

Meaning, Memory and the (Mis-)Remembered Past

Monday 5 and Tuesday 6 September 2022

Hosted at the Royal Air Force Museum, London, this two-day conference brings together an interdisciplinary field of academics and scholars to present research which challenges the accepted historical consensus. The conference will explore the meaning of parts of the past and establish their importance to the historical and will feature a keynote address given by Richard Toye entitled: 'Bet you're sorry you won!': Generations, authority, and honour in the public memory of the Second World War.

The research presented will offer new evidence and provide critical reflections on, and reframe our historical understanding of, the history we 'remember', the history we 'misremember' and the history we have 'forgotten'. In doing so, this research revises the conclusions of previous works and challenges myths which have developed and represents an important moment in advancing historical knowledge as well as an exciting line-up of speakers from around the World.

The panels hosted at the conference will include the latest research on a range of topics including: Memory and Media: The Pilot (Mis-) Remembered; Forgotten Efforts from the Second World War; Productions of the Past: Archives, Paintings, and Representations of Aerial Warfare; and Myths and their Meanings in the Present: The Battle of Britain, Navalist Reinterpretations in China, and Air Power in Africa. The conference will feature papers on the development of the French Aircraft Industry in the late 1930s, the Panavia Tornado procurement programme, and the 1957 Defence. The conference will conclude with a panel which considers the RFC and RAF's respective pre-war preparations and development and the RAF's experience of occupation in Japan.

The keynote address will be provided by Richard Toye, Professor of Modern History at the University of Exeter. Professor Toye is an historian of Britain in its global and imperial context in the period from the late Nineteenth Century to the present day, and an expert on the life, career and reputation of Winston Churchill. His book *Winston Churchill: A Life in the News* (OUP, 2020) builds on the approach Richard used in *The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches* (OUP, 2013) which showed that Churchill's oratory generated much more controversy and criticism than legend suggests. Professor Toye has also explored how Churchill's reputation has been exploited in the decades since his death in the co-authored book *Churchill Myths* (OUP, 2020).

The cost of attending the conference in-person for both days is £50. This cost covers registrations, refreshments and lunch for both days. The RAF Museum is making a third of the conference tickets available at a concession price of £35. These tickets are intended for students, retired delegates, and those who define themselves as being on a clearly limited budget.

[Please click here to book your place now](#)

The RAF Museum will be live-streaming the conference with access provided via the Museum's [Crowdcast channel](#)

TIMES are GIVEN in British Summer Time (GMT+ 1)

Monday 5 September

09:00 AM	Registration, Tea & Coffee available on arrival
	Welcome and Introduction
09:30 AM	Maggie Appleton (Royal Air Force Museum, CEO)
09:40 AM	Memory and Media: The Pilot (Mis-) Remembered Michael Terry — Writing the Knights of the Air: The Literature and Memory of the First World War Fighter Pilot Abby Whitlock — The Flying Ace on the Silver Screen: Film Portrayals as an Illustration of the Evolving Masculine Ideal and the Reality of War Guillaume de Syon — Constructing French memories of Flight: The Use of Popular Media in the Establishment of the Pilot Image
11:00 AM	Tea & Coffee.
11:30 AM	Forgotten Efforts from the Second World War Gerald White — The Forgotten Contributor to the Forgotten War: The Cotton Supply-Dropping Parachute of India Alastair Noble — Abigail Rachel - Forgotten Revenge for Coventry Molly Sampson — Wacs Keep ‘Em Flying’ —the Women’s Army Corps and the Army Air Forces in the European Theatre of Operations, 1943-1945
12:45 PM	Lunch
1:45 PM	Productions of the Past: Archives, Paintings, and Representations of Aerial Warfare Lucy Curzon — ‘WAAFs are not to carry arms’: (Mis)remembering Corporal Daphne Pearson Jennifer Scott — ‘Rarely seen - and still more rarely heard’: Trenchard’s curation of his image through his personal archive Christopher Sommer — Building perceptions – Exploring representations of aerial warfare at the German Air Force Museum via LEGO Serious Play
3:00 PM	Tea & Coffee. RAF Museum Academic Awards Presentation
3:30 PM	Villains, Meddlers, Fools?: Re-appraising Sandys, Tornado, and the French Aircraft Industry Samuel Hollins — Décisions de Dérision: Unacknowledged French Meddling in the Panavia Tornado Programme Jamie Slaughter — Re-remembering the French Aircraft Industry 1937 to 1940 Clive Richards (Virtual Paper) — The Villain of the Piece? Duncan Sandys, the 1957 Defence Review and the Royal Air Force – a reappraisal
4:50 PM	End of Day One
5:00 PM	Post-Day One Discussion at <i>The Beaufort</i>

Tuesday 6 September

09:00 AM	Arrival and Late Registration (Tea & Coffee)
09:30 AM	Welcome
09:40 AM	<p>Shaping the Aviator: Before, During and After the Second World War</p> <p>Jane Lowes — The Shaping of Testimony of Bomber Command Veterans: Memory, Catharsis, Performance and Critique</p> <p>Russell Smith — Proud of their Race and Loyal to Britain: The Education of Black Caribbean RAF personnel and the Path to Leadership</p> <p>Lisa Hackett — Uniform and Memory: How the Design and Presence (or Absence) of Uniforms was Used to Configure the Image the Female Second World War Pilot</p>
11:00 AM	Tea & Coffee
11:30 AM	<p>Myths and their Meanings in the Present: The Battle of Britain, Navalist Reinterpretations in China, and Air Power in Africa</p> <p>Sophy Antrobus — ‘Their Finest Hour?’: Has Embedding Myths and Eulogizing History Impaired Military Progress?</p> <p>Tommy Jamison — Rescuing Heritage from Humiliation: The PRC’s Navalist Reinterpretation of the Sino-French and Sino-Japanese Wars</p> <p>Samuel Oyewole — Meanings and Memories of Foreign Airpower in Africa: Reflections on Fears, Humiliations and Hope from the Sky</p>
12:45 PM	Lunch.
1:45 PM	<p>Keynote Address</p> <p>Richard Toye — ‘Bet you’re sorry you won!’: Generations, Authority, and Honour in the Public Memory of the Second World War</p> <p>Chair: Grace Huxford</p>
2:50 PM	Break.
3:20 PM	<p>‘Don’t Mention the War’: Mis-Remembered Preparations and Occupations</p> <p>Stuart Hadaway — Per Ardua Ad Imperium: Royal Flying Corps Preparedness for Overseas Deployments in 1914</p> <p>John Peaty — The Two Royal Air Forces</p> <p>Peter Johnston — The Other Occupation, on the Other Side of the World: The Experiences of RAF Personnel in the Post-War Occupation of Japan, 1946-1948</p>
4:40 PM	Closing Remarks

Conference Registration and Details

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To book your ticket for the conference please visit:

<https://royalairforcemuseum.digitickets.co.uk/event-tickets/41050?%20branches.branchID=2042>

If this is your first time attending an academic conference you are warmly encouraged to email the RAF Museum's Historian (details below).

The nearest stations to the RAF Museum are Colindale Underground (Edgware Branch of the Northern Line) and Mill Hill Broadway (on the Luton/King's Cross/Thameslink line). The stations are respectively, a 10- and 20-minute walk from the Museum. The 303 bus stops outside the Museum, there are bus stops for the 303 at both Colindale and Mill Hill Broadway.

