



**ROYAL
AIR FORCE**

No 216 Squadron Disbandment











Foreword

Wing Commander P R Morgan
Officer Commanding No 216 Squadron

As the 49th and probably last Officer Commanding No 216 Squadron, it has been my complete privilege to command the Squadron over these final 2 years. Reading our illustrious history since its somewhat vague inception as a Royal Naval Air Squadron back in 1917, I am minded of just how much this Squadron has been at the forefront of every major military action since World War I, earning an impressive array of Battle Honours and serving the Royal Air Force with distinction, honour and pride.

Serving overseas until 1955, its role as the first jet transport squadron saw it continue to service the outposts of the dwindling British Empire and the Squadron's role in long-range air transport and air-to-air refuelling during the Tristar years has also seen a predominant focus on overseas. Throughout this time the Squadron's motto has been 'CCXVI – Dona Ferens' which translates as '216 – Bearing Gifts'. Whilst in our earlier days these somewhat incongruous gifts were in the form of bombs, over the latter years our gift has been that of bringing Service personnel, both fit and as aeromedical patients, home to their loved ones.

Much of the time the Squadron has suffered from continuous pressure to deliver and the frustrations felt by our passengers when we have been delayed are keenly felt. I think the emotions caused by these periods, whether from the days of the Falklands airbridge to recently in Aghanistan, only serve to indicate just how vital our role has been and how reliant

Defence has been on our output. If what we did didn't matter then no-one would have given a fig!

As the Tristar ends 30 years of sterling service, I look back upon our initial level of serviceability and the partnerships with British Airways that saw a hybrid civilian/military model develop at the beginning. With our successors on 10 and 101 Squadrons just at the beginning of such a 27 year relationship, I wish them as much luck and hope that their aircraft can serve as well as the Tristar has.

Of course, none of this success has happened in isolation and it would be remiss not to mention the incredible support that the Squadron has enjoyed from all aspects, whether within the military from our enablers and 'back room boys' to the partnerships with industry, in particular Marshalls of Cambridge, Rolls Royce, Thales, Cobham and Northrop Grumman to name but a few. Without their dedication none of our output could have been achieved.

But my final thank you goes to the long list of previous Commanding Officers and personnel who have served on 216 Squadron. That we have achieved so much is down to every man and woman that has served over these last 97 years. You all deserve the greatest of congratulations for steering us to this bitter-sweet ending. I hope that the name and memory of the Squadron will live on in our Association and our sister Air Training Corps squadron, but for now, this is 'two-sixteen' signing off.

Per Adua Ad Astra

World War 1 and the origins of No 216 Squadron

The spark that started World War 1, also known as 'The Great War', was the assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. The assassination occurred on 28 June 1914. His assassination by a Serb nationalist in Sarajevo was viewed as a great excuse to attack Austria-Hungary's troublesome neighbour, Serbia.

Austria-Hungary made sure they had the support of Germany, with whom they had a treaty, before they proceeded. This in turn gave Serbia time to get the backing of Russia, with whom they had a treaty. The calls for assistance didn't end there, however, as Russia also had a treaty with France and Britain.

This meant that by the time Austria-Hungary officially declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, an entire month after the assassination, much of Europe had already become entangled in the dispute.

From 1914 to 1917, soldiers on each side of the line fought from their trenches. The only way to overtake the other side's trench was for the soldiers to cross "No Man's Land," the area between the trenches, on foot. Because of the nature of trench warfare, millions of young men were slaughtered in the battles of World War 1.

By 1917, the Allies were starting to run low on men. However, two major events: the sinking of the Lusitania and the interception of the Zimmerman Telegram, convinced the United States to enter the war. On 6 April 1917, the United States officially declared war on Germany.



WWI 16 Squadron RNAS France 1918

The freshness of the American troops reignited the Allies attempts. Soon the Germans were retreating and the Allies were advancing. The end of the war was near.

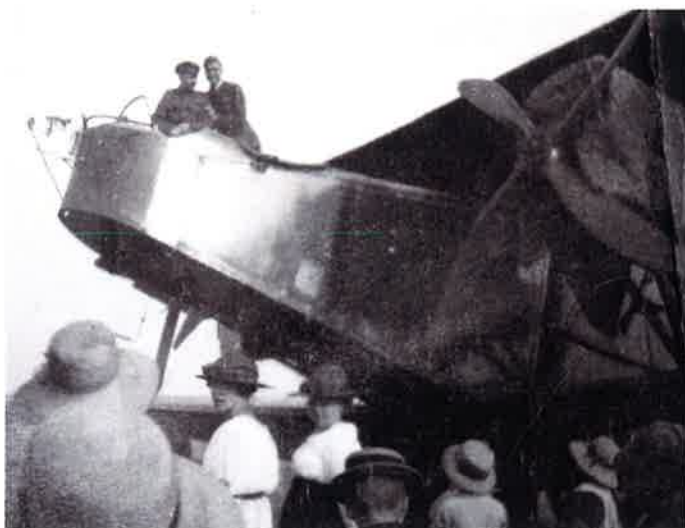
At the end of 1918, an armistice was finally agreed upon. The fighting was to end on the 11th hour of 11th day of 11th month.

This was not only a brutal and bloody war, but also a war which saw the first major use of aviation for military purpose. Huge advances were made during this time and it was also the backdrop to the birth of both the Royal Air Force and No 216 Squadron.

In August 1917 a detachment of No 7 (Naval) Squadron was sent to Redcar to operate four Handley Page O/100 bombers in the anti-submarine role. Beginning operations in September the unit was moved to Manston in October, where on the 5th of the month, it was re-designated as 'A' Squadron.

As such it was intended for strategic bombing operations in France. At the end of October the unit moved to Ochey in north-eastern France, where it joined the 41st Wing, which later became the Independent Bombing Force.

On 8 January 1918, 'A' Squadron was once again re-designated, this time as No 16 Squadron RNAS. On 24/25 March 1918, an aircraft of the unit carried out an 8½ hour operation against Cologne.



Handley Page O/100 Couthin Belgium May 1919

When the RAF was formed on 1 April 1918, all RNAS numbered squadrons had 200 added to their designation and No 16 RNAS therefore became No 216 Squadron RAF. To the present day, such squadron numbers are pronounced number-hyphen-number, so two-sixteen, as opposed to two-one-six.

On 3 April 1918, Squadron Commander Buss on parade, expressed his regret at the severance of the Squadron from the Navy. His regret was shared by the whole Squadron without exception. The old naval routine was adhered to as much as possible and was not departed from until subsequent changes in administration rendered it no longer practicable. The squadron was now known as No 216 Squadron, RAF.

The improved Handley Page O/400 started to enter service in April 1918, gradually allowing the re-equipment of more squadrons (including No 216 Squadron). It was used as support for the ground forces on the Western Front, particularly during the German Spring Offensive, and for strategic bombing under the control of the Independent Air Force.

The O/400 had two 360 hp Rolls-Royce Eagle VIII engines. A total of 554 were built. The O/400s could carry a new 750 kg bomb which was aimed with the Drift Sight Mk 1A bombsight. In service, the aircraft were deployed in force, with up to 40 aircraft participating in a particular raid. As a strategic bomber unit, No 216 Squadron attacked industrial targets in Germany dropping 176.5 tonnes of bombs in 162 raids.

It was during World War 1 that No 216 Squadron RAF was awarded its first Battle Honour, namely the Independent Force and Germany 1917-1918. However, this would prove to be just the first of many Honours.

Handley Page O/400. 1916 – 1922.

Twin engine, biplane bomber.

- Crew: 4 or 5
- Max. takeoff weight: 6,060 kg
- Maximum speed: 85 kts
- Range: 608 nm
- Service ceiling: 8,500 ft
- Rate of climb: 23 min to 5,000 ft
- Endurance: 8 hours



Handley Page O/400

Interbellum

World War 1 had a lasting impact on Great Britain. It was seen by many as signalling the end of an era of stability stretching back to the Victorian period. Across Europe many regarded it as a watershed.

