

# Editorial

It's an unfortunate fact that the demographics of our Society are such that we are, inevitably, losing valuable members as age takes its toll. This has become quite apparent in recent months with the loss of three stalwarts: Mike Pearce, Peter Wright and Stuart Leslie. Appropriate tributes are paid by Paul Leaman, in his obituaries on p.316. I had contact with both Mike and Peter but knew Stuart well and would like to explain why I think he was one of the most influential CCI members. It's simply that he wasn't interested in making a name for himself but, instead, placed his extensive knowledge and the unsurpassed JMB/GSL photograph collection at the disposal of others. There cannot be a single aviation author who had not, at some point, gone to Stuart for assistance and received it in abundance. We should all mourn his passing.

## ESSENTIAL VIEWING

I doubt whether there is a single member of this society who is only interested in the aviation aspect of WWI. I'm sure most are able to place the air war in context against events on the ground and at sea and have an understanding of life and work in the other services. A recent film has to be one of the best ever to show what life was like for the ordinary soldier and if there is anyone who hasn't seen *They Shall Not Grow Old* it is their loss. I was startled by the realism achieved in re-speeding and colourising footage from the IWM collection, fascinated by the taped recollections of veterans and impressed that the producers had avoided using any narrator. As I write, it's still available on BBC I-Player and, presumably, it will emerge on Youtube. So, if you have yet to see it, take the opportunity.

## THIS ISSUE

The recollections of veterans can provide useful insights to service life that are often overlooked in official accounts. Two sets of these are included in this issue, both by distinguished WWI pilots. RAF Staff College essays, such as that by Gerald Ernest Gibbs, were written while events were still fresh in the writers' memories and are well worth a read. I make no apology for the lack of illustrations to accompany Gibbs' account; the narrative makes for essential reading, first-hand accounts of the air war over Macedonia are few and far between.

That air war over Macedonia forms the main feature, with Mike Kesley's detailed look at the use of the RAF BE12 and BE12a by 17 and 47 Squadrons. Very little has been written about the operational use of those, often maligned, types and so this is a very overdue analysis.

In contrast, the combat that resulted in the award of a Victoria Cross to Alan Jerrard has been described numerous times but here we have something extra. Jiří Rajlich raises the question as to whether it really was Benno Fiala that brought Jerrard's Camel down.

Stewart Taylor's biography of 'Archie' McGinnis is brought to a conclusion and, in typical fashion, the author has also provided extensive biographical information about that observer's squadron mates.

It's always nice to receive articles from new contributors. Johanna Rustler has done just that and provided an interesting

look at the life of the ground crews, again an often-overlooked aspect of the air war and a subject that would benefit from an even deeper investigation.

Regular contributor Paul Hare has moved away from his usual Royal Aircraft Factory theme and gives us the story of a lesser-known aircraft manufacturing company. Reading it suggests that Hilda Hewlett must have been a truly formidable lady.

## 2019

Our Society enters its fiftieth year on 1 January, not bad for a bunch of amateur enthusiasts. There is a comfortable stock of material to hand but, as ever, more is welcome.

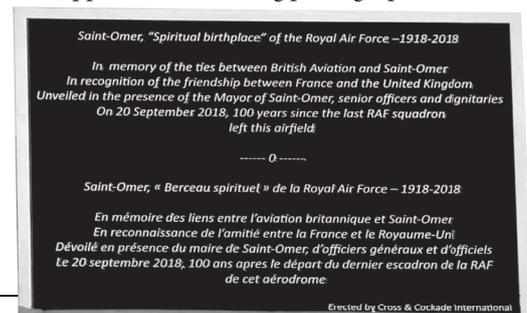
In addition to the conclusion of Mike Kelsey's opus on the BE12, another lengthy treatise will be Colin Owers' look at the flying boats built to the N3 and N4 specifications; the Short Cromarty, Vickers Valentia, Fairey Atlanta and Titania. Naturally, there will be more from Stewart Taylor, beginning with a look at ground strafing with 209 Squadron. One of my tasks over the winter will be putting together relevant photographs that will allow me to, finally, get the Mike O'Connor/Ray Vann 26 Squadron history into this journal. Others have contributed shorter features and as many of these as possible will be included.

Mick Davis



## ST-OMER

The RAF left this historic site on 20 September 1918 and the centenary of that event was marked by an official ceremony at the site, attended by our president, AVM Peter Dye. Peter also delivered a lecture the night before and the event was an undoubted success. A plaque, to mark the centenary, was unveiled and Peter supplied the following photographs of the events.



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