee. He is a passionate pilot with a penchant for vintage taildraggers and fast jets. Whether co-owning a de Havilland Chipmunk or testing diverse aircraft for magazine articles, his logbook includes more than 25 types.**

**A Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, Ben is active in the Air and Space Power Association, Aviation Focus Group, The Air League and Airlines UK, Ben's journalistic career includes working on City News for the Daily Mail**

**and for the Scottish Herald as well as trade publications.**

## **Anna moves on**

**AFTER 13 remarkable years at the helm of HighGround, inspirational founder Anna Baker Cresswell will be leaving the charity in May this year.**

**Anna's vision and tireless dedication have helped numerous individuals, through HighGround's horticultural therapy services and for those transitioning from military to civilian life, into the land-based sector. She has left an indelible mark on the Armed Forces community and the land-based sector alike.**

**Jamie Crisp, CEO of HighGround – on of the Club's affiliated military charities - expressed his admiration: "Anna's passion and determination have shaped HighGround into the impactful charity it is today. Her innovative approach has changed lives, providing hope, purpose, and new opportunities for so many. We will continue to build on the extraordinary foundation she has laid and continue to honour her legacy."**



**Said Anna: It has been a pleasure and privilege to have met and worked with so many fantastic people since I started HighGround Charity in 2013. My mission to promote horticultural therapy will continue with Therapeutic Garden Tours and Cath Manuel."**

## **Mike to publish Victory 80 before VE Day anniversary**

**MANAGING Editor and Chief of Staff at The Veteran UK, Captain (retd) Mike Davis-Marks, reminds Scribblings that 2025 is the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and he will mark the occasion with a special commemoration publication called Victory 80 - a tribute to the Greatest Generation. It will be out this Spring before VE day.**

He says: “80th Anniversaries are important as they are generally the last chance to salute living participants in global events and we will be featuring a number of the Greatest Generation for you to read as well as find true stories that are not well known. If you know of someone who has a story to tell, please let us know.

“Victory 80 is also being produced to support the Royal Hospital Chelsea and their outstanding outreach programme. You can read all about this remarkable institution and its extraordinary inhabitants in a six page feature in our latest edition. Want to get involved - please get in touch.”



The Veteran UK is a campaign to help working age veterans by connecting them to potential employers across all sectors. It also publishes books and periodicals in support of commemorative events as a way of funding the campaign.

Mike enjoyed a 36-year career in the Royal Navy as a submariner. Highlights included twice navigating and surfacing a submarine to the North Pole; command of the hunter killer submarine HMS Turbulent; a posting to the British Embassy in Washington DC before, during and after 9/11 and appointments as Director of Recruiting for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines and Director of Public Relations.

Beyond the ‘day job,’ Mike is a qualified Neuro Linguistic Programming practitioner and coach, a Past Master of a London Livery Company, Chairman of Trustees for a charity and the immediate past President of an international maritime fellowship, the Anchorites.

## Georgia takes CMS to Hannover

GEORGIA Pickering, owner and managing director of London based CMS Strategic, a specialist aerospace and defence communications consultancy, which has worked with DSEI, the pivotal biannual defence exhibition at Excel in London for many years is expanding her reach as that brand moves into Germany.

CMS Strategic will also provide media and communications support for the first DSEI Germany, which is backed by the German Ministry of Defence and industry.

Deutsche Messe and the global organisers of DSEI will jointly deliver a new landmark event in Hannover, 19 – 22 January 2027.

Georgia, who joined CMS in 2009 has worked on all aspects of the business as Account Director and then Communications Director.

She was appointed to the Board in 2014 and became owner in 2015. She has strong connections with the military through her work as an elected representative on Bracknell Forest Council where she also acts as Armed Forces Community Champion.



## Sue notches up 14 years with Fly Navy Heritage Trust

COMMNDER (retd) Sue Eagles has completed 14 years as Director of Communications at Navy Wings based at Yeovilton in Somerset. Sue's experience includes the role of NATO media spokesman in Afghanistan in 2004 and 2006 and led the Royal Navy Media Operations Branch for some five years. She was Communications Director for the Centenary of Naval Aviation in 2009.



Sue also worked in the aviation industry managing communications for Westland Helicopters in Somerset. Her naval career saw her set precedents on her progression through defence communications. She was decorated in the New Year's Honours in 2008 with the Queen's Voluntary Reserve Medal.

Sue featured in Navy News during the Royal Navy's celebration of 30 years of Women-at-Sea in 2020 when she recalled what it was like to be one of the first women to serve onboard.

