



'Eye in the Sky'

Newsletter

September 2025



We're kicking off this edition with some fantastic news for two of our senior serving members.

First, a huge congratulations to the newly promoted **Vice Admiral Steve Moorhouse** (right), who has assumed the role of Fleet Commander from Vice Admiral Andy Burns - an incredible achievement!



And not far behind, our Chairman **Commodore Andy Rose** has been selected for promotion to **Rear Admiral** and will be stepping into the role of Director People and Training in the new year.

It's brilliant to see both the FAA and fellow 'baggers' at the top of Navy leadership. A very proud moment for the AEW community!

Tales from the Front Line - Carrier Strike Group 2025



In our last edition, we had the pleasure of hearing from **Captain Colin McGannity**. After an impressive 18 months as Commander of the Carrier Air Wing, Col has now handed over command and returned to the UK, ready for whatever comes next. On behalf of the Association - BZ Col!

This time around, we're delighted to share an update from **Lieutenant Commander Paul Cataffo**, the ASaC Senior Observer on 820 NAS. It's great to keep the conversation going with those actively shaping our community and its future.

Ahoy, AnyFace Members! Here's a brief update on how the ASaC community is faring during our global deployment, Operation HIGHMAST, as part of 820 NAS.

As highlighted in previous newsletters, we've found ourselves on the far side of the world aboard HMS Prince of Wales, operating with a formidable air group: 18 F-35s, 10 Merlins of various marks (including three ASaC variants), and two Wildcat HMA2s - totalling 30 aircraft. Managing such a large and diverse mix of rotary and fixed-wing assets has been a significant challenge, especially when it comes to deck operations.

Alongside the demands of flying in contested environments, this deployment has also offered the rare opportunity to visit countries seldom seen by today's Navy personnel.



The first four weeks were spent in the Mediterranean undergoing a short but intense period of certification and training, all geared towards ensuring a safe transit through the Red Sea. This included organic AEW and Fighter Control missions in close coordination with the embarked fast jets, as well as rehearsals for the transit itself. There was a real sense of anticipation, with ASaC aircraft recognised as a critical enabler for protecting the Carrier Strike Group. Crews planned for extended

flying periods to ensure continuous coverage, something that, although central to our role, hasn't been practised or required at this scale in many years.

A brief stop in Chania, Crete, offered a welcome pause before we transited the Suez Canal and entered the Red Sea. If there's one takeaway from our time there, it's that AEW, Fighter Control, and Tactical Command and Control remain absolutely vital to the effectiveness of the Task Group. Merlin ASaC performed admirably throughout, maintaining station and safeguarding the fleet alongside UK, US, and allied aircraft.



Relaxing on the Flight Deck

Most recently, the CSG transited south from Japan to Singapore through one of the world's most contested waterways, accompanied by ships from Japan, Canada, Australia, the USA, and South Korea, among others. ASaC was once again called upon in its core role, with crews maintaining alert periods throughout the transit.



Squadron aircrew in Chania

Beyond the Red Sea, flying operations resumed with ASaC playing a key role in Exercise TALISMAN SABRE off northern Australia, a fifth-generation exercise designed to test F-35 interoperability with partner nations. Integration with our own F-35s and embarked Fighter Controllers has been central to strengthening the CSG's air warfare capability.

As we headed north toward Japan - roughly the halfway point of the deployment - we took part in the Multi Large Deck Exercise alongside the US, Japan, and several other nations. This involved complex integration and tactically demanding scenarios. Flying was briefly paused for the Crossing the Line Ceremony, where squadron members honoured King Neptune and his Court, proudly earning their Shellback status!



Battle bags at the ready!

While much of our time has been spent at sea, the Task Group has also visited some incredible locations - including Singapore (twice), Darwin, and Tokyo. These stops have given the Baggers a chance to unwind and explore: camping in the Australian Outback, discovering the vibrant streets of Singapore, and travelling across Japan, with highlights including Hiroshima and a climb up Mt Fuji. For many of our junior observers, this is their first posting, and these experiences have offered a fantastic introduction to life on a frontline squadron.



Climbing Mt Fuji



Karaoke in Singapore

As we enter the final phase of the deployment, we still face the challenges of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the concluding Carrier Strike Group FOC exercise. We're expecting some demanding flying ahead, but spirits are high as we look forward to returning home in time for Christmas.

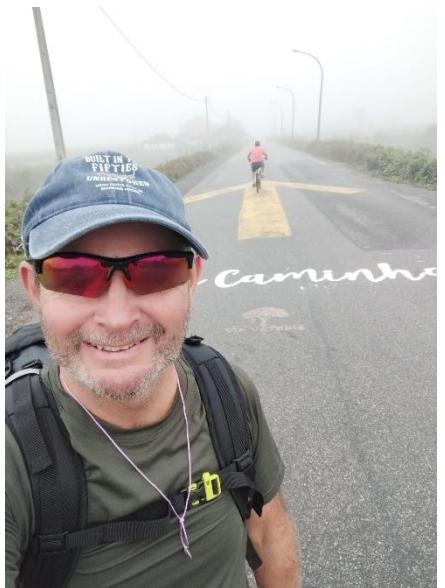


The view from the cockpit during a PHOTEX

It's fantastic to hear from Taffy and the young crew onboard. What an incredible experience so far and a brilliant reminder that life on the frontline still holds plenty of excitement and camaraderie.