For full details of how to reach the Museum visit: <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/london/plan-your-day/map-and-directions/>

Delegates are welcome to join the organisers at The Beaufort pub (2 Heritage Avenue) on the evening of 5 September. The venue has disabled access and facilities but is at least 500 metres from the Museum and you may need to arrange for transport from the Museum.

Access:

The Museum is committed to providing equal access to its Research Events. All the buildings and rooms used for the conference are wheelchair accessible. However, only a limited number of wheelchair accessible seats are available in the lecture theatre. If you wish to reserve a space, you are warmly invited to contact the RAF Museum's Historian (details below). Please also contact us if there are additional arrangements that we can make for you.

Online:

The RAF Museum will be live-streaming the conference. Access to the live-stream will be free via the Museum's [Crowdcast channel](#) and the programme above contains links to the individual sessions. For the best, experience, however, the Museum recommends attending in-person.

Contact Us

If you have broader questions, please contact the RAF Museum's Historian:

Dr Harry Raffal,

Archives, Library, and Research Department,

Email harry.raffal@rafmuseum.org

Keynote Speaker: Professor Richard Toye

Richard Toye is Professor of Modern History at the University of Exeter. An historian of Britain in its global and imperial context in the period from the late Nineteenth Century to the present day, he is particularly interested in the rhetorical dimensions of politics, economics, and empire. Richard is an expert on the life, career and reputation of Winston Churchill. His book *Winston Churchill: A Life in the News* (OUP, 2020) explores his journalism, his media image (and his efforts to control it), and the reception of news about him by ordinary readers and viewers. This builds on the approach Richard used in *The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches* (OUP, 2013) which showed that Churchill's oratory generated much more controversy and criticism than legend suggests. *The Churchill Myths* (OUP, 2020), which Richard co-authored with Steven Fielding and Bill Schwarz, explores how Churchill's reputation has been exploited in the decades since his death, by, Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, amongst others. The book shows, for example, both sides in the Brexit debate have tried to make use of Churchill's (highly contested) views on European integration for their own purposes.

'Bet you're sorry you won!': Generations, authority, and honour in the public memory of the Second World War

JOHNSON: (accusingly) I fought the war for your sort.

RINGO: Bet you're sorry you won!

- *A Hard Day's Night* (dir. Richard Lester, 1964)

It is often suggested that Britain has an obsession with World War II that is not merely remorseless but damaging, and even unique in Western Europe. It is certainly true that there is a powerful strand of xenophobic discourse around the war which can be found, for example, in the 1981 launch ad for the Mini Metro, in the *Daily Mirror's* grotesque anti-German campaign during Euro '96, and in the rhetoric of some pro-Brexit politicians. However, as some scholars have noted, this interpretation of the conflict has not gone uncontested. There were in fact a multiplicity of public memories, or varieties of memory. In the 1960s the *Beyond the Fringe* and Beatles generation offered an irreverent (and to many, highly offensive) take on the war. At the same time, young historians who had not experienced the war as adults began efforts to demythologise it. This was not a straightforward generational conflict though; not all youth was rebellious and not all of those who had lived through the war defended conventional patriotism. Rather, there were conflicts of authority within and between generations – that is to say, contests over who was entitled to speak. Ultimately these were also conflicts about honour – national and individual – which were sublimated into debates about wartime events and personalities. This lecture argues that the differing public versions of the war are not merely rival interpretations but co-dependent ones; that is to say, they continually anticipate and respond to one another, and rely on each other for their continued perpetuation.

Speakers and Abstracts

Sophy Antrobus

Dr Sophy Antrobus researches contemporary air power in the context of the institutional, cultural and organisational barriers to innovation in modern air forces, in particular the RAF. She joined the Freeman Air and Space Institute from Portsmouth Business School where she was a Teaching Fellow in Strategic Studies. Prior to that Sophy completed her PhD at the University of Exeter. Her thesis 'Whitehall Warriors: the political fight for the RAF 1917-1929' researched the early politics of air power and networks in Whitehall in the inter-war years.

Her publications this year have included a paper for Critical Military Studies 'Deeply Odd: Women veterans as critical feminist scholars' and a chapter on the Battle of Britain and Covid-19 in a recently published book: 'Covid-19, the Second World War, and the Idea of Britishness'.

Previously, Sophy served in the Royal Air Force for twenty years including in Iraq and Afghanistan and a tour with the Royal Navy; her final tour was commanding operations at RAF Valley. She is a Fellow and elected member of the Council of the Royal Aeronautical Society; she also chairs its Learned Society Board.

Title: 'Their Finest Hour?': Has embedding myths and eulogizing history impaired military progress?

Abstract

At its heart, cultural history grapples with representation and the struggle over meaning. For militaries, narratives around key battles in their histories are rehearsed in public, in academia, in commemorations, in military education, and in the media. The Battle of Britain is mythologized by the RAF, and in wider public discourse. However, does this nostalgia and myth-making bind the service closer to its past and in the process distort its ability to modernize? The Battle of Britain in 1940 was invoked as a decisive juncture between defeat and victory, at the time by the government and later by the RAF. There are annual rituals and physical memorials dedicated to the battle which keep the myths and memories of the battle alive and continue to reproduce its meaning. However, does that mean the Force struggles to adjust to the cultural challenges of the 21st Century (such as automation, drones, the rise of the space 'domain' etc), arguably unable to accommodate them into a cultural narrative which harks back to 1940?

This paper will use a brief comparative assessment of the Royal Navy's myth-making around the Battle of Trafalgar, using archival research, to contextualise the argument that battles can hamper organisational progress over time. Over decades, how do key battles change organisations? Does their eulogization, specifically, hamper the ability of armed services to focus on the future and celebrate progress over heritage and tradition? The modern RAF, it is argued, needs to think more critically about its own identity and what it internalizes from myth-making, and how that impacts on the organisation's health and ability to look forward, particularly in terms of understanding the present and embracing technological change in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

Lucy Curzon

Lucy Curzon holds a PhD in Visual and Cultural Studies and is Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art History at the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa AL, USA). She is the author of *Mass-Observation and Visual Culture: Depicting Everyday Lives in Britain* (Routledge, 2017), which was awarded (in 2018) the Historians of British Art Book Award for Exemplary Scholarship on the

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Period after 1800. She is currently working on an edited collection (with Dr. Benjamin Jones, Lecturer in Modern British History, University of East Anglia) focusing on new scholarship about Mass Observation and the Mass Observation Project (contracted with Bloomsbury Academic Publishing UK) and a monograph on British women war artists (contracted with Manchester University Press). Curzon sits on the international editorial review board for Bloomsbury Academic Press UK's Mass Observation Critical Series and the board of advisors for the Ohio State University Press's Formations series. She has published articles in *Visual Culture in Britain* (Taylor and Francis), *History of Photography* (Taylor and Francis), and *Oxford Art Journal* (Oxford University Press).

Title: 'WAAFs are not to carry arms': (Mis)remembering Corporal Daphne Pearson

Abstract

On 31st May 1940, Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) Corporal J.D.M. (Daphne) Pearson risked her life saving a British bomber pilot whose Avro Anson crashed after undershooting the runway at RAF Detling. Pearson's courage was officially recognized when George VI awarded her the Empire Gallantry Medal (later exchanged for a George Cross) and the War Artists' Advisory Committee commissioned Dame Laura Knight to commemorate Pearson in a formal portrait.