"Over 75,000 women served in the WRNS during WW2 many carrying out highly confidential and responsible jobs at home and overseas, but it was not until 1990 that women started to serve alongside their naval counterparts at sea."

"I first went to sea by accident in 1975, in a diesel submarine, day-running out of Gosport. I was a Wren Photographer and was onboard on a photographic job, taking pictures of hairline cracks in a piece of equipment for a defect report, when instead of returning to HMS Dolphin, we dived and set off down the Channel into the Southwestern Approaches.

"When I appeared in the Ops Room there was an outcry onboard, and I was told to keep out of sight and get my head down in the Midshipman's bunk in the wardroom. In those days it was very superstitious, especially in submarines, to have a woman onboard!"

In the 1970s, the prospect of a women ever commanding a warship at sea was out of the question but only a decade later, as the Staff Officer of 706 Naval Air Squadron, Sue took part in one of the first experiments of women at sea with her division of Wren Air Mechanics at RNAS Culdrose.

"It was a short embarkation in RFA Engadine, a regular two week embarkation of Sea King aircraft of 706 Squadron as part of aircrew advanced flying training" said Sue. "The fact that it was a routine part of the flying training syllabus enabled a group of eight Wren Air Mechanics to go to sea alongside their male counterparts without attracting undue attention.

"It proved a brief and successful toe in the water but there was still much controversy, outdated outbursts, and cartoonists having a hay day before WRNS at sea was to become a reality" continued Sue.

"It was to be another ten years, in October 1990, before mixed manning began in HMS Brilliant, HMS Invincible, HMS Juno and HMS Battleaxe – and then there was to be no turning back. At first, the situation took some getting used to. In the early days there were choppy waters and the new normal took a while to settle down.

"I served at sea on exercises and short deployments regularly throughout the 1990s as a Reservist and looking back now, the introduction of WRNS at sea and integration and equality with the Royal Navy reflected the sweeping changes of women in society" said Sue.

"Living through it at the time was exciting and being part of the team onboard quickly became a way of life. The first woman Commanding Officer of a warship was appointed in 2012, breaking a 500 year taboo, and two years later in 2014, the first women served in submarines.

"The 30th anniversary was a celebration of the success of women at sea and it was a privilege to be a part of it – although with a quirk of irony, just as I was able to find my way around an aircraft carrier, I then served on two tours in land-locked Afghanistan!"







## James lectures at West Point

**FLIGHT** Lieutenant James Langan, who led the combat news team during the Kabul evacuation deployment has earned a highlight to his career. Accepting an invitation as a Chief of the Air Staff Tedder Fellow at Cambridge University, he spoke to the US Military Academy at West Point's annual Social Sciences Seminar.

James spoke on the US' need to further balance China in the Indo-Pacific, the lessons it can learn from the

historiography of British Grand Strategy and its role as an ordering power in Europe.

He said: "It's inspiring to see at West Point, educating the next generation of leaders goes beyond the classroom. It's about the spirit of free inquiry, critical thinking, and appropriate challenge in developing the thinking of America's future to meet the challenges of a complex and unpredictable world.

James adds: "None of this would be possible were it not for the RAF, and its investment in my development and furthering my strategic thinking through its professional military education programme the Chief of Airstaff Fellowships. Of all the capabilities in defence, education is our most powerful weapon. Ultimately history matters! By understanding the past, we can apply the lessons of success to the present. "

James is currently based at Whitehall as a Euro Atlantic Security Policy Adviser. Since the Afghanistan deployment he has led combat news teams for Iraq, Syria, and the Sudan.

## The Pen's Authors at work

### The truth about Winkle, Britain's greatest test pilot

*Eric Brown became an aviation hero by flying 487 types of aircraft – but he had his own secrets, as Paul Beaver's biography reveals*

By Patrick Bishop, The Daily Telegraph

**IN THE** Royal Navy, diminutive chaps were – and perhaps still are – nicknamed "winkle." In the Navy's Fleet Air Arm, however, for much of the second half of the last century, there was only one Winkle. That was Eric Brown, the super-competitive, maverick Scottish aviator who will go down in history as the world's greatest test pilot.

Brown flew 487 types of aircraft, more than any other human being, a record that will almost certainly never be broken given modern safety restrictions. Testing German experimental jets captured at the end of the Second World War, there was sometimes no technical manual to guide him.

When he died in 2016, aged 97, aviators across the world mourned. He was also touchy, egotistical, and funny – all of which is apparent in Paul Beaver's excellent new biography, *Winkle: The Extraordinary Life of Britain's Greatest Pilot*.