Latest dits

And speaking of adventure, age is clearly no barrier! Our very own committee member **Dicky Lewis** has just returned from walking the **Camino de Santiago**, a remarkable journey that proves the spirit of exploration is alive and well, no matter the stage of life.



The biggest gift that retirement has given me is TIME. Time to do the things I've had on my bucket list and with a Navy pension, the pennies to do it. My latest adventure has been the Portuguese Camino de Santiago, a 240 Km walk from Porto in Portugal to Santiago de Compostella in Galicia, Spain.

As I sit, having breakfast on the banks of the Douro in Porto, I'm reflecting on the fabulous memories of the past 12 days. I walked between 17 - 20 miles per day, following the beautiful coastal route along the Portuguese coast before swinging inland to cross into Spain at TUI.

Accommodation was bunk house, in mixed dormitories taking me back to my early days at BRNC, Dartmouth in 1981. The cost for a bed was around €15-20 per night so a cheap way to travel.

I started alone but ended my walk in Santiago with my new friends from Ukraine, Spain, Portugal, Brazil and Sweden.

I kept a daily blog to show the grandkids that there is still life in the old sea dog. The Camino is probably the most satisfying challenge that I have done in years and I can't imagine a better way to spend a spare couple of weeks. If you fancy giving it a go, you may find my blog helpful.

dickynbrill.blogspot.com

My only advice: go with an open mind, and look after your feet!



Recent Events

Fly Navy Federation Meeting - Navy Wings, RNAS Yeovilton, 1 August 2025



Honorary VP Mike Rawlinson and committee member Jan Cox represented AnyFace at the recent Fly Navy Federation meeting - a valuable gathering that brings together voices from across our wider FAA community. These meetings continue to play an important role in strengthening collaboration, sharing updates, and ensuring our collective efforts remain aligned and impactful.

This session marked a notable transition, as Cdre Jock Alexander (rtd) formally handed over the chair to Cdre Nick Walker (rtd).

Minutes from the meeting are attached separately in the email for those who'd like to catch up on the discussions and decisions.

Upcoming Events

The Field of Remembrance, Westminster Abbey, 7-16 November 2025

The Poppy Factory's Field of Remembrance will be open to the public from Friday 7 to Sunday 16 November. For those who wish to visit, the AnyFace plot is number 99, located to the right of the entrance to St Margaret's Church.



RBL Cenotaph Parade, Whitehall - 9 November 2025

The RBL registration is now closed, and we look forward to seeing our AnyFace platoon on the big screen again this year. I'd like to thank those members for making the effort to represent us.



All members - whether parading or not - are welcome to attend the Fly Navy Federation service at the FAA Memorial on Embankment following the main parade.

If you'd like to attend lunch afterwards at the In & Out, then RSVP below.

[AnyFace Remembrance Day Lunch](#) |
[AnyFace Association](#)

Admin update

Supporting our members, especially our veterans, is at the heart of what we do. We want to ensure everyone is aware of the resources available to them, whether it's practical assistance, recognition, or simply staying connected to the wider Armed Forces community. Please see below some helpful links.

The [Office for Veterans' Affairs - GOV.UK](#) is part of the MOD and leads the government's efforts to ensure veterans receive the respect, support, and recognition they deserve.

A new initiative, [VALOUR](#), is making it easier for veterans across the UK to access essential care and support. It's well worth a look if you or someone you know could benefit.

As a veteran, you may be eligible for the following schemes:

- [Apply for an HM Armed Forces Veteran Card - GOV.UK](#)
- [Defence Discount Service | Discounts For Military Personnel](#)
- [Veterans Rail Discount | Railcard | National Rail - Veterans Railcard](#)

And of course, there are several outstanding charities offering support to the Armed Forces community:

- [The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity](#)
- [Royal Naval Benevolent Trust](#)
- [SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity](#)

Finally, if you're stocking up on FAA memorabilia for Christmas, don't forget to use the code **ANYFACE15** for 15% off at the [Navy Wings Flight Store](#) - a great way to support historic naval aviation while treating someone special.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition - it's your stories, updates, and insights that keep the newsletter vibrant and meaningful. Willing volunteers make all the difference, and we're always keen to hear more.

If you're wondering whether your news is worth sharing, the answer is yes! What might seem ordinary to you is often exactly what others love reading about. So please do send anything my way - every voice adds something special.

Yours aye,

Serena

