

# Helicon

The Magazine of RAF Odiham **Issue 2 • 2021**

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ODIHAM**







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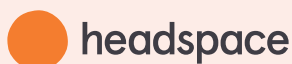
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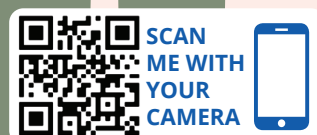
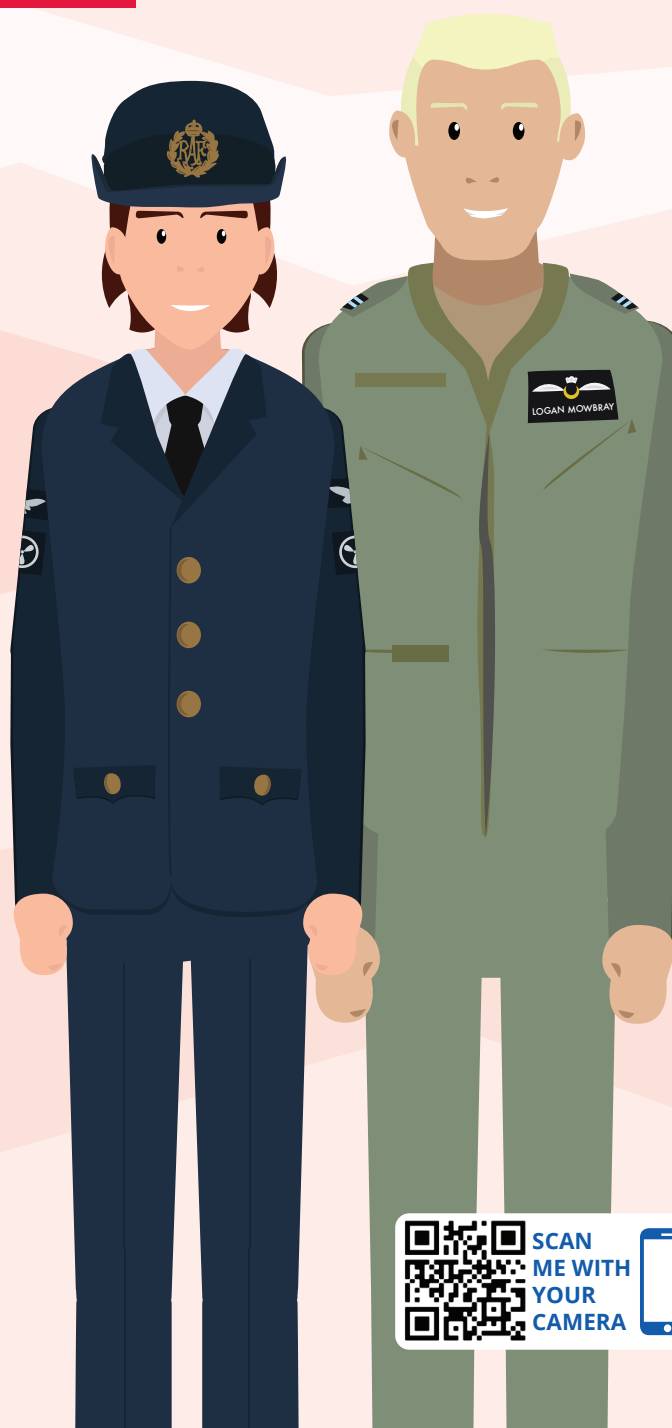
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With lockdown halting plans for the Exhibition to take place in its new venue last year, the Southern Nature Art Exhibition is back. Now in its 7th year, the largest Nature Art Exhibition in Southern England will be taking place over August Bank Holiday weekend (27th-30th August) at Cams Hill School in Fareham. The exhibition will focus on Nature, including Wildlife, Wildflowers, Seascape and Landscapes, in a variety of styles and mediums like Sculpture, Photography, Textiles and Ceramic based art.

Cams Hill School will also play host to the brand-new event The Arts and Craft Fair at Cams, which will take place on the 21st and 22nd August. This fair will showcase a variety of works by local Artisans.

Entry and parking for both events will be free, and there will be tea rooms to sit and relax in with refreshments for you to enjoy.

If you or your family fancy trying out a new art skill, workshops are available e.g., Kids Art, Airbrushing, Photography, Calligraphy, Mosaic. These will be taking place from 25th-28th August.

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*Deadline date for the next issue:*  
25th October 2021

**PLEASE SUBMIT ALL ENTRIES  
FOR THE NEXT ISSUE NO LATER  
THAN THE DATE STATED ABOVE.**

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

*The editor assumes article contributors are aware that the magazine has a wide distribution to both Service and Civilian communities and contributors are ultimately responsible for the vetting of their article submissions. The editor also assumes that the contributor has ensured that personnel included in the photographs they provide are aware and have no objection to these images being used in the magazine. Advice on content or preparation of future articles can be obtained by contacting the editor. To this end the Helicon editorial staff endeavour to ensure all articles are suitable for publication. The Helicon is the magazine of RAF Odiham and its intended audience is Station Personnel and their families. It is not an official document and the opinions expressed within it are not those of the MOD, the RAF or the editorial team.*

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**ON THE COVER**  
Chinook 40th Anniversary  
Commemorative Paint Scheme: ZD984

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LANCE PRINT LTD  
ADVERTISING: DARREN G  
[darreng@lanceprint.co.uk](mailto:darreng@lanceprint.co.uk)

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# STATION COMMANDER'S FOREWORD

Group Captain Nicholas Knight

Welcome to 2021 Issue 2 of RAF Odiham's Helicon Magazine.