***Eric 'Winkle' Brown by a de Havilland Vampire in 1946 Credit: Shutterstock***

Brown was brought up in Edinburgh, and like so many lads of the time, was fascinated by aeroplanes. Government pilot-training schemes opened the door to lower-middle-class boys, and he quickly revealed himself to be a brilliant pilot. He was also an excellent linguist, and his widowed father took him on visits to Germany to improve his grasp of the language.

In Berlin, fate arranged for young Eric to meet Ernst Udet, the highest-scoring German fighter ace to survive the First World War. At a party in Udet's apartment, Brown also became friendly with Hanna Reitsch, the pin-up girl of German aviation and a fanatical Nazi, with whom he would stay in touch after the war, interrogating her for details about German jet technology.



Brown began his active war service in 1941, flying Martlets off the carrier HMS Audacity until its sinking in December. In 1943, he switched to test-pilot duties, an activity as dangerous as combat. None of this put the slightest dent in Brown's determination to accept every risk on offer.

They included flying the experimental Messerschmitt Me 163, which could climb to 30,000 feet in two-and-a-half minutes, and whose hugely combustible fuel had accounted for several deaths.

Beaver, arguably Britain's most knowledgeable aviation-history expert, was given access to Brown's papers a few years before the veteran's death in 2016. By then, he knew Brown well, but he was still surprised by some of the details he uncovered. For instance, Brown, whose Scottishness seemed part of his identity, was (it transpired) born in Hackney, to an unmarried mother who put him up for adoption. Eric had hidden this from everyone, including his adoring wife Lynn. There were other discrepancies. Did "Winkle" really set off, during an Edinburgh University vacation, to fly in combat in the Spanish Civil War?

Beaver judges that Brown's tendency towards embellishment hardly matters, given the range of his certified achievements: generous, and ultimately hard to disagree with. Winkle's life, after all, had enough incident for several books. Among them was his role interrogating the Luftwaffe chief Herman Göring in 1945, a job for which his expertise and fluent German qualified him. Göring opened up, but when Brown asked his prisoner about the Battle of Britain, the German would concede only that it was "a draw." Brown told me that story himself once, during an enjoyable lunch we had near his home. Ever the aviator, he had chosen a restaurant at Gatwick airport.

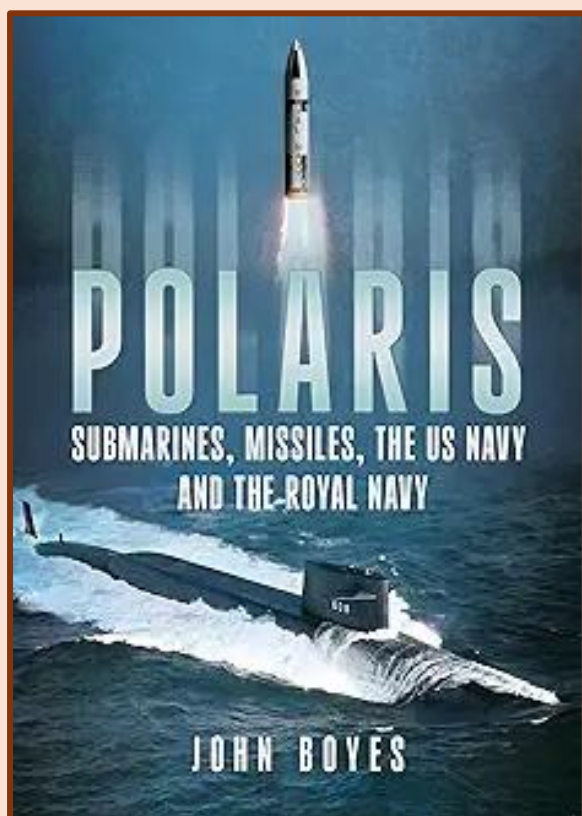
***The Extraordinary Life of Britain's Greatest Pilot is published by Penguin at £25. To order your copy, call 0844 871 1514 or visit Telegraph Books***

## **Polaris: John 'digs deep' for missile book launch**

THE ATOM bombs dropped on Japan at the end of the Second World War opened the door to the nuclear age. Seeing the potential for developing nuclear energy for the US Navy, Captain Hyman Rickover initiated a research programme that culminated in the launch of USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear- powered submarine.