Knight's painting depicts Pearson in uniform while holding a respirator and looking up into the darkening sky, as if searching for planes. But Corporal J.D.M. Pearson, GC, WAAF (1940), which now resides in the permanent collection of IWM London, is not the composition Knight originally planned. Her first effort showed Pearson holding a rifle over her shoulder. Kathleen Palmer (2011) and Catherine Speck (2014) suggest that the artist's eventual removal of the gun was a sign of Knight's begrudging respect for the female combat taboo and thus a concession to more conventional wartime gender roles for women. But it is not merely this compromise that makes the portrait an interesting historical artifact. The fact that there is no record of Pearson wielding a weapon on that night (as she recounts in her 2001 autobiography, 'WAAFs are not to carry arms. Controversy is still raging[!]') makes the work doubly intriguing. It suggests, I argue, that the original image was Knight's effort to encourage a different kind of remembrance—or even a strategic mis-remembrance—of Pearson's actions.

This paper continues the work of feminist scholars like Lucy Noakes (1998 and 2006), Corinna Peniston-Bird (2007 and 2014), Juliette Pattinson (2007), and Penny Summerfield (1987, 1998, and 2007) by engaging Knight's portrait as a context for re-visiting historical debates about the construction of femininity in early wartime, particularly with regard to ideas of heroism.

Guillaume de Syon

Guillaume de Syon teaches history at Albright College in Reading, PA, US, and serves as a research associate at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. He is the authors of *Zeppelin! Germany and the Airship, 1900-1939* (Johns Hopkins University Press,) and of numerous articles on the cultural history of aerospace.

For further information please visit: <https://albright.academia.edu/Guillaumedesyon>

Title: "Constructing French memories of Flight: The Use of Popular Media in the Establishment of the Pilot Image."

Abstract

When the May 15, 1965 issue of the French weekly *Paris-Match* appeared on stands, its cover featured a Mirage IV nuclear-capable bomber positioned in a ballistic position, akin to that of a rocket. Inside the magazine, several shots depicted the pilots as proverbial guardians of democracy

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who were cast as contributing to France's nuclear defense stance. Though the atomic theme was emphasized there, that of the pilot was in fact a recurring one in a magazine eager to familiarize its readership with technological advances during France's postwar era. In so doing, however, it also relied on previous images of the pilot as a knight of the air, and sought to emphasize the uniqueness of the pilot experience in an era of routine.

Relaunched by publisher Jean Prouvost in 1949, *Paris-Match* remained the best-selling weekly well into the 1970s by combining a peculiar mix of editorial choices capable of satisfying the full readership of the average French household, thus guaranteeing sales. Between ads promoting washing machines and reports on royal weddings, the editors nonetheless inserted technical topics throughout their coverage, thus including aviation. In so doing, and despite the emphasis on extraordinary feats, they presented the image of the flyer as a human being who was simply first among equals. This cultural imagery, though identified by Marshall McLuhan as an acceleration of sorts, and by Roland Barthes as the "Jet man," deserves in fact a closer look, as such coverage helped cast a memory of aviation that was already disappearing after World War II. To consider the meaning of such imagery, this paper relies on sociologist Anthony Giddens's work, as it argues that the iconification of individuals or events extends beyond cultural or national boundaries to rely on a globalization of images that influence, and are influenced by regional elements. Thus, by also considering the *Paris-Match* coverage of foreign flyers as well as that of French pilots, this paper suggests that what might be considered a national memory of the pilot.

Lisa J. Hackett

Dr Lisa J. Hackett is a Lecturer at the University of New England. She is also a founding member of PopCRN, the Popular Culture Research Network at UNE. Her research interests examine the role of clothing in various contexts, popular culture and the understanding of history. Her current research examines the roles of female Second World War pilot's uniforms in propaganda. Her latest publications include "Biography of the self: Why Australian women wear 1950s style clothing" (2021) in *Fashion, Style and Popular Culture* and "The History Bubble: Negotiating Authenticity in Historical Romance Novels" in *M/C Journal*. Her upcoming article "Sewing History: Consuming Culture" (2022) will be published in *Clothing Cultures*.

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Title: Uniform and Memory: How the design and presence (or absence) of uniforms was used to configure the image the female Second World War pilot

Abstract

The figure of the Second World War Service Woman in uniform has come to be seen as an aberration in history, a time when femininity was swept aside due to the pressing needs of war. For the female pilots of the Second World War across the belligerent nations, the provision of a uniform was not guaranteed. Some, like the women of the British Air Transport Auxiliary, were provided with uniforms based upon pre-existing designs for men. Others were provided with male uniforms they had to refashion themselves, for example the Russian pilots. And others, such as some of the German pilots, were not provided with a uniform at all.

How a military uniform is designed and who is allowed to wear it reveals much about a nation's social and political history. Uniforms are important in two ways. Firstly, they instil in the wearer a unifying sense of comradeship. Secondly, they act as a piece of government communication, making visible those whom the government wants recognised as serving their country. Many women who served in the Second World War did so in a supporting role, with countries such as Britain determined to use their services in a non-combat capacity. Serving female pilots in the Second World War worked in an arena that was typically configured as a masculine occupation, and thus threatened official depictions of women serving in the military. This cross-country study considers how different nations controlled the image of the female pilot in uniform. It examines and compares the effects on the women pilots of uniform policy, and how the wider public in each country understood the significance of these women's service both at the time and today.

Stuart Hadaway

Stuart Hadaway is the Research and Information Manager at the Air Historical Branch (RAF). He joined the Branch in 2009 as Senior Researcher, after spending five years as a curator in the Department of Research and Information Services at the RAF Museum. His recent publications have focused on the role of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force in the First World War.

Title: **Per Ardua Ad Imperium: Royal Flying Corps preparedness for overseas deployments in 1914**

Abstract

In 1914, the Royal Flying Corps went to war. In a process usually recounted in near comic opera terms, five squadrons were sent to France to support the British Expeditionary Force. The bulk of the historiography of the Royal Flying Corps generally gives scant, if any, room to the movements further afield than France and Belgium, patrols over home waters, and the defence of the UK. Deployments to the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Africa are all virtually ignored.

This provides a very insular view of the RFC, where the bulk of operations were conducted within a familiar and largely benign climate and environment, close to centres of population and industry, and with short lines of supply and communications. The subsequent global spread of the RFC is itself an overlooked area, important to the post-war development of the RAF and ripe for further study, but that question hides a deeper one: how prepared was the RFC to undertake global operations in 1914?

Although it had only existed for two years, the RFC was built on deep foundations and was part of the military forces of the largest Empire in the world. Despite this, very little thought seems to have been given to how the flying arm would operate within an Imperial setting. Small progress had been made in the Dominions (an area that will also be examined) but the leadership from the centre of the Empire was seemingly wanting. The RAF has long prided itself on its ability to think in extra dimensions and embrace the bigger picture, and yet this feature seems lacking in the RFC in the early years (although arguably less so with the RNAS).

This paper will look at the early development of the RFC in terms of a part of global mechanism, and highlight some of the shortcomings and short sightedness that permeated their organisation and planning.

Samuel Hollins

The Panavia Tornado programme resulted from the successful tri-lateral cooperation of three European nations – the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and Britain. Whilst the aircraft programme bled three nations before entering formal project definition (Belgium, Canada, and the Netherlands), another attempted to join. France, whilst never formally attached the Multi-Role

Combat Aircraft (MRCA), had probed several avenues through which to intercede in the programme. British, perceptions of the intercession are clear; French interest in the MRCA was designed to delay and derail the aircrafts development.