I can't quite believe that this is my final HELICON foreword. In many respects it seems like only yesterday that I was completing my Station arrivals' process. The last two years have flown by and, if truth be told, were not quite as I had anticipated - thanks to Coronavirus my time in command could best be described as the 'exception' rather than the 'norm' with Skype meetings and facemasks

commonplace throughout. In many respects however this issue of HELICON captures the very essence of what it is like to command RAF Odiham!

Operations continue to be at the heart of what the Chinook Force does - the 40th Anniversary Paint Scheme a colourful reminder of the Force's rich operational history, ZA715's Falklands Memorial a nod to where it all began and surpassing 3000 flying

## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Flight Lieutenant Rosie Middleton

Welcome to 2021 Issue 2 of the Helicon Magazine. Once again it is a busy edition jam-packed with only a small snapshot of what the Chinook Force and RAF Odiham personnel have been up to. As Coronavirus restrictions are lifted, the tempo of activity is increasing across Station including essential training, exercises, charity and club events. There have been some welcome announcements for the Chinook Force including investment in the fleet, and medallic recognition for personnel deployed in Mali. RAF Odiham was delighted to unveil the commemorative 40th anniversary paint scheme on ZD984 which will be seen



across the country on routine tasking and displaying with the Chinook Display Team. As always, it was a pleasure to collate the articles for what will be my final issue as editor of The Helicon Magazine as I am posted later this year. I would like to thank everyone for their contributions, and I hope you enjoy reading this edition!

hours in Mali evidence of the impact the mighty 'wokka' continues to have on current operations. Importantly, the Integrated Review confirmed a commitment to buy the latest generation of Chinook (H-47ER) and, in so doing, ensures RAF Odiham will be at the forefront of operations for many decades to come.

This issue also highlighted the quality of the people I have been privileged to command, whether the astonishing achievements of Chinook Force stalwarts like MACr Ruffles (9000 flying hours and counting!), our fearless firefighters, standout performances recognised through the Queen's Birthday

Honours and Station's Promise and Fulfil Awards or the selfless commitment of those that strive to make RAF Odiham even better - thanks for helping out at the WACC! Put simply I never ceased to be amazed by what the people at RAF Odiham do and the unwavering support of their families.

On reflection, and despite COVID challenges, I have thoroughly enjoyed my tour and will forever have an affinity to the Chinook Force - it is a truly special place! I wish all the best to my successor, Gp Capt McGurk, and look forward to seeing RAF Odiham go from strength to strength. Promise and Fulfil!

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# £1.4 BILLION MODERNISED CHINOOK FLEET

14 ultra-modern heavy-lift helicopters for UK forces

Next-gen digital capabilities

£1.4 billion contract providing support for the next decade

A £1.4 billion contract to modernise the Chinook fleet over the next 10 years has been agreed. The deal will see British forces benefit from 14 of the latest iconic heavy-lift helicopters.

The order for the new aircraft signals the commitment made in the recent Defence Command Paper to invest over £85 billion on military equipment over the next four years to reform and renew our Armed Forces.

Proven in battle and operated in every major conflict since the Falklands War, the Chinook is a highly-versatile aircraft. The helicopter can operate in a diverse range of environments, from the desert to the arctic, and transport up to 55 personnel or ten tonnes of cargo. With a top speed of 300 kilometres per hour, the new H-47(ER) aircraft will have a range of new capabilities, including:

- an advanced digital cockpit
- a modernised airframe to increase stability and improve survivability
- a digital automatic flight control system to allow pilots to hover in areas of limited visibility



Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: "From assisting emergency repairs to UK flood defences, providing vital logistics support during Covid-19 to its warfighting role on Afghan battlefields, the Chinook has been the workhorse of the Armed Forces for over 40 years.

"The cutting edge H-47 (ER) will be at the forefront of our specialist requirements in dealing with threats and logistic support. Our £1.4 billion investment will

mean we will be one of very few air forces with this capability."

The 14 aircraft will be purchased from the US via a Foreign Military Sales agreement and includes development and manufacture over the next decade. Deliveries are scheduled to start in 2026. The new helicopters will be based at RAF Odiham, the home of the Chinook fleet. Commander Joint Helicopter

Command, Air-Vice Marshal Nigel Colman said: "Proven on both UK and overseas operations time and again over the last 40 years, the Chinook continues to be a critical capability for UK Defence; this announcement assures Chinook operations for the decades ahead and is representative of our commitment to modernise capabilities whilst maintaining interoperability with key allies."