Meanwhile, ballistic missile technology was developing fast but still relied on complex liquid fuels. The US Navy partnered with the army to develop a ballistic missile for both services but withdrew when solid fuels became a practical proposition. Under the leadership of RADM William Raborn, the US Navy set up its own project: the Polaris weapon system.

In 1960, the first missile-armed nuclear-powered submarine (SSBN) left on patrol, with forty more to follow in subsequent years. Two years later, when Britain's Blue Streak and Skybolt plans were cancelled, Harold Macmillan and John F. Kennedy agreed for Polaris to be supplied to the Royal Navy.



Former First Sea Lord and Club Vice President, Admiral Sir George Zambellas has written a foreword to Polaris which is the third book on UK missiles written by former Club Chair, Major (retd) John Boyes:

He says: "Writing a comprehensive book about the concept, components, and delivery of submarine-based nuclear deterrence is an unenviable task. At best, it is both complicated and subtle. At worst, it is a continuous and giddy mix of politics, people, and process, and it requires the unwavering management and commitment of all three elements. And, at every turn, there is the nagging doubt about the reliability of the systems, the certainty of the people, longevity in political support, and the risk of counter-detection.

"Nevertheless, by dint of uninterrupted delivery over many decades, and no counter-detection, it is reasonable to claim that the concept is proven. Prime ministers, on their first hours in office, are required to

understand the nuclear firing chain, and their direct and indirect responsibility. It is a deeply personal matter which they take very seriously indeed.

"In this book, John Boyes has not shied away from the 'unenviable task,' as I put it. The Polaris journey was the formative submarine deterrence journey and captured most or all of the complex challenges, and John has dug deep to get the detail as right as he can. Submariners build professional authority by understanding the detail, applying it assiduously where necessary, but using creatively where possible. In the dangerous world of the deep, the room for error is almost none."

*John, left, is an Executive Council member of The Pen and a former National Chair; He served with Media Operations Group (V). Born in Edinburgh he was educated at Rugby School and later qualified as a chartered accountant. He pursued a career in the motor industry until his retirement in 2005.*

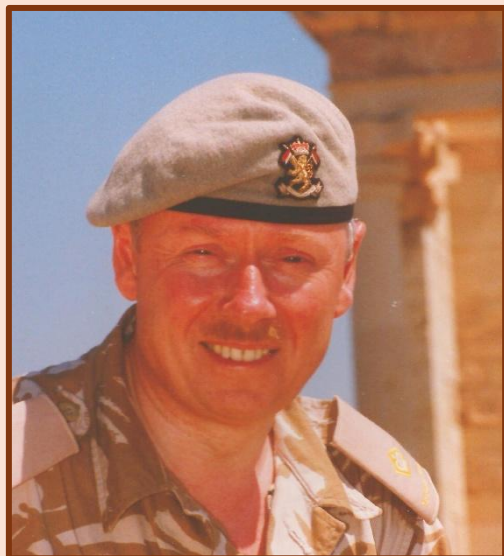
*He adds: "Having spent my life in various positions within the motor trade, retirement gave me the opportunity to research the early history of the UK's missiles. This resulted in three books on the RAF's Thor, Blue Streak and Skybolt ballistic missiles - and an invitation to join Douglas Aircraft Company personnel in Santa Monica and celebrate Thor's 50th anniversary. As part of my research, I had joined the RAF Historical Society, and in no time was 'volunteered' to become their treasurer. As a result of contacts made in the society I was approached in 2009 by a 617 Squadron pilot who was on the operation that finally sank the Tirpitz and asked if I would 'volunteer' to take on the financial control of the Bomber Command Memorial that was being planned for London's Green Park. Some £7.5m and a few sleepless nights later it was dedicated in June 2012.*

*I have continued as a trustee of the RAFHS until last year when the 'old guard' managed to hand over to the next generation who are beginning to appreciate how much work goes on largely unseen behind the scenes! Still with the Bomber Command Association, we are now in the final weeks of winding it up. After that, there is still Trident . . .*



## **POLARIS: SUBMARINES, MISSILES, THE US NAVY, AND THE ROYAL NAVY - the answer lies within his book, says John**

**AFTER** three books on the early days of the UK's venture into ballistic missiles - Thor, Blue Streak and Skybolt - Polaris was the logical next step to continue the story. In fact, my story of Polaris was really the start point some 50 years ago.



My first job after qualifying took me to Dunfermline, Scotland's ancient capital. Nearby could be found the headquarters of the Flag Officer Scotland and Northern Ireland (FOSNI) and HM Naval Base Rosyth.