By the end of the war, 4 major imperial powers—the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires—ceased to exist. The map of Europe was redrawn, with several independent nations restored or created. The League of Nations formed with the aim of preventing any repetition of such an appalling conflict. One of the most dramatic effects of the war was the expansion of governmental powers and responsibilities in Britain, France, the United States and the Dominions of the British Empire. In order to harness all the power of their societies, governments created new ministries and powers.

For No 216 Squadron, the expansion of the Government's global outlook provided the catalyst to the Squadron's changing role. Initially formed as a strategic bomber unit to attack industrial targets in Germany, the Squadron now transitioned to a new role: air transport.

This new role for No 216 Squadron was continued when they were moved to Egypt in May 1919. The Squadron settled at Kantara (El-Qantarah), 160km NE of Cairo. From there it transported mail and passengers throughout the Middle East.

Airco DH10s, built and used as a twin engine, medium bomber towards the end of World War 1 replaced the Handley Page machines in 1921. They provided an air mail service between



Voice from above: "Would you like me to tuck you in!"



DH10 prepared for flight



Johnny Johnson No 216 Squadron in the Flight Office Kantara Egypt 1922

Airco DH10. 1918 – 1923.

Twin engine, medium bomber.

- Crew: 3
- Max. takeoff weight: 4,118 kg
- Maximum speed: 114 kts
- Range: 700 nm
- Service ceiling: 19,000 ft
- Climb to 10,000 ft: 11 min
- Endurance: 6 hours

Vickers Vimy. 1919 – 1933.

Twin engine, heavy bomber.

- Crew: 3
- Max. takeoff weight: 4,937 kg
- Maximum speed: 87 kts
- Range: 900 mi
- Service ceiling: 7,000 ft

Vickers Victoria. 1922 – 1935.

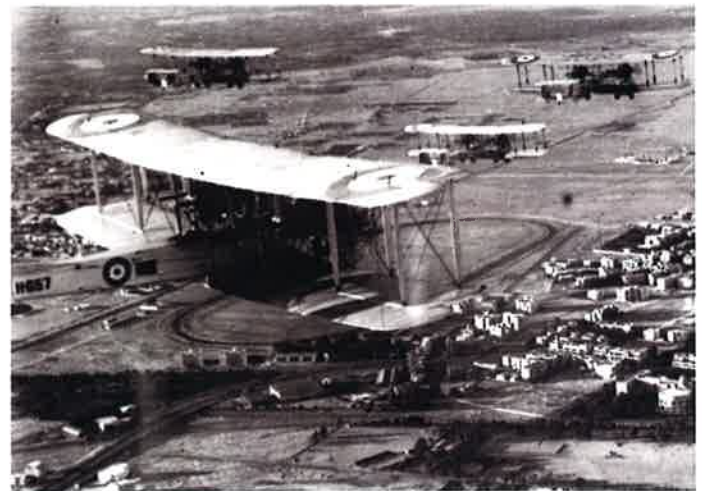
Twin engine, freighter and troop transporter.

- Crew: 2
- Capacity: 22 troops
- Loaded weight: 8,073 kg
- Maximum speed: 96 kts
- Range: 670 nm
- Service ceiling: 16,200 ft
- Climb: 11 mins to 4,920 ft

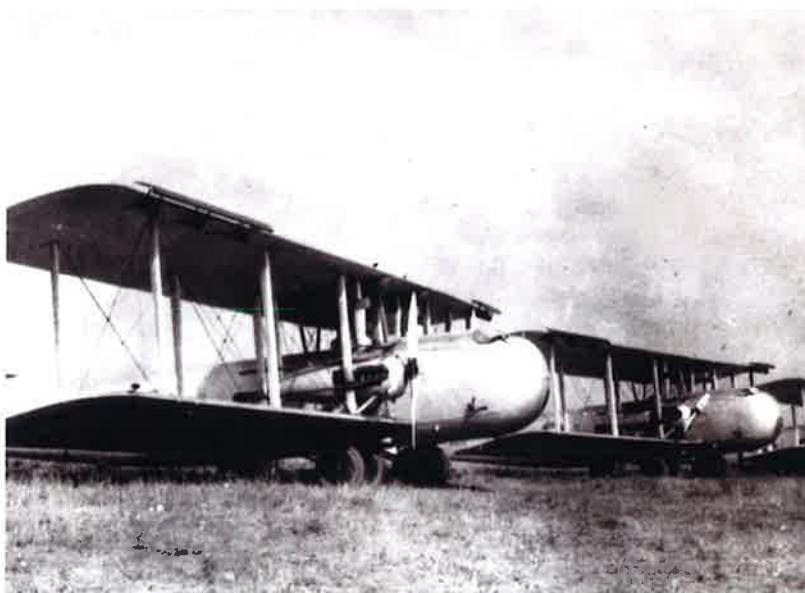
Cairo and Baghdad starting on 23 June 1921. This aircraft, another legacy of the Great War, proved short lived. A year later they had been superseded by the Vickers Vimy.

The Squadron continued operation of the Vimy for some 4 years before the Vickers Victoria replaced the Vimy. With an ever expanding empire to administer, No 216 Squadron continued to fly the mail flights along the Cairo-Baghdad route as well as route-proving and survey work throughout North and West Africa. Many of the routes surveyed became established commercial routes in the 1930's.

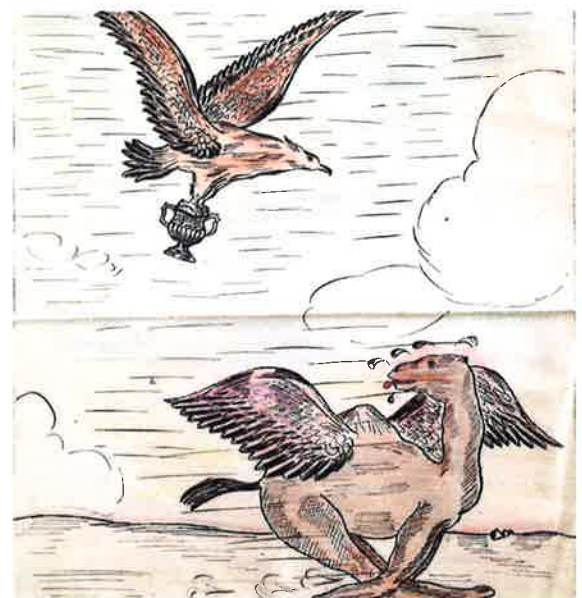
From 1931, the Squadron was re-designated as a bomber-transport unit and in 1935 Vickers Valentias supplemented the Victorias.



Vickers Vimy Heliopolis 1923



Vickers Victoria

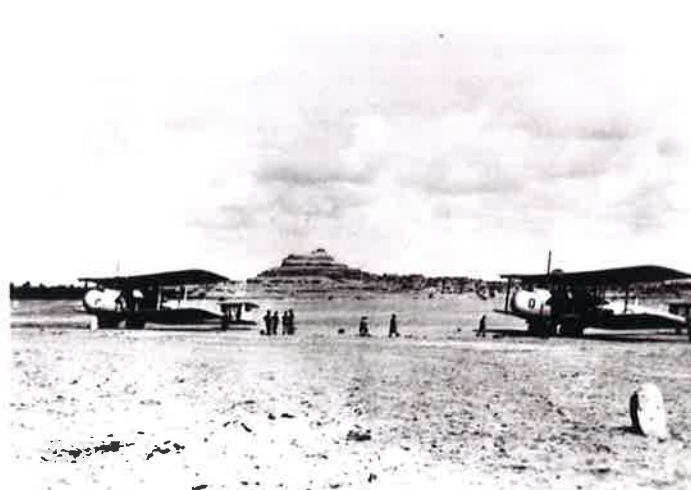


Inter War No 216 Squadron beats No 45 Squadron

World events would overtake the peaceful role of No 216 Squadron during the 1930s. Weakened states, renewed European nationalism and the German feeling of humiliation contributed to the rise of fascism and the conditions for World War 2.

