



My childhood in the world of the RAF

The centenary of the Royal Air Force this month is evoking many memories for our writer Diana Cormack. Here she shares a few with us:

When people ask where I'm from, it's not a question I can really answer. My mother was a former member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and I was born in Newcastle upon Tyne, her home town. As a teenager I ended up in west Wales when my father retired from the Royal Air Force to his original village. The time in between was spent at various RAF bases. We lived for approximately two years on each, both here and abroad.

In those far off days, before league tables and suchlike, we were sent to the nearest school. At some, RAF children were regarded as gypsies and my brother was bullied because of this. I just sailed through it all, making new friends and developing the ability to find my way quickly around unfamiliar settings.

Pfennig for the guy

In Germany, when I was eight, my mother used to send me shopping for vegetables in the local market. For Bonfire Night we British kids would collect the then customary 'Penny for the guy'. This included German houses where our 'Pfennig for the guy' request was rarely refused, though I doubt they knew what it was all about!

We were used to our father flying off to various parts of the world, often for indiscriminate lengths of time, with Mum left in charge. Once my baby sister didn't recognise him, he'd been away so long. Dad brought back interesting presents and talked



Diana's father Flight Sergeant Jack Boyd in 1940, home after being evacuated from St Nazaire. Taken in his home town of Llandeilo.

about the places he'd been, so we learned their names and looked for them on the globe. Some are now international airports.

Memories, not memorabilia

To us, living in married quarters on a military base meant being part of a separate society with access only via the Guard Room. Everything each household needed was provided and our frequent moves meant regular clear-outs, so I have no memorabilia from those days.

But I do have many memories, particularly of those things which added to my character in a number of ways. I still feel affinity with the RAF Family and am grateful for what it brought me. So happy 100th birthday, RAF. Over and out!

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Phoenix Film Club flies again with Hedy's bombshell story

By Neil McNaughton

After a long period in 'hibernation' the Phoenix Film Club restarted in March with a highly successful meeting organised by East Finchley resident David Gritten, the celebrated film critic and writer.

Screening biopic *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story* proved to be an excellent choice as the lively discussion, which followed in the cinema's café, had about 50 film enthusiasts packing in to share their thoughts about the film and the ultimately sad story of Lamarr's life.

It revealed the way in which the Hollywood 'star system' worked in the 1940s, how the story resonates today in the light of the Harvey Weinstein revelations and concerns about how women are still treated in the entertainment industry.

Pioneer work in WW2

It was not all doom and gloom, however, as the film was a fascinating and at times entertaining insight into Lamarr's life, full of rare, unseen footage and interview material. Many members of the audience commented that they had no idea about her 'other' career, as an engineer and inventor, especially the fact that she was a pioneer in the field of secret codes and encryption during the Second World War, work for which she received little recognition or monetary reward.

It was generally agreed that, had Lamarr been a man, and had her career been managed more effectively, the full story of her contribution to both film and technology would be better known. Others commented that they had not realised how exploited she was. Her story proved to be all too familiar in that period as the tragic experiences of Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo and Jean Harlow proved.

Film Club to be a fixture

Meetings of the Film Club will now become a monthly feature of the Phoenix's programme. *The Archer* and the



Double life: Phoenix Film Group members discussed *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story*

cinema itself will keep residents informed about future events. The Hedy Lamarr story was a great start and it is to be hoped

that word will spread that East Finchley is once again at the centre of north London's cultural life.

RICKY SAVAGE ... "The voice of social irresponsibility"

Lost leader

It's that time of year again. Formula One is back complete with the roar of racing engines, the squeal of brakes and the whine of prima donnas making excuses. They've got through the first race and now they are soaking up the money in Bahrain. But how many of them realise it's 50 years since a Scottish sheep farmer crashed in the rain, in a German forest, and how many of them will even know his name? The thing is, I do and it's about time you did too.

Back then Jim Clark was one driver everyone reckoned was simply the best, the man to beat. He might have been a self-effacing Lowland Scot from a farming family, but behind the wheel of a car he was lightning quick. He'd started in club racing, then drove sports cars and was signed to drive for Lotus in 1960.

Over the next eight seasons he competed in 72 Grands Prix, won 25 of them, along with two World Championships, the Indy 500, the British Saloon Car Championship and much, much more. This may not sound like much today, but it took 25 years for anyone to beat his record of seven GP wins in a season. And when Clark did it in 1963 there were only 10 races. Eat your heart out, Lewis Hamilton.

But there was more to Clark than wins. He was never arrogant, there was none of the Senna out of my way bullying or Schumacher and team orders. Jimmy didn't need them, he was just too good for that.

Back then it was a different world, one where motor racing was genuinely dangerous. There were no run-off areas, no crash barriers and drivers didn't wear seat belts until 1969. But Jimmy didn't have accidents... until Sunday 7 April 1968 at Hockenheim in Germany, that is.

It was a Formula Two race, it was raining, the tyres weren't working and one of them failed. And out in the damp woods, amongst the pine trees, the greatest driver of his age slid off the road and hit a tree. Not even his monumental skill could save him. As Ferrari driver Chris Amon said at the time: "It seemed that we'd lost our leader." So a minute's silence before the flag falls, please. It's the least Clark deserves.

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