Historical narratives have largely relegated French interaction with the Tornado to comparisons with the adjacent Mirage G project, and the prior cancellation of collaborative work that they had conducted with Britain on the AFVG (Anglo-French Variable Geometry) programme which they had unceremoniously killed via withdrawal in 1967. Other authors have falsely inserted the French into the programme's beginnings, demonstrating a lack of familiarity with either the existing but limited scholarship, or an ignorance of the available archival materials. New examinations of accessible (but un-digitised), and crucially declassified archival materials are painting an increasingly complex picture, not only of the MRCA programme itself, but also of intra-European relations during the Cold War.

The following paper will, through an interaction with high level internal British archival materials, examine British perceptions of French interest in the MRCA. We will explore why the French sought to intercede. Through this examination, the paper will demonstrate to the reader just a fraction of the exploratory and explanatory value which the aircraft possesses.

Title: **Décisions de Dérision: Unacknowledged French Meddling in the Panavia Tornado Programme**
Abstract

Samuel Hollins is a second-year PhD candidate within Lancaster University's History Department. His PhD, which is AHRC funded and in collaboration with the Royal Air Force Museum, explores the political, strategic, and economic rationale of Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. Samuel is also the Coordinating Editor for EPOCH History Magazine and has worked for the UK MOD, contributing to the incoming seventh edition of its Global Strategic Trends publication. Samuel holds memberships of the Centre for War and Diplomacy, and the Royal Air Force Historical Society. Samuel has recently been awarded the Henry Probert Bursary by the RAF Historical Society and taken up the role of Institutional Ambassador for the British Society for the History of Science.

Tommy Jamison

Dr. Tommy Jamison is a military historian and Asst. Professor of Strategic Studies in the Defense Analysis Dept., Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California. His work explores the history of naval development and conflict in the Pacific, with an emphasis on technological shifts and institutional adaptation. His work has been published by the Journal of Military History and Intelligence and National Security. In 2021, Dr. Jamison's dissertation "Pacific Wars" won the Society for Military History's Coffman Prize for Best Dissertation in AY 2020. He holds a Ph.D. (2020) and MA (2017) in International History from Harvard University, a BA in History from Grinnell College (2009) as well as language certificates from the Beijing Language and Culture University. From 2012-2014, Dr. Jamison worked as a Defense Intelligence Agency Staff Officer in both the Western Pacific and Afghanistan. Between 2009-2012 he served as the Intelligence Officer in a Japan-based Navy F/A-18F squadron. He currently lives in Monterey, CA with his wife and their springer spaniel.

Title: **Rescuing Heritage from Humiliation: The PRC's Navalist Reinterpretation of the Sino-French and Sino-Japanese Wars**

Abstract

This paper explores the instrumentalization of historical memory in the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a means of legitimizing naval modernization in the 21st century. Since the 2010s, public

memorials, historians, and propagandists have increasingly reimagined the Qing Dynasty's defeats in the Sino-French (1883-1885) and Sino-Japanese Wars (1894-1895) as China's first forays into modern, technocratic warfare at sea. Discarding old orthodoxies, the contemporary navalist reinterpretation rescues a sense of heritage from military defeat. In a stunning turn, moments more conventionally seen as low points in the "century of national humiliation" between the Opium War (1839-1842) and National Liberation (1949) now offer evidence of China's "sea power" identity and long-term commitment to modern naval capabilities. Here historical example and myth are political tools, stressing China's identity as a maritime state and contextualizing the vast transformation of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) into a professional, technologically enabled force. Out with the Maoist historical dogma and its emphasis on "People's War," and in with Mahanian navalism. Even as professional histories of the Sino-French and Sino-Japanese Wars become more nuanced, the Qing Navy as a cultural symbol and/or object of public history has metamorphosed from a caricature of humiliation into a mythologized origin story for the modern PLAN. This paper will review mainland Chinese academic papers, public memorials, and propaganda films for evidence of the navalist (mis-)remembering of the late-Qing wars. By documenting PLAN historical revisionism, it also points to future research opportunities regarding the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and its creation during the Korean War: a strategic stalemate that is nonetheless remembered as a heroic victory against "American Imperialism." The PRC's search for a tradition of "sea power" in the nineteenth century is, I argue, likely mirrored by similar debates about air power and its history after the Second World War.

Peter Johnston

Dr Peter Johnston is the RAF Museum Head of Collections and Research. He has acted as an expert and accompanying academic on battlefield tours from Flanders to the Falklands, as well as regularly appearing across media channels. His first book, *British Forces in Germany: The Lived Experience*, was the authorised history of the British forces in Germany from 1945-2019, and published by Profile Editions in October 2019. He has also published on recruitment propaganda and museum collections. Peter studied History and Modern History for his Undergraduate and Masters degrees at the University of Durham, and completed his PhD at the University of Kent, focusing on recruitment and culture in the British Armed Forces

Title: *The Other Occupation, on the Other Side of the World: The Experiences of RAF Personnel in the Post-War Occupation of Japan, 1946-1948*

Abstract

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the RAF joined the victorious allies in occupying the territory of its defeated enemy. It established bases, communities of service personnel, and undertook an air policing and disarmament role in support of a military government, imposing its rule and beginning the rebuild of a defeated nature.

But this paper isn't about the RAF in Germany. It's about the role of the RAF in the other post war occupation; that of Japan. This is an experience that has been far less documented in the historiography of the post-war period, has featured far less in Museum collections and exhibitions, and has been relegated to the fringes of our understanding of the post-war Armed Forces and world. Even the famous 'Spitfires over Japan' of Ginger Lacey and company have barely merited more than a few pages in the history books. Short in duration, this intensely complex military operation is worthy of study.

Learning more about how the RAF established itself in the ashes and ruins of Japan, with Hiroshima looming large as the ultimate consequence of air power, provides many salient lessons for the modern era. It provides an insight into coalition politics and multinational cooperation at the limit of operations. It provides a wider historical context for how military forces can be adapted to provide aid to the civil power in cases of natural disaster, or employed to help support civil authorities monitor sea lanes for illegal immigration. This paper will explore these alongside the human experience of serving in the RAF at this time

Jane Lowes

Jane Gulliford Lowes is a postgraduate student, currently studying for a Master's Degree in Second World War Studies: Conflict, Societies and Holocaust, at the University of Wolverhampton. Her particular interest is in Bomber Command and the Strategic Bombing Campaign. Jane has recently abandoned her career as a lawyer to write full time; her second book, "Above Us, The Stars: 10 Squadron Bomber Command – The Wireless Operator's Story" was published in 2020. Jane is a member of 10 Squadron Association and a speaker for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. She also lectures to groups throughout the country on social history and on the work and men of Bomber Command.

Title: The Shaping of Testimony of Bomber Command Veterans: Memory, Catharsis, Performance and Critique

Abstract

This paper will consider some of the factors which have shaped the testimony of Bomber Command Veterans over the last eight decades, and how this 'shaping of testimony' can pose problems for present day historians.

In his ground-breaking work on Holocaust survivor testimony, Christopher Browning cautioned against the unquestioning acceptance of testimony, and argued that the greatest challenge to the historian in the use of survivor testimony as historical evidence is posed 'not by those who are inherently hostile to it but by those who embrace it too uncritically and emotionally.' Can this criticism be levelled at students and academics researching the work and men and women of Bomber Command?

