

THE PIP-ACK POST

NEWSLETTER OF PIP-ACK SHELLHOLE

NOVEMBER 2017 EDITION



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FALL IN!!!

The monthly meetings are held on the second Sunday of the month at 10:30 - please diarise and attend.

- 11 October : Freedom of Entry to the City of Cape Town - Military Dinner - Kelvin Grove - 19:00 - Guest of Honour: Executive Deputy Mayor of Cape Town Alderman Ian Neilson
- 14 October : Highland Pipe Band Festival - Wynberg Boys High School - 9:00 - Pip-Ack members will be present to promote both the Order and the Shellhole
- 27 October : Battle of El Alamein dinner - Dawn Patrol Shellhole - 19:30
- 29 October : Battle of El Alamein memorial parade - the Castle - 10:30
- 5 November : Shellhole monthly meeting - 10:30 (first Sunday of month)
- 11 November : Poppy Day collection
- 11 November : Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital Day of Remembrance - 10:30
- 12 November : Remembrance Day Parade - the Cenotaph - 11:00
- 10 December : Shellhole Christmas lunch - details to be announced

Birthdays - November

*Arthur Bradstreet - 1st / Barbara Pretorius - 20th
Charlie Silverwood - 24th / Christina Rosslee - 27th*

Mary Ellis - Spitfire Pilot

Mary Ellis (pictured during her time as an Air Transport Auxiliary pilot in World War II) has celebrated her 100th birthday.

Tearing through the skies above the South Coast, two Spitfires evoke powerful memories of Britain's wartime resilience.

But this stirring image holds a further poignancy – for in the cockpit of the lead aircraft sits Mary Ellis, celebrating her 100th birthday by recreating her time as one of the 'Ata-girls', the select gang of female pilots who flew Britain's fighters during the war.

And over her shoulder is one of the actual Spitfires she flew during her 1,000 flights as a First Officer with the Air Transport Auxiliary.

"Wizard, this is wizard!" yelled the delighted centenarian through her intercom.



Mary was handed the controls of the 275mph twin-seater as it swooped over West Sussex. After about 15 minutes, she turned for home, and told her co-pilot Matt Jones: "Goodwood on the nose, you have control...". Then she settled back to enjoy the ride back to base.

Earlier, Mary watched in delight as Spitfire MV154 took its place beside her in an extraordinary airborne tribute. It was a plane she had delivered to RAF Brize Norton from Southampton on September 15, 1944, and it hides a sentimental secret. For at the end of the 25-minute wartime flight, she signed the cockpit, scrawling her maiden name Wilkins and the initials ATA.

She hoped her tag might be spotted by a handsome pilot and lead to a wartime romance – although the impulsive act, a career one-off, didn't bag her a boyfriend.

Mary, originally from Oxfordshire, had her first flying lesson in 1938, and flew for pleasure until 1941 when she heard a BBC radio appeal for women pilots to join the auxiliary service and so release male pilots for combat duty.

Speaking at a surprise birthday party on Thursday, Mary said: "The war was a challenge and one had to do something about it. I went on and on until I flew everything. I love the Spitfire – it's my favourite aircraft, it's everyone's favourite, it's the symbol of freedom."

For four years she ferried warplanes from factories to frontline squadrons. The 166 women of the ATA – about one in eight of the total – have been dubbed 'The Female Few', echoing Winston Churchill's description of the RAF airmen who fought in the Battle of Britain.

Mary was usually found at the joystick of a Spitfire or a Hurricane but ultimately flew more than 50 types of aircraft, logging 1,100 hours of flight, much to the astonishment of some colleagues.



Mary Ellis (circled) was handed the controls of the 275mph twin-seater as it swooped over West Sussex



Mrs Ellis looked back over her left shoulder and glanced at the aircraft she once flew

As she sat on the airfield ready to deliver her first Spitfire, the mechanic standing on the wing asked how many of them she'd flown. When she said it was her first, he was so startled he fell right off. The largest aircraft she flew solo was the Wellington bomber. After landing at an East Anglian airfield, Mary was greeted by the ground crew who asked where the pilot was. "I'm the pilot," she said. They insisted on searching the aircraft before they believed her.

It was dangerous work. Mary was sometimes ordered to move combat-damaged planes that were not officially fit to fly, but had to be taken for repairs. She crash-landed twice and was shot at once.

Fourteen of her fellow ATA female flyers lost their lives, including aviation pioneer Amy Johnson.

Mary – who to this day needs no spectacles, nor a walking stick – was one of the last six women serving in the ATA when it disbanded after the war. She remained a private pilot and then became managing director of Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight. She married Don Ellis, a fellow pilot, in 1961, but was widowed in 2009.

Matt Jones, who flies Spitfires for Goodwood-based Boulton Flight Academy, reunited Mary with MV154 after first meeting her in 2015. He conspired with the plane's current owner, pilot Maxi Gainza, to bring it to the UK from its base in Bremgarten, Germany.

He said, "I gave Mary control of our Spitfire. I wasn't sure where we were but Mary was very clear. She pointed us towards Thorney Island, up through the Witterings, flew on to Selsey Bill and then Bognor Regis, never losing a foot of altitude.

She showed me precisely how she was able to deliver all those aircraft with just a map, a compass and a stopwatch. I was utterly humbled by a superior aviator who also happens to be 60 years my senior!"



Mrs Ellis toasted a glass of champagne with co-pilot Matt Jones, managing director of Boulton Flight Academy

By Sarah Oliver for *The Mail On Sunday*

Source: www.dailymail.co.uk

Thanks to Moth Danie Steyn for contributing this article.

Money Matters

Shellhole Bank Account Details

Standard Bank, Society Scheme Savings Account
Branch: Plumstead Service Centre, Branch Code: 025309
Account Number: 076110656

Shellhole Birthday at Barristers

23 July 2017

Thanks to Moth Paul Rosslee for making the relevant arrangements.



Welfare

Both Moths Charlie Silverwood and Doug Nicolson remain in our thoughts.
The Shellhole wishes them well.



Memorable Quotations

“I believe that every human has a finite number of heart-beats. I don’t intend to waste any of mine running around doing exercises.”

Colonel Edwin ‘Buzz’ Aldrin
US Air Force

Aldrin was the second person to walk on the moon.

TAILPIECE



Did you know that Purple Heart medals awarded today were actually manufactured during World War II?

The Purple Heart is a United States’ military decoration awarded to those wounded or killed while serving with the US military. During World War II, nearly 500,000 Purple Heart medals were made in anticipation of the staggering casualties expected from the planned Allied invasion of Japan. To date, the total number of American military casualties incurred since the end of World War II – including the Korean and Vietnam Wars – has not exceeded this number. As at 2003, there remained 120,000 Purple Heart medals in stock. This surplus allowed combat units in Afghanistan and Iraq to keep Purple Hearts on-hand for immediate award to soldiers wounded in the field.

(Source: *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia*)

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