On 1 September 1939, Germany and Slovakia (which was a German client state at the time) invaded Poland on the false pretext that Poland had launched attacks on German territory.

On 3 September France and Britain, followed by the fully independent dominions of the British Commonwealth, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, declared war on Germany.



Vickers Valentia, Siwi Oasis, Western Desert October 1931

Vickers Valentia. 1934 -1944

Twin engine, cargo aircraft. Often converted from the earlier Vickers Victoria.

- **Crew:** 2
- **Capacity:** 22 troops
- **Loaded weight:** 8,864 kg
- **Cruise speed:** 102 kts
- **Range:** 696 nm
- **Service ceiling:** 16,250 ft



Vickers Victoria November 1931

World War 2

No 216 Squadron were operating a mixed fleet of transport aircraft including the DH10's and Vickers Valentia as Great Britain entered the war. The Valentia, an air transport stalwart, was to remain in operational service until September 1941.

In October of that year they were joined by the Bristol Bombay. As Italy entered the war in June 1940, the Squadron fitted bomb racks to its Bombay aircraft, carrying out night bombing raids, including longer distance raids on Tobruk, Libya.

This bomber-transport combination was to prove very successful and was to be the first sign of an emerging multi-role capability for the Squadron.

Counting as a heavy bomber in the Middle East until the end of 1940, the Bombay aircraft had varied tasking. Of particular note, 5 Bombay bombers of the Squadron were tasked with flying in support of the fledgling SAS on their first official parachute insertion in the Middle East. The mission was a raid on 5 forward German aerodromes.

"In June 1941, with four other pilots and crews of 216 Squadron, using Bristol Bombay aircraft, he was assigned to duty at Kabrit, near the Suez Canal, with Colonel David Stirling's newly formed 'L' Detachment of the SAS. Charlie piloted a Bombay named as 'Bermondsey', which became well known during 'dropping' practice, and he was held in high regards by the detachment personnel for his ability and co-operation in what was at that time, virtually an adventure into the unknown, insofar as the use of Paratroops in warfare was concerned"

Extract from the obituary of Charles Edwin West.



World War 2 Medivac 1940



No 216 Squadron Western Desert 1941



Military Humour: No 216 Squadron personnel on Christmas Day

**APPENDIX 'A'.****DETAILS OF DIVERSION OPERATION CARRIED OUT BY HUDSON AIRCRAFT ON THE NIGHT
23-24TH. OCTOBER, 1942.**

On the night 23-24th. OCTOBER, 1942, four Hudson aircraft, Captains:- W/Cdr. RUSTON, F/Lt. BRADSHAW, F/O. GODY and F/O. KING, carried out diversion operations over FUBIA Satellite aerodrome.

The aircraft took off at five minute intervals, commencing at 23.15 hours, each aircraft carrying eight self-destroying dummy "parachute troops", with the object of causing panic amongst the German and Italian troops in that area, thereby diverting attention from the main operations being carried out at EL ALAMEIN.

This operation, which was the second carried out by Hudson aircraft of 216 Squadron, was a complete success, as subsequent events proved.

All the Hudson aircraft arrived over the target area between 0100 and 0130 hours, and, after releasing flares, dropped their "parachutists" between FUBIA Main and FUBIA Satellite land grounds, the descent of the dummies being illuminated by the flares.

Light flak was encountered by the last two aircraft, and though no damage was received, it is significant in that it proves the enemy was well aware of our presence, which was the desired effect.

By 0315 hours, all the aircraft had returned to base, and the crews were being congratulated by the A.O.C. on having completed efficiently an important operation.

No 216 Squadron Operational record of spec ops in support of the Battle of El Alamein

As 1940 drew to a close the Bombay was gradually superseded as a bomber by the Vickers Wellington. Once again No 216 Squadron now returned to their air transport role. Squadron Bombays were used on 2 May 1941 to evacuate the Greek royal family from Crete to Egypt. The Squadron also began training for the airborne support role, dropping its first parachute troops in November 1941.

In the build up to the battle of El Alamein, a key battle of the West Desert Campaign, Squadron crews were involved in diversionary operations, dropping dummy paratroopers and flares to draw German forces out of position. By November 1942 the Squadron was moving forward, detaching aircraft to El Adem airfield, located to the South of Tubruq, Libya. The New Year saw rapid Allied advances on the ground and the Squadron were once again heavily tasked transporting fighter units to new bases, re-supplying ground forces and evacuating casualties. This combined action halted the Axis advance under General Erwin Rommel that aimed to take Egypt.

Other notable actions by No 216 Squadron include:

The delivery of supplies into Habbaniya, Iraq during the siege of April-May 1941.

The transport of troops of the Essex Regiment to pumping station H4 on the border between Iraq and Trans-Jordan in early May and to move troops to a position to the north-east of Baghdad later in the month. Delivery of supplies to the beleaguered garrison of Bir Hakeim, a remote oasis in the Libyan desert in June 1942. The Free French held out until 10 June, disrupting Rommel's timetable.

In July 1942 the Squadron received a number of Lockheed Hudsons which were used for supply and casualty evacuation duties. In July 1943 a single Bombay crew was credited with flying 6,000 wounded troops out of Sicily. Douglas Dakotas finally began to replace the Bombays in March 1943 and the last of the older aircraft was retired in June. The Squadron was used to provide regular transport services around the Mediterranean and the Middle East.

In September 1943 the Squadron's Dakotas were used to drop troops onto some of the Aegean Islands during the brief and unsuccessful Allied attempt to take advantage of the Italian surrender by taking control of the islands. Between 5 October and 20 November the Squadron flew 87 supply drop sorties during 26 missions, but this effort was unable to prevent the Germans from recapturing the islands.

Burma

On 31 March 1944 the Squadron detached 15 aircraft to India. By 7 April 1944 these aircraft were flying into occupied Burma (in support of Chindit operations), where it carried out re-supply drops and casualty evacuations from the area. Sadly several aircraft were lost on these sorties.

By the end of the war, the Squadron was acting much in the role of an airline with scheduled services throughout Africa, the Middle East, India, the Mediterranean, Southern Europe and back to the UK. In addition to these 'scheduled' services, airborne force operations were flown and detachments to Yugoslavia (supporting Tito's Partisans) and others as far reaching as Nairobi and Karachi occurred during the remainder of the War.



Dakota first delivery 1943

Dakota DC3

- Crew: 2
- Capacity: 21-32 passengers
- Gross weight: 11,430 kg
- Maximum speed: 200 kts at 8,500 ft
- Cruise speed: 180 kts
- Service ceiling: 23,200 ft
- Rate of climb: 1,130 ft/min



Air transport - A taste of things to come for troops...!

Extract From 216 Sqn Operational Record Book

V.E. Day Celebrations

Business continued as usual. Unfortunately a spasm of bungee-failures kept the riggers working busily throughout the celebration period, but when the crisis had passed two separate days off were arranged for the servicing personnel, and an appropriate amount of alcohol was consumed.

VE Day from No 216 Squadron Operational records

Post war years

After the war, the Squadron remained as part of the Middle East Transport Wing, fully replacing its Dakotas with the Vickers Valetta by February 1951.

The Valetta, which first flew on 30 June 1947, was a military transport development of the Vickers Viking civil airliner. The Valetta differed from the Viking in being fitted with more powerful engines, a strengthened floor and large loading doors.

The Valetta C1 entered service with the RAF in 1948, replacing the Douglas Dakota with No 216 Squadron and other transport squadrons in the Middle and Far East. The Valetta was used to carry out parachute drops in the 1956 Suez Crisis and was used to provide transport support for a number of other British military operations in the 1950's and 60's, such as the Malayan Emergency and operations in Aden.

After a distinguished service in the Middle and Far East the Squadron returned to the UK, to RAF Lyneham, on the 10 November 1955, the first time it had been stationed in Great Britain for 38 years.

