

David Ince DFC BSc FRAeS LdH

I am Secretary of the Typhoon Entente Cordiale Trust, created by David some 10 years ago, of which more later.

It is my great privilege and pleasure to have been invited to speak about my friend, David Ince.

What can one add to the history of a man who has published two autobiographical books and who has been the subject of detailed obituaries in the national press? One can only try.

My uncle was a Typhoon pilot, a founder member of 193 Squadron in 1942. In the early 1990's I started to research his career in the RAF. Very soon I came across wartime photographs of 193 Squadron, credited to David Ince, about whom I then knew nothing. A chance visit to the gliding club cafe at Booker, High Wycombe, revealed a poster advertising a new book, by David Ince, "Combat and Competition". Enquiries through a gliding colleague soon led me to David and I had the great pleasure of reuniting wartime friends during a visit to David and Ann near Winchester.

You may know that David spent his early years just South of Hadrian's Wall, then the family moved to Glasgow. David's father had been an Army officer but his son was an aviation enthusiast, begging his first flight in a Gypsy Moth from the Renfrew Flying Club. While being much involved in Cadet Force activities at school David had the opportunity to visit the Gloster aircraft factory at Hucclecote, where the Hawker Typhoons would eventually be built. There he took surreptitious photographs – an indication of what was to come.

David tried to join the RAF, but was initially rejected because of an eyesight problem. So, while a first year Mechanical Engineering student at Glasgow University, he joined the Army and became a gunnery expert. Soon he was demonstrating a studious, analytical and innovative approach to practical problems and developing skills that would serve him well later on. Then came an opportunity to be seconded to the RAF and to train as a pilot. It was during his initial training, and a visit to a school friend who was commanding the first squadron of brand-new Hawker Typhoons that he fell in love with the aircraft and declared his intention to fly it in action. The response was discouraging "There are lots of problems: you're an idiot!"

After extensive training, in England and in Canada, David became a fighter pilot, initially flying Hurricanes, Mustangs and Spitfires. As the Normandy Invasion approached David saw an opportunity. Claiming that because his finger, severely damaged in his youth, made it difficult to operate the pistol-grip gun trigger of a Mustang he would be safer in a Typhoon, with its thumb-operated gun button, he

talked his way into an interview with Denys Gillam, one of the greatest Typhoon advocates, and was posted to 193 Typhoon Squadron, then, just after D-Day, operating from Hurn and Needs Oar Point on the Beaulieu estate but shortly afterwards moving to its temporary airfield, B3, at Ste Croix-sur-Mer near Caen in Normandy. So began a long and happy association between David and the people of Normandy.

Somehow, David managed to use a camera, normally forbidden to active service personnel. He photographed his 193 Squadron colleagues and occasional visitors to B3, such as Winston Churchill and many of those photographs have found their way into David's books and other publications.

As with so many veterans, David's experience of war left its mark. In peace he was a kindly, thoughtful and compassionate man but during the Normandy campaign and then later in Holland and in Germany he saw and did things that he would later be rather reticent about. Students of the rather more glamorous Battle of Britain know little about the work of the Typhoons. Often, several times a day, David would climb into a 6-tonne brute of an aircraft, loaded with cannon shells and bombs or rockets. With his colleagues he would seek out the target, diving steeply to very low level to release his bombs on heavily-defended gun-sites, railway junctions, bridges, shipping, radar stations, V1 launch sites, and any enemy armour or transport that dared move in daylight. The attacks would be made directly in the face of concentrated flak, first the 88mm guns, then the multiple 37mm and 20mm cannon batteries, then small arms fire. The Typhoons left behind almost unbelievable destruction, later witnessed on the ground as Allied forces advanced across the famous Falaise Gap and on to Germany. All this came at a cost – that of 151 Typhoon pilots in Normandy alone.

David's bravery and skill made him a survivor, unlike his beloved Typhoons that were literally bulldozed into scrap metal at Lasham. He graduated from the first Post-War Empire Test Pilot's course but chronic sinusitis, probably caused by his wartime activities, denied him the opportunity of being a jet test pilot. He then completed his Mechanical Engineering degree course at Glasgow University. During this time he had discovered gliding and it became a passion, so much so that he became test pilot for the Elliot company, heralding a career move, first into aviation management, then into the avionics industry with Elliot Flight Automation. David broke gliding records, represented Britain in international competitions and became Chief Flying Instructor at the Long Mynd in Shropshire. Marriage to Ann, then the arrival of two daughters, Ginnie and Ros, provided David with a willing crew, until they shifted their attention to horses. David then became a director of an agricultural equipment group. That job took him all over Northern Europe and brought him into friendly contact with former enemies, including Luftwaffe pilots.

David did not want to look back, but always worked to create trust and understanding amongst former adversaries. His colleagues described him as “a lovely man”.

It was that forward-looking that encouraged David, with veteran friends, some of whom are here today, to establish links between the wartime Hawker Typhoons and their jet-age successors, the Eurofighter Typhoons. He believed that passing on the experience and traditions of the wartime Typhoon force to today's RAF would not only preserve the Typhoon's history but would encourage and inspire a new generation of pilots and engineers. He called it "passing the torch". So the Typhoon Entente Cordiale Trust was born. The French link is to ASAVN, an organisation in Normandy dedicated to the research of Typhoon crash sites, the recovery of wreckage and the construction and dedication of crash-site memorials to fallen pilots. The focus of an annual visit to Normandy is the beautiful Typhoon Memorial at Noyers Bocage, where we gather to remember all of those lost during the battle of Normandy, an event attended by veterans, friends and families and by members of the present-day RAF Typhoon force. David's involvement in the Normandy campaign was recently honoured by the French Government who presented the Legion d'Honneur to Normandy veterans – David's medal is displayed here today

In retirement David became heavily involved in the work of his local church – this church. He wanted to become a Lay Minister but was told that he was too old. That did not stop him from working with the church, doing pastoral work, leading intercessions, occasionally preaching and regularly singing in the choir. He was much involved, with the PCC, in the establishment of the Itchen Valley benefice which includes this church. He was a man of deep and secure faith, described as being meticulous, patient, realistic and clear-sighted.

David's last public appearance for TECT was another example of passing the torch. He, with other Typhoon veterans, the Rev. George Wood and Derek Lovell, was a guest of honour at the public launch at Goodwood of an amazing project, aimed at restoring and putting a Hawker Typhoon back into the air. The three veterans made a great impression and we are delighted that members of the RB396 team and supporter's club are here today. Many kind and sympathetic messages were posted on the RB396 Facebook pages, all remarking on David's engaging personality and willingness to share his wealth of experience.

What a remarkable person David was. So many people have expressed their admiration for his skills and character. He will be greatly missed. But we are only his friends; our love and sympathy go out to all the members of his family.

Forgive me if I become a little whimsical.

I can imagine David, in some super sailplane, far above us, banking steeply into the powerful thermal of love and prayer rising from Easton. The altimeter is spinning, the variometer singing as he climbs up... and up... and up..

Farewell David