In addition to traditional warfighting roles, the Chinook supports a wide variety of specialist tasks, including the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities. Most recently, it was part of the Joint Helicopter Aviation Task Force which transported NHS paramedics, equipment and patients during peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Introduced into service in 1981, the 40th anniversary of the first Chinook was recently celebrated with a new commemorative colour scheme. The oldest of fleet will be retired, enabling investment in the new aircraft to modernise the UK heavy lift capability.





## FALKLAND ISLANDS ZA715 MEMORIAL

On the morning of 13 May 1986 Chinook ZA715 was asked to recover 12 soldiers on exercise to their MOB in West Falkland.

Caught in disorientating 'white-out' conditions including low cloud, strong winds and snow showers, the Chinook collided with a ridge on Mt Young just five miles out from its destination. Shortly after losing radar contact with the Chinook, a Hercules was re-tasked to search the last known location, aided by a Personal Locator Beacon. A second Chinook was dispatched shortly after, aiding in the recovery of the injured personnel.

Sadly the lives of Fg Off David Browning, Sgt Wayne Hopson and Sgt Toyababhadur Gurung

were lost, alongside three major and nine minor injured personnel.

On 26 Oct 17 members of 1310 Flt reconstructed the memorial, re-purposing the previously used cairn stones and installing a decorated decommissioned Chinook rotor blade. This included cutting the blade down to approximately 12 feet before painting and lacquering to protect it from the harsh, sub-Antarctic elements.

On 13 May 21, personnel from across 905 EAW, joined by previous members of the Chinook Force, gathered to clean the memorial and pay their respects.



Flt Lt Scotty Miller of Helicopter Support Section, Mount Pleasant Aerodrome explains, "It was a privilege to commemorate those involved, especially on the 35th anniversary. It's a stark reminder of the perils of working in an austere environment". MAcr Upton, who led the clean-up and service, added, "It was an honour to be able to remember those that lost their lives serving their country in this tragic accident. It was nice to be able to carry out the service 35 years to the day with four former members of the Chinook Force in attendance".

# RAF ODIHAM AWARDS



### PROMISE AND FULFIL AWARDS 2021

RAF Odiham is delighted to recognise the hard work and achievements of our personnel in the 2021 Promise and Fulfil Awards. We are celebrating individuals, both service and civilian, who have delivered outstanding work over the last year. Many congratulations to all nominees and recipients.

Aviator's Award – SAC Faseyiku

Loyalty Award – SAC Hopkins

Professional Excellence Awards – SAC Buinimasi and Sgt Devlin

Support to Mental Health and Resilience Award – Sgt White

People and Community Award – SAC Llama

Civilian Support to Service Award – Mr Warburton

Teamwork Award – SAC Feeney

Resourcefulness and Innovation – SAC(T) Pearson

The Pride of Odiham Award – Cpl Jones

### QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST 2021

Meritorious Service Medal – WO Smith

Comd JHC Commendation – FS Bowdler

Comd JHC Team Commendation – 7 Sqn Trg Flt

Comd JHC Team Commendation – Duty Ops Controllers

AOC 1 Gp Commendation – Fg Off Webb

AOC 2 Gp Commendation – A/Sgt Glanville

AOC 2 Gp Commendation – A/Cpl Jones

AOC 2 Gp Commendation – SAC (now A/Cpl) Douch

 **ROYAL  
AIR FORCE**

**Queen's  
Birthday  
Honours  
List 2021**



# Fire section receive new fleet of Fire Appliances

An exciting time for the RAF Odiham Fire Section as they conduct scenario-based simulation training using their new fleet of fire appliances. The Section has received delivery of 3x MPRVs and will receive an additional Striker airfield firefighting vehicle later this year.

**A**n intense training package is underway to ensure the correct operating procedures are sanctioned. Once signed off these vehicles will become operational to replace the current fleet of 1x RIV and 1x MFV.

Utilising the chinook simulator, firefighters are able to practice and hone their skills. Not only does this

ensure all firefighters stay current on their training competences it also ensures they are fit and ready to deal with any aircraft emergency situation safely and effectively. The Fire Section are predominately here to provide airfield fire cover for all stationed and visiting aircraft but also provide 24/7 domestic fire cover for the base itself. Crews

must undertake regular training using a host of training aids on unit. The Breathing Apparatus Training Facility (BATF) at the Section can be used to simulate various domestic fire incidents, heated to high temperatures and filled with synthetic smoke to ensure training is as realistic as possible.

The fire crews also conduct regular road traffic collision training. Using their dedicated training area, they are able to utilise powerful cutting equipment during training scenarios to gain access to crashed vehicles and release trapped casualties. In addition, fire crews undertake regular familiarisation training on station aircraft and buildings across the Unit. This ensures all personnel are aware of potential hazards, layout of buildings and correct procedures when responding

to incidents across the site. A monthly theory training package is also delivered to all personnel to ensure they are equipped with the essential knowledge required to be a SQEP firefighter.