Leaving RAF Fayid, located 70 miles to the North East of Cairo, Egypt, the Squadron flew its 8 Valetta's via Malta to RAF Lyneham. There they were welcomed by Air Marshal Sir Donald Hardman, Air Member for Supply and Organization.



Vickers Valetta



No 216 Squadron return to England November 1945



The jet age

As the world entered the jet age in the early 1950s, the United Kingdom was at the beginning of the de-colonisation process, which would see the final break-up of the British Empire. Across the globe, diplomacy and military force were required in equal measure to try and ensure that order was maintained amidst the upheaval of the next 2 decades. Wars and uprisings in Kenya, Malaya, and the Middle East, and conferences and summits in dozens of other locations all required British royalty, politicians and diplomats on the spot to smooth feathers and exert influence.

An aircraft capable of spanning these great distances at speed and in great comfort was thus required; the RAF acquired the De Havilland Comet 2 and reincarnated No 216 Squadron as the first military jet transport squadron. Based at RAF Lyneham, it was eventually equipped with 10 Comet 2s. In 1962 a further 5 aircraft were obtained, this time in the C4 variant. The Comet 2s were retired in 1967, and the Comet 4s served until the first disbandment of the Squadron in 1975.

The Comet itself, as the first jet airliner, had a chequered history before entering service with the RAF. The Comet 1 suffered horrific structural problems, leading to several high-profile accidents and great loss of life. The Comet 2 improved upon the initial design, with oval windows replacing the doomed square windows of the original, which had caused cracks to develop in the fuselage. The Comet 2 could carry 44 passengers, but the extended Comet 4, with its more powerful Avon engines, longer range, higher ceiling and greater cruising speed now carried 81 passengers and was a great improvement.

The Comet served primarily as a VIP transport aircraft, but also operated schedule services to destinations such as Malta, Cyprus and various destinations in Africa. Certain aircraft were modified for the aero-medical role and fitted with "iron lungs". In the 1970s some of the aircraft were fitted with electronic surveillance equipment. Over 20 years of service, the Comets completed 587 VIP tasks, carrying HRH Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and several other members of the Royal Family.



No 216 Squadron Comet



In addition, 4 British Prime Ministers, several Chancellors of the Exchequer, heads of all 3 Armed Forces, ambassadors and dozens of others amongst the great and good were ferried across the world in comfort by No 216 Squadron. By its retirement the aircraft had flown almost 55,000 hours.

After the retirement of the Comet and the disbandment of the Squadron in 1975, the fallow years were to be few. In 1979 the Squadron was stood up again at RAF Honington and equipped with the Blackburn Buccaneer S2B; for the first time in many years it had returned to the bombing role in the Maritime Strike/Attack field. The Buccaneer was equipped with WE177A nuclear bombs, free-falling conventional HE bombs and Martel missiles for non-nuclear strike. It formed part of the RAF's nuclear strike capability, capable of striking at Soviet forces in

Europe. The Squadron was eventually rested in 1980 before being reactivated (it was never formally disbanded) in its current role on 1 November 1984.



A No 216 Squadron Buccaneer

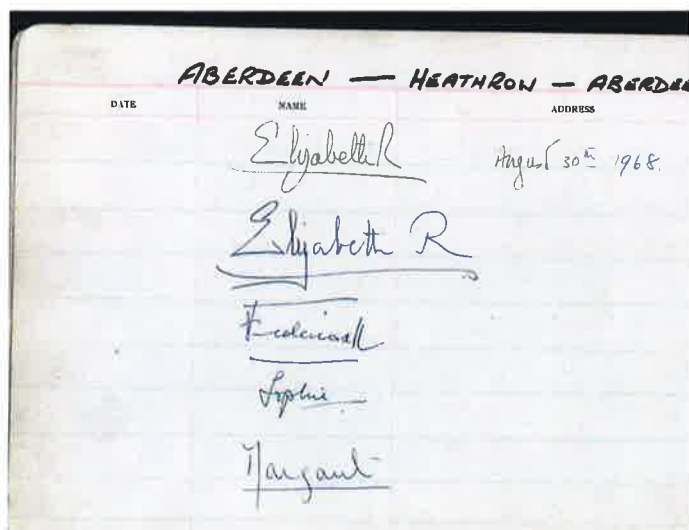


No 216 Squadron crews pose in front of their new aircraft



(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
347	July	1974	1015	XR 396	Sqn Ldr Alderson	Paris	Prime Minister Harold Wilson
348	July	1974	1017	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Alexander	Lucca	Archbishop Makarios
394	July	1974	1016	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Alderson	Geneva	Foreign Secretary James Callaghan
350	August	1974	1000	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Sharpe	United States	Air Chief Marshal Sir Denis Smallwood
351	August	1974	1023	XR 396	Sqn Ldr Johnson	Geneva	Foreign Secretary James Callaghan
352	August	1974	1011	XR 397	Wg Cdr King	Ankara, Lucca	CENTO Officers
353	August	1974	1014	XR 399	Sqn Ldr Alderson	South America	Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra
354	August	1974	1012	XR 396	Wg Cdr King	Ankara	CENTO Officers
355	September	1974	1018	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Johnson	Hong Kong	Air Marshal Sir Ruthven Wade
356	September	1974	1924	XR 399	Sqn Ldr Sharpe	Seeb, Masirah	Permanent Under Secretary for Defence Sir Michael Cary
357	September	1974	1025	XR 396	Sqn Ldr Galloway	Luxembourg	Lord Brayley did not in fact go
358	September	1974	1019	XR 399	Sqn Ldr Somers	Brussels	NATO Military Committee
359	September	1974	1020	XR 399	Sqn Ldr Somers	Gilze-Rijen	NATO Military Committee
360	September	1974	1031	XR 399	Sqn Ldr Sharpe	Ingolstadt	Senior Officers to see MRCA
361	September	1974	1029	XR 395	Sqn Ldr Foreman	Cairo, Riyadh	Sir Lester Suffield
362	September	1974	1020	XR 396	Sqn Ldr Alexander	Andrews	Admiral Sir Edward Ashmore
363	September	1974	1030	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Alderson	United States	Foreign Secretary James Callaghan
364	October	1974	1033	XR 395	Sqn Ldr Sharpe	Akrotiri	Field Marshal Carver
365	October	1974	1040	XR 395	Sqn Ldr Alderson	Masirah	Under Secretary of State Air Brian Broadbent
366	October	1974	1032	XR 398	Sqn Ldr Sharpe	Akrotiri	Chief of Air Staff Sir Andrew

Excerpt from No 216 Squadron Flying Log, July to October 1974



Flight of the Queen by No 216 Squadron 30 August 1968



No 216 Squadron crew on VIP tasking



No 216 Squadron 2013



The introduction of the Tristar

In 1966, Lockheed started work on what they hoped would become the most advanced jetliner in the world at that time, the L-1011 Tristar. Lockheed was able to draw on its technological experience from the development of the Mach 2.5+ high-altitude SR-71 Blackbird, C-5A galaxy transport and Jetstar. When completed, the Tristar's avionics were 5 to 10 years ahead of the competition. Rolls Royce developed the RB211 high bypass turbo fan engine for the Tristar; the largest, quietest and most fuel efficient engine of its time.

The aircraft was built using a bonding technique that incorporated the use of Lockheed's autoclave system for bonding fuselage panels together. This made the aircraft resistant to corrosion. Lockheed had built a plane that would remain in service from 1 September 1970 through to and beyond 2014.

On 2 April 1982, Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a remote UK colony in the South Atlantic. The conflict was a major episode in the protracted historical confrontation over the Territories' sovereignty. Argentina has asserted and maintains that the islands have been Argentinean territory since the 19th Century and, as such, the Argentine government characterised their action as the reclamation of their own territory. Argentina's military junta hoped to restore its support at a time of economic crisis, by reclaiming sovereignty of the islands.

The British government saw it as an invasion of territory that has been British since the 19th Century. Neither state, however,



Tristar commemorative envelope

officially declared war and hostilities were almost exclusively limited to the territories under dispute and the area of the South Atlantic where they lie.