Why do veterans relay their accounts of their experiences in a particular way? What influences their decision-making process, in terms of the information they decide to share, and the information they keep private? To what extent are their accounts influenced by 'collective memory' and 'accepted narrative', a need for catharsis, and the cultural, social, and political context of the time in which that testimony is given? Is there a danger that the giving of testimony has taken on a performative element, and that the finely-honed and oft-repeated account has gained in the telling over the years and bears no relation to actual historical events? Does it matter?

In recent years, as the last of these wonderful old men fade away and the Second War begins rapidly to fade from living memory, in our haste to accord veterans due respect, there has perhaps been a tendency towards a belief that that the authenticity of survivor accounts is more important than their factual accuracy.

In this paper I will advocate the adoption of a forensic, critical approach to veteran testimony, and will consider what aviation historians, particularly in this context those working with the accounts of Bomber Command veterans, can learn from academic approaches to Holocaust survivor testimony.

When analysing veteran testimony, the aviation historian must be prepared to adopt a bold and forensic approach. In the same way that a lawyer would examine witness statements and cross-examine the witness in the context of legal proceedings, the historian must probe and challenge, ask potentially difficult questions, and look beyond established, accepted narratives and the so-called 'collective memory.'

Alastair Noble

Dr Alastair Noble is a Historian with the Air Historical Branch (RAF) at RAF Northolt. He previously worked at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Scotland Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and The National Archives, Kew. He is the author of books, articles and book chapters on contemporary military, political and diplomatic history. In AHB, he is currently examining British Defence Policy and the Royal Air Force since 1970, with a closer focus on defence reviews and their impact on the Service.

Title: Abigail Rachel - Forgotten Revenge for Coventry

Abstract

While the Luftwaffe's devastating raid on Coventry on the night of 14-15 November 1940 is still remembered and commemorated to this day, the RAF's attempt to exact revenge is largely forgotten. Using British and German sources, this paper considers Operation 'Abigail Rachel'. This operation was mounted by Bomber Command, one month later, on the night of 16 December, against Mannheim.

'Abigail Rachel' was a one-off attempt by Bomber Command to shift away from its commitment to precision bombing. Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to view Bomber Command's efforts in 1940-41 as having much precision. 'Abigail Rachel' was to constitute revenge for Coventry through an area attack on a German industrial city. The objective was to cause maximum damage to Mannheim.

The paper will explain how 'Abigail Rachel' did some damage but nothing like that inflicted by 'Moonlight Sonata' in Coventry. Numerous factors explain the disparities between the two operations. The Coventry raid was mounted by more than three times as many German aircraft than Bomber Command finally assembled on 16 December. Various technical advantages also rested with the Germans. Moreover, photographic reconnaissance subsequently ascertained only a small percentage of the bombs meant for Mannheim fell within the target area. Some buildings were hit, around three dozen Germans perished, and bomber losses were relatively light, but the overall operation had little resemblance to the carnage in Coventry. That would come later, with interest. Meanwhile, German propaganda would talk of targets being 'Coventrated' by heavy bombing but the term 'Mannheimed' never entered the RAF lexicon.

This examination of a forgotten operation examines the debate on the ethics of area bombing, specifically when there was no other way to strike the German foe effectively. In doing so, it will illustrate the limitations of British air power at this stage of the war.

Samuel Oyewole

Samuel Oyewole is a lecturer at the Department of Political Science, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. His research interests cover African affairs, military and strategic studies, crisis management, and development studies. His articles have appeared in many learned journals, including *Astropolitics*, *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs*, *African Security*, *African Security Review*, *Defence Studies*, *Defense and Security Analysis*, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, *New Zealand International Review*, *Politikon*, *South African Journal of International Affairs*,

Strategic Analysis, and Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. He is the co-editor of *Boko Haram's Campaign of Terror in Nigeria: Contexts, dimensions and emerging trajectories* (Routledge, 2021), and *Power Politics in Africa: Nigeria and South Africa in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge Scholar, 2020).

Title: Meanings and Memories of Foreign Airpower in Africa: Reflections on Fears, Humiliations and Hope from the Sky

Abstract

Africa has hosted numerous air campaigns that involved foreign powers since the early 20th century. Besides the pioneered Italian air war in Tripolitania (1911-1912), often remembered cases of foreign airpower in Africa include the air components of the World Wars in the continent, the colonial air policing and counterinsurgency of the British, French and Portuguese Empires, the Cold War interventions of the US, the USSR and their allies, hostilities between African and foreign militaries, the war on terror in Somalia and beyond, and the responsibility to protect (P2P) in Libya. Often less remembered, however, are the roles of foreign airpowers in building the capacities of African militaries and humanitarian support for the populations in theatres of conflict and disaster. Despite some efforts to document the experiences of foreign airpower in many African theatres, there is little known attempt to understudy the meanings and memories of the subject in the continent. African perspectives are often underestimated, misrepresented, and overlooked in the dominant externally constructed narratives of air campaigns by foreign powers in the region. This development has left Africa with little or no coherent understanding, and often misremembered and forgotten memories, of airpower by foreign powers, whom have also received limited feedback on their deployment, presence and operations in the region. Accordingly, this study seeks to examine relevant perspectives to unlock the meanings and memories that better reflect African experiences with foreign airpower. In this case, it is observed that African meanings of different elements of foreign airpower - including air base, war, capacity building and humanitarian support - generally reflect memories of fears, humiliations and hope, which are rooted in numerous experiences over a century. This study will be relevant to military and strategic understanding, research and policy in Africa and foreign powers with significant airpower-related interests in the continent

John Peaty

John Peaty is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and of the Royal Historical Society. He holds a PhD and MA in War Studies from King's College London, where he also attended the intelligence studies programme, He served for many years on the Committee of the British Commission for Military History in the post of International Secretary. He is a founder member of the Royal Air Force Historical Society, the Chair of the Templer Medal book prize and a Council member of the Society for Army Historical Research, the Convenor of the Historical Military Mapping Group and a Council member of the British Cartographic Society, a Committee member of the Royal Engineers Historical Society, a member of the National Army Museum's Research and Collections Advisory Panel and a life member of the University of London's Institute of Historical Research. He has lectured widely to both specialist and non-specialist audiences, both in the UK and overseas. He has published articles, chapters and essays. He worked at the Ministry of Defence for many years, including at the Army Historical Branch, the Defence Evaluation & Research Agency and Defence Intelligence. He was closely involved with the British Army's commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. He has guided both military and civilian groups around battlefields across the globe.

Title: The two Royal Air Forces

Abstract

The world's first independent air force was created in Britain in 1918: the Royal Air Force (RAF). The world's second independent air force, the Regia Aeronautica (Royal Air Force), was created in Italy in 1923, building on the Italian use of airpower since 1911.

The paper will examine the relationship between the two air forces between 1923 and 1933 (when Mussolini replaced the pro-British pro-American anti-German Balbo as head of the Regia Aeronautica). The paper will show that, building on their wartime alliance, in this period the two air forces were friends, admirers, competitors and rivals, to their mutual benefit.

The period of Balbo's leadership (1926-33) was the golden age of the Italian air force. It is a sad fact that – due to later wartime enmity - the remarkable achievements of Italian designers, pilots, manufacturers, theorists etc. in those years – which were so much admired in the contemporary RAF - are now largely forgotten. As are the warm relationship between Italian airmen and the airmen of other countries and the great respect for Balbo and the Italian air force in other countries, especially the UK, during this period.