The Section has recently received a new compartment fire behaviour training facility. This will mean they will soon be able to conduct real life compartment fire training on site, this training is normally only carried out at the Fire Training College. Lots happening at Odiham Fire Section with exciting times ahead.

**If you are interested in what the Fire Section does or if you have any Fire Safety queries, please contact the RAF Odiham Fire Section.**



## 27 Squadron

# Chinook Crewman exceeds 9000 flying hours whilst on Op Newcombe



A ROYAL Air Force Master Aircrew has achieved the extremely rare feat of amassing 9000 flying hours whilst operating RAF helicopters.

Master Aircrew Ruffles passed the career landmark while deployed as a Crewman Instructor with 1310 Flight. This Flight is currently the Chinook detachment that is deployed to provide a heavy lift capability for the French Operation Barkhane counter insurgency mission in West Africa.

Ruffles said: *"Passing this landmark has given me the ability to reflect back on how lucky I've been operating the Chinook whilst history has unfolded around me. From the troubles of Northern Ireland, through the conflicts of the Middle East, to humanitarian relief around the world."*

The Master Aircrew passed the career milestone on the 29 May 2021, during an operational sortie as part of the crew carrying out the underslung recovery of a vehicle from near Menaka.

On his return from this sortie Master Crew Ruffles was greeted by a traditional soaking to celebrate his achievement. In the past personnel either returning on their final flight or having achieved a personal milestone would be hosed down by a fire engine, now however buckets of water stand in for the fire engine.

Master Aircrew Ruffles joined the Royal Air Force in 1985. Reflecting on joining the RAF he said: *"I was looking for the opportunity to see the world in a job with plenty of variety."* He completed his initial helicopter training on the Wessex helicopter at RAF Shawbury, before he was then posted to the Chinook Operational Conversion Unit at RAF Odiham.

Ruffles began his frontline career with 18 Squadron at RAF Gutersloh in Germany, where he was at the forefront of developing the Air Mobile Concept and gave Ruffles the ability to see first-hand how capable the aircraft truly was.

Prior to serving in Mali, Ruffles has previously deployed on numerous operations over the years including service in Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan. *"In Sierra Leone the opportunity presented itself to assist in stabilising a country and rescue captured British Troops"* he said.

Whilst in Afghanistan during combat operations, he flew over 1300 hours in support of the ground troops. Reflecting on his service in Afghanistan, he said: *"the most rewarding element of this was the CASEVAC operations we were able to carry out in support of injured troops."* He added: *"the*

*Chinooks took a lot of punishment during operations, I flew on sorties that took RPGs, HMG, and small arms fire on several occasions, so it hasn't all been plain sailing."*

Away from operations, Master Aircrew Ruffles spent time at RAF Benson as an Instructor on the Wessex helicopter from 1992 to 1995. He has also served with the Support Helicopter Standards and Evaluation Flight at RAF Benson.

In 2002 Ruffles was awarded the MBE for his work on the development of insertion and extraction techniques that improved the deployment of troops from the Chinook during operations. This was followed in 2015 by Boeing, the manufacturer of the Chinook helicopter presenting him a Lifetime Achievement Award. The current 1310 Flt that Ruffles is serving with is formed mainly from 27 Sqn personnel and arrived in Mali during January 2021. Since deploying to Mali 1310 Flt have transported over 18,000 soldiers, and flown over 3000 hours. Comparing the operations in Mali with his previous operational service he said: *"this theatre has proven to be as demanding as any I have served in with temperatures consistently reaching*

*45°C plus and the challenges of negotiating frequent dust storms."*

The Chinooks are an important part of the French Operations with missions covering a range of tasks including large-scale combat troop moves, VIP transport, under-slinging armoured fighting vehicles and deploying Commando formations into pre-assault forming up points.

Wing Commander Butler, the Officer Commanding 1310 Flight said: *"Ruffles is an inspiration in the world of Chinook flying, he has literally been there and done it for so many years and is always ready to help other aircrew by sharing his vast knowledge and experience. Passing 9000 hrs operational flying is a formidable achievement."*





# Raf Chinook Helicopter celebrates **40<sup>th</sup>** Anniversary with new colour scheme



ROYAL Air Force Odiham is celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Chinook helicopter entering RAF Service with a commemorative new colour scheme.

The new colour scheme was unveiled today as the aircraft departed RAF Odiham, the home of the Chinook Force, on a routine training flight. On board was the paint scheme designer and current Chinook pilot Flight Lieutenant Andy Donovan of 27 Squadron, RAF Odiham who said: "It has been a great privilege to rejuvenate special liveries on the Chinook Force over the past five years. For a short time, this aircraft will be the centrepiece around which 40 years of incredible stories can be told. I am personally very proud to be associated with the Chinook and the professionalism displayed by all who contribute to getting this incredible aircraft into the air, wherever it may be needed."

The commemorative paint scheme was applied during regular scheduled routine maintenance at no additional cost. The design has taken two years of groundwork and engineering preparation before entering the paint bay at RAF Odiham. A dedicated team from Serco have worked over several weeks to apply the special commemorative livery.