The UK, which had ruled the islands for 150 years, quickly chose to fight. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said the 1,800 Falklanders were "of British tradition and stock"

Op CORPORATE was the codename given to the British military operations in the Falklands War. Operations lasted from 1 April 1982 to 20 June 1982.

Air Power played a key role in the conflict, providing tactical air defence of the fleet and ground troops alongside offensive operations. This culminated in the daring Black Buck raid raids on Stanley airfield by the RAF.



Tristar 1st tanker handover ceremony



Tristar No 216 Squadron Reformation Parade 01 November 1984

The conflict highlighted the vulnerability of surface ships to anti-ship missiles and submarines, the challenges of co-ordinating logistical support for a long-distance projection of power and re-confirmation of the role of tactical and strategic air power.

Recognising the limitations of Stanley airfield, a new station was constructed as part of British efforts to strengthen the defence of the Falkland Islands. Mount Pleasant airfield has since served as home to flights of Phantoms, Tornado F3s and presently Typhoons.

As 1982 drew to a close and the Falklands war had reached its logical conclusion the MOD identified the need for a strategic tanking aircraft capable of supporting long range deployments of both personnel and freight. Though offered the DC10, the RAF opted for and purchased a number of L-1011s from British Airways and Pan Am.

Marshall Aerospace of Cambridge were awarded the contract to convert 9 Tristars in the early 1980's for use by the Squadron. Of these the C2 variant would remain a purely passenger aircraft, retaining the configuration in which they arrived from the civilian world. These aircraft would form the backbone of troop transport operations and were rapidly pushed into

service supporting the Falkland Islands airbridge. This new extended reach and airlift capability saw No 216 Squadron reach destinations as far afield as Calgary, Nairobi and the Far East.

The remaining aircraft would undergo significant modification with Marshalls. The holds were replaced by 2 large fuel tanks increasing the theoretical fuel load to over 140T. These tanks were connected to the main fuel gallery, which in turn had new piping installed leading to a pair of Cobham hose drum units for air-to-air refuelling. To provide ultimate flexibility the entire floor was strengthened and modified allowing any combination of freight and passenger seats to be used. These aircraft would form the core of the air-to-air refuelling contingent of the Squadron. They were to play a major role in the RAF's contribution to future operations over the coming decades.

As world events drew the Squadron focus towards the Gulf, the passenger variants would form the core of the strategic airbridge into Iraq and subsequently Afghanistan. Further modifications were required: flight deck armour, a fuel tank inserting system and a defensive aids suite were added to ensure the aircraft were safe to operate in this hostile environment.



Tristars in MPA

Op GRANBY/RESINATE SOUTH

After the long stalemate that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, the Gulf War began with an extensive aerial bombing campaign on 17 January 1991. The Coalition flew over 100,000 sorties, dropping 88,500T of bombs and widely destroying military and civilian infrastructure. The air campaign was commanded by USAF Lieutenant General Chuck Horner, who briefly served as US Central Command's Commander-in-Chief – Forward while General Schwarzkopf was still in the US.

A day after the deadline had passed under Resolution 678, the Coalition launched a massive air campaign, which began the general offensive codenamed Op DESERT STORM. The first priority for Coalition forces was the destruction of Iraq's Air Force and anti-aircraft facilities. The sorties were launched mostly from Saudi Arabia and the 6 Coalition carrier battle groups in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

The next Coalition targets were command and communication facilities. Saddam Hussein had closely micromanaged Iraqi forces in the Iran–Iraq War and initiative at lower levels was

discouraged. Coalition planners hoped that Iraqi resistance would quickly collapse if deprived of command and control.

The air campaign's third and largest phase targeted military targets throughout Iraq and Kuwait: Scud missile launchers, weapons research facilities and naval forces. About one-third of the Coalition's air power was devoted to attacking Scuds, some of which were on trucks and therefore difficult to locate. US and British special operations forces had been covertly inserted into western Iraq to aid in the search for and destruction of Scuds.

Iraqi anti-aircraft defenses, including man-portable air-defense systems, were surprisingly ineffective against Coalition aircraft and the Coalition suffered only 75 aircraft losses in over 100,000 sorties, 44 of which were the result of Iraqi action. Two of these losses are the result of aircraft colliding with the ground while evading Iraqi ground fired weapons.

The United Kingdom committed the largest contingent of any European state that participated in the war's combat operations. Op GRANBY was the code name for the operations



Op Granby trail May 1991



A message of thanks to No 216 Squadron



in the Persian Gulf. British Army Regiments (mainly with the 1st Armoured Division), RAF squadrons, including No 216 Squadron, and Royal Navy vessels were mobilized in the Gulf. The RAF, using various aircraft, operated from airbases in Saudi Arabia. Almost 2,500 armoured vehicles and 53,462 troops were shipped for action.

Op GRANBY saw No 216 Squadron flying more than 1200hrs in the month of August. The first sortie was on the 12 August 1990 delivering essential NBC equipment to the Gulf. The Squadron then maintained a twice daily run between Cyprus and the Gulf delivering weapons into the region. No 216 Squadron deployed engineers to Wildenrath, Akrotiri and Bahrain in order to speed up the turn-round time of the aircraft. Tristar KC1 aircraft were routinely carrying 40T at a time delivering 72 CBLUs or 9 double pallets of JP233. This was operational flying and crew days

exceeding 19 hrs were common with reduced crew rest in-between. All the time Op GRANBY was being conducted the Squadron managed to maintain its extant tasking including completing a large roulement of Army units in the Far East.

Op GRANBY was to continue into 1991 and by the end of Jan that year over 5200hrs had been flown in support of the operation. The two K1s were hastily painted in desert pink camouflage and deployed to King Khalid International Airport, near Riyadh. Named "Pinky" and "Perky", they flew more than 90 AAR missions, accumulating more than 430 flying hours and transferring over 3,100T of fuel. To enable the refuelling of coalition aircraft, clearances were received, within a month, for the refuelling of F14, F18, A4, A6, A7, Mirage 2000 and Mirage F1 aircraft. On the 26 February 1991 a Tristar crossed the Iraqi border in support of Tornado F3 aircraft.

"The successful conclusion of the ground war and the pleasant task of repatriating fighting units has given the Sqn a sense that the effort was all worthwhile. Many Sqn crews came under direct attack from Scud missiles and the deployed aircraft CAP'ed right up to the edge of known enemy anti-air defences. 216 Squadron has a long and proud Service history, Op GRANBY has added a Tristar chapter."

Officer Commanding No 216 Squadron, Wing Commander Hoskins 1991

Op RESINATE SOUTH

The Iraqi no-fly zones were a set of 2 separate no-fly zones and were proclaimed by the US, UK and France after the Gulf War of 1991 to protect the Kurds in northern Iraq and Shiite Muslims in the south. Iraqi aircraft were forbidden from flying inside the zones. The policy was enforced by US, UK and French aircraft patrols. Op RESINATE was the UK's codename to the no-fly-zone.

Between August 2001 and March 2003, the Squadron took over Op RESINATE SOUTH from No 101 Squadron. This detachment, based in Bahrain, supported the long-standing commitment by UN Forces to maintain the no-fly zone over Southern Iraq by providing AAR support to the RAF's Tornado Force.



The Balkans

No 216 Squadron first deployed to Italy on 8 June 1993 in support of Op DENY FLIGHT. The crews deployed with the 2 K1 aircraft to Milan and quickly started 2 trips a day. Op DENY FLIGHT was to endure and whilst the detachment moved to Palermo the pace of operations remained. In August of 1995 Op DELIBERATE FORCE was to commence, with No 216 Squadron providing air-to-air refuelling support to coalition aircraft, flying up to 3 tanking sorties per day.

The Squadron's presence in the Adriatic region continued with Op DELIBERATE GUARD and in January 1998 the Tristar detachment moved from Palermo to Ancona.