Particular subjects examined will include: Balbo's mass formation long-distance transoceanic flights ("Balbo" becoming the accepted RAF term for a large formation of aircraft); the record-breaking successes of Italian pilots and aircraft in competition with British pilots and aircraft (especially the Schneider Trophy contests); the great technical achievements of Italy's designers and manufacturers in rivalry with British designers and manufacturers. The paper will also examine the personal nature of the respect for, and close contacts with, the Italian air force, including: the visits to Italy of Hoare and of Wedgewood Benn; the visits to the UK of Balbo. The paper will also examine the influence of Italy on Trenchard's statement of UK air strategy in 1928.

The paper is based on research undertaken both in the UK and Italy.

Clive Richards

Clive Richards is an independent scholar based in Malvern, Worcestershire. He served on the staffs of the Department of Research and Information Services, RAF Museum between 1993 and 1996 and the Ministry of Defence Air Historical Branch between 1996 and 2008. On leaving the Ministry of Defence he has continued to research and write on air power matters, and in December 2017 he was awarded an MA in Air Power: History, Theory and Practice by the University of Birmingham.

Clive has delivered papers at conferences held by the Royal Air Force Museum, the RAF Centre for Air and Space Power Studies, the Royal Air Force Historical Society, the British Commission for Military History and the Polish Historical Society. His account of the early development of military aviation in India and the creation of the Indian Air Force appeared in *The British Indian Army: Virtue and Necessity*, edited by Dr Robert Johnson (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014), and he also wrote *The University Air Squadrons. Early Years*, published by COMEC in their Occasional Paper series in 2016. Clive has contributed to several other publications, including the *RAF Historical Society Journal*, the *Royal Air Force Air Power Review* and *The Aviation Historian*.

Title: *The Villain of the Piece? Duncan Sandys, the 1957 Defence Review and the Royal Air Force – a reappraisal*

(Virtual Paper) Abstract

Duncan Sandys' tenure as Minister of Defence between January 1957 and October 1959 is steeped in controversy. To many within the British aviation community, he has come to represent something of a *bête noire*. Central to the case against Sandys is the 1957 Defence Review, the results of which were encapsulated in a White Paper presented by him to the House of Commons on 16 April 1957.

Accounts of Sandys' period in office, from a Royal Air Force perspective, have revolved largely around his role in shaping and delivering the Review, and the implications of the latter both for the Service and the UK military aircraft industry. The enduring view of Sandys, both within and outside the RAF, has been that of a stubborn, opinionated and abrasive man, who sought to use his position to press his misguided views on the Services with little or no regard for the arguments of the Service staffs or his own military and civilian advisors. 'To this day', Andrew Brookes observed in 2007, 'it is common for even senior RAF speakers to heap opprobrium on Sandys and to imply that he tried singlehandedly to impose over-inflated policies on the RAF.'

To what degree, however, is this an accurate portrayal of the Defence Review? It can be argued that the accepted narrative 'mis-remembers' the events of 1957, insofar as it neglects the wider military, strategic, economic and social context against which the Review took place. Moreover, in concentrating upon Sandys' role, many commentators have tended to neglect the contribution of other individuals and groups to the Review process. Drawing on a range of primary and secondary sources, this paper will seek to reappraise the circumstances that led to the Review, the players that took part and the factors that shaped their positions.

Molly Sampson

Molly Sampson has been studying the Women's Army Corps during the Second World War for the last decade, with special focus on the Third WAC Training Center and service in the European Theater of Operations. She enjoys bridging the gap between academic and public history. In 2021, her exhibit "Triple Victory of the 6888th" opened at the 6th Cavalry Museum in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. This exhibit tells the story of the first and only Black Women's Army Corps unit to serve overseas during the Second World War, and their monumental success as the most efficient postal unit in the ETO. Currently, Sampson serves as the Executive Director of the Maritime Museum of Sandusky.

Title: *Wacs Keep 'Em Flying*—the Women's Army Corps and the Army Air Forces in the European Theatre of Operations, 1943-1945

Abstract

Women's service in the Second World War is often misremembered or has fallen away from public memory. While focus is given to pilots and GIs, the women of the U.S. Army Air Forces who served in the European Theatre of Operations (ETO) in the latter years of the war are largely ignored. On July 16, 1943, 574 women of the 1st WAAC Separate Battalion landed in Scotland, the first members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) assigned to overseas duty in the ETO. They were sent to Eighth Air Force stations across Britain, taking over jobs previously done by the WAAF. During the Second World War, thousands of Wacs were sent overseas and assigned to hundreds of occupational specialties in a variety of units, but it would be the Army Air Forces that would be the earliest and most accepting of women in the ranks. However, the service of the "Air Wacs" was not without struggles. The more than 3000 Air Wacs had to deal with a range of issues, from inadequate uniforms to sexism while still filling crucial support roles. Working hard to prove themselves, the women excelled at their work. General Eaker, initial commander of the Eighth Air Force, stated in 1945, "It was not long before they were the best we had...other forces followed our lead." Despite this, women like Cpl. Flora Ausenbaugh, a teletype operator assigned to Eighth Air Force Headquarters, have had their service nearly forgotten in the decades since the end of the war, and even more quickly as we lose them from living memory. Studying not only the official histories of the

U.S. Army Air Forces and Women's Army Corps in the European Theatre of Operations, but also the personal accounts of women will provide an insightful view into the unique experiences of Air Wacs in England.

Jennifer Scott

Jennifer Scott joined the Royal Air Force Museum as the Trenchard Project Archivist in February 2020. She has previously worked in archival roles at The British Library and Westminster Abbey. Her role involves cataloguing, conserving and digitising the personal papers of MRAF Viscount Trenchard, in order to increase the accessibility of the unique collection. In 2021, Jennifer presented research on "'One continual fight": Trenchard's application of air power thinking in the RAF and Metropolitan Police' at the New Thinking in Air Power Conference.

Title: 'Rarely seen - and still more rarely heard': Trenchard's curation of his image through his personal archive.

Abstract

Throughout historiography, MRAF Viscount Trenchard is remembered enigmatically, opinions on his motivations are strikingly divided. This paper will explore how the act of self-editing within Trenchard's personal archive has contributed towards this conclusion, and whether this is an accidental outcome or more carefully engineered on his part.

Trenchard believed in the importance of record keeping. Over the course of his career, he compiled a selection of documents which could be used by biographers to represent the sum of his work. The Trenchard Archive presents a comprehensive record of events from his early military career in the Royal Scots Fusiliers, service with the Royal Flying Corps and the RAF's Independent Air Force during the First World War, his positions as Chief of the Air Staff and Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Force through to his later political, industrial, and commercial activities until the end of his life. However, a surface level reading of these 651 files still doesn't give much insight into their creator's personality.

Whether consciously or un-consciously, the papers which Trenchard chose not to keep influence our reading of the Archive as much as the ones he did. Gaps in correspondence create a sometimes-one-sided conversation where Trenchard's own voice is absent. Contrastingly, elsewhere there is significant evidence of his attempts to pragmatically navigate contentious issues, particularly the Royal Air Force's foray into Imperial policing following its creation as an independent service. The end result illustrates the contradictions between Trenchard's desire to chronicle the past yet still have control over how it is remembered.