The Boeing CH-47 Chinook Helicopter entered RAF service on the 22nd November 1980. Throughout its 40 years of service the Chinook has made an immeasurable contribution to the Service, supporting communities across the UK and operating in every major conflict since the Falklands War.

Commander of the Joint Helicopter Command Air Vice Marshal Nigel Colman OBE said, "For most of its time in Service, the RAF Chinook has been part of the



*Joint Helicopter Command where its incredible capability has been in great demand, both at home and overseas. All those involved with Chinook operations, both past and present, should take great pride in what they have achieved. The Chinook will continue to be a familiar sight and sound in the years ahead and we all look forward*

*to the next chapter in the Chinook's illustrious history."*

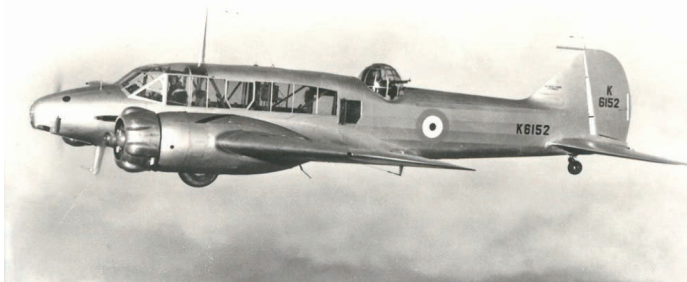
RAF Odiham Station Commander Group Captain Nick Knight OBE MA said, "Since receiving the Chinook in 1980, its contribution to Defence has been profound. From first deployment to the Falklands to current operations in West Africa, the Chinook has continually delivered on operations. Offering a capability second to none, the Chinook emotes a sense of pride built on this long and illustrious history. I am privileged to fly this iconic aircraft and also Command the Chinook Force - I look forward to seeing the Chinook play an equally important role as part of the next generation RAF. The newly painted aircraft, ZD984, has re-entered 27 Squadron's fleet at RAF Odiham and will resume essential routine training for operations in the UK and overseas. The painted Chinook will support the RAF Chinook Display Team's season and commemorative events throughout 2021."





# RAFA 381 Bognor Regis' Association

## with 1310 Flight



**B**ognor Regis's association with 1310 Flight started shortly after it was formed at RAF Llandow on 10th April 1944. Then equipped with the Avro Anson, the Flight moved to the RAF Bognor Regis Advanced Landing Ground on 25th June in the follow up to the D Day landings. The Flight was kept busy flying medical supplies to Normandy and bringing the wounded back to this country. The Flight disbanded on 21st July 1944 at Bognor and then re-formed in 1995 at Split in Croatia for service in Bosnia, providing support to the British units serving with IFOR.

Fast forward to 2009, when Mike Monk, an ex-member of 18(B) Squadron and living in Bognor Regis, and a RAFA member, suggested that the RAFA 381 Branch could provide worthwhile welfare to 1310 Flight which was now providing crucial Chinook support to the British Army in Afghanistan. RAFA 381 officially adopted 27 Sqn in 2009 and was the first RAFA Branch in

the U.K. to adopt an operational Squadron. Their sister 18(B) Sqn was also adopted two years later. Thus began the association with the two RAF Odiham Chinook Squadrons and Bognor's re-connection with 1310 Flight.

Welfare boxes for 1310 Flight started in 2009 on a regular basis until the Chinooks left Theatre in 2015. On average 50 boxes containing coffee, tea, biscuits, cake, magazines etc were sent each year. In addition funds were raised to purchase phone cards for use by the Flight for additional time to call families back in the U.K. A further year's worth of funding was raised by Mike Monk who ran the London Marathon in 2011. Last, but not least, our infamous 'Knitting Nannies' produced valued balaclavas which were highly prized by the ground crews working in the freezing Afghan nights.

Starting in 2018, RAFA 381 Members now regularly send Welfare Boxes to the 1310 Flt Chinooks operating in Mali. In addition the Branch, purchased three laptops and solar powered

torches, fans and battery chargers for use in the field. RAFA 381 has hosted members of both Squadrons over the years. The Squadrons have supported our Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain and Remembrance Sundays as well as our annual Wings fund raising at the Goodwood Revival. An 18(B) Chinook landed on the site of the WW2 Bognor Advanced Landing Ground to mark the 75th Anniversary of D Day and Bognor's link with 1310 Flight. Visiting Squadrons update RAFA members with presentations on the work of the Chinook force and the Squadrons have arranged RAFA members to visit RAF Odiham. Our links remain strong.

All RAF personnel and their families can find a warm welcome at the Bognor Regis RAFA Club. It has recently finished an extensive refurbishment and upgrade, thanks to a £143k grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund. The aim is to be Covid-19 compliant and fully open on 21st June. Best to give us advanced notice so we can make your welcome even warmer.

You could not come to a better place for sunshine as this part of the coast

has more hours of sunshine than anywhere else in the UK. A stay at the RAF Association's holiday home in Selsey (contact your RAFALO for details) or at the Butlins Holiday Resort allows you easy access to a range of historic towns such as Arundel, Chichester and Portsmouth as well as the beautiful South Downs. In addition we have the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum and Goodwood famous for the annual Festival of Speed and the Revival.