On 23 March 1999 Richard Holbrooke, a prominent US diplomat and key player in American policy on the Balkans, returned to Brussels and announced that peace talks had failed between parties in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and formally handed the matter to NATO for military action. Hours before the announcement, Yugoslavia announced on national television it had declared a state of emergency citing an imminent threat of war and began a huge mobilisation of troops and resources.

On 23 March the Secretary General of NATO, Javier Solana, announced he had directed the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), US Army General Wesley Clark, to "initiate air

operations in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." On 24 March NATO started its bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

NATO's bombing campaign lasted from 24 March to 11 June 1999, involving up to 1,000 aircraft operating mainly from bases in Italy and aircraft carriers stationed in the Adriatic. Tomahawk cruise missiles were also extensively used, fired from aircraft, ships, and submarines. With the exception of Greece, all NATO members were involved to some degree. Over the 10 weeks of the conflict, NATO aircraft flew over 38,000 combat missions.

On 10 June 1999, after an air campaign lasting 77 days, NATO Secretary General Javier Solana announced that he had instructed General Wesley Clark, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, temporarily to suspend NATO's air operations against Yugoslavia. This decision was taken after consultations with the North Atlantic Council and confirmation from General Clark that the full withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo had begun.

In support of these operations, No 216 Squadron Tristars, still deployed in Ancona, Italy, provided AAR support for NATO aircraft enforcing the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. Later, during Op ALLIED FORCE, Tristars were again involved. Five tankers flew 230 missions with a 100% success rate; transferring 6100 tonnes of fuel to 1,580 aircraft from 7 countries.

"Dear comrades and friends, it is always a special pleasure to work with you guys. Your situational awareness and professionalism is extraordinary and gives just that support to my aircrews they need for successful SAM hunting. Keep up the 'shit hot' work and leave us a space at your gas stations!"

Signal from Colonel Joe Both, German Combat Wing addressed to the No 216 Squadron detachment commander. This is believed to be the first signal between UK and German forces fighting on the same side since the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

Paying tribute to General Clark and to the forces which had contributed to Op ALLIED FORCE and to the cohesion and determination of all the Allies, the Secretary General stated that NATO was ready to undertake its new mission to bring the people back to their homes and to build a lasting and

just peace in Kosovo. Moreover, the success of the campaign resulted in the award of the DFC to one of the Squadron pilots, along with 4 other awards to aircrew for gallantry. The Squadron remained in Italy until July 2001, ensuring that peace prevailed in the volatile Balkan region.



Refuelling during Op DENY FLIGHT, January 1994

Op TELIC

Op TELIC was the codename under which all of the UK's military operations in Iraq were conducted between the start of the Invasion of Iraq on 19 March 2003 and the withdrawal of the last remaining British Forces on 22 May 2011.

The operation proved to be one of the largest deployments of British Forces since the mobilisation of World War 2 with some 46,000 troops deployed to the Gulf region. Geoff Hoon, the then Secretary of Defence, gave 3 declarations to the House of Commons between the 7 January 2003 and the 6 February 2003 announcing the deployment of naval, land and air forces. Hostilities began on the 19 March.

The UK air component comprised of 115 fixed-wing aircraft and 27 helicopters, supported by 8,100 personnel. Prior to

expansion for Op TELIC, there had been 25 aircraft and 1000 RAF personnel in the Gulf as part of the No-Fly Zone enforcement operations. Air Vice-Marshal Glen Torpy initially commanded the RAF elements in the Gulf.

The Squadron immediately began daily freight flights from the UK to Kuwait International Airport moving vast quantities of materiel required in Theatre. In addition to this commitment, 4 refuelling aircraft deployed to Bahrain. This commitment would remain for a number of years past the cessation of hostilities with eventually a single aircraft deployed to Seeb, the military side of Muscat International airport in Oman. From this small detachment in the desert, the Squadron were well placed to support operations over Iraq, flying in support of Tornado GR4 reconnaissance aircraft. Though primarily supporting the



Early start at RAF Brize Norton

GR4, additional tasking was common. Crews would regularly refuel American EA6 Prowler aircraft over Baghdad and to the North West near Mosul.

Air Transport

Basra, located in Sothern Iraq, became the focal point for the UK Airbridge into Iraq. The Squadron began transport duties to the airbase moving troops and freight. The approach, to a poorly lit airfield in the depths of the desert, provided a unique challenge to operating crews. It was flown by night, lights out and often to a downwind join for a visual circuit to land. With limited visual cues and no NVGs, the finals turn often resembled a descent into a black hole. A slip pattern was initially established to minimise ground time of the aircraft. Conditions were basic. Initially accommodated in the air traffic tower as

a make shift shelter, the crews were then moved into tented accommodation. Each 15 strong crew would use a wing of the tent with a one man "pod" for their bed. Facilities were limited; the creative use of clothes pegs and old sheets providing a modicum of privacy when required.

As Op TELIC drew to a close, passenger transport flights were replaced by freighter flights landing at Basra to unload before a hop to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. The world's attention was now firmly on the activities of insurgents within a small central asian country: Afghanistan. Op HERRICK was about to begin and would dominate the Squadron's role until its disbandment in 2014.



No 216 Squadron Tristar in front of Basra Air Terminal

Op HERRICK

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 marked a new era for NATO and the allied forces. With Osama bin Laden and the terrorist organisation, Al-Qaeda, claiming responsibility for the attacks on the twin towers, the US launched their 'War on Terror' and in October 2001 operations against the Taliban government of Afghanistan were initiated.

Supported by the UK, the American led Op ENDURING FREEDOM was aimed at removing power from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, run by the Taliban government, as a result of their refusal to extradite Osama bin Laden and expel Al-Qaeda. Although successful in displacing them from power, most Taliban and Al-Qaeda escaped, seeking refuge in the mountains of Eastern Afghanistan or across the border to Pakistan. Having re-grouped, these fighters began launching insurgent attacks against the allied forces, which included the use of suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices, guerilla raids and countryside ambushes.

As 2011 drew to a close, and with Osama bin Laden killed by US Special Forces, NATO leaders began to define their exit strategy. Peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government were initiated and the British government announced that UK troops would cease their combat role by the end of 2014.

Op HERRICK began in 2002 and was the codename for British operations in Afghanistan. Consisting of 2 parts, the first was the British contribution to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), initially set up to assist the Afghan government in Kabul in 2001 and originally codenamed Op FINGAL. The second was in support of American forces of Op ENDURING FREEDOM, which began under a different codename of Op VERITAS.

As of 2003, Op HERRICK increased in both breadth and depth to match the spread of ISAF's intervention outside of the capital, Kabul. However 2006 marked the biggest change for British forces as ISAF began its expansion into Southern Afghanistan, in particular the Helmand Province.

The RAF's role dates back to the start of operations in October 2001, when RAF aircraft provided a reconnaissance and air-to-air refuelling capability in support of US strike aircraft under Op ENDURING FREEDOM. As the British area of responsibility shifted to the Helmand Province so did the focus of the RAF.

During the course of operations leading up to Op HERRICK, the Squadron had the distinction of being the first Allied tanker asset to enter Afghanistan airspace, and in a period of



Tristar at Kandahar



F18 in close formation in sunset

just 4 months had dispensed more than 10,000T of fuel to coalition aircraft.

With the drawdown of Op TELIC, the Tristar air-to-air refuelling detachment in Oman focused their efforts on supporting the Op HERRICK mission. During the period 2008 to 2012 operational tanking sorties flying from the Squadron's detachment in Seeb, and then later Musannah airbase, were launched on a daily basis. Many of these sorties were flown in support of the US Navy and US Marine Corps F-18 and Prowler aircraft due to the compatibility of the 'probe and drogue' system. The Squadron rapidly became their "tanker of choice", the Squadron crews praised by their fast jet counterparts for their flexibility and professionalism in the dynamic and challenging air environment of Afghanistan.