Overall, by using examples from the Trenchard Archive, particularly during his tenure as Chief of the Air Staff between 1919-1930, it is possible to explore how Trenchard's extensive curation of his personal image affects our understanding of him as a man and a leader.

James Slaughter

James Slaughter is a Senior Graduate Instructor/Adjunct Professor at Norwich University in Vermont, U.S.A., and a high school teacher. He completed his PhD at the University of Wolverhampton under Professor John Buckley in 2020. He holds degrees from West Virginia University, Marshall University, and Norwich University. He has a lifelong interest in World War II but specializes in developments in technology and doctrine in France and Germany in the interwar period from 1919 to 1939. He is also interested in combined arms warfare during World War II in the European Theater of Operations. His

secondary fields include the causes, course, and outcome of the American Civil War, and reform in history education in American high schools. He regularly presents and conferences in the U.S.A. and abroad. He is published academically and popularly, and his first two books will be completed and published in 2022 or early 2023. He currently lives in South Carolina with his wife Stacy, son Logan, and dog Bear, and regularly enjoys scuba and fishing.

Title: Re-remembering the French Aircraft Industry 1937 to 1940

Abstract

The French aircraft industry is much maligned in historical memory, just as the service it primarily served, the French Air Force. It is indeed true that many French combat aircraft continued to be delivered incomplete up to May 10, 1940. Further, many French aircraft lagged behind their competitors in a decade where aircraft designs were outdated within months. However, these failings conceal a complicated truth.

The convoluted political complications associated with the nationalization and modernization of the French Aircraft industry in the late 1930s, with the enigmatic and divisive Pierre Cot at their core, and the vilification of French airpower from Riom to the present conceal an inconvenient truth: without the extensive reorganization and modernization of the industry, France would have been in even more dire straits in May and June 1940.

The French aircraft industry prior to modernization remained largely an atelier affair. Although it produced functional aircraft, many of its production techniques predated World War I; modern metal monoplanes were assembled by hand in works more attuned to the stick and canvas of 1915. The results showed as production numbers were low and the lack of modern machinery made modern designs at best shaky and at worst dangerous, but always slow.

Instead of condemning France, the modernization of the aircraft industry was in fact, one of the best efforts at saving France, as it dispersed a strategically vulnerable industry, modernized production processes, and in the end produced respectable numbers of good aircraft, and given slightly more time due to the external delays in the economy that made France vulnerable at the worst possible moment, combined with questionable reorganization of the French Air Force right before the war, might have saved France.

Russell Smith

Russell Smith is an M.A History scholarship student at the University of Leicester, due to start as a Scholarship PhD candidate at the University of Glasgow later in the year, with a view to further exploring the service and legacy of wartime RAF service volunteers.

He has been a Research Volunteer with the Royal Air Force Museum for three years, both focusing upon exploring the RAF's wartime and post-war race relations, with particular interest in the RAF's own Windrush legacy. A published author, he has also written and contributed to access and learning events on Black British Military History at Leeds City Museum and at fan conventions. He has served as a Heritage Ambassador for the Tottenham Hotspur Foundation and in this role has researched, written and performed historical works. He has previously chaired the University of Florida Panel on African American Military Service in World War One, and been a staff member of the most recent two Historical Fictions Conferences.

Title: Proud of their race and loyal to Britain - The education of Black Caribbean RAF personnel and the path to leadership

[#RAFMconference](#)

Abstract

This paper follows research into the earlier education of wartime Black Caribbean RAF service personnel and how the combination of this and their RAF training helped to shape future leadership roles. This paper examines how the Anglicised school system many underwent in shaping their world view and their idea of social justice and asks how much this was a factor in professions chosen outside the RAF, with reading law being a common thread. This paper also asks whether such career paths influenced some prominence in activist work which developed over similar time, of which Errol Walton Barrow, Dudley Thompson and Billy Strachan operate as some key examples. This paper also offers some comparison which can be made across other British colonies as to how the motives of the Colonial Office fitted into to their educational systems.

Christopher Sommer

Christopher Sommer is a Research Associate at the Institute of Material Culture at the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg, Germany. His research interests include the representation of immigration in museums, currently with a focus on the New Zealand context, and the transnational representation of military history in museums.

He completed degrees in History and Museum Studies in Mannheim (Germany) and Oldenburg (Germany). He received an International Doctoral Scholarship at the University of Auckland (New Zealand) and completed his PhD there in 2016.

From 2018–2020 he coordinated two digitization projects at the Institute of Material Culture funded by the Ministry for Science and Culture of Lower Saxony. Both projects endeavour to integrate blended learning and game-based learning concepts into the curriculum and improve digital literacy.

His current research project “Taming War - The representation and perception of war in military history museums”, funded by the German Research Foundation, explores visitor perceptions of war and violence in Germany, England and New Zealand with special emphasis on the use of large-scale exhibits and scale models.

Employing unconventional interviewing techniques such as participatory professional wargames and Lego Serious Play sessions, he aims to expand methodologies of museum visitor research.

Title: Building perceptions – Exploring representations of aerial warfare at the German Air Force Museum via LEGO Serious Play

Abstract

The modern military history museum in democratic systems endeavours to be an environment where the human condition and current geopolitical developments can be discussed. However, this aspiration is often obstructed by constant political pressure and conflicts with national master narratives or popular opinion. Similarly, museums under autocratic systems or influenced by conservative politics tend toward the dissemination of propaganda and become tools to forge a national master narrative that consciously misremembers and forgets.

Representations of aerial warfare, especially in museums that are sponsored or managed by the armed forces, have the potential to be highly controversial and at the same time overly heroic. Aerial warfare usually causes significant civilian casualties, whether as collateral or by design. Can those be justified as militarily necessary and a means to an end? Are personnel involved in such operations to be lauded or vilified? Reflections on such topics and the cultural history of aerial

warfare, however, are seldom found in contemporary exhibitions. Instead, technical aspects are the focus, complicating a multi-faceted narrative.

The majority of visitors to these institutions are not military personnel, veterans, or specialists, but rather families and the average consumer. War exhibitions may currently be en vogue, but how do these visitors perceive such exhibitions, and do they recognise them as elaborate simulations of history?

I will compare depictions of aerial warfare in German and English-speaking contexts, contrasting different narratives and biases. Based on qualitative visitor interviews using LEGO Serious Play¹ at the German Air Force Museum in Berlin, I will also discuss the perception and affective potential of such displays with special emphasis on the effect of large exhibits.

Michael Terry

Michael Terry is an early career researcher currently writing a thesis for the Open University on the Representation of First World War Aerial Combat in Literature. His work aims to highlight the significance of this under-researched body of writing and examine how the literature is highly distinct, confounding our general expectations of what First World War literature should be like, and how it helped form a mythology about early aerial combat that persists to this day.

Although Michael's work is heavily related to history, his professional background and his Bachelor's and Master's degrees are in English, and so my work involves the close analysis of texts. As well as novels and memoirs, Michael studies combat reports, diaries, letters, wartime communiques, newspaper articles and publication records. Michael's research work is at military archives like the Imperial War Museum and also publication archives relevant to the literature he examines.

In January 2021 Michael presented to the Institut Historique Allemand about the 1934 aviation novel *Winged Victory* and in March 2021 he was an entrant in the 'Three Minute Military Thesis' competition for the British Commission for Military History.