The Branch's Club is prestigiously located in the Bognor Regis Waterloo Square Conservation Area, with its balcony overlooking the gardens, bowling greens, mini golf course, the Pier and the sea.



**RAF Association**  
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Visit the Branch Website  
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 latest news and much,  
 much more.







# Odiham Motorcycle Club **Airfield Riding Day**

The RAF Odiham Motorcycle Club (OMCC) run three Airfield Riding Days a year. This year the April ARD was postponed until June with the September ARD being a weekend long sporting event due to COVID restrictions.

Various mitigations measures were put in place allowing the Stn Cdr to give his consent to run this event with a special invitation to the Royal Air Force's British Superbike Team. This prestigious team includes Lee Hardy and the fastest woman ever to complete a circuit of the Isle of Man TT racecourse, Jenny Tinmouth and Ryan Vickers. They supported the event bringing along their BSB bikes and

instructing OMCC members out on track.

The ARD is organised as a sports event for novice, intermediate and experienced riders where they can learn to improve and control of their bikes at low and high speed. Separating the groups allows the riders to develop their own skills without having any undue pressure from riders of significantly different abilities; in addition, a cohort of highly experienced instructors

including the BSB team were on hand to advise those who requested instruction.

OMCC committee and volunteer members set the track the evening before using bales of straw to protect airfield infrastructure and a sea of cones to mark the course and the setup of the paddock area for 150 riders and support agencies.

The route to was slightly adjusted this year to take into account the new runway surface, slowing down the riders before

the joined the main runway at turn 1. Sadly, no support crew or spectators were permitted due to COVID mitigation measures. The circuit is fully marshalled with volunteers manning 7 points, controlled by a chief marshal perched on top of aircraft steps positioned on the compass bay. Two roaming vehicles can recover any bikes that may break down and two paramedic ambulances are also on hand should there be any incidents. Bikes are fully checked before being allowed on circuit which also includes noise testing to ensure they adhere to 102db limit.

Support agencies at the ARD included a tyre supply/repair company who also advise in suspension set up for those who are inexperienced.



Another attendee was 'Love Life and Ride' who promote Helite motorcycle protective air bag vests. They also provide cylinder recharge and vest loan services for riders wishing to be safer on the airfield in the event of an off. The day was a fantastic success and it shows the diversity of the club by incorporating workshops and advanced riding skills to those club members taking part, both male and female show casing D&I within the RAF and the sport. Most importantly, it raises money for charity, some £4,000 per event going to worthy causes in the local area and for this event, a £1,000 sum to the Junior Ranks Fund at RAF Odiham.

The club not only runs ARDs (the next one is a weekend long event on the 11/13th Sep), but also a Mopedathon (teams of 4 running a 50cc moped using the Kart Track as a course for an endurance event) with is due to take place on the 9th Oct rising yet more monies for charity. The club also runs commercial track days, flat tracking, off roading experiences, discounted trips to the British MoToGP and MCN show in Birmingham. Tours were cancelled this year, but plans are already afoot for a Battlefield tour of northern France next year.

All our events require volunteers and without them, none of the above can take place and they are the true unsung heroes of the clubs' success. From July, the OMCC will be resuming their monthly meeting on the first Wednesday of every month at the Families Club from 20:00 onwards with guest speakers and planned BikerDown and Bike Safe courses run by the Hampshire constabulary. It's free to join the OMCC for serving personnel, a yearly membership fee applies to civilians.

**For information on club membership and our planned events, please contact FS Gary Baker at [gary.baker150@mod.gov.uk](mailto:gary.baker150@mod.gov.uk) or ext 7480. And for Bikerdown information and courses please contact Cpl Steve White at [steven.white400@mod.gov.uk](mailto:steven.white400@mod.gov.uk) or ext 5250. Or, alternatively, please take a look at [www.omcc.co.uk](http://www.omcc.co.uk)**







RAF Odiham Welfare Centre and RAFA Kidz Garden

# Get a Tidy Up

A few months ago, a request came from the RAF Odiham Community Development Officer, asking whether personnel from the station could reinvigorate the areas outside the Welfare and Community Centre (WACC), and RAFA Kidz Nursery. Both areas had sadly become neglected, were looking rather forlorn, and needed a tidy up and injection of colour.

Being something of a keen gardener, Sgt Danny Gilderson volunteered to head up this project. With the help from personnel sourced via the RAF Odiham Charities Committee, the assembled gardeners set to work bringing a new lease of life to these two areas. Our kind host for the day, Mrs Linzi Neal, greeted the eager volunteers at the door and plied them with coffee and copious amounts of toast and biscuits.

This was just the thing to invigorate the team before a day of gardening!

We set to work undertaking a series of straight forward gardening tasks. These included a general tidy up of all areas, removing the weeds that had taken over, some pruning of trees and shrubs, repointing of flower beds and the digging of a new flower bed. The highlight though, was to replant all pots, planters, hanging baskets and beds with an assortment of new summer bedding plants.

