



CRANWELLIAN ASSOCIATION

Keith Mossman RIP



We are sorry to announce the passing of Keith Mossman of 47Entry (B Sqn) on February 14th 2024. Winning the Groves Memorial Trophy for the best pilot on his course, he also won Victor Ludorum, establishing record times for sprinting and excelling at rugby, which he went on to play for the RAF.

Keith's flying training started on Tiger Moths, eventually converting to the Meteor day fighter before joining 63 Squadron at a time when there were 45 fighter squadrons in Fighter Command. On one occasion he ferried a Meteor F8 from Chivenor to Singapore, where it was to enter service with the Royal Australian Air Force. This was a 21 hour 16-leg journey staged across RAF occupied bases in the Mediterranean, Middle East, India and the Far East.

After training at the Central Flying School (CFS), Keith returned to Cranwell as a flying instructor (Harvard) but within 18 months, he was back at CFS on the Vampire.

Following a tour at the MoD (managing the careers and appointments of junior pilots) he served at HQ Fighter Command as the Bloodhound surface-to-air missile Plans Officer.

In 1959, Keith joined 25 Sqn (Waterbeach) as a Javelin Flight Commander. He was then posted to the Central Fighter Establishment to command the All-Weather Fighter Combat School at West Raynham, Norfolk.

His career took a very different turn in 1962 when began a three-year secondment to the Royal Malaysian Air Force based at Kuala Lumpur. The young air force was equipped with the

piston-engine Provost, the Pioneer and the Twin Pioneer. Keith converted to all three, allowing him to fly into jungle outposts and landing grounds.

With the formation of the Federation of Malaysia in September 1963, tensions with Indonesia increased and there was an uprising in Brunei. During this, Keith made frequent visits to Borneo flying a newly acquired de Havilland Dove aircraft.

He developed a keen interest in butterflies and, in the jungle, discovered a new species which was named *Ypthima Doherty Mossmani* in his honour.

In 1965 he was posted to the Master Radar Air Defence Station at Patrington, near Hull. With promotion to Wing Commander he commanded of No 260 Signals Unit in Cyprus.

With a long-range early warning radar mounted on Troodos mountain at 6,400 feet, (which extended the range of the radar considerably), the air defence of Cyprus was provided by a Lightning squadron and a Bloodhound guided missile squadron.

Lightnings were scrambled frequently to intercept both Soviet and Egyptian Air Force Tupolev 104 long-range bombers which often tried to enter Cypriot air space. At the end of his tour, Keith was appointed OBE.

After the Air Warfare Course at Manby, Keith remained on their staff for 18 months before he took command of RAF Buchan in Aberdeenshire. This large Air Defence Early Warning Radar Station provided the crucial cover for the airspace north of Scotland and into the Norwegian Sea.

On one memorable New Year's Eve party in the Officers' Mess, he dressed up as an oil-rig worker in a long wig and a suitable check shirt. No-one recognised him and he maintained that he learnt a lot about his station that night! For his services at Buchan, he was advanced to CBE.

Keith's final appointment was Deputy Director of Air Defence responsible for the many aspects of air defence of the UK including fighters, missiles, airborne early warning, and the early warning radar units. He was also responsible for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. He chaired a NATO tri-service group on air defence, requiring regular visits to Brussels.

After three years, Keith retired from the RAF and took up an appointment with the Sultan of Oman's Air Force, overseeing the installation and commissioning of an Integrated Air Defence System, which had been purchased from British Aerospace.

On retirement, he became head of the Emergency Planning Office for Cumbria County Council.

He had a wide variety of interests as a fisherman, clock maker and repairer, and beekeeper. He and his wife travelled widely, including a special visit to Hawaii where he attended a family reunion with the Hawaiian descendants of James Mossman, a sea captain who had settled there seven generations before.