

GROUP CAPTAIN DAVID BARON OBE – COLD WAR FIGHTER PILOT

It is with great sadness that the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum announces the death on 24 December 2020 of its Chairman, Group Captain David Baron OBE.



Pilot Officer Baron receives his wings, at RAF Swinderby in August 1962

David's flying career began when he joined the RAF as a young officer cadet in 1960. After being commissioned as a pilot officer he underwent pilot training on the piston-engined Provost T1 and the Vampire T11 jet trainer. After operational conversion training on the Hawker Hunter jet fighter, he commenced his first operational tour in Aden, seeing action during the Radfan campaign with No 8 Squadron.



Fg Off Baron replaces the ejection seat safety pin in his No 8 Squadron after a sortie over the Radfan

Returning to England in 1965 he completed the Central Flying School Course, following which he was posted to RAF Valley, Anglesey for a three-year tour instructing

on the Folland Gnat jet trainer and later the Hunter.



Flt Lt Baron's No 4 FTS Gnat in the barrier at RAF Valley in 1966 following brake failure on landing

In 1968/69 David underwent the first RAF conversion course on to the McDonnell Douglas Phantom FGR 2 at RAF Coningsby, Lincolnshire. He then spent the next three years as a pilot and instructor in No 6, the RAF's first Phantom equipped squadron. As the decade changed, David was posted as an instructor and flight examiner to the Phantom Operational Conversion Unit and on promotion to squadron leader in 1972 was posted on a three-year exchange tour to the USAF F4 Phantom Central Instructors' School at Luke Air Force Base in Arizona.



Group Captain Baron before his final Phantom flight in 1992 at RAF Akrotiri

David returned to the UK in 1975 and after completing the RAF Staff College Course was appointed to a two-year Air Staff tour after which he returned to flying as a wing commander, the 'boss' of No 14 Squadron from June 1980 until July 1983 operating the Jaguar GR1 in the strike/attack role at RAF Bruggen in Germany.



Wing Commander Baron, OC No 14 Squadron, with his pilots at RAF Bruggen in 1982

On returning to the UK David was appointed OBE (Military Division) in the 1984 New Year's Honours List and in the following year was promoted group captain, and appointed Head of the Long-Term Planning Branch at HQ Allied Forces Central Europe in the Netherlands. Two years later he took over command of RAF Church Fenton, Yorkshire.



Group Captain Baron hands over command of RAF Church Fenton in August 1989

A three-year tour at HQ British Forces Cyprus followed as Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations. David retired from the RAF in February 1996 after over 35 years in the service with 3,500 fast-jet flying hours out of 4,200 total in his log book.



Group Captain Baron as reviewing officer at the RAF School of Training, Swindorby, 1988

In 2000 David and his wife Vivienne moved to the Chichester area and he was soon involved with the Tangmere Military Aviation Museum, taking on responsibility for the aircraft collection. In 2003 he became a Trustee of the Museum and in 2006, its Chairman. During his 14-year stewardship the Museum went from strength to strength to become one of the most successful aviation museums in the country. He will be greatly missed by the Museum's trustees and the all-volunteer workforce at Tangmere.



David Baron gives an interview to Radio Sussex on the work of the museum in April 2018