At the same time, the RAFA Kidz Nursery asked for their mud garden to be turned over. All brambles were removed, and the herb garden pruned and brought back under control. The kids were extremely excited (and loud!) to see their first visitors for such a long time and loved watching their beloved mud pit restored!



The team really enjoyed the day; some even learned new horticultural skills, and all grafted away tirelessly. This has brought back some much needed colour and life, particularly to the front of

the WACC. A big thanks to Flt Lt Si Littler, Sgt Elle Maynard and LAC Josh Moulton-Jones for pitching up and working so hard.

Sgt Danny Gilderson





# New HIVE Information Officer

I'm Caroline Stag, your new HIVE Information Officer, I was appointed on 5 May 21. With my previous role being on the Station, I bring with me knowledge of the Service Community and an understanding of the support provisions here at RAF Odiham.

The HIVE is an Information and Referral Service for the whole force Service Community. HIVEs can provide you with additional information on local community including Station amenities and facilities, places of interest, education and adult training, employment and deployment support.

HIVE Information Officers are not trained in welfare counselling; however, we are able to offer initial support to individuals and can make referrals to appropriate professional services. All HIVE staff are bound to a Code of Confidentiality.

The HIVE office is located within the Welfare and Community Centre (WACC), just outside the main gates on Kersley Crescent.

Please do not hesitate to contact the HIVE office, should you require any information to assist and support you during your posting.



**Email:** ODI-BSW-Hive  
**Information Officer**  
**Tel MIL:** 95235 7422  
**Civ:** 01256 367422  
**Opening hours**  
 Monday-Thursday 0830-1530  
 & Friday 0830-1230

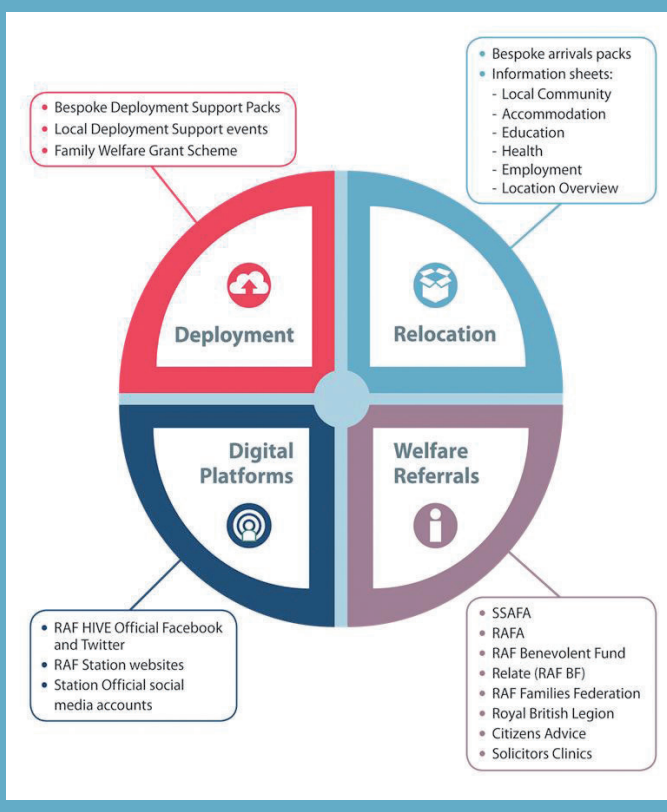


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# 28 SQUADRON HELPS RESTORE WILDLIFE HABITAT



Pewit Island, administered by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, was once a thriving seabird colony.



The aggregate, delivered by Royal Air Force Chinook helicopter, will help restore and improve a vitally important breeding and roosting area for a range of species. Due to the remoteness of the site and shallow water, airlifting the aggregate was the only viable option and Number 28 Squadron, from RAF Benson in Oxfordshire, were delighted to assist.

Reserves Officer for Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, Chris Lycett said, *"This project is very exciting and has the potential to return breeding seabirds to Portsmouth harbour, something that has not been seen in a very long time. Working with the various partners for this project has been great and I am really pleased that it went ahead after several years of planning. Special thanks to*

*Day Aggregates and Tarmac for providing the shingle."*

The operation involved many Ministry of Defence organisations working closely together as they do on operations around the world. Dr Stuart Otway, Principal Ecologist for the Defence Information Organisation, said, *"An important part of our role is to look after our environment, and that includes providing mitigation for impacts of refurbishment and development projects around Portsmouth Harbour. We are really pleased to have initiated, facilitated and supported this work to enhance and protect Pewit Island, and even more pleased that the Armed Forces used it as a valuable training exercise. It really is a win-win."*

Captain of the Chinook, Flight Lieutenant David Monaghan, said *"The instructors on Number 28 Squadron are highly experienced, operational aircrew and need to retain their own skills while teaching the future frontline crews. This task was an ideal opportunity for us to do that while supporting an important conservation project."*

Corporal Adam Brighthouse, from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment Royal Logistics Corps based at Marchwood, was the Coxswain of the MEXEFLOTE raft used to transport the stores to Pewit Island ready for airlifting. *"It is great to showcase what the MEXEFLOTE can do so close to home. It is a versatile raft that can be configured in different ways. We are constantly finding new ways of putting it to use."*





# Campaign Medal Recognition For Personnel Deployed to West Africa

MILITARY Personnel serving with the Joint Helicopter Command Chinook Detachment deployed in Mali, to support the French counter insurgency Op Barkhane have begun receiving a campaign medal.