The Cold War still dominated military thinking, and the Royal Navy had recently taken over the role of the strategic deterrent from the RAF with the deployment of the four Resolution-class SSBNs, each one equipped with sixteen Polaris missiles.

When the 'bombers' came to Rosyth for their refits, for me, this became an irresistible source of interest. The annual Navy Days presented an opportunity to 'get lost' in the sprawling acreage of the dockyard to seek out and photograph the SSBN in the refit dock before security moved me on.

It was then that I started to write my book which, some half a century later, was to become 'Polaris:

Submarines, Missiles, the US Navy and the Royal Navy' which reaches the bookshops on 20 March.

John Chambers, Senior PRO to HMS Neptune, the Clyde Submarine Base, assured me the navy would give me every assistance with my venture 'short of actual help.' However, on repeating my request to FOSNI's SPRO, a certain Hugh Colver ( the Pen's immediate past President) undertook to seek the necessary security clearances. Little did I know that our paths would again cross many years later.

In due course I was allowed to visit HMS Renown escorted by a recently promoted lieutenant. He was to complete his RN service as the captain of the Trident submarine HMS Vengeance and had retired before I got around to using the notes I had taken on that day many years before. I was later able to meet one of the Polaris captains, but it was soon evident that the real purpose was to see how much I knew.

Over the years I have accumulated a large collection of Polaris related books, documents, photographs, emails, and a number of 'interesting' items via eBay, including items (legally) removed from the bombers as souvenirs.

There were regular visits to the National Archives with its ever-helpful staff and the meetings, held every two years of the British Nuclear History Group which often took us to the edge of what we were allowed to know – particularly with reference to Chevaline, the Polaris Improved Front End, (see Chapter 17).

Fonthill's allowance of 70,000 words was soon used up and the final text is some 155,000 words. My long-suffering editor had the unenviable task of turning my version into one acceptable for the publisher's house style. (For RAF readers, I do know that since the 1950s the RAF have abbreviated group captain to Gp Capt, but that did not conform! Fonthill requires Grp Capt.) Furthermore, modern usage now eschews the use of capital letters of which a large number had to be changed to lower case.

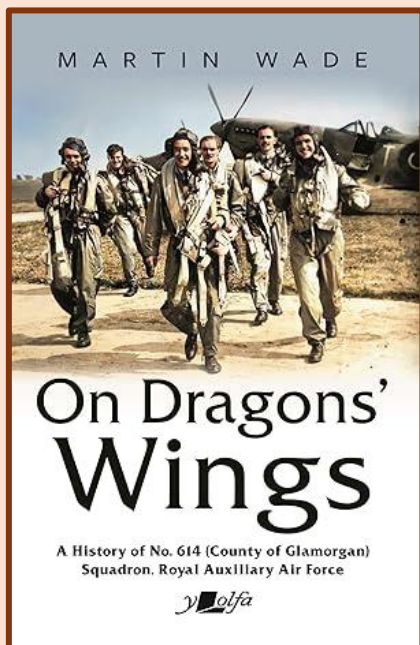
Many years ago, when I worked for a major motor manufacturer, the sales director (who I have always believed was formerly in the SBS), the regional manager, and myself shared an interest in military matters and this led to a periodic exchange of tricky questions to pose to the other two. One of my questions was: 'when was an arachnid cut in half to become a president of the United States?'



This, perhaps predictably, proved impossible to answer and led to the sales director later asking, I hope in jest, if I could be sectioned under the Mental Health Act! The answer lies within my book.

## On Dragons' Wings

by Flt Lt Martin Wade RAuxAF



THE STORY of a Welsh reserve squadron and of the ordinary men who flew biplanes from their base in Cardiff during the 1930s in their spare time, was written by Martin in a busy year which won him a RAF Media Reserves award

With the coming of the Second World War, they were the only Pathfinder unit to operate outside the UK and were involved in bombing raids over Europe and North Africa, with many being killed or shot down and taken prisoner.

After the war, the squadron returned to Wales and flew jets as a Cold War fighter unit at Llandow in the Vale of Glamorgan, before disbanding in 1957.

Relaunched in 2014, the squadron now has over a hundred men and women from across Wales who serve the RAF in their spare-time. The book tells the story of those part-timers and is a story not just of their operations but also the human side of fighting thousands of miles from home and facing danger and death with humour, courage, and professionalism.

**The Editor welcomes suggestions and stories for Scribblings. Please contact [michaelpcoms@btinternet.com](mailto:michaelpcoms@btinternet.com).**

**Views expressed in this journal are those of the authors.**