Title: *Writing the Knights of the Air: The Literature and Memory of the First World War Fighter Pilot*

Abstract

The First World War remains a conflict whose memory in Britain is dominated by themes of loss and futility. Efforts by many military historians to re-evaluate how that war should be seen have had little effect on the war's presence in culture. In particular the overwhelmingly cynical nature of its literature persists. There is one major exception: the literature of First World War aerial combat. As exemplified by *Biggles* and the stories of the aces, books about the first war in the air can focus on glamorous themes like chivalry and sportsmanship that remain largely unthinkable in novels of trench warfare. The image of the early fighter pilot as a modern form of knight is one that remains strong today. This mythology has often obscured the brutal reality of how that air war was actually fought.

This unusual divergence of First World War air combat literature from other writings on the war has remained almost entirely unexplored by scholars, despite the insights such a study could provide into the puzzle of how we remember war. My work, based on extensive research of books and in military and publishing archives, aims to change this by providing an understanding of how early air combat literature was written, published and read. This paper provides an overview of how and why the fighter pilot's divergence in literature and memory occurred. It explores the origins of fighter

pilot mythology during the First World War, the emergence of his distinct literature in the 1930s, and the survival of the themes of that literature after the Second World War and beyond, in a time when all other positive representations of the First World War in literature were being quietly forgotten.

Gerald A. WHITE, JR

Gerald White is a retired US Air Force historian with 20 years experience at 4 different wings, a staff agency and a major command, including 2 combat deployments as a civilian historian to Iraq (2007) and Afghanistan (2012). He is now an independent history researcher, with a primary interest in the development of air resupply in India and Burma before & during the Second World War. He has written *The Great Snafu Fleet; 1st Combat Cargo/344th Airdrome/326th Troop Carrier Squadron in WW II's CBI Theater*, published April 2001 (Xlibris Press), which was developed from a graduate paper. More recently, the RAF Historical Society Journal published *Manna from Heaven: Development of Aerial Resupply in India & Burma – 1942-1943* in their Spring 2014 issue, developed from a paper presented at the November 2013 Southern Conference on British Studies Annual Meeting.

Gerald's previous work includes researching and writing fifteen annual/multi-year official wing histories and eight classified chronological monthly historical reports while deployed. Other products include brochures, pamphlets and oral history interviews. A project looking at Tuskegee Airmen meteorologists resulted in a presentation at the American Meteorological Society Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA in 2006, then published as "Tuskegee (Weather) Airmen; Black Meteorologists in World War II," in the *Air Power History*, Summer 2006 issue.

Title: The Forgotten Contributor to the Forgotten War: The Cotton Supply-Dropping Parachute of India

Abstract

While Second World War campaigns in Burma and eastern India are receiving more attention of late, they largely remain a forgotten war. Moreover, the historiography has glossed over a key innovation enabling air supply of Lieutenant General Bill Slim's 14th Army drive to liberate Rangoon in an environment bereft of the roads, railroads or rivers normally required for logistical support of land operations.

This innovation was the 18' diameter cotton parachute, designed, tested, improved and produced primarily in India. No cotton parachute production existed in India prior to the Second World War. Identifying a pressing need, the British Indian Army essentially conducted an end-run around the RAF in 1941 to design and test a supply dropping parachute and related equipment, produced locally with locally sourced materials. Over the next four years, what started as a trickle became a torrent, with Indian looms and factories producing over 4 million supply dropping parachutes, at a significant cost to Indian domestic needs.

From helping supply Fort Hertz in Northern Burma, to keeping Orde Wingate's Chindits supplied without a logistical train, to daring deliveries over the "Tennis Court" and other tiny and contested drop zones at Imphal and Kohima, bundled supplies were delivered under this 18' canopy. Later, the jute industry and 14th Army tried to replicate this success but could not. Nevertheless, "parajutes" seem to feature in many Burma campaign accounts, obscuring the essential contribution of cotton supply parachutes.

Using primary archival source material, this paper will explore circumstances surrounding the 18' cotton parachute's creation, production and key role in the land campaigns to retake Burma, historically the largest air-supplied campaign ever. While the RAF in India had a miniscule pre-war supply dropping capability, creating the components and building the war-time system was primarily Army driven with RAF inputs, something not generally known as public perceptions were shaped by images of parachute-delivered supplies falling from RAF Dakotas. While air supply required multiple "key" innovations, with the absence of any crippling this effort, the 18' parachute can be viewed as the linchpin component, without which the supply dropping enterprise doesn't exist and the course of the war in Burma changes.

Abby Whitlock

Abby S. Whitlock graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History and European Studies from the College of William and Mary in 2019, focusing on social, cultural, and military history and war as a cultural production. Her thesis, "A Return to Camelot?: British Identity, The Masculine Ideal, and the Romanticization of the Royal Flying Corps Image", took an interdisciplinary approach to identifying and analyzing the promotion of the Royal Flying Corps and the typical British airman's experience during the First World War. In November 2022, she will graduate from the University of Edinburgh with her MSc in History. Her dissertation, "Language and Sense of "Self" in the Royal Flying Corps: The Intersection of Class, Gender, and Culture", focuses on how Royal Flying Corps perceived themselves and their comrades in an attempt to analyze to what extent the role that Victorian and Edwardian social and cultural ideas influenced these perceptions and to what extent the nature of war played a role. She currently works at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC for the Digital Experience Division, where she assists with project management, administrative support, and content planning for the institution's digital initiatives.

Title: The Flying Ace on the Silver Screen: Film Portrayals as an Illustration of the Evolving Masculine Ideal and the Reality of War

Abstract

As the newest military branch by the start of the First World War, ultimately created through the innovations of the industrial era, the image of the Royal Flying Corps stemmed from three primary avenues: Britain's pre-war infatuation with aviation, the anonymous nature of industrial warfare in the trenches impacting public morale, and targeted recruitment tactics and medical examination criteria. These three avenues directly correlated with the British upper class perception of the ideal "masculine man", whose characteristics of chivalry, obedience, courage, and emotional strength were directly projected onto RFC servicemen. Represented through a close analysis of personal correspondence of pilots, there is a complex relationship between their personal perceptions of themselves and their comrades and the external perceptions forced upon them by high-ranking personnel, civilians, and the media. Pilots were certainly influenced by these external perceptions, with three common reactions taking shape: complete acceptance of these views and tailoring their own ideas, experiences, and views to assimilate; a more cautious approach that included reflection on the reality of war while finding room to accept some of these external views; and a complete rejection of these external views, underscoring the importance of combat experience in determining the image of servicemen.

Post-war film presents an interesting perspective on this RFC image, showing RFC life as one of an "artificial" camaraderie, formulated in the creation of an "us" vs "them" mentality, as a direct result

of attempting to uphold this masculine ideal. Through an examination of pilots' personal correspondence/memoirs and post-war films, I argue that although the general public and military officials emphasized RFC pilots as the collected, reckless, "ideal" British male, this romanticization hid the reality of this new form of warfare, in which pilots suffered from a lack of aviation medicine practice and the oppression of this "masculine ideal". These films represent the complex role social class, gender, and cultural context play in the representation of these Royal Flying Corps pilots on the basis of their interactions with each other and their surroundings against the backdrop of the First World War and development of aerial combat. Rather than be considered "misremembered", these film representations reflect the cultural context of their respective time periods of production, an added layer of distance and outside perspective on top of the already predominant influence of the external perspectives of pilots created by the wartime media, high ranking personnel, and civilians.