The first presentation of the medals was made at RAF Odiham by Air Vice-Marshal Alan Gillespie CBE, the Air Officer Commanding 2 Group RAF. He presented medals to five personnel drawn from the Odiham based flying squadrons and the ground support elements.

Group Captain Capt Nick Knight OBE, the Station Commander at RAF Odiham and Chinook Force Commander said: "this is a well-deserved recognition of all the hard work that Joint Helicopter Command personnel have carried out over

*several years now, in arduous and challenging conditions, to support the French Operations in the Sahel region. It is a testament to their training and professionalism that they continue to successfully carry out the tasks assigned to them on this operation."*

The award of the campaign medal has been recently graciously approved by Her Majesty The Queen and is the General Service Medal (2008) with clasp 'Western Africa'. This medal will recognise the service of personnel from all three services, who have served on Operation Newcombe with the CH-47 Chinook detachment that is providing a combat support heavy lift capability to the French operation.

The medal will be issued to all personnel who have served for 30 days continuously or who have aggregated 45 days service in the Sahel region of Western and Northern Africa, between 20 Feb 18 and a date to be decided with the Chinook detachment. The award of the medal is to recognise the hardships and dangers which have accompanied service on the operation.

The Chinook detachment is formed of 1310 Flight plus other supporting Joint Helicopter Command elements including the Tactical Supply Wing and Joint Helicopter Support Squadron amongst others.

The personnel of 1310 Flight RAF are mainly drawn in rotation from 18 (B) Sqn or 27 Sqn both of which are normally

based at RAF Odiham, the home of the RAF Chinook Force. The RAF flight is fully integrated into the French, Groupement Tactique Désert-

Aérocombat which in turn provides the aviation support for the French ground mission in the region.





# Royal Air Force Chinooks Pass 3000 Operational Flying hours supporting French Operations in Mali

The ROYAL Air Force Chinooks currently deployed in Mali in support of French Military Operations there have passed a significant milestone after recording 3000 hours of operational flight time.

The milestone was passed by 1310 Flight, the RAF detachment that operates the CH-47 Chinooks in Mali and is primarily committed to conducting flight operations in support of the French Operation Barkhane, a counter-terrorist operation across the Sahel region of West Africa.

The RAF Odiham based helicopters from Joint Helicopter Command, first arrived in West Africa during July 2018 to provide a heavy lift helicopter support capability to Op Barkhane. The Chinooks therefore regularly carry out troop movements, resupply missions and logistical support to the French forward operating bases and

desert locations around Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. Since the inception of the task in 2018, the CH47 detachment has moved over 1,500 tonnes of freight and over 18,000 French soldiers. The aircraft are currently flown by pilots and crewmen from 27 Sqn, supported by personnel from across the RAF, British Army and Royal Navy drawn from Joint Helicopter Command.

The RAF Detachment Commander, Squadron Leader Sam Bennett, said: *"the crews and individuals who are deployed on Op Newcombe have maintained a high tempo of operations throughout our time in theatre, delivering support to the French in their efforts to counter the militant Islamist threat".*

Sqn Ldr Bennet added: *"This deployment has been particularly challenging due to COVID-19, however, our mitigations have kept the detachment 100% free*

*of the virus, resulting in no lost sorties. In addition, the harsh conditions in which we operate have added a number of substantial technical issues, that test the engineers on a daily basis. Despite this, the team has managed to provide over 100 flying hours per month and so achieve our mission to support our French allies".*

Since arriving in mid-January 2021, the current detachment has transported over 1000 soldiers while operating in temperatures over 45°C and overcome frequent dust storms.

The Chinooks are an important asset to the UK's French partners, with missions covering a range of tasks including large-scale combat troop moves, VIP transport, under-slinging armoured fighting vehicles and deploying Commando formations into pre-assault forming up points.





# "No really, it's all ~~good~~" too much!

Okay.

So if you really want to know - yeah - things are a bit tough at the moment. I'm a 27 year old mum, and sometimes I look at my friends whose partners come home every night, regular as clockwork, and I do feel a bit envious.

I'm so proud of Simon but I do have moments when he's away when it all gets on top of me a bit. Trying to juggle kids, work - I feel just a bit overwhelmed sometimes I guess. I know it's stupid - he's always there on the end of the phone and he's so supportive -

I just can't help how I feel sometimes.

He's due back next week. I can't wait for him to get home and everything to be normal again. We just need to get through the first few days of all living in the same house together again - he'll be tired, the kids will be over the top excited and I'll be in the middle....

But I'm not moaning. There's plenty worse off than me. Si's a great husband and a great dad. I just need to be positive. Get on top of things.

Then I'll be fine.

Promise x

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