In contrast to the gas hungry American aircraft, the Squadron also supported Italian AMX aircraft. These jets, nicknamed the "Hawk-uar" for their hybrid look of a Hawk and Jaguar aircraft combined, were rarely able to take more than 1.5 tons of fuel each. Crews often joking that until they saw the pilot filling his cockpit with fuel they would keep him in contact.

As a tanker detachment only the K1 and KC1 aircraft were used for Op HERRICK detachments, however out of all the tankers the K1 aircraft, ZD951, was used by far and away the most. Due to its lack of a defensive aid suite the aircraft was unsuitable for flights into and out of theatre with passengers, however for tanking missions, with only a basic crew on board, it was ideal.

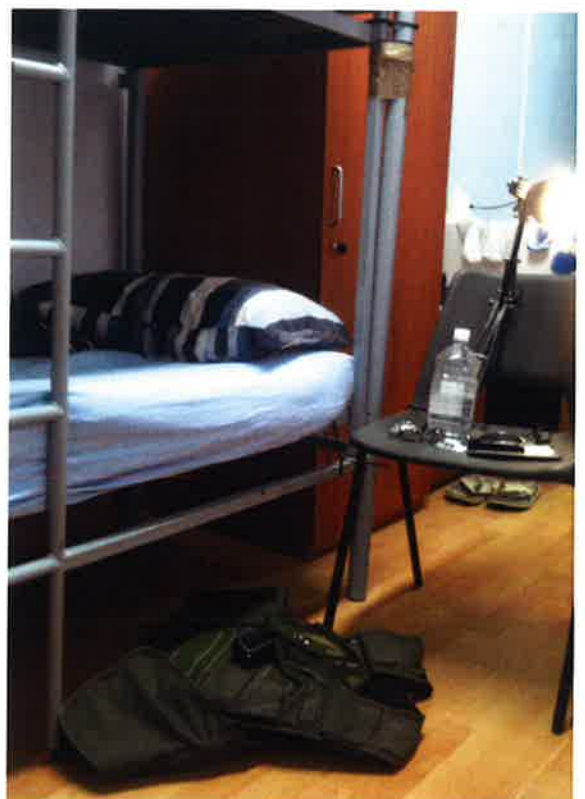
Air Transport

The Squadron's first flight into an Afghan airfield under Op HERRICK was to Kabul on 27 March 2002. With little airfield infrastructure (including bomb craters and mined areas), mountainous terrain and the most basic of approach aids, Kabul was an extremely challenging environment for the Squadron crews to operate a wide-bodied, legacy airliner. However due to the weather, only 60% of missions were achieved in these early days and although tasking was to reduce in support of Op TELIC the Squadron was soon returned to operating flights into Kabul in late 2005.

In 2006, with the shift in UK operations away from Kabul to Southern Afghanistan, Kandahar Air Base became the new destination for the Tristar. No 216 Squadron were responsible for delivering the UK airbridge for personnel into and out of



Crew accommodation Kandahar



Sleeping accessories Camp Bastion

theatre. Flights began in December 2006, departing on a regular basis from the UK flying directly to Afghanistan, with troops stepping onto the aircraft at Brize Norton then some 7 hours later stepping off into the heart of a war zone.

A typical Squadron mission to Afghanistan would entail the crew reporting 2 hours before departure. The air load master and cabin crew would prepare the aircraft whilst the pilots and air engineer would plan the sortie in detail, considering how much fuel was needed, and whether or not any weather might affect the route.

With the nature of Op HERRICK tasking, crews would attend an intelligence briefing then move to the aircraft carrying body armour and helmets. The defensive aids suite would also be tested along with all the other more routine systems.

As the numbers of UK troops increased, so did the tasking. With 19 airbridge flights departing in August 2007 this rapidly became the norm and as of 2008, 5 flights a week were planned into theatre. The majority of these flights were flown using the passenger carrying Tristar C2s. The front of these aircraft had been specially modified with stretchers, allowing injured personnel to be carried on board as well as returning soldiers. In addition to this, on occasion, specific aeromed tasks were flown for personnel in need of critical care.

Every Squadron member was acutely aware of the importance of all the Op HERRICK tasks, and how any delays could directly impinge on an individual's leave or time in theatre. With an ageing airframe, limited availability of spares, the requirement for serviceable DAS and the sheer fluidity that is the nature of operations into theatre, delays were sometimes inevitable. Despite these frustrations the vast majority of tasks ran on time. Engineers worked a 24/7 shift pattern, with a spare aircraft in reserve. In May 2006 a change in route meant flights now

routed via RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus. Although this was more crew intensive it did allow for greater flexibility and improved the success rate of each task.

“The trial routeing appears to be improving visibility of the Sqn’s commitment to operations although it would seem that the whole of the Defence community has a view, and is more than willing to share those views with me”

Officer Commanding No 216 Squadron, Wing Commander Chadwick 2008

In 2007 Wing Commander Chadwick, the then Officer Commanding, launched the ‘Beer for the Boys’ campaign. Run by members of 216 Squadron, the fund aimed to provide every Service person aboard the Tristar with a free beer when flying back from Afghanistan as a sign of the nation’s gratitude. It also had a secondary aim of offering to buy beer, through donations, for homecoming parties. The campaign proved incredibly popular and to date £116,000 has been raised by Squadron personnel to buy beer for returning Army, Royal Marine and RAF Regiment Units homecoming parties as well as giving every soldier a beer on the flight home. Over 187,000 cans of beer have been given out on Op HERRICK flights.



Tristar refuelling F-18

Operations in Afghanistan have dominated the day-to-day life of No 216 Squadron and its members for the last decade, with the relentless nature of the airbridge placing pressures on all those concerned. Despite the fundamental issue of operating

[illegible]

Improvised entertainment passes the time

Officer Commanding No 216 Squadron, Wing Commander Rob Daft 2006

Op ELLAMY

Op ELLAMY, the codename for the UK participation in the 2011 military intervention in Libya, brought a hefty challenge for the air-to-air refuelling crews of No 216 Squadron.

The operation was part of an international coalition aimed at enforcing a Libyan no-fly zone in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolution 1973 which stipulated that "all necessary measures" should be taken to protect civilians. The no-fly zone was proposed during the Libyan civil war to prevent government forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi from carrying out air attacks on anti-Gaddafi forces.

The UN Security Council Resolution 1973 passed on the evening of 17 March 2011 gave a mandate to countries wishing to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya militarily. A conference involving international leaders took place in Paris on the afternoon of 19 March 2011. International military action commenced after the conference finished, with French military fighter jets being the first to participate in the operation only a few hours after the conference finished in Paris with the first shot fired at 1645 against a Libyan tank.

At its peak, the UK had some 4,000 personnel, 37 aircraft and 4 ships committed to the operation. The RAF were well placed to begin operations immediately deploying both strike and ISTAR assets in support of the operation.

For No 216 Squadron this was an ideal opportunity to operate the Tristar in its element: that of strategic refuelling platform.

Crews immediately commenced long range refuelling missions to Libya. Flying sorties in excess of 12 hours, the crews launching from the UK laden with fuel (in excess of 120 tonnes) bound for the Libyan coastline. After a high level transit through Europe the aircraft was descended to enter the tactical airway structure close to Malta bound for a rendezvous with "fast air" in need of fuel. After a period of 3-4 hours "On task" within striking distance of the Libyan coastline and, having ensured all available fuel was given to the receivers, the jet would then depart, often on minimum fuel, to begin its flight back to the UK.

Of particular note, the Squadron was tasked with supporting long range strike missions by Tornado aircraft launching from the UK on a round trip to Libya. On the night of 19-20 March 2011, Tornado aircraft from RAF Marham flew a 3,000nm mission to fire Storm Shadow missiles against targets in Libya. Providing the air-to-air refuelling capability, No 216 Squadron then went on to fly a number of these missions over the course of the operation.

The refuelling crews of No 216 Squadron performed admirably throughout the Libyan conflict, managing challenging missions in order to ensure fuel reached those in need. For their efforts a number of Squadron personnel were awarded the Op UNIFIED PROTECTOR NATO medal. These extremely long range missions demonstrated the essential requirement for a strategic refuelling platform.



Tristar trailing Typhoons



No 216 Squadron return to the Falkland Islands

In 2013, though the focus of the Squadron remained firmly on the Gulf region, a proposed return to the Falkland Islands provided a welcome distraction from the dust and heat. With the out-of-service date of the aircraft from No 101 Squadron already deployed to the Islands looming, No 216 Squadron were called upon to provide a replacement.

In contrast to the Squadron's previous role of providing the Atlantic airbridge, this time an aircraft would be permanently deployed to the Islands. In August 2013, the Squadron deployed a single K1 aircraft to the Falkland Islands in support of No 1312 Flight.

For a Squadron used to working in the hot and dusty environment of the Middle East, operations from Mount Pleasant Airfield posed their own unique challenges. Strong to gale force winds dominated the weather. This was combined with an "all seasons in one day" phenomena as hail, snow, then sunshine were often all experienced in a matter of hours.

In particular the threat of rotor streaming posed its own planning and logistical headaches.

It is testament to the skill and calibre of the deployed crews that these unique weather phenomena did not deter from providing a refuelling capability to No 1435 Flight Typhoons.

For the crews, on duty 24 hours a day for a month at a time, their day was split between training sorties and QRA scrambles. When not flying crews remained in the "Big Brother House", the name affectionately given to the accommodation provided for the Tristar crew.

The crews were also able to provide a vital element in the compassionate and aeromedical role to the South American mainland and beyond. For one particular crew their experience of Sao Paulo International Airport at rush hour is a memory that will never be forgotten.

"After a gruelling night flight landing at Sao Paulo International was a huge relief. The approach had proven to be extremely challenging; we had battled with poor weather and unserviceability into an airport surrounded by mountainous terrain. Who would have predicted that the fun was only just about begin as our taxi time passed the 4 hour marker. The flight had taken a little over 3 hours. Finally, after much pushing and shoving then squeezing in between the commuter flights that seemed to be landing every 30 seconds we were shoe horned onto the military apron. Was it worth it? Absolutely. Our compassionate case made his connecting flight home in time. What better feeling?!"

Flight Lieutenant P Walton, No 216 Squadron.

"Ad perpetuam rei memoriam": Remembering the fallen of No 216 Squadron

Deaths in the line of duty were difficult for post-war societies to cope with; their unprecedented scale challenged existing methods of grieving. Furthermore, an expectation arose during war that individual soldiers would expect to be commemorated, even if they were low ranking members of the military. One method used to address this was the inclusion of lists of names, war memorials and military cemeteries. In part, this was a response to the practical problem of commemorating such large numbers of dead, but it carried additional symbolic importance; in some ways, the physical presence of a name and/or grave acted to compensate for an absent body.

Since its formation in 1918, 77 personnel have lost their lives whilst in service with No 216 Squadron. Over the winter of 2013/14, Squadron personnel visited the sites of a number of the fallen to pay their respects. A group led by Wing Commander Pete Morgan and comprising the Squadron Standard Party visited Darton All Saints Church, Yorkshire; Milton Cemetery, Portsmouth; and the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey. The Squadron standard was sloped at the graves of Warrant Officer Brian Fletcher, Flying Officer Edward James McSherry and Sergeant Percy Tindall.

Further visits were made to locations in France and Italy where again, the Squadron Standard was sloped; homage to the sacrifice made in the line of duty by No 216 Squadron personnel.

No 216 Squadron Grave Locations

- Libya : Benghazi War Memorial & Knightsbridge War Cemetery, Acroma.
- Nigeria: Ikoyi No 2 Cemetery.
- Sudan: Khartoum War Memorial.
- India: Kohima War Cemetery.
- Singapore: Singapore War Memorial.
- Egypt: Halfaya, Sollum, El Alamein & Heliopolis War Cemeteries.



"They shall grow not old, as
we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor
the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them."

"For the Fallen" - Laurence Binyon 1914



Naples War Cemetery

On 3 September 1943 the Allies invaded the Italian mainland, the invasion coinciding with an armistice made with the Italians who then re-entered the war on the Allied side. Allied objectives were to draw German troops from the Russian front and more particularly from France, where an offensive was planned for the following year.

The site for the war cemetery was chosen in November 1943. Later, graves were brought in from a number of small cemeteries in the immediate vicinity.

Naples War Cemetery contains 1,202 Commonwealth burials of WW2 including 5 members of the Squadron.



Ravenna War Cemetery

Following the fall of Rome to the Allies in June 1944, the German retreat became an ordered, and successive stands were made on a series of defensive lines. In the Northern Appennine mountains the last of these, the Gothic line, was breached by the Allies during the Autumn campaign and the front inched forward as far as Ravenna in the Adriatic sector. Ravenna was taken by the Canadian Corps at the beginning of December 1944 and the burials in the cemetery there reflect the fighting for the Senio line and the period of relative quiet during the first 3 months of 1945. The site for the cemetery was selected by the Army in 1945 for burials from the surrounding battlefields.

Ravenna War Cemetery contains 955 Commonwealth burials of the World War 2 63 of them unidentified. There are also 33 World War 1 burials. One of these graves is of a 216 Squadron pilot.



"The generation that mourned its sons passed; then that which mourned its comrades; then that which mourned its fathers, clinging, perhaps, to fragmentary childhood picture-memories. Then the fallen became faces in yellowing photographs. Now they are names on family trees. Soon, they will be only history. Yet we will remember them."

Daniel Hannan. Daily Telegraph. 2013



No 216 Squadron

Commanding Officers

Squadron Commanders prior to WW2

Squadron Commander K S Savory, October 1917
Squadron Commander H A Buss, January 1918
Major W R Read, September 1918
Squadron Leader C H Nicholas, January 1920
Squadron Leader M Henderson, October 1921
Squadron Leader C O F Modin, February 1922
Wing Commander L D D McKean, October 1924
Wing Commander E A B Rice, November 1929
Wing Commander MacKey, April 1933
Wing Commander Gardiner, January 1937

Wing Commander K D Filbey, August 1983
Wing Commander A J Kearney, December 1986
Wing Commander P J Hoskins, June 1989
Wing Commander D C Vass MBE, December 1991
Wing Commander F Harbottle, May 1994
Wing Commander W D Williams, May 1997
Wing Commander P A Atherton, November 1999
Wing Commander R A D Greene, May 2002
Wing Commander R E Daft, June 2005
Wing Commander S J Chadwick, August 2007
Wing Commander A J Green, February 2010
Wing Commander P R Morgan, March 2012

Squadron Commanders during WW2

Wing Commander P G Chichester, January 1940
Wing Commander E J Laine DFC, September 1940
Wing Commander G R Howie, July 1941
Wing Commander P Ruston, January 1942
Wing Commander E M Morris, December 1942
Wing Commander A L T Naish, May 1944
Wing Commander J H Williams, November 1944
Wing Commander J E S Morton, July 1945

Squadron Commanders post WW2

Wing Commander G R Howie DSO, August 1946
Wing Commander R T Mason, June 1947
Squadron Leader F Welburn, September 1948
Squadron Leader E A Rockcliffe, March 1951
Squadron Leader C M Fell, November 1951
Squadron Leader W J Swift, August 1953
Flight Lieutenant R D Richards, November 1955
Wing Commander B D Sellick DSO DFC, March 1956
Wing Commander I D N Lorson DFC, June 1957
Wing Commander R D Ghurcher DSO MVO DFC, August 1958
Wing Commander M E Hoad, October 1960
Wing Commander D J Harper AFC, November 1962
Wing Commander D Wright AFC, September 1965
Wing Commander J Byard, August 1967
Wing Commander B D'Oliveira OBE, August 1969
Wing Commander P Walker, May 1972
Wing Commander A R King, April 1974
Wing Commander P G Sturt, January 1979
Wing Commander P J Harding AFC, July 1980



1918–2014



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